

# Theory of Labour

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We Indians, following the conventions of United Nations celebrate May 1 of every year as international labour day. The celebrations will be fruitful only with the commemoration of the cause of celebrations. Historically international Labour Day is celebrated to recall the great march conducted by the labours in Chicago in 1881 for

demanding 8 hours work 8 hours and 8 hours of entertainment. Later in democratic nations this demand came to be executed as a general principle applicable to all labours in a country.

In the contemporary society in the guise of globalisation and liberalisation many institutions are violating this basic principle. Moreover many institutions are denying

workers their basic human rights in the workplace. The denials of basic human rights in the workplace may temporarily provide increased profits to the said institutions and inflated national income for the country. But an unsatisfied labourer cannot be productive in the long run and he will become a hindrance to the economic and social welfare of the country. So it is urgent to ponder on the need

for creating a self satisfied workforce by implementing labour laws suitable for the society for ensuring social economic welfare of the country. This article is an attempt to define labour, its role in achieving human fulfilment, and to state the necessary conditions for the creation of labour laws providing justice to labourers.

**What is labour?**

The term species identity means the difference between human species with the animal species. Many have identified that loving another human being by a person to the extent of sacrificing his own life is the specie character of a human being. Animals also have compassion for its own kind but that drive does not lead up to sacrificing one's own life in the animal Kingdom.

This specie identity of human person (self sacrificing love) is concretely expressed in labour. Any mental or physical human activity purported for the increment of the welfare of the person other than himself and for the increment of common good is defined as labour. Thus labour is the concrete expression of love which alone

differentiates human person from other animals.

Through labour a human being impose his mental designs on natural things and transform them into useful things. For example a carpenter imposes his mental designs on wood and transforms it into furniture; blacksmith imposes his mental picture on bronze, iron or stone and transforms the base material in to different

artefacts ranging from utensils too aircrafts. During this process as Hegel rightly points out the labour grows internally and is defined as the subjective dimension of labour. For example assume that a man is walking through the shores of river and sees a shoal of fish in river. By using a net he catches some fish and gives it to his fellow man. Then he is called 'fisherman' in addition to simply as 'man'.



This transference of man to fishermen is his internal movement from specie identity to personal identity as Derrida interprets Hegel. The transference from man to fishermen or man to sculptor teacher, business man, doctor etc is subjective dimension of labour and the products he thus produced are the objective dimension of labour. Subjective dimension of labour is his self fulfilment

which earns for him his self esteem. The goods and services he produces is that objective dimension of labour and if the objective dimension is properly rewarded as wages, bonus, a living space, then a labourer becomes materially and externally satisfied. This external and internal satisfaction further ensures psychological motivation for creating new goods and services. Slave

societies deny rewarding to the labourers and therefore doomed to under development and social conflicts and final disintegration. All communist nations were built and organised in the name of labourers but paradoxically they all considered labourers as slaves. The central committee of deputies of Soviet socialist Republic identified that wage policy of

Soviet Union based on communist principles were the main cause of its downfall. It is mentioned in the book written by Mikhail Gorbachev with the title *Radical restructuring the Soviet economy*.

## **Objective dimension of labour and labour laws**

Social scientists identified that without properly remunerating the objective contribution of the labourers

any society will be doomed to self destruction. So they argued for creating conducive ambience for labourers. A labourer is not an individual and he is part of domestic life viz; family. In family he has the duty to nurture the next generation. Young generation is the future of a nation. If the labourers as domestic heads are not provided with sufficient material support, time and space for nurturing

their children who else will nurture them for the country? If he is working 16 hours a day and he take remaining 8 hours for rest what is the time for nurturing his family members and participating in social life? This question motivated some sincere politicians to formulate statutes for creating conditions for the labourers to enjoy material conditions of life in proportions to their

contribution to the society. I argue that labourers should not be allowed to work more than eight hours a day except on national emergency conditions.

## **Wage policy theory and practise**

As we stated earlier remuneration and other material provisions for the labourers should be in proportion to the benefits received by the institution. St.

Paul says that the remuneration for a labourer is not a benevolence but a right (Romans 4:4). But the contemporary world, labourer's presence in an institution is defined not as a contributor but as a cost maker. The remuneration bill or pay slip of a labourer is titled as cost to company abbreviated as C to C. Is he a contributor to the institution or a cost maker? This naming



itself shows the loss of justice to labourers. In organised sectors, until liberalisation and globalisation the labour ministry of India had ensured the material conditions of labourers are properly provided or not?

But labourers in many institutions in the organised sector forgot that without labourer's contribution the institutions cannot survive economically. The heavy loss

raised in many public sector companies are not only due to the corruption of the political leaders who were in charge of the institutions but also because of the failure of labourers in those institutions to provide satisfaction to the consumers. In unorganised sector the working conditions are pathetic and in underdeveloped countries public institutions are terribly failed to ensure even

minimum wages to the contributor to the institution or to country. In this regard social scientists and thinkers contributed many theories from antiquity as to formulate labour laws ensuring that material conditions for labourers. Following are some of the basic propositions which help political leaders to formulate labour laws.

Firstly, labour's wages are remuneration for his

contribution. In other words good material conditions provided for a labourer is a right and not a benevolence of the institution.

Secondly, Saint Thomas Aquinas proposes, labourers deserve 'Just wage'. Just wage includes the material conditions for maintaining the family of the labour.

Thirdly, subsistence wages as the universal principal is proposed by Communist

manifesto. Manifesto argues that wage to the labourers should be maintain up to the level of minimum subsistence. Manifesto denies anything more to the labour than his subsistence.

.The neo classical economic thinkers proposed that wages should be equal to the marginal productivity of the labourer. Higher the productivity higher will be the wage. Neo liberals propose

that material rewards should be based on demand and supply of labour force. This principle about wages is more dangerous than subsistence theory. According to subsistence theory minimum is guaranteed. But if demand and supply conditions are taken as a the basic norm for determining price of labour, wage may fall below minimum wages.

Based on this various propositions regarding remuneration by social scientists and philosophers like St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church has developed her own decision about the system of wages. That is a combination of all the above views developed by scientists and executed by political authorities in many countries. She argues for “Just wage”. Just wage should be

the minimum wage irrespective of the economic condition of the institution.

Church maintains that minimum should be guaranteed in all situations. Sometimes the productivity of labour may be below the subsistence wage. Even then the minimum subsistence for the family or just wage should be provided to the labourers. Sometimes the demand for labour diminishes and wage



fall below the subsistence. In that situation also the labourer deserve just wage.

However the contemporary world is terribly fail in ensuring the minimum wages and good working condition to the labourer both in organised and unorganised sectors. Extra burden is on those who are in information technology sector and in banking sector. This extra stress may lead the

breakdown of nation. The situation of labourers in unorganised sector all over the world is so poor. If governments are not giving due consideration to these areas financial crisis will be the resultant in world.