

Trade Union Culture: A Comparison in Light of the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The global pandemic has notoriously put many businesses to a standstill and raised uncertainties among existing employees. With various economies being affected in different ways, some elements remain common, especially for workers employed in precarious or unstable jobs. Workers engaged at the lowest tiers of their organisational structures had to face greater risks.

This paper focuses on the Garment outsourcing and the Animation industries in India and Japan respectively. Trade Unions made the headlines in June, 2020 where members of the Garment and Textile Workers Union (GATWU) sat in protest as 1200 members of a textile factory in Srirangapatna, Karnataka abruptly lost their jobs in June as H&M reportedly cancelled their orders in light of reduction in consumer demand because of COVID-19. On the other hand, the *Anime* industry of Japan, one of the backbones of its economy, suffered major losses, causing delay of shows or abrupt stoppage in broadcast. The ones most at risk were animators, among other creators who already work in exploitative conditions given the nature of output in this industry. The freelance animators in Japan do not have a trade union owing to the scattered nature of their jobs. Moreover, the work culture in Japan is a great influence on the minimal functioning and a collective reluctance on part of these animators that they still have not formed a Trade Union at any level nor have discussed their issues widely in mainstream media.

The paper intends to study the above mentioned factors and make a comparative analysis regarding why workers engaged in informal occupations in these two industries which, by nature are very similar; are facing two completely different outcomes.

Keywords: Trade Unions, Work Culture, Garment Industry, Animation, Job loss, Gender, Pandemic.

I. INTRODUCTION

Trade Unions as organisations have been perceived as the defenders of labour rights. As Richard Hyman puts it, trade unions are always forced to choose among contradictions: whether to prioritize between ensuring short-term solutions or on long-term welfare goals (Gillan & Lambert 2013, 181). This stands true at the face of any uncertainty, previously the Global Economic Crisis of 2008; now the COVID-19 pandemic, which has created uncertainties wherein trade unions around the world have been forced to rethink their roles and act to accommodate for the losses accrued.

Scholars have talked about the erosion of labour movements in general, ever since the emergence of neo-liberal economic ideology upon which capitalist regimes have been thriving.

The 1970s have given birth to systems creating segmentation in work roles and subsequent wage gaps; globalisation has made informal labour accessible to the global value chain but at the same time, labour security is at risk which has become a major problem now. While labour unions throughout the globe are engaging in efforts to curb these vices born of the system, there are unfortunate instances where these movements have been met with either oppressive reactions or none at all.

India and Japan are completely in two different leagues, if compared in terms of economic strength. Given their economy and manpower, Japan's productivity index surpasses that of India in certain sectors such as putting out creative output in the global market¹ but India is also catching up in terms of growth rate in GDP per person engaged and in terms of creating a better business environment. This holds true for pre-pandemic economic situations and the coping mechanisms for India as of now have been increasing domestic and foreign investments. If the economy is viewed as a culmination of various organised and unorganised or informal² professions, there are visible similarities between India's informal sector depicted here by the faction made up of garment workers and that of Japan, comprising of freelance creators in its animation industry.

Although formal in structure, the animation industry in Japan, more commonly known as the '*Anime*' Industry, makes use of contract labour and outsourcing many a time given the extensive nature of production that is required in creating content that is consumed at a relatively faster rate. *Anime* has been around in mainstream media for many decades now, being a symbol of Japanese pop culture. Apart from Japan's revenue from other forms of export, animation has developed a soft power of its own as it has gained a massive fan following worldwide ranging throughout every age group. Besides serving as the projection of Japanese culture through its storylines, combined with merchandise such as games, outfits and figurines; the industry has also been a major contributor to the Japanese economy in general. Revenues were raised as high as approximately 17.15 billion USD in 2015 and 17.7 billion USD in 2016 (Pan 2018) by the *Anime* industry alone.

¹ Economy Stats comparison: India and Japan (DOI: <https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/analysis-comparison>)(accessed on 05/08/2020)

² ILO defines "informal" work as one where workers who lack social protection. They are not well-protected by labour legislations, nor are they employed under fixed contracts.

In light of the pandemic, many shows and movies to be released by the industry this year were delayed or stopped mid-broadcast (Orsini, 2020). Tokyo Olympics getting cancelled in 2020 also added to the existing damage (Phnom Penh Post, 2020). The Japanese government had plans of appointing several popular *Anime* characters as mascots for the games thus the production process getting cancelled suddenly, although delayed, definitely led to unforeseen losses. However, there is no formal trade union for animation artists in Japan. Moreover, many of them have expressed the difficulties they face in general individually on various platforms, however, no collectivised representation has been seen as of yet.

Indian informal workforce has been one of the worst victims of this pandemic, with the mass exodus of workers back to their villages and hometowns making it to the global headlines (Al Jazeera, 2020). Most of these workers were employed in on short-term or contract bases and given the onset of sudden uncertainty upon businesses, the workers engaged were asked to go back to their hometowns adhering to the national lockdown guidelines. India's lockdown protocol has been called one of the most stringent (Ghosh, 2020) when it comes to dealing with the pandemic with such a huge population. Informal workers form the backbone of many high-end businesses running in India and even worldwide as places like Dharavi in Mumbai provide informal labour to high quality fashion brands, similar to services of Bangladeshi garment workers for brands like H&M and many others.

This paper focuses on garment workers in reference to the Garments and Textile Workers Union (GATWU) strike (Independent, 2020) that took place in July in Karnataka in reaction to 1200 workers being laid off a production plant for textiles based in Srirangapatna citing reason that due to the pandemic, orders had stopped and thus the business could not afford to employ all of them. However, it is alleged that only that plant in particular that had been shut down and there were plans to replace labour with machinery. Therefore, the workers mobilised by GATWU organised a strike outside the factory (Ram, 2020). They also justified the strike in terms of difficulties they are facing because of the pandemic and thus being laid off at a time like this only adds to their problem.

A. Work Culture

It is necessary to point out a difference in work culture and production techniques between the workforce of these two nations in order to understand their respective circumstances. In the Japanese Economy work is input-based, contrary to the mainstream way of firms being more concerned with individual productivity and the resultant output produced (Ono 2018, 39-41); restructuring of the economy after the World War II has a major role to play in shaping Japanese corporate culture at present. Economic recovery was about raising productivity in general fostering the collective tendency of *ganbaru* or "to work hard". What ended up forming was a traditional office culture where an individual is to devote

himself completely to his company. His devotion to his company and seniors should surpass that to even his household. After work, the employee is even expected to stay join his colleagues for drinks, if invited. Moreover, an unspoken culture among employees is to not leave the office until their boss does. The concept of overtime somehow becomes ambiguous because within this work culture the employee is expected to be voluntarily working extra shifts. This is the same throughout every industry. However, there are differences between foreign companies recruiting Japanese employees and domestic corporate houses. In case of the former, work ethics are concerned more with individual productivity and the final output. The latter focuses more on the faithfulness of the employees and its input-driven method.

Moreover, within Japanese corporate houses, it is very uncommon to see an employee switch jobs mid-career as they are expected to devote themselves to one company throughout their lives. Even the recruitment procedures abide by the same as the candidate preferred are mostly those who are just starting out (Ono 2018, 39-40). This tendency is also one of the contributing factors to what is known as *karoshi*, wherein a worker commits suicide giving in to the immense pressure at their workplace. Numbers show that this phenomenon had been on a steady rise with 2000 to 10,000 deaths to be estimated per year due to work stress alone. (Doxsee 2018b, 5). Measures were taken to assure a decline in these rates and so provide a more relaxed work environment to employees. However, it would be safe to imply that the work culture embedded among the Japanese workers took over as the outcomes were short-lived.

Indian corporate culture is similar to the one observed in the West, focusing more on individual productivity and final output. The service sector started growing in the 1980s and accelerated in the next decade because of India's economic reforms (Mukherjee 2013, 1). The trend among Indian corporate employees is to engage with companies as long as they find better opportunities elsewhere. Goals of companies therefore, are shifting to create better work-spaces for the employees. The average corporate employee is an opportunist and contrary to Japan, the organizational culture strives to create better work environment for its employees. (Nair, Lekshmi and Sommerville 2017). It is backed by the belief that employee satisfaction will add to their betterment as human capital on one hand and increase organizational commitment on the other.

The majority of the Indian service sector however, consists of informal workers who belong to backward communities and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. 80% employment in the service sector (FY 2009) was observed in the informal sector (Mukherjee 2013, 6). However, the growth in output does not correspond to growth in per capita income, hence service sector has been said to promote "jobless growth" over the years. There are instances where workers are unaware of their terms of work and most of the time they are recruited, not directly by the enterprises but through contractors that too,

usually on a temporary basis. In terms of work ethic, worker productivity matters and this stands the same throughout every industry. Since the public sector is also relatively an active recruiter, the competition in the private sector is proportionately lesser compared to Japan.

The Labour Laws in India are being scraped to be integrated into four Labour Codes dealing with Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security and Occupational Health and Safety respectively. In light of the pandemic, many Indian states were criticized on the base of how they agreed to do away with existing labour laws for the time being, until productivity could be regained in certain sectors (Rathi and Chatterjee 2020). This was in reference to the reverse migration of labourers from cities back to their hometowns in light of the COVID-19 lockdown guidelines. It was critiqued as being the exploitation of labour as working hours were increased and the scope of overtime pay was removed (Roychowdhury 2020).

II. DECADE OF THE 90s: A COMPARISON

The 1990s were a recovery period globally as many countries, even the US, were getting over losses of the Global Recession of the 1980s. Japan also suffered quite a bit given its linkages to the global economy. Scholars have termed the 1990s for Japan as being “The Lost Decade” (Sadahiko 1999, 6) as after a flourishing decade for the economy Japan had to face a sudden halt in growth. Growth in real terms was declining along with the onset of an ageing population in Japan. Now more and more people, including women were entering the workforce. The reluctance to start families also came to light as women were also driven by work culture prevailing in the corporate realm and to this day, Japan faces the effects as a decline in its domestic population has emerged. It was in the 1960s that Japan had made attempts to revamp its economy with the needs of globalisation and to cope with the international competition that was coming its way (Sadahiko 1999, 8). The later decades up until the 1980s witnessed an era of steady economic growth; however this was based off the import of manufactured goods, thus hitting the domestic manufacturing sector negatively. As the world witnessed the global recession and the oil crisis in the 1980s, Japan had to suffer through an inflationary period with cumulative losses amounting JPY 1000 trillion. On the other hand, there was an increase in unemployment and a steady decline in GDP which averaged 1.6% per annum in the decade of the 90s.

The same for India was a period of revolution. In 1991, India was made to adopt the LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation) model to run its economy. Although after its Independence in 1947, India had pledged to adopt a mixed economic model, taking inspiration from both capitalist and socialist economies, given the extremely backward nature of infrastructure back then, most policies remained pro-socialist and welfare-oriented. However, that had led up in India accumulating an immense amount of foreign debt. In 1991, in light of rising inflation, India had to approach the IMF for a loan of 2.2 billion USD however; it was to be provided only on

the condition that the Indian economy was opened up as it was a closed economy until then, with very high barriers on foreign trade. The problem with India’s service sector after the 1990s is that the focus and the benefits of the reforms have benefitted mostly the organised workers, rather than focusing on the overall welfare of workers engaged in general at any establishment. Moreover, the labour market globally is seeing an increase in precarity in the nature of work in general, to which India has also been a victim. The industrial sector earlier was shadowed by the system of licensing (Dutt and Mahajan 2016, 211-212) popularly known as the *license raj* which was abolished under the new economic policy in order to encourage the growth of self-owned establishments. As more and more labour laws came to light, along the development of precarity in every kind of employment, establishments made use of loopholes in legislations to make sure that they could produce their output without going against any of them. Thus, the stronghold of Indian trade unions gradually began to weaken with the increase in restructuring of the formal sector. This was in addition to the weakening of bargaining power among labourers amidst economic uncertainties.

III. GARMENT PRODUCTION OUTSOURCING IN INDIA

The emergence of corporate globalisation gave companies in participant countries newfound options to advertise their brands in more diverse regions. This was also an opportunity to minimise the cost of input. South Asia, in particular, became a manufacturing hub providing abundance of cheap labour. Reforms of the 1990s gave India a better position as a provider of cheap labour in the global value chain, making it the seventh largest exporter of garments globally in 2014 (Working conditions of migrant garment workers in India: A literature review 2017, 3).

In the 1980s, the Indian service sector witnessed the gradual growth of Privatisation and Outsourcing (Nair, Lekshmi, & Sommerville, 2017) as the public sector started to let go of the control it had over certain sectors. As liberalisation continued, India’s informal sector started getting engaged in the outsourcing of manufactured garments. This was a parallel growth with the rapid informalisation of the then industrialised nations. According to figures by the ICFTU in 2004, the informal sector across nations had raised 35% of the global GDP. Under this global trend, informal workers were preferred for the job because of the level of flexibility they provided. Moreover, the manufacturing process was decentralised, mostly managed by middlemen therefore it was easier to manage international production for the companies. The workers are basically segregated into four kinds, namely the home-based workers, workers who run micro-enterprises, workers working for contractors and lastly the ones who work in factories (Ascoly 2004, 5).

After independence, one of India’s major economic focuses was import-substitution, as a result of which the textile mills were not modernised using imported technology. The priority

was to strengthen the economy from the inside. Thus India always had abundance of labour-intensive skilled technology as far as the textile industry was concerned. After outsourcing started, manufacturing work was broken down into smaller tasks under categories of skilled (stitching, cutting) and unskilled (fixing buttons, cutting thread, etc.). Training was also arranged for by companies as far as factory work was concerned.

Production work from home-based units consisted of skilled workers, mostly home-makers. 100% of workers operating at home-based units are women who now have to earn a living for their families. There is ignorance prevalent among such workers, which makes bypassing labour laws easier for contractors who engage in business with them. There is significant wage gap when it comes to factory work and home-based work (Kharate and Gross 2017, 14). Moreover, the scope of exploitation is higher. A study undertaken by the Global Labour University in the slum economy of Dharavi, Mumbai revealed that the wage received for unskilled work is somewhere around 4000 INR or 66 USD. The wage received for skilled work is about 6800INR or 114 USD. The numbers are less than the minimum wage level set by the Government of Maharashtra.

The workers in factories are made up of around 60% of men (Kharate and Gross 2017, 12) however home-based workers completely comprise of women who already come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus there is no sense of social security for these women on top of which, they are subject to occupational hazards such as acute backache issues, respiratory problems and the likes of such. Women workers in the establishments are also subject to verbal or even sexual abuse. This also adds to why women switch to working from home, even if paid less because they feel more secure in the household.

A. Formalising the Informal

A new trend seen in labour movements is the transformation in the nature of trade unions (Sinha 2002, 153-155). In its initial stages, trade unions were concentrated in the public sector enterprises and the prominent roles were played by the workers engaged in higher or organised work profiles. With the increase in informal job profiles, there has been a need to mobilise based on similar natures of job. In case of the informal sector, various research institutes exist in the country today such as the V. V. Giri National Labour Institute, the National Institute of Labour Economics and Research and the Central Labour Institute to name a few.

Trade Unions like the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) are prime examples of how the informal job profiles can be mobilised under a formal institution. The LKMS (LEARN Mahila Kaamgar Sangathana) is an organisation that engages in the mobilisation and research of home-based workers, not only the ones engaged in garment production but also domestic work and other jobs in the informal sector. They basically operate in Mumbai, Nashik and Solapur. Under the

efforts of the LKMS, women have been organised under a distinct union however, they are subject to constraints in forms of domestic violence or reluctance to participate from time to time, given the scattered nature of their jobs. The social culture also has to be accounted for while analysing why these workers continue to be exploited from time to time. The gender gap is persistent and that adds to a lot of issues. However, at present, urban centres are predominant hubs of such informal labour movements.

B. A Glance at Gender Disparity

Gender Disparity at workplace is evident explicitly in the Indian context. Male dominance in society is prominent in both India and Japan. Thus men were ideally viewed to be part of the workforce in general whereas women were expected to look after households. However, with the entry of women in the labour market, feminisation of labour and the emergence of home-based work have been observed.

Although the animation industry has not had any concerns when it comes to gender, garment industry in India has definitely witnessed a prominent gender gap. With production work divided into being factory-based and home-based, 100% of workers operating at home-based units are women as they were previously home-makers who now have to earn a living for their families. There is significant wage gap when it comes to factory work and home-based work. Moreover, the scope of exploitation is higher. There have also been complaints of sexual harassment and verbal abuse at workplace; hence women find their homes to be safer work-spaces.

IV. ANIMATION INDUSTRY IN JAPAN

Animation Industry in Japan, widely known as the *Anime* Industry, is one of the major contributors to Japan's economy for quite some decades now. According to statistics by the Association of Japanese Animations, *Anime* and related merchandise earned Japan a revenue of 1825 billion JPY in 2015 (Garrett 2018, 3). Producing any animated content requires a good amount of investment both monetary and in terms of labour, thus making the content relatively pricey. After procuring frames, the content has to be animated, edited, dubbed and advertised; hence, the production costs accrue at every stage. Thus the *Anime* industry also launches merchandise, video games, *manga* (comic books) and light novels. Sometimes a particular content is presented on different platforms, for instance a *manga* series is adapted into an animated series or a movie.

From the production perspective, the industry is divided into three broad categories- the Production Committee-broadcasters, publishers, distributors and advertisers; the Primary Contractors which consist of established or popular animation studios and lastly, Professional Sub-contractors made up of smaller studios and freelancers (Garrett 2018, 13). Although bringing in massive revenue, the internal structure of the animation industry makes it exploitative in nature. Given the creative art aspect, there are

no regulations for fixed timings for employees. Regulated work timings under government sanction are currently a necessity. (Pan,2018.)

Employment in Japan is basically divided into two categories, namely the Regular workers who work full-time for 40 hours a week, are directly employed and are entitled to certain social insurance schemes. Then there are the Non-regular workers who are not entitled to such benefits. Although some studios can afford to hire animators on regular terms also, most studios make use of outsourcing work to freelancers or even cheaper means if available. Freelance animators in particular work as contract employees under studios for a fixed-term, thus they fall into the category of Non-regular Workers.

The Japanese Animators Creators Association (JAniCA) is an advocacy group working for the welfare of Japanese Animators. They released reports in 2009 and 2015 respectively based on surveys conducted by them on animators engaged in the industry. The reports show that animators in Japan are the most overworked, with work hours going even beyond 10 hours per day. The pay does not match the labour that goes into creating the content because of its nature. Although merged with technology of the day, creating animations is still extremely labour-intensive.

The payment of these workers is based on the number of frames they can produce, the standard rate for which ranges from 2 to 2.5 USD. A standard 25-minute *Anime* episode requires 12 to 24 frames per second. Every frame is hand-drawn and the production of one episode can be sent out to 4 or 5 freelance animators at once, the cost for that excludes the rest of the production process which includes editing, voice addition, all the way to broadcast and advertisement. Therefore, studios are always on the look for cheaper production methods. Animators are basically creative content makers, however they are extremely underpaid. Freelance animators engage with multiple studios at the same time because that helps them make ends meet. According to JAniCA's report, 73.3% of animators in Tokyo earn less than 1 million JPY per annum which is less than the minimum wage mandated by the Tokyo Municipal Government (Garrett 2018, 15).

A. Pressure to Perform

When animators in the industry start out, many of them operate as freelancers because *anime* studios themselves run on low budgets at times. Therefore, outsourcing the work becomes cheaper. Animators can be part-time or full-time, depending on the work they are able to secure. It is usually after three to five years of work after which an animator can expect a stable income. There is also this prevailing mindset that an animator has to have enough experience in order to produce better content and once he is able to do so, his pay will automatically stabilise (Pan, 2018). However, that is very unpredictable in itself. According to a research by JAniCA, the top directors in the industry earn around 6.486 million JPY or 53,960 USD. Among the animators, their key animators earn 2.817 million

JPY or 23,513 USD. The Chief Animation directors earn around 5.683 million JPY or 46,900 USD annually (Doxsee 2017a, 6). Given very high working hours, it becomes a matter of coping up with the intense work schedule. One standard 25-minute episode of *anime* might take a month to finish production. Studios are expected to broadcast every week and in order to do so the animators are expected to already have ten or more simultaneous episodes ready before broadcast (Doxsee 2018b, 3). Moreover, freelancers take simultaneous projects of two or more studios at once out of the need to make amends meet. However, this only adds to their work hours. The intense hierarchical work culture of the corporate also applies to the animation industry which means that the input of the employee is given preference in this output-oriented work. Freelancers have the liberty to refuse work as they are not fully committed to any company. Quitting is a common phenomenon among the animators who newly enter the industry as it gets hard to keep up and hence they face burnout.

B. Problems of Piracy

In the 1980s, 56% of Japanese exports to the US were from the *Anime* industry (Chambers 2012, 96). As it started expanding broadcast in other countries as well, Japanese culture in general attracted global attention because the trademark of Japanese animation is that it will be produced in Japanese and will always reflect Japanese culture, thus strengthening it as a soft power. However, as more and more people got access of content that was not being broadcast internationally and as the popularity of the animation form increased, piracy began, thus creating major difficulties for creators who were already dealing with huge production costs. Today there are many illegal online streaming sites where people can access the content they are unwilling to pay for. Moreover, there are 'fansubbing' facilities available worldwide as more and more non-Japanese people are learning Japanese. Fansubbing refers to somebody putting in subtitles voluntarily for any content. So, finding content has become easier.

C. Outsourcing and International Competition

As observed, producing *Anime* comes at a huge cost. Therefore, studios find it easier to outsource animation work to freelancers and even to channels available outside the country. There is a huge network of Japanese animation created in Vietnam and Philippines (Garrett 2018, 24).

At present, this art form is facing international competition from countries like China and South Korea who have come up with their own *Anime*, although there are visible differences in the graphics and character designs. Japanese comics had started to lose market for the past couple of years as South Korea had introduced their version of comics which were much more user-friendly as they could be accessed for vertical reading even on smartphones, as opposed to *manga*, which follow a strict comic book pattern and are to be read from right to left. Moreover, they are very much content-heavy, which only makes it difficult to access them on-the-go. COVID-19

has only worsened the already falling state of the industry with production suffering in midst of already accruing losses.

D. Anti-union Culture

Jonathan Clements in his book 'Anime: A History' mentions the anti-union atmosphere in Japan (Garrett 2018, 17). He discusses the Toei animation company employee lockout that took place after the employees had formed an animators' union demanding higher wages. The company resorted to hiring freelancers and outsourcing work to contractors instead of their regular staff. This somewhat became a predominant feature of the industry and it remains so. Sub-contracting became a practice in the 1970s after which it spread to countries such as South Korea, China, Taiwan, Philippines and Vietnam. Trade Union culture in general is something that is not practised in the service sector. However, such an industry should receive government assistance in setting up a labour union (Pan, 2018).

V. COMPARISON OF TRADE UNIONS

Although the 1990s were a significant decade for the economies for both India and Japan, trend of the labour movements are in contrast to each other. Like every labour movement, the same in these countries shared the same ideals and objectives, which was to secure overall labour welfare.

A recent trade in labour movements is how informal-sector workers are getting mobilised and working towards securing common goals. In India, the informal sector is vast and scattered. Rina Agarwala, in her article 'From Work to Welfare' talks about how there is hierarchical segregation existing in the informal sector itself, going from the petty bourgeoisie made of the self-employed to the informal proletariat comprising of the informal and casual workers (Agarwala 2006, 422-424).

Initially, Indian trade unions were made off public sector undertakings, backed by political support. Therefore, they viewed the state to be responsible for ensuring that worker demands are met. Movements started becoming more and more welfare-oriented during the 1980s and the 1990s. With the hit of the global recession in the 1980s, India had to deal with loss in employment, growth and foreign earnings. The economic reforms introduced in 1991 basically aimed to provide a financial boost to the miserable pace of operation of the economy. With the incoming of globalisation the unions were somewhat caught off-guard as the informalisation of work did not align with the public sector framework in which they existed (Sinha 2002, 152). Talking of recent trends in trade unions, there is definitely more independence visible with unions such as SEWA and NTUI working at the forefront. Rather than sticking to political affiliations, the current trends have somewhat made these unions shift from the usual route and rely on self-sufficiency. Moreover, demands are not only limited to wage rises now as more and more unions are demanding labour welfare and job security (Ambedkar and Prashad 2020, 43-47).

Japan has no trade union for animators. Trade Union culture in general is also not preferred in Japan as much as it is encouraged in other Asian or earlier in the European nations (Sahoo 1999, 164). Employees forming trade unions are also not viewed in good light by companies. This might be a product of past experiences where the Japanese economy had to suffer in the 1980s as the trade union culture of individual employee welfare might have shifted focus from collective labour and *ganbaru*. The Japanese labour movement remained favourable till the mid 1990s ever since liberalisation began in 1980s (Sadahiko 1999, 9). These decades saw the nation's accelerated efforts at coping up with international competition. The 1990s soon became the Lost Decade with the decline in economic growth and increase in unemployment and cumulative losses that accumulated up to 1000 trillion JPY. The political scenario was also a major determinant into all of these events as the existence of trade unions was not favoured soon after the Liberal Democratic Party lost power.

Not before long, the corporate culture as it is known today took over. At present, blue-collar workers in some sectors have been subject to pay raise, indicating that the work culture is gradually becoming accepting towards performance-based output. Trade unions do exist, but not in every sector. Their framework and collective bargaining method is extremely sophisticated if compared to its contemporaries. At present, the existing trade unions are trying to ensure minimum social security for its members. In terms of animation however, there is no such mobilisation as seen in case of Indian informal workers. There are organisations such as JAniCA and AJA, however no direct representation from engaged animators themselves, owing to the much scattered nature of their work.

VI. AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Garment Sector:

With logistics receiving a massive blow, the supply chain which the garment sector relied on was crippled for a while. However, online retail services were started shortly within late April maintaining caution. However, the resultant inevitable lack in demand created a negative impact on the earnings of the producers. The strike in focus of this paper is the four week strike conducted outside a plant of the Euro-clothing company II (ECC-II). With 1200 workers suddenly left jobless in the midst of such a massive crisis, it is only reflective of how vulnerable the workers involved in such global value chains actually are. The strike was supervised by officials of the Garments and Textiles Workers' Union (GATWU) who had previously also conducted talks with the management at the company, however to no avail. The workers had posed the demand that H&M take full responsibility of this lay-off and for the company to make sure that the worker were not left to fend for themselves at such short notice. In times of such a pandemic, the members of the unit maintained social distancing as they sat in protest outside the company. However, no dialogue was initiated afterwards.

This is only one instance of similar occurrences throughout the globe where companies are refusing to place orders, hence endangering livelihoods. Similar protests were seen in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Cambodia. H&M however, issued a statement assuring support to garment workers in Bangladesh (Karim, 2020). However, the manufacturing countries in general are to gear up for a period of intense revival as they wait for normalcy to return.

Animation Industry:

For an industry that was already going through hardships, the pandemic was a huge blow. With many upcoming movies and shows that had to be deliberately delayed, it created quite a stir among creators as well who could only put out public statements like production being stopped indefinitely. The industry releases are planned according to seasons- spring, summer, autumn and winter. The line-up was disrupted as many shows had to be either cancelled or delayed (Orsini, 2020).

However, as the world took up gradual recovery starting from the mid-July, things seem to go normal for the industry as of now. Many shows that had stopped broadcast have resumed. Many anticipated shows have been aired. This on one hand has definitely been a sense of relief for the industry. As for the Tokyo Olympics, officials are already looking into preparations for next year with hopes that the preparations for that are not disrupted as well (The Phnom Penh Post, 2020).

A prominent ruling passed by the Japanese government in this pandemic is the revised anti-online piracy law which criminalises the illegal downloading or streaming of digital *manga* or *anime* on any digital web platform (The Japan Times, 2020). This is being lauded as a big save for the industry from a production point of view. The effects of the ban have been visible since mid-August and the law is expected to take full effect by 2021. State has played a crucial role in securing the interests of the community as of now however it is only subject to further observation whether this legislation will prove to be fruitful in the long-run or not as there is still much room for progress in the industry.

VII. CONCLUSION

All-in-all, both the economies of Japan and India have been negatively impacted by the novel pandemic. As both serve as significant contributors to the global value chain in their respective sectors, both are subject to exploitation in the sense that the workers who are directly involved at the lowest tiers are engaged in direct production however, are bereft of basic social security. Contemporary Labour Economics, time and again, has been addressing such issues however, to not much avail.

A. Significance of the Global Value Chain

With liberalization of world economies, the Global Value Chain acted as a contributor to livelihoods when economies were struggling at their worst, especially India. The abundance

of cheap labour has also helped the retail giants existing today to flourish and cut costs in a significant manner so as to be able to cater to consumer needs at the broadest.

With Japan's animation industry going global, it opened up new opportunities for procuring revenue and helped make a cultural statement worldwide. As the industry kept growing especially in the United States, it provided more opportunities of expansion. However, it is also to be taken into account that to keep up with the global trends, the intangible 'Return on Investment' at the moment is lesser in tangible terms.

B. Reliance on Outsourcing

The need for outsourcing emerged in the first place with the thought that it would help minimize costs and give better outputs. Outsourcing nations could also have the option of doing away with unnecessary tax burden (Hansen et al. 2014, 40). Outsourcing began picking up pace in the 1980s only to become a global trend at present. The pros and cons of outsourcing have been perpetually discussed where caution is to be maintained when it comes to monitoring costs and opportunist nature of contractors involved in the supply chain. However, empirical evidences show positive impacts in forms of raised transparency and productivity (Hansen et al. 2014, 40-44).

In case of India and other South Asian nations involved in garment production, they are the ones who are being depended on by retail giants through outsourcing. In case of the animation industry, outsourcing provided a way to reduce costs. However, it also provided countries like China and South Korea to learn a craft that was endemic to Japan exclusively. Now that digital content is being illegally streamed online, the worst affected is Japan itself.

C. Necessity of reform: Concerns and Assistance

Textile outsourcing needs work in terms of providing workers their deserving social protection. The Karnataka strike is only one of many.

In case of the *anime* industry a commendable reform undertaken recently is the ban on illegal streaming sites, thus maintaining the authenticity of their animated content (The Japan Times, 2020). However, it still does not make up for the extremely stringent work routines that the creators will still have to go through. Although this looks like a good opportunity at bringing revenue to the industry in form of digital subscriptions, the industry will also have to face the underlying risk of losing audience which was solely dependent on such streaming platforms for browsing their content. Moreover, with almost all forms of entertainment now transforming into digital media, the risk of piracy increases all the more (Tripathy, 2019). Even with streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon boasting their high-end interfaces, their availability on the internet is enough to get them leaked; therefore it is questionable as to how feasible it will actually prove to be. What the government can do is to create a framework wherein subsidies can be provided to animators,

given that many still prefer to produce content by hand, without a digital medium as not everyone can afford so. Going digital can reduce labour by a greater extent if the cost minimisation can be arranged for by the state.

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