

TRADE UNION PRAXIS - 5  
(Towards a Sociology of Trade Unions)

PRAXIS OF DISALIENATION -  
WORKER ORGANIZATIONAL  
PROCESSES

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**(Towards a Sociology of Trade Unions)**

**PRAXIS OF DISALIENATION**  
**WORKER ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES**

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## TRADE UNION PRAXIS - 5

(Towards a Sociology of Trade Unions)

### 5.1 WORKER ORGANIZATION AND THE PRAXIS OF DISALIENATION

Trade Unions praxis is a dialectical struggle between opposite forces in contradiction-ridden totalities - the tension between the praxis of alienation and the praxis of disalienation given the mode of production and the relations of production. The praxis of alienation has been analyzed in terms of the alienating structures and processes of work organizations in the capitalist and socialist modes of production and also in terms of the modalities of the alienation of the working classes given the relations of production and relations in production.

The supersession of the praxis of alienation is possible only by the praxis of disalienation understood as the struggle of the working classes through representative trade unions. This is becoming evident even in socialist societies. The praxis of disalienation is therefore inextricably linked with the manner in which trade unions are defined and structured within the politico-economic totality, the kind of role played by worker organizations given the mode of production and relations of production, the character of worker participation in worker organizations, the political perspective of the workers and leaders of the working class movement and finally the methodology of action - reflection of the worker organizations. If the trade union is an instrument of the praxis of disalienation of the

working classes, to what extent is the worker organization and its activities an expression of as well as a solution for the class contradictions of the socio-economic formations as well as that of work organizations? If the trade union is a means for the transcendence of the praxis of alienation, to what extent does it pose a challenge to capital or the State? The question of whether trade unions contribute to the praxis of alienation or to the praxis of disalienation revolves around whether they are instruments of class collaboration or of class struggle, instruments of expropriation or instruments of emancipation of the working classes from the alienation of work organizational structures and processes.

The process of overcoming the alienation of the working classes therefore is linked with the modalities of the structure, processes and role played by the organizations of workers. Disalienation is also a function of the nature and degree of worker involvement in worker organizations although any evaluation of this phenomenon should be preceded by a politico-economic analysis of the role of trade unions in a given mode of production.

## 5.2 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO TRADE UNIONISM

It might be useful therefore to first embark on a review of theoretical and empirical contributions to the understanding of trade unions. Some of the important contributions have been referred to earlier in the discussion of industrial relations theories. Early religion-inspired trade union theories arose as

a protest against poverty and injustice and trade unions were viewed as the champions of the most disadvantaged. Social psychological approaches to trade unions project the view that trade unions are a kind of defence mechanism for workers to cope with stress and frustration. According to Perlman, workers lack entrepreneurial abilities and competitive capabilities and therefore settle for selling their labour for wages and in the process develop social instruments like trade unions as a means for self-defence<sup>1</sup>. Tannenbaum<sup>2</sup> draws attention to the breakdown of traditional institutions and values in the midst of the rapid progress of industrialization and the market economy resulting in social anomie and social stress among worker groups. Trade union organizations therefore become the means for the restoration of social integration amidst the social turbulence of industrialization. Worker participation in trade unions within this perspective becomes a means for satisfying the social and psychological needs and problems of workers in the context of a rapidly modernizing and a rapidly changing context.

Employer-employee relations have also been viewed as characterized by a conflict of interests. Trade unions in this view are initially held to be inimical to organizational interests but gradually become acceptable to the establishment as the realization spreads that through trade unions conflict also becomes institutionalized and therefore predictable and manageable. "For although the result of such organization was that an incipient strike could rapidly spread and last a long time, this was still more advantageous and economical for both

parties than were the many local quarrels, work stoppages and petty conflicts which could not be arrested in the absence of a strict organization of the employers and workers"<sup>3</sup>. Within this perspective, worker participation in trade unions is encouraged both by employers and worker leaders. However, such participation is viewed as a means for buttressing a policy of worker containment rather than one of worker emancipation.

Pluralists concede that trade unions have a pivotal role in industry and in society. However, the pluralist takes the view that trade unions should confine their activities to the work organization. The task of a trade union therefore is to organize workers for improving their working lives in work organizations. This task takes two forms - struggling for better wages and working conditions and also neutralizing employer power at the workplace. Worker participation in trade unions under the above perspective is therefore characterized by workplace economism and is motivated mainly by the thrust towards improving wages and working conditions.

The Syndicalist approach to trade unionism views trade unions as a means for establishing a new socialist order. Syndicalists advocate worker take over of enterprises and do not see any need for politicization of workers or for the political leadership of trade unions. Further, they suggest that workers themselves through their organizations should abolish capitalist management and introduce worker management of enterprises. Trade unions in this perspective not only become organizations of workers but also become organs of worker management of production



processes. Worker participation within this perspective not only becomes worker participation in trade unions but also becomes a means for the establishment of worker control of work organizations.

Marxist approaches to trade unions have been discussed earlier. The "pessimistic" approaches represented by Lenin and Trotsky see trade unions as appendages of a capitalist system. Lenin was convinced that trade unions could at best develop a kind of "trade union consciousness" characterized by sectarianism and economism. Trotsky while not advocating a total bypassing of trade unionism has said categorically that trade unions play a predominantly reactionary and not a progressive role.

Marx and Engels themselves had a different approach to trade unions. While they were keenly conscious of the limitations of trade unionism, they nevertheless did acknowledge that trade unions do pose a challenge to capital. However, within the Marxist perspective, worker participation in trade unions cannot be confined to mere "trade union consciousness" but will have to tend towards "social democratic" or "class" consciousness. Worker involvement in trade unions becomes a process of education in socialism. Unlike the Syndicalists, Marxists hold the view that trade unions per se cannot bring about politico-economic changes. Since trade unions are capable only of developing trade union consciousness, what is required is a linkage with a revolutionary party which has a clear political perspective. Worker participation in trade unions therefore becomes a

politico-economic process with the politicization and liberation of the working classes as a primary goal realizable only by linkages with a revolutionary party.

The praxis of disalienation through worker involvement in trade unions will therefore have to keep in mind the diverse approaches to the goals, structures, processes and limitations of trade unions given the socio-economic formation within which trade unions function. Several relevant questions can now be raised regarding worker participation in trade unions: What are the major theoretical approaches to the phenomenon? What is the structure, process and modalities of worker participation in trade unions? What are the indicators of worker participation in trade unions? What are the positive and negative forces impelling and impeding worker participation in a trade union? The answer to these questions will be sought by reviewing theoretical formulations and empirical examinations of worker participation in trade unions. The vital question in this exercise, of course, will be related to the nature and extent of the contribution of trade unions to the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production and thus to the praxis of alienation of the working classes given the general trend of the adoption of the capitalist mode of production in the Indian socio-economic formation.

Political sociology and its tradition of the theoretical formulations related to voluntary, democratic organizations can help as a first step in understanding the process of worker involvement in trade unions. Vall<sup>4</sup>, for instance, has pointed out



relatively few citizens are interested in the common good. Michels through participant observation came to the conclusion that only a dwindling minority participates in political decision-making. Political apathy is prevalent in all democracies and this is seen as the reason why democracy in large organizations ultimately ends in the oligarchic control of leaders. It was with this phenomenon in mind that Michels formulated his "iron law of oligarchy". Pareto concurred with Michels when he formulated his theory of the circulation of<sup>10</sup> elites: Organizations are ultimately controlled by oligarchs and the growth and decay of the organizations is seen to be the direct consequence of the fluctuations caused by the cyclical<sup>11</sup> rise and fall of the oligarchs. Mosca too noted with concern the oligarchic tendencies of large organizations committed to<sup>12</sup> democracy. Runciman analyzing the researches carried out by political sociologists concludes that democracies are in reality controlled by elites and oligarchs. This trend prompted Prof Duverger to redefine democracy as government "of the few, by the few, for the few" (quoted in Runciman). This school of thought had its exponents till the mid-twentieth century especially in<sup>13</sup> the works of Burnham who predicted that the oligarchic forces of the welfare state would annihilate the democratic parliamentary system. The impressionistic school with its theory of the oligarchic law of large organizations has certain research implications in the context of a microsociological analysis of worker participation in trade unions. If it is accepted that participation is an elite phenomenon, the logical conclusion is

to confine oneself to the study of the leadership of trade unions only. The trend in research related to union studies shows an implicit acceptance of the iron law of oligarchy considering the numerous studies of trade union leadership in India. Punekar and Madhuri<sup>14</sup> surveyed trade union leaders across several Indian states. Reindorp<sup>15</sup> studied trade union leaders in Bangalore. Kearney<sup>16</sup> conducted studies of the trade union leadership in Sri Lanka. There have been similar contributions from Giri<sup>17</sup>, Karnik<sup>18</sup>, Crouch<sup>19</sup> and Johri<sup>20</sup>.

From the dialectical perspective, if the formulations of the theoretical school are considered the "thesis" and the formulations of the impressionistic school are considered the "anti-thesis", then the findings of the empirical school can be termed the "synthesis". While the theoretical school defines democracy as total participation and the impressionistic school holds that democracy is governed by an iron law of oligarchy, the empirical school gives due weightage to both the leaders and the rank-and-file members in defining democracy. This school had its origins in the United States after World War-II. According to this school, democracy is a system of organized decision-making in which leaders are to some degree responsive to non-leaders and operate even with a low level of non-leader participation<sup>21</sup>. Empirical sociologists showed that democratic organizations in reality operate with oligarchs and active members helping each other in a balance of power by means of democratic rules. The empiricists introduced the definition of democracy as "polyarchy". "The polyarchic differs from the oligarchic in that

in addition to the powerful leaders and the passive membership, there is a third group, the active participants. By their two-way communication within the organization, (controlling from members to leaders and informing from leaders to members), they act as its democratic core .<sup>22</sup>

### 5.3 EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON TRADE UNION ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Extensive and intensive studies have been carried out in relation to the internal organization of worker organizations. Lipset's study of the ITU<sup>23</sup> prescribes a two-party system for the democratic functioning of any trade union. He has also provided tangible evidence to show that multiple links of the worker with the union leads to membership participation. Participation in the voluntary clubs organized within the broader framework of the union, participation in organized politics in the union and job benefits obtained through the union are the various strands which link the worker to the union. Lipset's view that the two-party system is essential for democracy in the worker organization is criticized by Ramaswamy<sup>24</sup> on the grounds that it was the printer-union links rather than a particular style of politics which led to union democracy. Cook<sup>25</sup> lists the conditions for union democracy : Separation of the executive, legislative and judicial functions; a genuine choice of candidates in elections made possible by rank-and-file accessibility to political skills, a representative government based on constituencies held together by common interests; a clear identification of the powers and responsibilities of leaders, special controls to check the acquisition of excessive

and unusual powers by leaders in charge of collective bargaining and effective channels of communication between the leaders and the rank-and-file. Allen sweeps aside the traditional approaches to union democracy and holds the view that unions are instrumental collectivities. Schumpeter supported by Runciman say that democracy consists not in the absence of an elite leadership but democratic procedures for electing a leadership which gives them the power to decide. Ramaswamy has pointed out that multiple links between the union and the worker lie behind membership involvement in the union. He lists work-related interests, inter-union hostility, political involvement of members and to a lesser extent the pattern of leadership as the multiple links binding the worker to the union studied.

The theoretical formulations and the empirical studies outlined above have one common thread running through - there can be no organization without membership involvement, there can be no trade union without worker participation. It is the importance of this factor which accounts for the widespread interest and puzzled concern shown by trade union researchers in the almost universal phenomenon of membership indifference to the trade union. If the trade union is pivotal to the well being of the workers and if membership involvement is vital to the worker organization, why is there widespread rank-and-file membership apathy to unions?

The Webbs had this to say : "Only in the crisis of some great disputes do we find the branch meetings crowded or the votes at all commensurate with the total number of the members.

At other times the trade union appears to the bulk of its members either as a political organization whose dictates they are ready to obey at Parliamentary and other elections, or as a mere benefit club in the management of which they do not desire to take part". Lipset, Trow and Coleman affirm the fact of mass apathy and oligarchy and hold the view that this has been the feature of trade unions. Goldstein in his study of the Transport and General Workers Union in Britain demonstrated that there is a high degree of membership apathy. Vall gives instances from trade union studies in Denmark, Norway, Germany, Austria, France, Netherland and the United States to illustrate the widespread prevalence of membership apathy to trade unions. As indicators of apathy, Vall not only mentions non-attendance at meetings but also membership turnover and unofficial strikes.

The theoretical and empirical review carried out so far is relevant to the present discussion because it has not only helped in emphasizing that membership involvement is vital to the functioning of trade unions but has also highlighted some of the conditions identified by researchers as being conducive to the democratic functioning of worker organizations. It has therefore been established that the degree and nature of membership involvement is indispensable because "membership involvement is of critical importance for democratic union organization irrespective of how it is defined".

The next important question in this section relates to the positive and negative forces which impel or impede worker participation in a trade union. Previous studies have shown that



there are several external forces inducing or inhibiting worker participation in a trade union. Employer hostility is an important factor in inducing worker participation in a worker organization. "In the initial stages of organization workers usually meet with stiff employer resistance. Far from stifling the union, employer hostility may actually drive the worker closer to his organization"<sup>35</sup>. Whenever there is worker acceptance of employer paternalism or worker belief in the productivity of the company in a competitive environment, unions elicit low response from workers. Abegglen<sup>36</sup> in his study of the Japanese factory points out that the worker's close ties with the company renders the union irrelevant.

Once employer hostility, when and where it exists, is reduced, the union becomes for the member a means for resolving some job-related problem if and when it arises. This is what Allen<sup>37</sup> refers to when he defines unions as "instrumental collectivities"<sup>38</sup> while Goldthorpe and Lockwood refer to the same phenomenon as "instrumental orientation". This is the kind of unionism which Lenin referred to as characterized by trade union consciousness. Needless to say such "economic" trade unionism cannot induce sustained labour involvement in unions. "Strong, cohesive group behaviour in non-crisis conditions probably must be built on something other than on an appeal to individual self-interest"<sup>40</sup>.

Ideological unionism has also been found to elicit sustained and committed membership involvement in unions.<sup>41</sup> Davis holds the

view that class conscious workers make the best unionists.  
42  
Seidman has shown that members with leftist leanings are highly participative. Such committed unionists in Lenin's words are 43 those who are characterized by social democratic consciousness .

Multiple and political unionism have been subjected to  
44-54 55  
considerable analysis . Even as early as 1898 , the Webbs had this to say about trade unionism in England : "It is no exaggeration to say that the competition between overlapping unions is to be attributed nine-tenths of the ineffectiveness of the trade union world". However, Ramaswamy made a significant contribution in relation to multiple unionism when he said, "The conflict between competing unions is generally thought of as being purely dysfunctional. The existence of rival unions does weaken bargaining capacity of labour and throws many hurdles in the path of well-meaning unions. But interunion conflict is also a factor which contributes to the stepping up of union activity. This is so transparent as to be perceived by even ordinary workers. A single union plant is almost certain to have a low  
56  
level of union activity .

At this point it might be relevant to consider the views of the advocates of both politically neutral and politically committed trade unions. Giri (1958) has been an ardent advocate of non-political trade unionism and his views can be taken as the position adopted by supporters of politically neutral trade unionism. "It is time that workers realize that party politics are completely out of place in trade unions, that they should not play the role of pawns in the game of party politics, and that

their organizations are concerned first and last with their  
interest and welfare"<sup>57</sup>. Giri attributes the lack of genuine  
trade union leadership to the political affiliation of trade  
unions : "The existence of various political parties having an  
immediate interest in the working class, at times for purely  
political purposes, has resulted in the absence of genuine trade  
union leadership"<sup>58</sup>. However, he does grant that the political  
party leadership does contribute to the growth of the trade union  
movement during the freedom struggle : "In fact, in this country  
politicians have played a greater part in organizing trade unions  
than elsewhere. This is due to the fact that India till  
lately was a subject country dominated by a foreign government  
and everyone..... had one thing in common, namely, the desire  
to fight unitedly the foreign government on all fronts for  
securing political independence"<sup>59</sup>.

Yet another sample of this school of thought is to be found  
in the writings of Agarwal :<sup>60</sup> "Political unionism has had serious  
impact on the growth and development of trade unionism over the  
last half a century. Its most important consequence has been the  
fragmentation of trade union structure..... The result has been  
the multiplicity of unions at all levels..... Rival unionism has  
had its consequences on member loyalty, Union management  
relationships and state policy..... Another baneful effect  
of political unionism has been that political leaders have not  
encouraged, if not actually prevented the development of worker  
leadership"<sup>61</sup>. Similar views have been expressed by Karnik and  
Punekar.<sup>62</sup>

However, the working class movement in both the developed and the developing world has had close political links. Even the American trade unions often quoted as an example for non-political unionism have consistently supported the candidates belonging to the Democratic Party in Presidential elections. It is this empirical reality which inspired the industrial relations specialist Flanders to write, "Trade unions must be involved in politics in order to establish and maintain the legal and economic conditions in which they flourish..... It makes the term "non-political unionism" taken literally, a nonsensical description; there is no such animal" .

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An important Indian empirical contribution to the understanding of the problems of the relationship between politics and trade unions is the empirical research conducted among unions organizing workers in the Coimbatore textile industries by Ramaswamy (1977) : "Political affiliation then provides the Textile Worker's unions with a committed and a steady membership whose identification is over and above that necessitated by the fulfilment of job interest....." . Again, he says, "the multiple ties binding the partymen make them a cohesive group which can act in concert" . It was Ramaswamy again who pointed out that political affiliation of unions is not confined to the union leadership alone but percolates to the rank-and-file membership .

The views presented above related to political neutrality and organized labour can be summarized as follows:

1. The relationship of politics to organized labour has its roots in the freedom struggle.
2. Trade unions should not now have any links with party politics as this leads to the multiplicity of unions.
3. Trade unions should concern themselves with workers interests and welfare.
4. Continued dominance of trade unions by political party leadership stifles the development of genuine trade union leadership.

Further, if at all workers stand to gain from political affiliation, empirical realities suggest that:

1. Politically affiliated workers provide a steady and committed membership for the unions.
2. Politically affiliated workers provide cohesiveness in the Union.
3. Political affiliation is no longer confined to external leadership only but trickles down even to the rank-and-file membership thus providing the unions with a committed core group.

Nevertheless, the above approaches to the relationship between politics and organized labour can at best be termed as an

advocacy of "trade union consciousness" if we were to go by  
67  
Lenin's approach to the phenomenon . Whether trade unions  
profess apparent political neutrality or even if trade unions  
affiliate themselves to political parties to pursue the limited  
goals of protecting or furthering the worker's economic and  
political interests, such workers and such unions have only  
attained "trade union consciousness". Marx describes this  
approach in his own way : "Trade unions work well as centres of  
resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail  
partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail  
generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the  
effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying  
to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever  
for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say,  
68  
the ultimate abolition of the wages system" . Trade unions have  
to work towards the protection and promotion of worker's  
interests but they should go beyond to the establishment of a  
more humans system in which the very system of wage labour will  
be abolished. Working for the improvement of the working class is  
an expression of trade union consciousness whereas working for  
the abolition of the system of wage labour is an expression of  
working class consciousness. "If the first aim of resistance was  
merely the maintenance of wages, combinations, at first isolated,  
constitute themselves into groups as the capitalists in their  
turn unite for the purpose of repression. Once it has reached  
this point, association takes on a political character. ....

69  
The struggle of class against class is a political struggle..."  
The above passage once again clearly states that the struggle of

workers with capitalists for better conditions is a trade union struggle whereas the struggle for a society in which wage labour and the class system no longer exists is a political struggle.

Lenin argues in a similar vein in his article 'What is to be done' in which he draws a firm line of demarcation between the nature and characteristics of "trade union consciousness" and "social democratic consciousness". "Social democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich. Hence, it follows that not only must Social-Democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but they must not allow the organization of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities. We must take up actively the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness" <sup>70</sup>. It is clear again that social democratic consciousness goes beyond making cosmetic changes in the system to a radical change of the system of wage labour itself. Some social analysis of his time tried to equate social democratic consciousness with the economic struggles of the working class by attempting to make out that the economic struggle itself has a political character. Lenin attacked this concept with great vigour: "Lending the economic struggle itself a political character means, therefore, striving to secure satisfaction of these trade demands, the improvement of working conditions in each separate trade by means of legislative and administrative measures". This according to Lenin, "serves as a

screen to conceal what is in fact the traditional striving to degrade social-democratic politics to the level of trade union politics" .  
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Political commitment of the working class, in the Marxist-Leninist sense, therefore, does not merely mean struggling with the employer for better conditions for the working class but goes beyond to the radical transformation of the system in the direction of the very abolition of the system of wage labour.

The history of the working class movement alluded to earlier shows that there is a close relationship between politics and organized labour. An analysis of the theoretical approaches to the relationship between politics and organized labour has shown the various nuances of meaning given to this relationship:

1. Trade unions should be politically neutral meaning that trade unions should be independent of the ideologies, policies and programmes of any political party and strive only for the protection and improvement of the conditions of the working class.
2. Trade unions should be affiliated to political parties because only then trade unions will have a steady and committed core group to achieve the goals of trade unions.
3. The economic struggle of the trade unions should be given a political character through a power struggle with employers and governments for the purpose of extracting legislative and administrative measures in order to improve the condition of the working class.



4. The economic struggle, however, viewed, is only an expression of trade union consciousness whereas what the working class should develop is a social democratic consciousness which could impel the working class in the direction of a political struggle for the very abolition of the system of wage labour. This is possible only by the identification of the working classes with a political party.

Thus far some of the external forces impelling the worker to participate in worker organizations as evident from various studies have been enumerated. There are also intrinsic motives operating in a worker's decision to join a union. Vall<sup>72</sup> lists these motives under two categories: Egocentric motives which include avoidance of personal problems at work, securing individual benefits, securing benefits outside the work environment, securing personal information and advice, to secure prestige; sociocentric motives which include joining the union under the influence of parents, follow workers, wife, superior, friends and so on.

There are also two schools of thought about why a worker participates in a working organization. The theorists known as the "revisionist theoreticians" hold the view that it is not the most deeply frustrated who join unions and take part in union activities. "Instead of being frustrated and alienated, the modern trade union participant is more satisfied and integrated into society". Lane<sup>73</sup> has said: "People who are satisfied with<sup>74</sup>

their communities and feel integrated in their community life are more active in politics than those who do not: Integration, not alienation, forms the basis of most political motivation in the model non-crisis politics". Tannenbaum<sup>75</sup>, comes to the same conclusions in his review of research on trade union participants.

Yet another school of thought related to this issue is the Marxist school of thought elements of which are found in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.<sup>76</sup> In the view of this school, it is alienation which ultimately leads to the formation of worker organizations. Alienated from the work organization, the theory runs as follows: after the exploited..... workers have entered into conflict with the employer ..... the collisions between individual workers and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collision between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations against the bourgeoisie"<sup>77</sup>. The alienation theory of worker participation in trade unions in psychological terms can be referred to as the frustration-aggression theory of trade union participation. There are several empirical studies<sup>78-80</sup> to support the revisionist hypothesis whereas empirical studies on the latter hypothesis are practically non-existent.

The review of studies related to worker participation in trade unions has affirmed the vital role played by membership involvement in giving life and energy to the worker organization.

An attempt has also been made to identify the various positive and negative forces which impel or impede worker participation in trade unions.

Such efforts have been directed at evolving a typology of worker participation in trade unions by analyzing the correlates of worker participation in a trade union. Family Type, Marital Status, Age, Caste, Religion, Linguistic background, nature of job, work experience, job satisfaction, income, indebtedness, possessions, health, social participation, political affiliation, length of membership in union and status in union . It has been found for instance that the smaller the plant size and the more stable the work force, the higher is the participation in the union . Jobs which facilitate wider contact with workers seems to encourage union participation . It has also been found that participation in unions is higher among workers with relatively higher pay and status . In terms of community of origin, those from urban backgrounds are found to be more active in unions . The ideological unionist is found to be more participative in unions .

There is a statistical association between the extent of off-job contacts with fellow workers and attendance at union meetings . Those with union family background also tend to be active . The "deprived" groups in society also respond well to unions . Relationships with prounion friends and leaders encourage union participation while relationships with superiors and anti-union friends decreases participation in unions .

Workers who experience job satisfaction tend to participate actively in unions . Those with higher achievement motivation also participate more in unions . For most active unionists, the unions itself becomes a leisure time activity .

When it comes to the question of indicators for assessing worker participation in trade unions, there is little agreement on the content of the index. The content is generally dictated by the theoretical and empirical exigencies of a particular study. "Indexes of trade union participation vary although holding an union office, serving on a committee and attendance meetings are commonly used; other criteria include voting in union elections, reading union literature and using the grievance procedure" .

An evaluation of the studies related to worker participation in trade unions throws up certain issues for critical reflection:

1. Most of the studies have revolved around what is participation, why workers participate in trade unions, who participates the socio-cultural and technological correlates of worker participation in trade unions.
2. Worker participation in trade unions is viewed as an isolated phenomenon independent of the work organization and its environment.
3. The preoccupation appears to be related to the question of whether worker participation in trade unions is democratic or oligarchic.

4. There is also a tendency to define participation only in terms of intra-organizational decision-making.
5. There is generally a denigration of political unionism and ideological unionism. Except in stray cases, the trend is to advocate politically neutral and establishment-oriented unionism. This trend largely ignores the empirical reality of management government - ruling party- union links as a reaction to which the party links of other trade unions become a structural necessity.
6. Most of the studies of trade unions are ahistorical in their approach. Trade unions have been viewed in isolation from the mechanics as well as the dynamics of the logic of history. An effort to analyze trade unions in the context of the evolution of society from feudalism to capitalism to socialism appears to be non-existent.
7. It follows also that most of the studies are apolitical. The analysis of trade unions has not been located within a politico-economic definition of society. Trade unions have not been located within the framework of the prevailing mode of production, relations of production and production relations.

However, it must be admitted that the modalities of worker participation in trade unions form the basis of the praxis of disalienation of the working classes. Not only is it necessary to conceptualize the modalities of worker participation in trade

unions but is also necessary to carry out this exercise within the framework of viewing worker participation in trade unions as the essence of the praxis of disalienation.

Worker participation in a trade union can be viewed as a function of the "involvement" of the worker and the "praxis" of his organizational involvement. The "involvement" of the worker in the worker organization can be gauged by his level of minimum organizational participation, cognitive - effective participation and the reinforcement involved in the process of participation. The minimum level of participation, whether he has aspired to or assumed office in the union, whether he strives to maintain the image of his union. Cognitive - affective participation is the degree to which the worker is mentally and emotionally convinced of the potency of the worker organization. Reinforcement, both positive and negative, is experienced by the worker in the process of his involvement either intensifying his participation or dissuading him from further involvement.

The "praxis" of the worker's trade union involvement is a function of the worker's participation in the reflection processes in the organization, the worker's participation in the decision-making processes and the worker's participation in the action processes of the trade union. The dialectic between critical reflection and transforming action is the essence of the struggle of the working classes to bring about change both in the work organization in the short term and transformation of the socio-economic formation when conditions are right for such a change.

Thus worker's participation in trade unions can be gauged on the following dimensions:

1. Minimum Organizational Participation: This refers to the question of whether the member meets minimum requirements like regular payment of union dues, regular attendance at ordinary and extraordinary meetings, efforts taken to maintain and increase union membership.

2. Participation in Reflection Processes: This refers to the level of participation in the reflection processes in the union as evidenced by attendance at Gate Meetings and rallies, attendance at training sessions, reading of union publications, discussions with union leaders, informal discussions among members.

3. Participation in Decision-Making Processes: This refers to the level of participation in the formulation of union policies, procedures and programmes.

4. Participation in Action Processes: This refers to participation in various forms of union actions in the working class struggle.

5. Cognitive - Affective Participation: This refers to the extent of intellectual and emotional involvement in the union and the nature of this involvement understood as his belief in what the union can achieve for the working classes.

6. Reinforced Participation: This refers to the worker's response to the various positive and negative reinforcements which he experiences in the course of his involvement in the trade union in the course of its struggles.

7. Participation in Political Processes: This refers to whether the worker perceives himself as an actor in a larger political process, whether the worker is politicized, whether the worker is committed to any political party or to a party committed to a left ideology, whether the worker is characterized by trade union consciousness or social democratic consciousness, whether he has a politico-economic perspective in analyzing organizational and societal issues.

#### 5.4 THE PRAXIS OF DISALIENATION

Worker participation in trade unions therefore is neither ahistorical nor apolitical. The phenomenon therefore has to be viewed from a historical perspective understood as the evolution of socio-economic formations. The phenomenon has also to be viewed from a political perspective in the sense that both the modalities of trade unions as well as the modalities of worker participation in trade unions are part of a larger political process of a class struggle between those who control the relations of production and relations in production and those who sell their labour for wages.

The structures and processes in work organizations analyzed earlier which constitute the immediate context for worker



participation in trade unions are also an inalienable part of the political process of a class struggle in antagonistic socio-economic formations. A whole new perspective on the relationship between work organizations and trade unions emerges when viewed from the point of view of the mode of production and relations of production.

The industrial relations framework of work organizations as well as trade unions takes on a totally different character when analysed in relation to the dominant mode of production. Industrial relations as we have seen earlier becomes a complex of concepts, procedures and techniques oriented to the control of work processes and work relations in order to further the interests of a given mode of production and relations of production.

The analysis of trade union studies also shows that the potential of trade unions to contribute to the praxis of alienation of the working classes depends not only on its role as a protector and preserver of the democratic rights of labour but also depends on the extent of democratization of intra union processes.

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