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Industrial Discipline

1. Meaning of Industrial Discipline
2. Maintenance of Industrial Discipline
3. Code of Discipline in Indian Industry.

Meaning of Industrial Discipline

Industrial discipline refers to orderly working of the employees of an industrial undertaking in accordance with established rules, regulations and conventions. Discipline is a force that prompts an individual to observe rules, regulations and procedures to attain an objective. In the broad sense, discipline means orderliness — the opposite of confusion. In an organization, discipline is the orderly conduct of its members. Industrial discipline can thus be defined as “the orderly conduct of affairs by the members of an industrial organization who adhere to its necessary regulations because they desire to co-operate harmoniously in forwarding the end which the group has in view and willingly recognize that to do this, their wishes must be brought into a reasonable union with requirements of the group in action.” Formerly, discipline meant the kind of regimentation of thought and action that obtains in the army. Discipline is definitely something which is opposite of chaos, irregularity and disorder in human behaviour and action. Mary C. Niles traces the origin of the word discipline to root meaning “to

learn". According to her, the purpose of discipline is not to punish the workers but to help them learn proper conduct. Discipline is essential for any successful activity and, where it refers to industrial discipline, its essentiality gets an added value. In industrial organizations, discipline is a must. The condition of complete peace and harmony as opposed to chaos is a very important factor for the success of an industrial unit. In an atmosphere of discipline, work environment improves productivity of labour increases, production gears up and the organization, as a whole, attains prosperity and achieves its objectives and goals. Discipline may be self-imposed or enforced. In the case of self-imposed discipline, employees regulate themselves and their conduct but, in enforced discipline, regulation comes from the top. When the discipline is self-imposed, naturally there is spontaneous work on the part of the employees and no enforcement is necessary; motivation comes from within. It is a more powerful force for the workers to work more. Nevertheless, occasions arise under which managers are compelled to rely on enforced discipline for bringing in recalcitrant employees to task.

Maintenance of Industrial Discipline

The maintenance of industrial discipline is a difficult and highly complicated task and needs very efficient handling.

- 1) Workers are to be consulted while framing rules and regulations.

- 2) Rules and regulations should be properly framed.
- 3) There should not be any communication gap between the management and the workers.
- 4) New workers should be given proper orientation.
- 5) Where necessary, charts, graphs and other methods should be used so that the workers may understand them.
- 6) Penalty for breaking rules should be used only where it is absolutely necessary.
- 7) Victimization should not be the aim of punishment.
- 8) Favoritism, nepotism and casteism should be avoided.
- 9) Managerial staff should never be breakers of law which they themselves have framed for enforcing discipline.
- 10) Code of conduct or discipline should be framed and followed.
- 11) A disciplinary committee should be formed.
- 12) A suitable machinery should be set up to listen to the appeals made by the aggrieved party.

The ways of maintaining discipline are broadly discussed above. Where indiscipline actually takes place, some measures must be taken to enforce discipline.

According to Paul Pigors and Charles A. Myres, the following steps may be taken for disciplinary action:

(a) Preliminary investigation,

(b) An informal, friendly talk,

(c) An oral warning or reprimand,

(d) A written or official warning, and

(e) A graduated series of penalties such as disciplinary lay-off, demotional downgrading or transfer and — as a last resort — discharge. These are termed 'clinical approach'.

In India, the principles of natural justice are followed in dealing with cases of indiscipline. The accused is to be given opportunity to defend himself and, under no circumstances, a man with sense of partiality should be appointed a judge and punishment should never be disproportionate to offence. Disciplinary action is taken after domestic enquiry by the appointment of an Enquiry Officer and by framing and issuing a charge-sheet. The offender is given opportunity to submit his explanation, the enquiry notice is given, the proceedings are conducted, findings are made known and the decision is communicated to the proper authority. The authorities of

the firm proceed with utmost caution before any disciplinary action is taken.

Code of Discipline in Indian Industry

The 15th session of the Indian Labour Conference held in July 1957, discussed the problem of discipline in industry and formulated certain principles for removing employee grievances and settling industrial disputes by mutual negotiation, conciliation and voluntary arbitration. The Code of Discipline has come into force from June 1958. The Code of Discipline can be described as a truce between organized labour and management

The following principles were discussed

- 1) There should be no lockout or strike without notice.
- 2) No unilateral action should be taken.
- 3) No recourse to go-slow tactics.
- 4) No deliberate damage to plant or property.
- 5) No acts of violence, intimidation, coercion or instigation.
- 6) Existing machinery for settlement of disputes should be utilized.
- 7) Awards and agreements should be speedily implemented.

8) No agreement violating cordial industrial relations should be entered into.

The above principles were accepted and incorporated in the Code of Discipline, in industry. Certain modifications were made to codify them which became a "Code of Discipline".

This was ratified by the four central national labour organisations (INTUC, UTUC, AITUC, and HMS) on behalf of the workers and by the Employers' Federation of India, the All India Organisation of Industrial Employers and the All India Manufacturers' Organisation on behalf of the employers. The Code of Discipline however, could not prevent the major strikes in the steel plant at Jamshedpur, in dockyards at important ports, in the plantation industry in Kerala, at Calcutta Tramways, Hindustan Shipyard and Heavy Electricals at Bhopal. A seminar on the working of the Code of Discipline was held in 1965. Again, in 1967, the working of the Code of Discipline was reviewed at the meeting of the Central Implementation and Evaluation Committee and the proposal to set up a National Arbitration Promotion Board for encouraging voluntary arbitration was finalized. To maintain harmonious relations and promote industrial peace, a Code of Discipline has been laid down which applies to both public and private sector enterprises. It specifies various obligations for the management and the workers with the objective of promoting cooperation between their representatives.

The basic objectives of Code of Discipline are to

- Maintain peace and order in industry.
- Promote constructive criticism at all levels of management and employment.
- Avoid work stoppage in industry.
- Secure the settlement of disputes and grievances by a mutually agreed procedure.
- Avoiding litigation.
- Facilitate a free growth of trade unions.
- Eliminate all forms of coercion, intimidation and violations of rules and regulations governing industrial relations.

The Code is based on the following guidelines

- Employees should not follow go slow tactic.
- No deliberate damage should be caused to a plant or property
- Acts of violations, intimidation and coercion should not be resorted
- The existing machinery for the settlement of disputes should be utilized.
- Actions that disturb cordial relationships should be avoided.

To ensure better discipline in industry, management and unions agree on not indulging into various actions. These actions are

Management and Union(s) agree

- that no unilateral action should be taken in connection with any industrial matter and that should be settled at appropriate level
- that the existing machinery for settlement of disputes should be utilized with the utmost efficiency

- that there should be no strike or lock-out without prior notice
- that neither party will have recourse to coercion, intimidation, victimization or go –slow tactics
- that they will avoid litigation, sit-down and stay-in strikes and lock-outs
- that they will promote constructive co-operation between their representatives at all levels and as between workers themselves
- that they will establish upon a mutually agreed grievance procedure which will ensure a speedy and full investigation leading to settlement;
- that they will abide by various stages in the grievance procedure and take no arbitrary action which would by-pass this procedure; and

Management Agrees

- not to increase work-loads unless agreed upon or settled otherwise
- not to support or encourage any unfair labor practice such as discrimination and victimization of any employee
- to take prompt action for settlement of grievances and implementation of settlements, awards, decision and orders
- to take appropriate disciplinary action against its officers and members in cases where enquiries reveal that they were responsible for precipitate action by workers leading to indiscipline

Union agrees

- Not to engage in any form of physical duress.
- Not to permit demonstrations which are not peaceful and not to permit rowdyism in demonstrations

- That their members will not engage or cause other employees to engage in any union activity during working hours, unless as provide for by law agreement or practice.

To discourage unfair labour practices such as:

Negligence of duty

Careless operation

Insubordination

- To take prompt action to implement awards, agreements, settlements and decisions
- To display at conspicuous places in the union offices, the provisions of this code in the local language (s); and
- To express disapproval and to take appropriate action against office-bearers and members of the union for indulging in action against the spirit of this code.

The code symbolises the policy of the Government to build up an industrial democracy on voluntary basis. It tries to preserve industrial peace with the help of the employers and the employees. The Code of Discipline is the basis of non-violent relations between the union and the management. It should be followed in letter and spirit.