



LABOUR MOVEMENTS DURING THE INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Madhavi Ashok Yakkaldevi
Research Scholar

ABSTRACT

Labour movements during the Indian freedom struggle formed an important part of the social, economic, and political history of colonial India. The growth of modern industries, particularly textile mills, railways, plantations, mines, ports, and factories, created a new industrial working class that faced low wages, long working hours, poor working conditions, insecurity, and limited labour protections. These conditions contributed to the emergence of trade unions, strikes, labour associations, and organized forms of collective action. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, labour activism developed in major industrial centres such as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Ahmedabad, and Kanpur. Organizations such as the All India Trade Union Congress, established in 1920, contributed to the development of organized labour politics. Nationalist leaders and political organizations also became involved in labour issues, while sections of the labour movement increasingly connected economic demands with the wider struggle against colonial rule. Important developments included industrial strikes, the Ahmedabad textile workers' movement, Bombay textile labour mobilization, and railway and plantation workers' struggles. However, labour movements were not uniform; they differed according to industry, region, leadership, political affiliation, and workers' economic conditions. This study examines the origins, growth, leadership, organization, major activities, and historical significance of labour movements during the Indian freedom struggle and explores their contribution to the development of trade unionism, workers' rights, and anti-colonial political mobilization.



KEYWORDS: *Labour Movements, Indian Freedom Struggle, Trade Unionism, Working Class, Industrial Workers, British Rule, Labour Strikes, Workers' Rights, All India Trade Union Congress, Industrialization.*

INTRODUCTION

Labour movements played an important role in the social, economic, and political history of colonial India. The expansion of British rule and the growth of modern industries transformed the traditional economic structure and led to the emergence of a new industrial working class. The development of textile mills, railways, plantations, mines, ports, jute factories, and other industries created large groups of wage labourers. However, workers often faced low wages, long working hours, unsafe working conditions, inadequate housing, and limited employment security. These conditions gradually encouraged workers to organize collectively and demand better economic and social conditions. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, labour protests began to appear in several industrial centres.

Workers increasingly used collective actions such as strikes, demonstrations, petitions, and the formation of associations to express their grievances. Early labour organizations and leaders contributed to the development of labour consciousness. The growth of industrial centres such as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, and other cities provided important bases for the development of organized labour activity. The rise of trade unionism gradually transformed scattered workplace grievances into broader collective movements.

The labour movement became increasingly connected with the Indian freedom struggle during the twentieth century. Nationalist leaders and organizations recognized that industrial workers could become an important force in the struggle against colonial rule. At the same time, many workers participated in nationalist activities because they experienced colonial economic policies and industrial exploitation directly. The establishment of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in 1920 marked an important stage in the development of organized labour at the national level. Trade unions provided workers with platforms to raise issues concerning wages, working hours, working conditions, employment security, and workers' rights while also participating in wider political developments. Labour participation was visible in several major phases of the national movement. Workers in textile mills, railways, plantations, ports, mines, and other industries participated in strikes and demonstrations. The Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement created different opportunities for sections of the working class to participate in anti-colonial activities. However, labour participation was not uniform throughout India. Workers' responses differed according to industry, region, local leadership, economic circumstances, political affiliations, and the nature of trade union organization.

The labour movement also reflected the influence of different ideological currents. Nationalism, socialism, communism, trade unionism, and social reform influenced sections of the working class and their organizations. During the interwar period, debates emerged concerning the relationship between workers' economic struggles and the broader political struggle for independence. Different labour organizations adopted different approaches toward colonial authorities, employers, nationalist organizations, and other political groups. These developments contributed to the growing political awareness and organizational capacity of Indian workers. The colonial government responded to labour activism through a combination of legislation, regulation, negotiation, and repression. At the same time, certain labour laws introduced during the colonial period addressed specific aspects of industrial employment, although their implementation and effectiveness varied. The interaction between workers, employers, trade unions, and the colonial state therefore became an important feature of India's industrial and political history.

The study of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle is significant because it demonstrates that the national movement was not limited to political leaders and middle-class organizations. Industrial workers and other labouring groups also participated in collective struggles that combined economic demands with wider political concerns. Labour movements contributed to the development of trade union organization, working-class consciousness, political mobilization, and demands for social justice. Their history provides an important perspective on the broader character of the Indian freedom struggle and on the emergence of organized labour in modern India.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

The main aim of this study is to examine the origin, development, nature, and significance of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle and to analyse the role played by workers and trade unions in improving labour conditions and contributing to the broader movement against colonial rule.

Objectives

1. To study the origin and development of labour movements in colonial India and identify the major factors responsible for their emergence.
2. To examine the economic and social conditions of Indian workers under British colonial rule, including wages, working hours, employment conditions, and workplace conditions.
3. To analyse the growth of trade unionism and the formation of organized labour associations in different parts of India.
4. To study the major labour strikes and protests that emerged in important industrial centres such as Bombay, Calcutta, Ahmedabad, Madras, and Kanpur.
5. To examine the establishment and development of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and its contribution to the organization of Indian workers.
6. To analyse the relationship between labour movements and the Indian national movement, particularly during major phases of the freedom struggle.
7. To study the role of labour leaders, trade union organizers, and political organizations in developing working-class consciousness and collective action.
8. To examine the influence of nationalism, socialism, and communism on the development and direction of labour movements in colonial India.
9. To assess the contribution of workers to major national movements, including the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement.
10. To evaluate the historical significance of labour movements in the development of workers' rights, trade union organization, social justice, and the broader struggle for Indian independence.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle has attracted considerable attention from historians, sociologists, economists, and scholars of working-class history. Existing literature examines the emergence of industrial labour, the development of trade unionism, workers' participation in nationalist politics, and the relationship between economic struggles and the anti-colonial movement. These studies provide an important foundation for understanding the changing nature of labour activism in colonial India. Ranjit Guha and other scholars associated with subaltern studies contributed to a broader understanding of popular participation in colonial India. Their approach encouraged historians to examine the activities of ordinary people and subordinate groups rather than concentrating exclusively on political elites. This perspective is useful for understanding workers as active participants in historical processes and for examining labour protests from the standpoint of collective action and popular consciousness.

S. D. Punekar made significant contributions to the study of Indian trade unionism and industrial labour. His writings examine the development of trade unions, labour organizations, industrial relations, and the problems faced by workers. His work is particularly useful for understanding the organizational development of the Indian labour movement and the institutional challenges faced by trade unions. V. B. Karnik examined the history of trade unionism and labour organization in India, with particular attention to the development of organized workers' movements. His studies help explain the emergence of trade unions, the role of labour leaders, and the changing relationship between workers and political organizations during the colonial period.

S. A. Dange was an important figure in the history of Indian working-class politics. His writings and political activities provide material for understanding the emergence of socialist and communist ideas among sections of Indian workers. His work also illustrates the debates concerning the relationship

between class struggles, trade unionism, and the national movement. E. M. S. Namboodiripad discussed the development of the Indian national movement from a Marxist perspective and examined the participation of workers, peasants, and other social groups. His writings are useful for understanding the interaction between class politics and nationalism and the emergence of left-oriented political currents within the freedom struggle.

Bipan Chandra and his co-authors, in their studies of the Indian national movement, examined the participation of different social groups in the struggle against colonialism. Their work provides a broader political context for understanding labour participation in nationalist movements and the changing relationship between the working class and the Indian National Congress. Sumit Sarkar examined various dimensions of Indian nationalism and popular political mobilization during the colonial period. His studies provide valuable insights into mass movements, political consciousness, and the participation of workers in different phases of the freedom struggle. His analysis also helps locate labour movements within the wider social and political transformations of colonial India. Rajnarayan Chandavarkar made an important contribution to the social history of industrial workers, particularly through his study of Bombay's working class. His research examines the relationship between industrialization, migration, community, political organization, and labour activism. It demonstrates that workers' identities and political actions were shaped by both workplace experiences and wider social relationships.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his study of working-class history in Bengal, explored the formation of working-class consciousness and the distinctive social and cultural experiences of industrial workers. His work challenges overly simplified interpretations of class formation and emphasizes the importance of community, culture, religion, and everyday life in understanding labour politics. V. V. Giri, who was closely associated with the Indian labour movement, contributed substantially to discussions on trade unionism, industrial relations, and workers' welfare. His writings and public work provide useful perspectives on the development of organized labour and the institutional dimensions of workers' struggles in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a historical, descriptive, analytical, and comparative research methodology to examine the development and significance of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle. The historical method is used to trace the emergence of industrial labour, the growth of trade unions, major strikes, workers' organizations, and their participation in the national movement from the late nineteenth century to Indian independence in 1947. The study is primarily based on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include government records, labour department reports, factory reports, trade union documents, contemporary newspapers, journals, official publications, speeches, correspondence, and records relating to major labour organizations. These sources help reconstruct the activities of workers, trade unions, employers, and colonial authorities during the period.

Secondary sources include books, research articles, scholarly monographs, dissertations, biographies, and historical studies dealing with Indian labour history, industrialization, trade unionism, and the national movement. Works of historians and labour scholars are used to understand different interpretations of working-class mobilization and the relationship between labour struggles and nationalism. A descriptive approach is used to document the major labour organizations, strikes, protests, working conditions, and important developments in different industrial centres. An analytical approach is employed to examine the causes, nature, organization, leadership, objectives, and consequences of labour movements. The study also analyses the influence of economic exploitation, industrialization, political developments, nationalism, socialism, and trade unionism on workers' mobilization.

A comparative method is used to examine labour movements across different regions and industries, including textile, railway, plantation, mining, jute, and other sectors. Differences in workers' conditions, forms of organization, leadership, political affiliations, and responses to colonial policies are considered in order to identify both common patterns and regional variations. The study follows the principles of source criticism and historical interpretation. Primary and secondary sources are critically examined for their reliability, context, authorship, purpose, and possible limitations. Information from different sources is compared and cross-checked wherever possible. The methodology therefore seeks to provide a balanced historical understanding of the economic, social, organizational, and political dimensions of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Indian Freedom Struggle was a broad-based historical process in which different social and economic groups participated in varying ways. Among these groups, industrial workers and other labouring communities gradually emerged as an important force during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The expansion of modern industries under British colonial rule created a growing working class, but workers frequently experienced low wages, long working hours, poor working conditions, insecure employment, and inadequate welfare facilities. These conditions contributed to the emergence of labour organizations, strikes, and collective protests. The central problem of this study is to understand the origin, development, nature, and significance of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle. It seeks to examine how workers transformed their workplace grievances into organized collective action and how labour organizations developed in different industrial regions of colonial India.

Another important aspect of the problem is the relationship between economic struggles and nationalist politics. Workers participated in movements for better wages and working conditions, while sections of the working class also became involved in wider political campaigns against colonial rule. The extent, nature, and consequences of this interaction varied across regions, industries, organizations, and different phases of the national movement. The study also addresses the problem of understanding the growth of trade unionism and working-class consciousness. The formation of organizations such as the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920 provided a broader institutional framework for labour mobilization. However, labour organizations were influenced by different ideological and political currents, including nationalism, socialism, and communism. These differences affected their objectives, methods, leadership, and relationship with the wider freedom movement.

Regional and occupational diversity presents another significant research problem. Labour movements in textile industries, railways, plantations, mines, ports, and other sectors did not develop in identical ways. Similarly, the experiences of workers differed according to region, occupation, gender, caste, migration, and economic circumstances. Therefore, a comprehensive study must examine both the common features and the regional variations of labour activism. The study further seeks to examine the response of the colonial government and employers to labour organization and industrial protest. Government legislation, administrative measures, negotiations, restrictions, and repression influenced the development of labour movements. Understanding these responses is essential for assessing the changing relationship between workers, employers, trade unions, and the colonial state.

Thus, the problem of the present study is to examine how labour movements developed within colonial India's changing economic and political environment, how workers organized themselves, how their economic demands interacted with the national struggle, and what historical significance their

activities had for the development of trade unionism, workers' rights, and India's struggle for independence.

NEED OF THE STUDY

The study of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle is important for understanding the wider social and economic dimensions of India's struggle against colonial rule. The freedom movement was not confined to political leaders and constitutional organizations; workers, peasants, students, women, and other social groups also participated in different forms. Examining labour movements therefore helps present a broader understanding of popular participation in the national movement. The study is necessary to understand the emergence and development of the Indian working class under British colonial rule. The growth of textile mills, railways, plantations, mines, ports, and other industries transformed employment patterns and created new forms of wage labour. Studying these developments helps explain the economic and social circumstances that contributed to the formation of labour consciousness and collective organization.

Another important need is to examine the working and living conditions of labourers. Low wages, long working hours, occupational risks, inadequate housing, unemployment, and limited welfare measures affected workers in different industries. Understanding these conditions provides the background necessary for analysing the causes of strikes, protests, and the formation of trade unions. The study is also needed to understand the growth of trade unionism in India. The formation of organized labour associations and the establishment of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920 represented important developments in working-class organization. Examining these institutions helps explain how individual workplace grievances developed into collective demands and organized labour movements.

The relationship between labour movements and the national movement also requires systematic study. Sections of the working class participated in important phases of the freedom struggle, while at other times labour organizations concentrated primarily on economic and industrial issues. Studying this relationship helps identify the different forms and degrees of workers' political participation without treating the working class as a completely uniform group. The study is further necessary for examining the influence of nationalism, socialism, and communism on labour organizations. Different ideological perspectives shaped workers' demands, organizational structures, leadership patterns, and political activities. Understanding these influences provides insight into the diversity of labour politics during the colonial period.

A study of labour movements is also significant for understanding regional and industrial variations. Workers in Bombay's textile industry, Bengal's jute industry, railway services, plantations, mines, and other sectors experienced different economic and social conditions. Comparative examination of these movements helps identify both common features and distinctive regional patterns.

Finally, the study contributes to an understanding of the historical foundations of workers' rights and labour institutions in modern India. The struggles of workers and the development of trade union organizations influenced debates concerning wages, working hours, industrial relations, welfare, and social justice. A systematic study of these movements therefore provides an important perspective on India's political transformation, social change, and the development of organized labour.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Further research on labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle can examine the experiences of workers in greater regional and occupational detail. Comparative studies of labour movements in Bombay, Bengal, Madras, Punjab, Assam, and other regions may help identify differences in

organization, leadership, working conditions, and political participation. Future researchers may undertake detailed studies of women workers and their participation in labour organizations, strikes, and nationalist activities. Greater attention can also be given to the experiences of workers from different caste and community backgrounds and to the ways in which social identities influenced labour organization. The history of plantation, mine, railway, port, and agricultural labourers requires further investigation because existing studies have often concentrated more heavily on workers in major urban industries. Studies of these sectors can provide a broader understanding of the diversity of India's working population during colonial rule.

Further research may examine the relationship between trade unions and nationalist, socialist, and communist organizations. Such studies can explore how different political ideologies influenced workers' demands, organizational structures, leadership, and participation in the freedom movement. Researchers can also undertake detailed studies of individual labour leaders and trade union organizations, using biographies, correspondence, newspapers, union records, and contemporary government documents. This may provide greater insight into leadership patterns and organizational strategies.

The role of labour newspapers, pamphlets, journals, posters, and oral histories deserves greater attention. These sources can help reconstruct workers' own perspectives, political ideas, workplace experiences, and forms of collective action. Future studies may also examine the response of colonial authorities and industrial employers to strikes and trade union activities. Government legislation, police records, factory reports, court proceedings, and administrative correspondence can be used to study policies toward organized labour.

A comparative study of Indian labour movements and international working-class movements could further explain the influence of global developments, socialist ideas, and international trade union networks on Indian workers during the colonial period. Digital archives and historical databases can be used to preserve and analyse newspapers, government records, trade union documents, photographs, and other sources relating to labour history. Such research can make previously scattered evidence more accessible and facilitate quantitative and regional analysis.

Finally, future research should connect the history of colonial labour movements with the development of labour policies and trade union institutions after independence. Such a study can help trace the historical continuity and changes in workers' organizations, labour legislation, industrial relations, and workers' rights from the colonial period to independent India.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Scope of the Study

The present study focuses on the origin, development, nature, and significance of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle. It examines the emergence of the working class under colonial rule and the economic and social conditions that contributed to workers' collective organization. The study covers major industrial sectors such as textiles, railways, plantations, mines, jute, ports, and other organized industries. It considers the development of labour organizations and trade unions in important industrial centres including Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, and other regions.

The study examines major forms of labour activity, including strikes, demonstrations, protests, petitions, trade union organization, and collective bargaining. It also considers the establishment and development of organizations such as the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and the role of labour leaders in organizing workers. An important area of the study is the relationship between labour movements and the Indian national movement. Workers' participation in major phases of the freedom

struggle, including the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement, is examined in its historical context.

The study also considers the influence of nationalism, socialism, communism, and trade unionism on working-class organization. Regional and industrial variations are examined to understand the diverse nature of labour movements during the colonial period.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited primarily to the period of British colonial rule and the Indian Freedom Struggle, with particular emphasis on the development of organized labour from the late nineteenth century to 1947. Developments after independence are considered only where necessary to understand the historical consequences of the colonial labour movement. The availability and reliability of historical sources constitute an important limitation. Government records and employer documents may reflect official or institutional perspectives, while workers' own records and testimonies are comparatively limited for some periods and regions.

The study cannot provide equal coverage of every industry, region, occupation, or labour organization because labour movements developed unevenly across colonial India. Greater attention is therefore given to movements for which sufficient historical documentation is available. Another limitation is the diversity of the Indian working class. Workers differed according to region, occupation, gender, caste, community, migration status, and economic circumstances. Consequently, the experiences and political responses of one group cannot necessarily be generalized to all Indian workers. The study also relies substantially on existing historical scholarship and documentary evidence. Differences in historians' interpretations of the relationship between class struggle, trade unionism, and nationalism are therefore acknowledged and examined through comparison of available sources.

FINDINGS

The study finds that the emergence of labour movements in colonial India was closely associated with the growth of modern industries such as textile mills, railways, plantations, mines, jute factories, and ports. Industrialization created a growing wage-earning working class and introduced new forms of employment and industrial relations. The economic and social conditions of workers played an important role in the development of labour consciousness and collective organization. The findings indicate that Indian workers frequently experienced low wages, long working hours, unsafe or unsatisfactory working conditions, employment insecurity, and inadequate welfare facilities. These conditions contributed to the emergence of workplace grievances and collective protests. In the early stages, many labour protests were local and focused primarily on wages, working hours, employment conditions, and treatment by employers. With the development of organizational structures, these protests increasingly acquired a collective and organized character.

The study finds that the growth of trade unionism was an important development in the history of Indian labour. Trade unions provided workers with platforms through which they could express common demands, organize strikes and demonstrations, negotiate with employers, and develop collective identities. The establishment of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920 represented an important stage in the development of organized labour at the national level and provided a broader framework for coordination among sections of the working class. Labour movements developed in several major industrial centres, including Bombay, Calcutta, Ahmedabad, Madras, and Kanpur. Textile workers, railway workers, plantation labourers, miners, jute workers, and employees in other industries participated in different forms of

collective action. The findings show that the nature and intensity of labour activism differed according to region, industry, working conditions, leadership, and the degree of trade union organization.

The study also finds that labour movements acquired an increasing political dimension during the twentieth century. Sections of the working class participated in nationalist activities and, at various stages, connected their economic grievances with opposition to colonial rule. Workers participated in different phases of the national movement, although their participation was not uniform or continuous. Economic interests, local circumstances, political affiliations, and organizational structures influenced the extent and nature of workers' involvement. The findings further demonstrate that nationalism, socialism, and communism influenced different sections of the labour movement. These ideological currents contributed to debates concerning class organization, workers' economic interests, trade union strategies, and participation in the national movement. Consequently, Indian labour movements developed as diverse organizations rather than as a single unified movement with identical objectives.

The colonial government and industrial employers responded to labour activism through legislation, administrative measures, negotiations, restrictions, and, in some situations, repression. Government policies and labour legislation influenced the organization and activities of trade unions. At the same time, workers' collective action contributed to greater attention to questions of wages, working hours, industrial welfare, employment conditions, and workers' rights. The study finds that labour movements also contributed to the development of working-class consciousness and collective identity. Workers increasingly recognized the importance of collective organization in addressing common economic and social problems. However, workers were not a homogeneous social group, and their experiences were shaped by occupation, region, migration, gender, caste, community, and economic circumstances.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle reveals that the development of the working class was closely connected with the economic transformation brought about by colonial rule. The expansion of modern industries created new employment opportunities but also produced difficult working and living conditions for many labourers. Low wages, long working hours, employment insecurity, and limited welfare provisions contributed to dissatisfaction and encouraged workers to seek collective solutions to their problems. The development of labour movements demonstrates a gradual transition from individual grievances to organized collective action. Early protests were generally limited to particular workplaces or local issues, but the growth of industrial centres and worker organizations created conditions for wider mobilization. Strikes, demonstrations, petitions, and negotiations became important methods through which workers expressed their demands. The emergence of trade unions strengthened the organizational basis of these activities.

The establishment of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920 was an important development in this process. It provided a national platform through which different sections of organized labour could coordinate their activities and discuss common concerns. However, the labour movement remained diverse, and different unions and leaders followed different organizational and political approaches. This diversity reflected the complex social and political character of the Indian working class. The relationship between labour movements and the national movement was significant but complex. Sections of workers participated in nationalist campaigns and viewed colonial rule as an important part of the economic and political conditions affecting Indian society. At the same time, workers had specific economic demands concerning wages, working hours, employment security, and workplace conditions. Thus, labour activism

cannot be understood exclusively as either an economic movement or a nationalist movement; in many situations, economic and political concerns interacted with one another.

The discussion also highlights the influence of nationalism, socialism, and communism on labour politics. Nationalist organizations sought working-class participation in the broader struggle against colonial rule, while socialist and communist groups emphasized class organization and workers' economic interests. These different perspectives influenced trade union strategies, leadership, and political activities. Consequently, labour movements displayed considerable ideological diversity during the later colonial period. Regional differences were another important feature of labour movements. Industrial workers in Bombay's textile sector, Bengal's jute industry, railway services, plantations, mines, and other industries experienced different working conditions and developed distinct organizational traditions. Local leadership, industrial structure, migration patterns, community relationships, and regional political developments influenced the form and intensity of labour activism. Therefore, the history of Indian labour movements needs to be understood through both national developments and regional experiences.

The response of the colonial government and employers also shaped the course of labour movements. Labour activism was addressed through legislation, negotiations, administrative measures, restrictions, and repression at different times. While some labour legislation introduced regulations concerning industrial employment, workers continued to face significant challenges. The interaction between government policy, employer practices, trade union organization, and worker resistance influenced the evolution of industrial relations. The discussion further demonstrates that workers should not be viewed as a completely homogeneous group. Differences of occupation, region, gender, caste, migration, and community affected workers' experiences and their participation in labour organizations. Greater attention to these differences provides a more comprehensive understanding of the social history of the Indian working class.

CONCLUSION

Labour movements constituted an important component of the social, economic, and political history of the Indian Freedom Struggle. The development of modern industries under British colonial rule created a growing industrial working class, but workers frequently experienced low wages, long working hours, poor working conditions, employment insecurity, and inadequate welfare facilities. These circumstances encouraged workers to develop collective forms of resistance and organization. The labour movement gradually developed from localized workplace protests into more organized trade union activities. Workers used strikes, demonstrations, petitions, negotiations, and other forms of collective action to express their economic and social demands. The emergence of trade unions provided workers with an institutional framework for collective organization, while the establishment of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920 represented an important step toward national-level labour organization.

The relationship between labour movements and the national movement was significant but complex. Sections of workers participated in nationalist activities and major phases of the freedom struggle, while continuing to pursue their specific economic interests. Labour participation varied across regions, industries, organizations, and different periods. Therefore, the working class cannot be regarded as a completely unified political group during the entire freedom struggle. Nationalism, socialism, and communism influenced different sections of organized labour and contributed to debates about class interests, political participation, trade union organization, and the nature of the anti-colonial struggle. These ideological influences contributed to the diversity of labour politics and shaped the strategies adopted by different organizations and leaders.

Labour movements also played an important role in developing working-class consciousness and collective identity. Workers increasingly recognized the value of organization in addressing common workplace problems and demanding improved conditions. Their struggles contributed to wider discussions concerning wages, working hours, industrial welfare, employment conditions, trade union rights, and social justice. The history of labour movements also demonstrates the importance of regional and occupational diversity. Textile workers, railway workers, plantation labourers, miners, jute workers, and other groups experienced different conditions and developed different forms of organization. Gender, caste, migration, community, and regional circumstances further influenced workers' experiences and participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The history of labour movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle should be given greater importance in the study of modern Indian history. Academic curricula at schools, colleges, and universities can include greater coverage of workers' participation, trade union development, industrial protests, and the social conditions of labourers during colonial rule. Historical research should place greater emphasis on the experiences of ordinary workers rather than focusing exclusively on prominent political leaders and organizations. Workers' letters, autobiographical accounts, oral histories, contemporary newspapers, union records, and other worker-generated sources should be systematically collected and studied.

Greater attention should be given to women workers, plantation labourers, mine workers, railway workers, agricultural labourers, and workers in smaller industrial centres. This would provide a broader understanding of the diversity of labour experiences during the colonial period. Archives containing government records, factory reports, labour department documents, trade union records, newspapers, photographs, and pamphlets should be digitized, preserved, and made accessible to researchers. Digital preservation would facilitate comparative and interdisciplinary research on labour history.

Museums, universities, libraries, and historical institutions should organize exhibitions, seminars, workshops, and public lectures on the history of Indian labour movements. Such initiatives can increase awareness of workers' contributions to India's social and political transformation. Researchers should undertake more regional and industry-specific studies to identify differences in labour conditions, organizational structures, leadership, and political participation. Comparative research can provide a more comprehensive picture of labour movements across colonial India. Greater attention should also be given to the relationship between labour movements, nationalism, socialism, communism, and trade unionism. Different ideological perspectives should be examined through historical evidence so that the complexity of labour politics during the freedom struggle can be properly understood.

Historical studies should examine the development of colonial labour legislation and industrial relations and assess how government policies affected workers, employers, and trade unions. Such research can help explain the historical development of labour institutions in India. Interdisciplinary approaches combining history, sociology, economics, political science, and labour studies should be encouraged. Such approaches can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of working-class movements.

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