



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION THROUGH THIRD GENERATION WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS: PROSPECTS AND POTENTIALS

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Abstract

There has been 'a progression and regression effect' on trade unions and workers organizations over past 5-7 years. 'Organization of the unorganized' is a milestone progression. Unionization of agricultural workers, artificial gem cutters, quarry workers etc in Tamilnadu are examples for these progression trends. Outcomes such as formation of a Board for the un-organized workers by the Government in Tamilnadu and involvement of ILO in bonded labor concerns are indicators for taking this progression, forward. On the other hand, the key areas of recession related to rights of workers are many and the paper discusses them in detail. The proposition of 'third generation workers organizations' is an option for balancing the progression and recession trends. The first step is to categorize unorganized work sectors that have initiated the process of getting organized. The second step is identifying issues, which can form the primary base for the re organization process. The third step is to identify the root causes for

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'anti worker' conditions such as compulsory labor and decent work deficit, which is now prevalent in the system. This would form the secondary base for the organization. The proposition of third generation workers organization is an integrated developmental process. It is not a single activity governed by 'One cause and one solution'. It is located in the total development context of the community. 'Anti worker' conditions such as deficit in decent work, bondedness including child labor etc are symptoms of failure of the larger systems. Structural defaults produce these manifestations. They are not the problems in themselves. Causes are multiple. Treatment of the causes should be integrated and based on the 'total system treatment' approach.

1. What is community organization?

Community is a geographical situation where individuals live in their social, economic, political and cultural grouping. The grouping is contributed by two systems in the community. One, the basic social institution of family. The family is the basic unit of the Indian community. Two, the grouping of individuals / families that takes place through an ' Organization ' process. The constituent for the organization could be economic, social, political or cultural. The main ingredient for the process of organization is the common interest that can be the binding force for the organization process. The interest could be positive, such as an incentive, recognition or quality / quantity benefit - material or non-material. Or, negative - such as a common threat or danger to the members of that respective group.

Any community has a number of organizational forces acting on its members. In some cases these forces manifest in the form of formalized organizational structures expressed through forms such as name, legal identity, membership criteria etc.

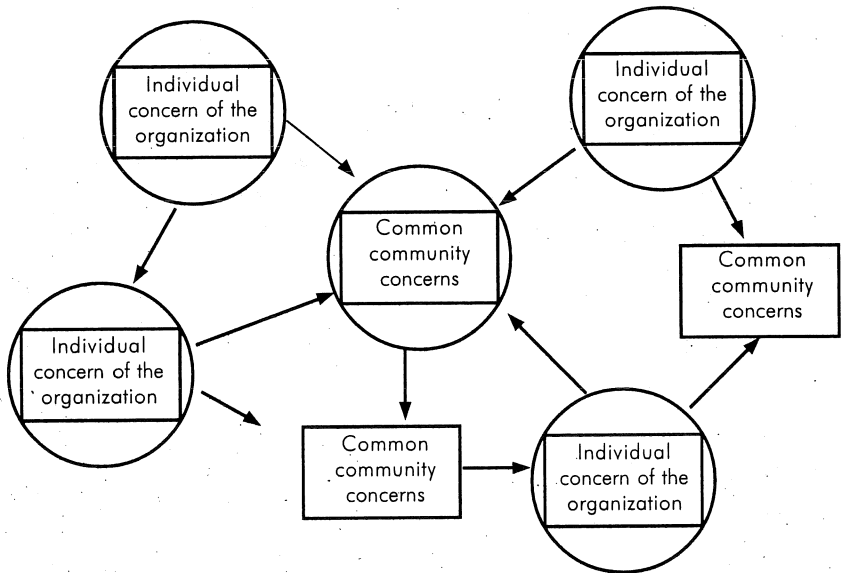
In most of the other instances the organization forces are informal, unseen but active. The organization forces and forms have context specific interaction with one another.

The structural context of India is caste /class based. Consequently, the organization process and forms in the community are affiliated to their caste / class rooting.

2. The matrix of organization processes and forms in the Indian structural context:

Caste			Class
Cultural	Social	Political	Economic
'Bajana mandalis', Prayer groups, Festival / deity/ faith based groups. Games and sports associations.Theatre and art groups	Caste associations. Neighborhood associations. Welfare and charity groups.	Political parties. Issue or ideology based movements.	Trade unions. Workers associations.

- Membership in organizations is overlapping. For example an individual / family in the community will have membership in political party, caste association and a faith group. But the membership in each is context specific and subjective. Because of this, no organization is a constant. But, is a force in the community that is variable with time and context.
- Organization process and form work in alliances with one another. For example, on the issue of local Panchayat elections, the political party organization and caste association may form alliance. Or, on the issue of accessing a drinking water well for the village, the workers association in the village may form alliance with a neighborhood group. A community is a situation of multiple interactions of its different organization processes and forms.



3. Why are organizations necessary for a community?

- Organizations are primarily necessary for binding the individuals /families in a geographical situation through the medium of commonality.
- Secondly, the interest or threat that binds the respective group has two categories of concerns. One, the set of concerns that are related to the members of the group. Two, the spread of the concern of the group extending into a concern of the community at large. For example, the organization force for a Dalit group in a village may be the need of drinking water supply for the members of the group. The need for more water for agriculture in the small farmers group in the same village will ultimately consolidate into the concern of depleting water situation in the total village.

The inter- linkage of concerns is mutual, and interdependent. In a community where the different organization processes and forms are strong and functional the scope for common community concerns being identified and addressed is higher. The weakening of organization processes and forms in a community, on the other hand, has a direct implication on the extent of common community concerns being identified, acknowledged and addressed.

4. Trends and directions of the organization processes and forms in the community - subsequent to the macro changes of 90s.

The dawn of 90s heralded the coming in of macro changes in India. Economic liberalization and structural adjustment program came into their full manifestations during mid 90s.

One significant change that these macro changes brought on the organization process and forms in communities is the distinction and demarcation between the caste based organizations and, those affiliated to class. The line dividing the two became distinct. While the interaction between the caste related organizations became more and stronger, the economy-based organizations became fairly isolated and weak. For example, in the Southern States of India, a number of caste based organizations have become political parties over the past 3-5 years. A number of 'faith associations' have formalized their identity and structure and, made political affiliations with political parties and /or peoples movements.

One of the major outcomes of the economic liberalization process on the individual / family is the increased need for identity through caste and caste related organizations. This much needed identity for the individual / family was hitherto provided by a combination of caste / class. The most significant outcome of economic liberalization is the reformulation of the class perspectives of the community.

Some mile stone changes in the class perspective are as follows:

- 'Consumer class' becomes the main class identity in the community. The identity of the individual / family being decided the capacity to support the market by being a continuous buyer.

- Weakening of the 'middle class' identity. The individual / family in the middle being necessitated to take the option of 'either going up' or 'coming down'!

5. The progression and regression of trade unions and workers organizations over past 5-7 years.

The areas of progression made by the trade unions are as follows:

- Transition in the perspectives of Unionization. The first generation trade unions had two major agendas. One, negotiation on wage. Two, redressing grievance of members. The norm for interaction with the management was one of confrontation. The transition during the recent past was to the second-generation trade unions with additional characteristics such as negotiation for worker participation in management, concerns related to occupational health, environmental and ecological concerns etc. This transition however, is at the level of few role models. The replicability of the model is very restricted.
- At the side of the workers associations, the unionization of workers from the unorganized sector has been a significant milestone in progression. Unionization of agricultural workers and workers from the other sectors such as artificial gem cutting in Tamilnadu are examples for this progression trends.
- The formation of the Board for the workers from un-organized sectors in Tamilnadu is a encouraging support to the unionization process.
- The increased involvement of ILO in India is yet another dimension in the rights of workers. Child labor eradication has been taken up as a priority intervention in high-density child labor areas such as the match industry in Tamilnadu, with the resource partnership of ILO.
- Identification of bonded labor, release and rehabilitation is the next pioneering action in the area of restoring workers rights, which happened over the recent past.

Areas of recession

The areas of recession related to the rights and interest of workers in general, has been predominantly through 'accompany effect' of the market economy process in India.

Some of the key areas that contribute to a process of recession are:

- Change in the wage system. From wage to piece rate in all sectors including agriculture.
- Unethical wage practices in the name of cost reduction

- Large scale change from employment to contract labor
- Dis-empowering labor practices such as advance on payments , credit etc
- Supply over demand in labor, eliminating the scope for negotiation on wage
- Displacement of labor through modernization and high tech
- Co-option of unions in the organized sector as part of management
- Exclusive labor availability for women with conditions of un and under payment
- Absolutely minimal employer - employee interaction. Introduction of multiple intermediaries under the policy of outsourcing by the management

In the larger interest of community as the main identity of the social system, it is important to identify the factors that need strengthening to sustain its basic characteristics and purpose. As analyzed earlier, while there is a polarization of the caste based organizations in the community, the recession trend on the side of class based organization is phenomenal. This imbalance has contributed to a severe weakening in the form and structure of the community per se. The sense of ownership of the individual / family to the community has drastically reduced. Common community concerns have been orphaned.

6. The process of creating the third generation workers organizations:

The first step towards creating the third generation workers organization is to categorize the worker sectors in the sectors which are in the process of getting organized

Agriculture and land based	Non agricultural production sector	Domestic and home based work	Employment	Service sector	Trading and vending
Own lands Small holdings	Artificial gems Brick making	Domestic work- unpaid	Trainee/ temporary/ permanent/ contract	With in village / neighboring towns	Essentials/ Utilities/ Consumer items
Poor quality Low productivity	Quarries Construction	Domestic work- paid	Public / Private sector	Shop and trade establishments	Manufacture/ retailing
Wage labor Regular/ Casual/ Seasonal	Head load workers	Domestic work + wage labor Full time/ Part time/ Seasonal	Local factories, production	Transport Service helpers	Individual/ familygroup

Contract/ piece rate labor	Helpers in manual work	Domestic work + income supple- mentation	units, mills, ancillaries	Sex work	
Lease/ share cropping	Individual/ family Group	Full time/ Part time Seasonal	Individual/ group	Technical services	
Individual/ family farm labor	Regular/ Seasonal/Part time/Casual	Case based work Burial of dead, night soil removal	Self employment		
Plantation labor			Part time Full time Seasonal		

- The above sectors of work have an element of forced and compulsory labor inbuilt into them. This is through 'unfriendly worker systems' such as advances on payment and other non-economic causes such as traditional sectors of work, work related to caste, gender stereotype in work etc
- In the above sectors, the concept of work per se is very restricted. Only activity that brings in external payment of wages is perceived as work. For example, Domestic work by women is not calculated as work.
- Self-employment is not perceived as part of employment. Much needed systems such as calculation of wage and accountability for targets are ad hoc and subjective.

7. Issues related to work and workers in the above sectors of work

The second step of promoting the third generation workers organization is identifying issues, which can form the primary base for the organization process.

Lack of knowledge and skill	Lack of labor inspection	Wage related issues	Poor continuity and assured work	Absence of fair trade practices
Low qualifying academic education	Absence of legal identity of employer- employee	Cheating in work-wage calculations Absence on negotiation on wage	Seasonal migration for work (outward)	Monopoly of trade /business Binamy ownership s and 'ghost'

<p>Low access to skills up gradation</p> <p>Lack of alternate skills</p> <p>Lack of support skills</p>	<p>Dominant presence of middle men</p> <p>No safety in hazardous work</p> <p>Sexual harassment in work</p> <p>Lack of basic facilities / entitlements</p> <p>Night work for women and children</p> <p>Gender stereo type in work</p> <p>Different forms and intensities</p>	<p>Under/un paid work. Adjustments against expenses</p> <p>Payment of wages in travens. shops, 'shandys', market</p> <p>Payment through middle men</p> <p>Payment of women to men in family</p> <p>Adjust-ment against advance. Debt bondage. Interest calculations on advance.</p> <p>Wage payment in kindPoor quality/non standardized measurements</p> <p>Contract/ piece rate payment system</p> <p>Lower wage for woman. Sexual favor for payment.</p> <p>Irregular payments. Not full payment. No payments in time</p>	<p>Seasonal migration into the community (inward)</p> <p>Poor living conditions on migration.</p> <p>Excess work</p> <p>Unethical and unlawful work</p> <p>Habits in labor camps. Alcoholism,STD, AIDS</p> <p>Exploitation and alienation by the local community</p> <p>Break up of families. Ad hoc families. Extra marital relationships, desertion of children</p>	<p>ownership s of enterprises</p> <p>Caste based production systems and economic processes</p> <p>Size feasibility</p> <p>Unethical trade practices</p> <p>Unregulated profit margins</p>
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8. Causes for forced and compulsory labor and decent work deficit

The third step is to identify the root causes for the conditions of compulsory labor and decent work deficit, which is now prevalent in the ongoing system. This would form the secondary base for the organization.

Economic	Social	Cultural	Political
Deficit between expenditure and income. Increasing indebtedness Landlessness. Alienation of land. Poor productivity from land. Drought Poor support systems for agriculture and land based productivity Rural-Urban divide. Disproportionate investment, infrastructure and growth Displacement because of mechanization and hi tech Poor access to institutional credit. Dependency on non institutional credit Caste controlled economy Supply over demand of work force	Caste discrimination Caste - work/ occupation linked traditionality Break down of the nuclear family system Gender stereo type in work	'Karma'. Religious believes Community - family- individual order of social identity. Poor drive in Individual Self - family - community relationships Caste based culture for economy Dalits: Wage earning Tribals: Self consumption Middle castes: Investment and entrepreneurship Dowry, Consanguinous marriage system Patriarchy Early/child marriage Population	Unplanned and unregulated growth effect of globalization 'Maintain the on going' policy of the Government. 'Fire fighting approach' Poor application of legislations Subjective interpretation of issues related to labor Bonded labor, Forced and compulsory labor and child labor External fund driven relief and rehabilitation of Bonded labor, Forced and compulsory labor and child labor Weak priority for prevention Wrong and deficient models for release and rehabilitation of Bonded labor, Forced and compulsory labor and child labor Caste linked work and job opportunities Co option and corporatization of TUs Political de-stating.. De democratization. Absence of 'right' and 'left' ethics in politics Alliance between TUs and Political parties for non trade / member interests

9. A developmental matrix incorporating the causes, issues and possible remedies for the promotion of third generation workers organizations to address deficit in decent work and prevention of Forced and compulsory labor.

Org- anization	Demo- cratization and local govern- ance	Agriculture and land develop- ment	Livelihood alternatives	Legal intervention	Institutional services	Release and rehab of BL,CL	Campaigns, advocacy and lobbying
TU for unorgani- zed workers Member- ship in Govt. board for unorgani- zed workers Organi- zation of women in sex work	Proactive role in Panchayat Accessing of amenities for commu- nity Accessing of welfare provi- sions for indi- vidual/ family/ commu- nity	Data on Panchami lands Common property resource manage- ment Watershed develop- ment Agriculture develop- ment. Sustainable agriculture Livestock addition	Savings and credit Micro enterprises Credit mobilization Income supplementa- tion Alternate livelihoods Culture and skills for self employment	Activating the SC/ST prevention of atrocities act Individual cases related to Forced and compulsory labor , bonded	Education for prevention of child labor Health services Occupat- ional health	Monitor/ Survey on Bonded labor for the Govt. Delegated role in release and rehab Individual cases beyond the Govt.survey list	Campgn against child laborTotal prohibition Violence against women Caste certificate issue State Human Rights commision NGO networks Consumer forums Govt. depart- mental interaction

10. Conclusion:

In the interest of the larger community structure and systems, it is necessary to strengthen the workers organization as part of the community strengthening process. Giving a new perspective to workers organization could do this.

The third generation workers organization with reformulated perspectives is an integrated and total developmental process. It is not a single activity. One cause and one solution do not govern it. It has to be seen its inter linkages with the larger development context of the community.

It is necessary to internalize the fact that deficit in decent work, forced and compulsory labor, bondedness in work and child labor etc are the symptoms of failure of the larger systems. Structure default. They are not the problems in themselves. The causes are multiple. Consequently, the treatment of the causes needs to be necessarily integrated and based on 'total system treatment' approach.

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