

rich in painstakingly collated information that would be otherwise inaccessible to a vast majority of students.

To sum up, the book under review presents a balanced and informed introduction to many of the ongoing debates around the process of globalization. With its in depth coverage of the process of external liberalization, it will be a useful complement to studies of the process of internal liberalization and its impact. At the same time, it will continue to serve as a valuable source of reference for quite some time to come.

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Negotiated Change – Collective Bargaining, Liberalization and Restructuring in India by C. S. Venkata Ratnam, Response Books, 2003

The objective of this study has been to present a comprehensive account of the way labour management relations are being shaped in the post liberalized period. Thus it reviews the response of collective bargaining to the challenges of globalization and the restructuring of enterprises. It may be mentioned that collective bargaining is the most common, preferred and prevalent method of resolving industrial disputes both in the public and the private sector in India. The industrial relations climate of an organisation can be assessed by the smooth functioning and signing of the agreement. About 2% of the total workforce or over 30% of the workers in the organized sector participate in collective bargaining. The book is divided into two parts. Part I contains the main text and Part II deals with the agreements. Altogether, there are eight chapters and the introduction starts with the overview of literature, the context, the purpose, the method and materials. The study is based on a trend analysis of 215 agreements signed in last the ten years following economic restructuring.

The second chapter deals with the legal framework and explains the provisions and coverage of collective bargaining under the Indian constitution, in the ILO

conventions and under the Industrial Disputes Act. The legal approach, which highlights adjudication with government having the main role, is gradually receiving low priority. Regarding the level of bargaining, the author has explained various practices prevalent in different industries. Basic industries like steel, port, coal, power or nationalized banks where the government is a dominant player, have been in the process of signing national level agreements. The oil co-ordination committee, also, managed to achieve a good amount of standardisation in pay and service among all oil companies through collective bargaining at the national level, though all other issues are being dealt at the plant level. Regarding the duration of agreements, the present trend is to sign an agreement for five years and more in the public sector, whereas, in the private sector it continues to be three or four years.

Thereafter, the author has moved on to the mode and context of bargaining by detailing out bargaining flexibility. With business imperatives forcing flexibility, management thought it appropriate to include various issues which may be non-conventional but very relevant for the organizational work process. Though it appears as pro-employer, it also promises workers the opportunity to deal with the issue proactively. It may include creative and innovative approaches which have multiple choices. The author has emphasized the win-win of flexibility bargaining which would fetch mutual gains. The chapter is accompanied by a list of companies having signed such bargaining with issues like multiskilling, retraining, redeployment, alternative jobs in temporary reasons, elimination of redundant jobs if alternative jobs are offered, transfer to other establishment in the company and reduction in employment strength. Such agreements are more usually found in decentralized enterprises and in plant-level agreements in the private sector.

Chapter Four deals with productivity bargaining which is signed both in government and non government companies in different forms like productivity linked bonus in railways, ports, posts and telegraphs or productivity linked wage settlement in Indian Airlines, Bata India Ltd, Indian Aluminium Co. Balmer Lawrie Kerala, Bharat Petroleum Co. Ltd. etc. According to the author, productivity does not only indicate labour productivity since labour cost in most of the sector is less than 20% of the total cost. Also signing a productivity agreement is neither a strength nor a weakness, but what is needed is an effective performance management system for optimum utilisation of human resources.

The fifth chapter deals with collective bargaining and agreements in the public sector. A large number of units have achieved good results through co-operative collective bargaining. A two way communication and continuous dialogue helps to promote a climate of transparency and mutual understanding and trust, which are critical for co-operative bargaining. Whether it is overcoming economic crisis, or modernization of the plant, or promoting flexibility, or providing mechanisms to new work practices, or workforce reduction, it is important to have labour management co-operation and a climate having the basic ingredients of the partnership model where collective bargaining would serve as a means to that end.

The sixth chapter is based on wage bargaining in the public sector. The author has raised a few questions, such as, can there be an unified national wage policy in the public sector or whether wage controls can be made either by legislation or some other measure. He does not find a satisfactory answer. However, according to him, wage issues need to be addressed with income and prices. With income disparities and unchecked prices, it would be difficult to bring equilibrium in wages and wage policies.

Chapter Seven has dealt with the statutory provisions of the welfare and social security system. There has been considerable change in these areas, especially, in healthcare delivery and insurance coverage keeping in view the voluntary retirement schemes for employees in various organizations. The last chapter summarizes by mentioning the major emerging trends in collective bargaining in India as well as in industrialized countries and also focusses on its implication for the role of the partners in industrial relations i.e., employers, trade unions and the state.

This book will, undoubtedly, help students, teachers and researchers of industrial relations and human resource management to understand the contemporary, changed perspective of collective bargaining and its distinctive features, negotiation strategies, and trends of collective agreements. Such research based work may be regarded as a genuine contribution in the field of industrial relations.

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