

First-Time Statutory Recognition of Grievance Redressal Mechanism in India under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020



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Introduction

For the first time in Indian legislative history, the present Government led by **Shri Narendra Kumar Modi** has empowered workers at the workplace to raise and seek redressal of their work-related grievances without being compelled to immediately resort to adjudication or the intervention of external statutory authorities. This initiative reflects a historic shift towards internalized and participative dispute resolution, wherein grievances are addressed by those who are directly familiar with the practical limitations, operational realities, and mutual concerns of both management and workers.

The introduction of the Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) signifies a conscious policy decision to encourage self-regulation, dialogue, and cooperative resolution within establishments, thereby reducing avoidable escalation of individual disputes into formal conciliation or adjudication. Such a mechanism not only empowers the workforce but also substantially contributes to reducing the workload of governmental and quasi-judicial machinery.

In this backdrop, the **Industrial Relations Code, 2020 ("IRC, 2020")**, one of the four consolidated labour codes, marks a significant transformation in India's industrial relations framework by integrating and rationalising laws relating to trade unions, standing orders, and industrial disputes. Among its most notable reforms is the statutory recognition and strengthening of the **Grievance Redressal Committee**, (GRC) envisaged as an internal, time-bound, and accessible mechanism for the resolution of individual workplace grievances

The GRC reflects the legislative intent to reduce industrial disputes at the source, encourage in-house dispute resolution, and foster a climate of mutual trust between employers and workers.

2. Statutory Framework

Section 4 of the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 mandates the constitution of a **Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC)** in every industrial establishment employing 20 or more workers.

This provision is a continuation and refinement of Section 9C of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, but with enhanced clarity, wider applicability, and alignment with modern industrial relations practices.

3. Composition of the Grievance Redressal Committee

The Code prescribes a balanced and representative composition of the GRC:

- The Committee shall consist of equal number of representatives of employers and workers.
- The total number of members shall not exceed ten.
- Adequate representation of women workers is mandatory, which is a progressive step toward inclusive governance.
- The Chairperson of the Committee shall be selected from among the members.

This balanced structure ensures fairness, transparency, and credibility in the grievance resolution process. However, in my considered view, a Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) comprising four to six members, with adequate representation of women members, would constitute a reasonable and effective group, capable of addressing workplace grievances in a fair, participative, and expeditious manner.

4. Scope and Nature of Grievances

The Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) is primarily designed to address individual grievances arising out of employment, including but not limited to:

- Wage-related disputes
- Leave, working hours, and service conditions
- Transfers, promotions, or disciplinary actions
- Interpretation of standing orders or service rules

It is worthwhile to mention that that the GRC does not replace collective bargaining mechanisms (Trade Union function) or adjudicatory forums (Industrial Tribunal / National Tribunal) but acts as the first internal forum for resolving disputes at the workplace level amicably without interference of the union or any other legally trained persons out-side or inside the company.

5. Procedure and Time Limit

The IRC, 2020 emphasizes speedy and effective redressal:

- Any aggrieved worker without support of union member may submit a grievance in writing to the GRC within one year from the date on which the cause of action of such dispute or grievance arises.
- The Committee is required to complete its inquiry and pass a decision within 30 days from the date of receipt of the grievance.
- The decision of the GRC must be communicated to the aggrieved worker as well as to the management.

This statutory timeline reinforces accountability and prevents prolonged uncertainty for both workers and management.

6. Right to Adjudicate

If the worker is not satisfied with the decision of the Grievance Redressal Committee,(GRC) the Code preserves the worker's right to seek redressal under the appropriate provisions of the IRC, including:

- Conciliation
- Adjudication before Industrial Tribunal
- Adjudication before National Industrial Tribunal

Thus, the GRC acts as a pre-litigation mechanism, without curtailing statutory remedies.

7. Significance of the Grievance Redressal Committee

For Workers

- Provides a speedy, cost-effective, and accessible remedy
- Reduces dependency on prolonged litigation
- Ensures participative decision-making
- Strengthens workplace dignity and fairness

For Employers

- Helps in early detection and resolution of disputes
- Reduces industrial unrest and litigation costs
- Improves workplace discipline and morale
- Encourages harmonious industrial relations

8. GRC and the Changing Industrial Relations Landscape

The Grievance Redressal Committee under the IRC, 2020 reflects a paradigm shift from adversarial to collaborative dispute resolution. It aligns with global best practices emphasizing internal grievance mechanisms, alternative dispute resolution, and workplace democracy.

By institutionalizing grievance redressal at the establishment level, the Code aims to decongest labour courts and tribunals and promote a culture of dialogue and consensus.

9. Challenges and Way Forward

Despite its statutory backing, the **effectiveness of the Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC)** largely depends upon the following factors:

- **Formulation of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** The management should formulate a comprehensive SOP for the functioning of the GRC, providing for systematic record-keeping of all grievances. Each grievance should be assigned a unique reference number, duly recorded, examined, and disposed of through a reasoned decision. The final decision should be communicated in writing to the parties concerned, thereby ensuring procedural discipline akin to a quasi-judicial process.
- **Genuine Participation of Stakeholders:** There must be meaningful and bona fide participation by both management representatives and worker representatives, ensuring that the committee functions as a forum of dialogue rather than a mere formality.

- **Proper Training of Committee Members:** Members of the GRC should be adequately trained in labour laws, principles of natural justice, and grievance handling techniques to ensure informed and fair decision-making.
- **Awareness among Workers:** Workers must be made aware of their rights, the procedure for raising grievances, and the role of the GRC, so that the mechanism is accessible and effectively utilised.
- **Transparent and Unbiased Functioning:** The GRC must function in a transparent, impartial, and unbiased manner, inspiring confidence among workers and preventing erosion of trust in the internal grievance redressal mechanism.
- **Recording of Proceedings and Communication of Decisions in the Local Language:** The Grievance Redressal Committee must interact with workers in the local language or in a language understood by the concerned worker, so as to ensure meaningful participation and effective hearing. Further, the decision of the GRC should be recorded and communicated in writing in the local language, thereby eliminating language barriers, ensuring transparency, and upholding the principles of natural justice.

10. Conclusion

The Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 is a progressive and pragmatic reform aimed at fostering industrial harmony through early, internal, and participative resolution of workplace disputes. If implemented in its true letter and spirit, it has the potential to significantly transform India’s industrial relations ecosystem by making justice swift, accessible, and humane at the workplace itself.

Therefore, it is imperative that the Government, employers, and trade unions collectively ensure that the Grievance Redressal Committee does not degenerate into a mere statutory formality, but instead evolves into a vibrant, credible, and effective forum for workplace justice.

SPECIMEN FORMAT – GRIEVANCE REGISTER

(To be maintained permanently under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020)

Name of Establishment : _____

Address : _____

Registration / Code No. : _____

Period : From _____ To _____

GRIEVANCE REGISTER

Sl. No.	Grievance No.	Date of Receipt	Name of Worker	Emp. No.	Dept./Designation	Nature of Grievance (Brief)	Language of Grievance	Date of Hearing	GRC Members Present	Decision / Findings (Brief)	Date of Decision	Mode of Communication (Written/E mail)	Date of Communication	Signature of Worker (Acknowledgement)	Remarks
1.	GRC/2026/001														
2.	GRC/2026/002														

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS (To be printed on first page of the Register)

1. Each grievance shall be assigned a unique Grievance Number.
2. No entry shall be overwritten, erased, or removed.
3. Corrections, if any, shall be made by single line cancellation and attestation.
4. The Register shall be treated as a permanent judicial record.
5. The Register may be summoned by Conciliation Officers, Industrial Tribunals, or other adjudicating authorities.
6. Proceedings and decisions shall be communicated in the local language or a language understood by the worker.

SIGNATURES

Chairperson, GRC

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Member (Management Side)

Signature: _____

Member (Worker Side)

Signature: _____

A model Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the functioning of the Grievance Redressal Committee may be obtained free of cost by making a request via email at: skpfdelhi@gmail.com