

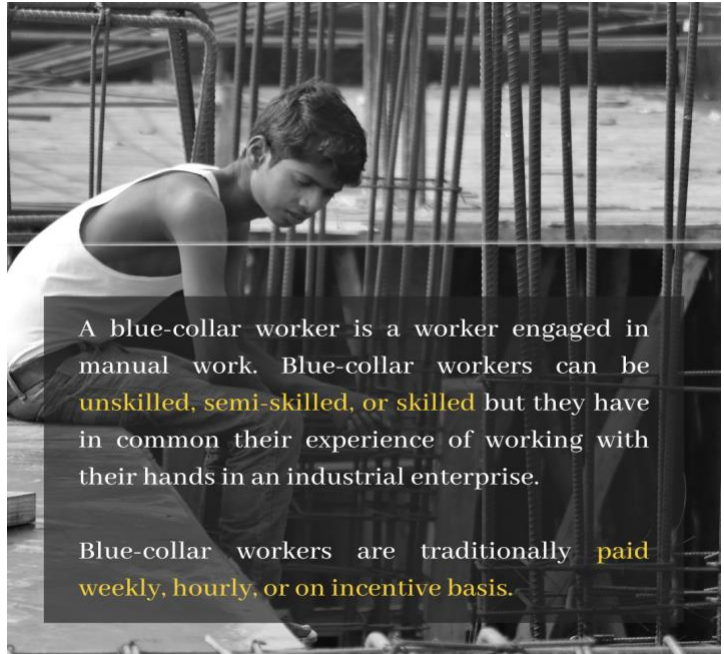
Informal & Blue Collar Workers

The term “informal sector” was coined during 1971. Since then, there have been varying perspectives regarding the informal economy in developing countries.

An effort to recognize these perspectives, that define the dynamics within communities/institutions to understand this segment, leading to business strategies, finance, remuneration, etc.

Different schools of thought:

1. **Dualist:** Marginal activities that provide income for the poor and a safety net in times of crisis.
2. **Structuralist:** Subordinated economic units and workers that serve to reduce input and labour costs of large capitalist firms.
3. **Legalist:** Plucky entrepreneurs who choose to operate informally in order to formal registration.
4. **Voluntarist:** Entrepreneurs who choose to operate informally in order to avoid taxation, regulations and costs of operating formally.



In India, the informal sector contributes to almost 50% of the total GDP. However, the term "informal workers" have been loosely defined as workers engaged in informal sector. As per ICLS conference at ILO, the concept of informal employment as *"all remunerative work (i.e. both self-employment and wage employment) that is not registered, regulated or protected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks, as well as non-remunerative work undertaken in an income-producing enterprise. Informal workers do not have secure employment contracts, workers' benefits, social protection or workers' representation."*

Blue collar workers have been a sub-section of the informal workers all around. At present, there are over 450 million blue-collar workers in India. ILO defines a blue-collar worker, is a worker engaged in manual work. Blue-collar workers can be unskilled, semi-skilled, or skilled but they have in common their experience of working with their hands in an industrial enterprise. Blue-collar workers are traditionally paid weekly, hourly, or on incentive basis. Occupations considered as blue-collar include warehouse keeper, mechanic, security guard, server, maintenance worker, auto drivers, carpenter, gardener, painter, mining worker, etc.

Informal Workers' Movements in India

Over the course of time, there has been several movements demanding better working conditions, improved social securities, higher wages, and so on.

1906 – 1911 - Swadeshi Movement, Ashwini Coomar Banerjee, Prabhat Kumar Roy Chaudhari, Premtosh Bose and Apurba Kumar Ghosh organised mass level strikes in the government press, railways and the jute industries. The biggest strike was organised when Bal Gangadhar Tilak was arrested and faced trial.

1918 - Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association and their demand in wage hike which was arbitrated 35 percent instead of 27.5 percent.

1920 - All India Trade Union Congress. Lala Lajpat Rai was then becoming the first president and Dewan Chaman Lal was the first general secretary.

1926 - British government came with the trade union Act. It formalized the trade union as a legal association. It also laid down eligibility criteria for registration and regulation of trade union activities.

1928 - Bombay Textile Mills, strike led by Girni Kamgar Union. This strike was an alarming situation for the British government that laid the formation of the Public Safety Ordinance of 1929 and the Trade Disputes Act of 1929.

1929 - Meerut Conspiracy Case, this case and trial received worldwide publicity, but weakened the working-class movement in India.

1931 - All India Trade Union Federation

1935 - All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was reaffirmed

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