

CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT DURING THE BRITISH RULE

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2.1. Introduction

Labour is the outcome of factory system and trade union is the outcome of the emergence of labour. With the establishment of factory system labour grows as a class, and it happens in case of India too. Factory system had been installed in India only in the middle of 19th century, with the erection of one cotton mill in Bombay and a Jute mill in Calcutta in 1851 and 1854 respectively. Trade union movement in the Indian Subcontinent was late in comparison to western countries as factory system had been established lately in India. But India had a long reputation for her rich heritage of cottage industry.

Industrial labour had grown in India through an evolutionary process. From coal mining Industry in 1775 to plantation industry in early 19th century, cotton, Jute and other industries came up through gradual process. With the process of industrialisation labour as a class evolved.

In this chapter we will try to discuss the emergence of labour through the process of gradual industrial development of India and Bengal as well as labourers' socio-economic conditions and struggle against the arrogant foreign and native masters. Attempt has been made to depict the growth and development of trade unions and their fight for the legal recognition. They had to fight hard from village panchayat to the formation of all India trade union congress. We will also take up the coming up of labour as a class with gradual industrial development of the country and their socio economic conditions. The trade union movement of this subcontinent has been discussed in different phases up to 1947.

2.2. Emergence of Labour Class

The evolution of labour in British India needs a trace back to the coal mining industry. Production of coal had started as far back as 1775, but insignificant in quantities. It was only the beginning of the second half of the 19th century that production of coal rose to any significant tonnage (Ramanujam, 1986: 6). Whatever may be the quantity we can see the existence of coalmines in the last quarter of 18th century in Bengal. So the coal mining industry is older than any other industry in Bengal (Saha, 1978: 10). Moreover, coal is a labour intensive industry. Therefore, it can be said that invention of colliery gave birth of industrial labour in Bengal and India as well. ILO report of 1838 on industrial labour of India recorded:

The production of coal is the most important mining industry. The first mine was opened at Raniganj in 1828, but it was not until 1854 when the East India Railways reached the coalfields that the industry began to develop (ILO Report on Industrial Labour in India, 1938: 24).

The coal production in Burdwan district on an average was about 14,000 to 15,000 tons in 1832 (Dutt, 1956: 286-287). About 95 per cent of total coal obtained from Bihar, Orisa and West Bengal in which Raniganj, Jharia, Bokaro, Giridi and Karanpura fields were concentrated. Out of these the first was the most important yielding 77 per cent of the country's output. Coal-fields of Central Province, Assam and Beluchistan provinces were unimportant (Panadikar, 1933: 93).

It is previously said that the coal mining industry is situated in Asansol – Raniganj area of Burdwan in Bengal. Dwarakanath Tagore, the grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore had a coal mine at Raniganj colliery. It was the largest coal mine of India at that time. His Excellency pointed out in a letter to the secretary, Government of Bengal, on August 15, 1884 that newly formed Bengal Coal Company expected to bring to Calcutta twenty-lakh mounds coal annually by employing over five thousand persons at the mines and 1500 boats with crew totaling 9,000 men to bring the coal to Calcutta (Quoted in Saha, 1978: 10).

Coal mining did not take place in an organised form before 1895. In 1895 coal production reached three million tons for the first time, whereas since 1906 it had more than double (Saha, 1978: 10). The labour force in the coal mines steadily increased since 1890s, with the production. In coal mines labour had to be recruited from the villages around the coal mines. The number of miners was 229,100, who were mostly the natives in 1939, (Sen, 1981: 314) but minorities were obtained from Bihar, United Province and the Central Province. Being more intelligent, adaptable, painstaking and regular than the aboriginal workers, they were being increasingly employed for the coal-cutting machinery, explosives and other modern and scientific methods of mining and of regular working hours (Panadikar, 1933: 95).

The number of collieries under the scope of the Indian Mines Act was 208 and the number of persons employed in them were 44,303 during the year 1929 and the total output of this year reached up to 5,965,104 tons.

Table 2.1: Production of coal in each province and state in India (1878-1915)

(In Tons)

Year	British Provinces									Total
	Burma	Assam	Bihar & Urissa	Bengal	Punjab	N.W.F.P.	Baluchistan	Central Province	Madras	
1878-1880 (Average)	-	-	-	946,000	-	-	-	41,000	-	987,000
1886-1890 (Average)	-	105,000	+	1,411,000	16,000	-	5,000	137,000	-	1,674,000
1896-1900 (Average)	12,000	201,000	-	3,673,000	83,000	-	18,000	151,000	-	4,228,000
1910	-	297,236	7,041,208	3,737,322	49,189	90	52,614	220,437	-	11,398,096
1915	-	294,484	13,680,030	5,302,295	50,418	210	43,125	481,470	-	19,852,062

+ Figure included in Bengal

Year	Indian States					Total	Grand Total
	Hyderabad	Rajputana (Bikaner)	Central India (Rewah)	Kashmir			
1878-1880 (Average)							
1886-1890 (Average)	41,000	40,000	101,000	-		298,000	
1896-1900 (Average)	378,000	3,000	141,000	-		522,000	
1910	506,173	12,744	130,400	-		649,317	
1915	659,122	11,343	199,975	-		870,431	

Source: *Statistics of British India, 1921, Vol. 1, Commercial, p. 88.*

But wages were at about the same level as in the previous year (Report of Administration of Bengal, 1929-30: 84-85). So, exploitation and deprivation started since the beginning of industrial system came into being. Since the beginning the capitalist aimed at maximising the level of profit, thus depriving the working class.

The Table 2.1 on previous page gives a picture of coal production in each Indian province in 1818.

The total population of India was 191, 691, 731 in 1901, while the population supported by industry was 45,719,922 and population supported by commerce was 4,197,771 (Census of India, 1901, Vol. 1, Part-1, Report: 224-225) and the number of actual workers in collieries, miners and other subordinates were 62,485 of which the number of female workers was 27,962 (Census of India, 1901, Vol. 1, Part-1, Report: 231). In 1911 the total population of India was 313,470,014 and population supported by mining was 375,927 respectively. In 1921 it was 316,055,231 and 398,968 (Census of India, 1921, Vol. 1, Part-1, Report: 284). The following table 2.2 renders a clear picture of population supported by industry, coal mining and mining as a whole.

**Table 2.2: Population supported by Industry, mining and coal mining
(Male & Female)**

Total Population	Population Supported by Industry	Population Supported by Mining	Population Involved in Coal Mining	
			Male	Female
316,055,231	33,709,071	375,927	131,247	74,024

Source: *Census of India*, 1921, Part-I, Report, P. 282-285.

The Total quantity of coal exported during the year 1832-33, 451,564 tons earned rupees 43.68 lakhs (Report of Admn. of Bengal, 1932: 33-163). Moreover coal is a labour intensive industry. Therefore, it can be said that invention of colliery is the birth of industrial labour in Bengal and India as well.

Plantation industry was one of the oldest industries in India, and indigo came first as plantation industry, especially in Bengal. B.B. Kling says—

“Since pre-historic times indigo had been grown and processed in India, and during the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages small quantities had been exported to Europe. It was one of the rare tropical products which first attached European traders to India”...

(Kling, 1966: 16).

Europeans learned the indigo plantation from India when Alexander (327-324 B.C.) conquered Punjab. It was introduced in Europe from India, and widely used in European textiles especially in England after the adoption of blue for British Naval costumes. However at a latter stage the production considerably improved in West Indies and other South American colonies (Ahmed, 1978: 2). It was very interesting that from 17th to 20th centuries indigo was a fugitive among industries. Indigo reached up to the West Indies from India and then back to Bengal in Eastern India. Finally it took refuge in Bihar from Bengal (Kling, 1966: 15-16).

A different information we get regarding plantation of indigo in Bengal. At the end of 18th century the industry was imported into India from West Indies by European planters. One French trader Louis Bonnard introduced indigo cultivation in India in 1777. Among the English traders Carel Blume first introduced the indigo cultivation in Bengal in 1778 (Bose, 1969: 216). B.B. Kling also describes almost in the same manner – when the West Indies planters voluntarily switched over to the more profitable commodities of sugar and coffee, the British coal manufacturer were forced to depend on the supply from Spanish Guatemala, French Santo Domingo and Southern Carolina. These sources of dye were lost in the 1770s, with the American Revolution, and the British manufacturers were forced to pay more for indigo. The directors of East India Company therefore undertook steps to promote the cultivation of these cash crops in Bengal (Kling, 1966: 16-17). Afterwards Company discovered that indigo produced in Bengal under European supervision was equal in quality to the finest West Indian product. Then the East India Company helped the planters with advances. The company also encouraged experienced West Indian planters in Bengal. The governor General John Shore carried out a highly effective measure to improve the quality of indigo exported from Calcutta and stimulate the industry in Bengal in 1796. He imposed 15 per cent duty in all indigo brought into the province from Agra, and Oudh, areas which until that time supplied from fifths indigo exported from India to London. At the end of the century the amount of indigo exported to U.K. from Bengal was more than double of the quantity from all other sources (Kling, 1966: 18). Romesh Dutta said more categorically “the importation of Indigo from India commenced about 1790 and had so greatly increased in forty years as to supersede all other indigos” (Dutt, 1902: 281).

The scenario of cultivation of indigo was different than that of tea or other plantation in Bengal. Two types of indigo cultivation, *nijabad* and *raiyati* was in practice in lower Bengal. In *nijabad*, as in a conventional plantation system, that factory supplied the land and seed and hired the cultivators, usually along with ploughs and bullocks. *Nijabad* cultivation took place only on the adjacent lands of the factory and on *chars* (muddy plains formed due to changing course of the rivers). The major indigo cultivation was under *raiyati* cultivation outside the factory grounds. *Raiyati* land might have belonged to Indian Zamindar (*be-ilaka*) or the planter himself or it might be the Zamindar (*ilaka*). When it was cultivated on *raiyati* land that indigo conflicted *raiyats* and Zamindar (Kling, 1966: 29).

In northern and eastern Bengal where *char* lands were more plentiful, there was higher proportion of *nijabad*, but in lower Bengal as a whole almost three times as much land was cultivated under *raiyati* as under *nijabad*. Even they used to force the small and medium landholders to take the advances for the cultivation of indigo. The system by which European indigo manufacturers gave advances to the *raiyats* for cultivation of indigo was bound to lead to fraud and oppression (Sinha, 1961: 228). Advances were made to the tenants of local landlords to cultivate indigo and once they took advance they were no longer freemen and doomed forever. So cultivators were very much reluctant to produce indigo under planters' terms and conditions which were never profitable but they were forced to do it on slashes of whip. But on the contrary it was very much profitable to the planters. As it was profitable there were nearly one thousand Europeans in the 400 and odd indigo factories in Bengal in 1831 (Ahmad, 1978: 2). But due to this satisfaction of cultivators Blue Mutiny took place in Bengal and continued from 1858-60. The agitation was particularly widespread in Jessore, Nadia, Pabna, Faridpur, etc. (Bose, 1969: 217). Due to this indigo rebellion we could follow a marked decline in the cultivation of the plant throughout the Bengal. There were 300 or 400 factories in Bengal chiefly in Jessore, Krishnagar and Tirhoot. All the indigo factories were destroyed during that rebellion (Dutt, 1956: 280). So the roaring business declined miserably. The industry recovered the decaying condition in Bengal due to its extension in Bihar and the North West Provinces (Sinha, 1961: 355-256).

Actually there were no regular labour employed in the plantation of indigo but in the indigo factories some skilled workers, employees and very

small amount of labour were required. During the manufacturing season *Buna* coolies were brought from jungle tribes of Manbhum, Singhabhum and Midnapore were employed. A large factory like Mulnath, head quarters of Bengali indigo company, employed one hundred of them in each manufacturing season paying 3 or 4 Rupees per month and local labour was also employed to operate the pumps, boilers, cutting machines and other equipments as well as cart men and boat men were hired to bring the indigo plant to the factory (Quoted in Kling, 1966: 29).

So we can say that the planters used to cultivate indigo with the help of the tenants of local landholders under pressure from different corners. Neither labours nor tenants used to work willingly in the indigo factories or in the field of the foreign masters or their close allies, Zamindars of Bengal.

Some plantation industry, which has less onerous system of indentured labour, existed at that time. One of the largest plantation industries of Indian subcontinent was tea. Its development necessitated two basic requisites – firstly, large areas of cultivable land and secondly, huge labour force. Moreover the areas suited for plantations were initially sparsely populated, so plantation had to depend on migrated labour all through like other plantation areas of the world (Bhowmik, 1981: 10-11). Tea plantation requires huge labour, as it is a labour intensive and agro industrial product.

The growth of the tea plantation of India is very interesting. Major Robert Bruce discovered indigenous tea plants in Assam in 1823. During the following decade discovery of wild tea was made in Assam and in 1834 Lord William Bentinck appointed a commission charged with the duty of submitting to Government “a plan for the accomplishment of the introduction of tea cultivation in India and for the superintendents of its execution (Quoted in Saha, 1978: 7). On the basis of the report an experiment was made on the lower hills and valleys of the Himalayan range and the experiments were proved successful and it was found to be highly profitable (Quoted in Saha, 1978: 7).

The experimentation in cultivation of tea in India was undertaken by the Government in 1834. Tea makers and artisans from China were introduced in 1837 and some consignments of manufacture of Assam tea were forwarded to the court of Directors in the year 1838-39. To see the high quality the English Mercantile world and the company were attracted for the cultivation of the tea plant and manufacture of tea in upper Assam. The first

trial of tea plant at Darjeeling was made in 1841. And these ventures also came out successful (Gosh, 1978: 9). The discovery of indigenous tea in Sylhet and Cachher gave the impetus for an expansion of the industry into Surma valley, and few years thereafter the whole of the upper portion of the province of Assam (both Brahmaputra and Surma valley) was converted into large tea plantation (Saha, 1978: 8-9). The tea plantations were localized mainly in Assam, Bengal and also in parts of U. P., Punjab, and in some southern states (Gosh, 1978: 3).

Now the question arises why the tea plantation industry was encouraged by the British. Firstly, there was a huge demand for tea in the Indian market and thus a big amount of it had to be imported from China. Secondly, tea had a demand in the world market, especially in the western world. Thirdly, Warren Hastings realized that the growth of tea industry would promote industrial development of India (Bhowmik, 1981: 7). and lastly cheap labour, land and favorable climate for tea production, and foreign capital ushered in the growth of tea plantation.

In May 1838 the first consignment of eight chests of tea from India was supplied to London and was sold by auction at prices ranging from 16 Shilling to 34 Shilling per pound. Another important news was that the Assam Tea Company was founded in 1839, and it was the first tea company (Saha, 1978: 8).

How tea plantation industry came up is not our concern, rather the emergence of working class through the gradual flourishing of industrial sector is our main concern of discussion. The working force of tea plantation industry is a bit different from any other industry. Tea gardens were generally located in jungle lands where there were wild animals, mosquitoes and other poisonous insects too. So working conditions of the growing stage of the garden were very hazardous and risky. Local people having a minimum means to live were disinclined to work in the tea gardens. In this situation all the tea producing areas had to depend on immigrant workers of Bihar, Orissa, U.P., Santals from Santal Pargana, Nepal, and some local labour. Not only in the tea plantation of India, plantation industry all over the world had to depend on migrant labour like cotton plantation in North America, rubber in Malaysia and tea in India (Bhowmik, 1981: 11).

An exquisite report on 'Industrial Labour in India' conducted by International Labour Office of Geneva, presented valuable information regarding tea plantation of tea in Assam and Bengal as follows:

“The plantations in the North area principally located in Assam and Bengal. In Assam the plantation are distributed in the Brahmaputra or the Assam valley in the North and Surma valley in the South. The planting areas in Bengal comprise Darjeeling, Terai and the Dooars in the North and Tripura in the South-east. In Darjeeling the tea gardens occupy slopes from 6,000 feet downwards; Terai is level country at the base of and surrounded by high mountains and is only about 300 feet above the sea level; the Dooars is a submountain country, South of Bhutan and 22 miles in width, between Tista and Sankosh River. With the exception of Cinchona, which is grown by the Government in the district of Darjeeling, the only plantation crop is tea. A few small plantations are also to be founded in the Punjab, the United Province and Bihar and Orissa” (ILO Report, 1938: 36).

Regarding the manufacture of tea we can say that there was steady progress marked in this industry. The quantity of tea manufactured was 111,355,903 Lbs in 1928. The number of tea plantations totaled 388 and employing on an average 194,511 permanent and 9,432 temporary hands daily (Report of Administration of Bengal, 1929-30: 84)

Tea was ranked second to jute in the number of persons employed among the organised industries of Bengal. Virtually tea-producing districts were Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri in Bengal. Since tea plantation started in Bengal in 1850s its growth had been phenomenal. The industry was the first in Bengal as a commercial enterprise in Darjeeling in 1856. In 1870 there were only 56 gardens, employing about 8,000 labourers in Darjeeling and by 1901 there were 148 tea gardens, employing 64,000 coolies (Bengal District Gazetteers, Calcutta, 1907: 44-45).

From the 1911 census it is evident that the work on tea gardens appealed to a very large number of tribal not less than 91, the chief among them being Oraons, Mundas, Jeondars or Khambus, Santals, Murmis, Mangars and Kharias. The nature of labour force varied in the different gardens (Broughton, 1924: 77). It varied because the sources of labour in different plantation areas were different.

Local Assamese people were very much reluctant to work in the tea gardens. This necessitated the employment of labour from outsiders, like, tribes, people belonging to the Hindu untouchable community from the district of Ranchi and its neighbourhood and from eastern part of U. P. and Madhya Pradesh with false hopes and aspiration. For recruitment of labour

from distant parts of the country for Assam gardens passed two special Acts, first was the workers breach of contract Act, 1859. Under this Act planters could take summary remedy against deserters. The second was the plantation Act 1863 requiring the recruiters to be licensed, the emigrant to be registered, and sanitation could be provided on the way to labour districts. Desertion on the part of the workmen was made possible and planters were empowered to arrest absconders without warrants (Ahmad, 1978: 3). So the conditions of workers were like that of slaves. And these labourers had to work hard in jungles with minimum wages and little fringe benefits and above all tuckered in different ways. Not only in Bengal, in India vast majority of workers got a wage which was not enough to provide them with the meanest necessities of life (Dutt, 1969: 388).

From the following table (table 2.3) we would get the number of labour employed in specified years of Assam tea gardens.

Table 2.3: Labour population living on Assam tea gardens in specified years

Year*	Adults	Children's	Total
1877...	110,675	46,544	157,219
1900...	410,075	252,374	622,451
1919-20	629,631	480,733	1,110,364
1935-36	618,043	521,353	1,139,396

* The year chosen are these when the number of workers on the gardens was large.

Source: ILO Report on industrial labour in India, 1938, p. 38.

From the following table (Table 2.4) we can have the growth of tea plantation workers of both Bengal and Assam.

Table 2.4: Growth of tea plantation workers

Place	1935	1942
Assam	519,621	521,667
Bengal	205,428	221,251

Source: Saha, 1978: 9.

From the following table 2.5, we will get a picture of number of tea gardens employing more than 20 persons.

Table 2.5: Gardens employing more than 20 persons

Year	No.	Persons
1911	1,002	703,585
1921	1,353	746,760

Source: Census of India, 1921: 266.

In Jalpaiguri tea gardens, the majority workers were found to be immigrants, more than half coming from Chota Nagpur (Census of India, 1911: 358). The growth of Jalpaiguri garden is significant as it started with 13 gardens in 1876, and rose to 235 in 1901, employing some 90,000 persons (Bengal District Gazetteers, Jalpaiguri, Allahabad, 1911: 102-103).

In the gardens of Darjeeling almost half of the labour was local, the bulk of the remainder coming from Nepal (Broughton, 1924: 77). It is the special characteristics of Darjeeling tea gardens that there were some local labours.

The valuable information regarding labour and production of the tea garden is revealed in the Statesman's year book of 1918 as follows:

One of the most important industries connected with agriculture is tea industry, the number of persons employed being about 698,000 in 1915-16. The area under tea plucked in this year was about 585,000 acres, distributed as follows: Assam, 359,000; Bengal, 151,000; Madras, 21,000; Punjab, 10,000; Agra, 8,000; Bihar and Orissa, 2,000; Upper Burma, 1,600; and the Travencore state, 33,000. The production of 1915-16 was about 372 million pounds (Statesman's Year Book, 1918: 136).

Regarding the daily working people of tea factories a notable statistics we can get from a report on the administration of Bengal 1932-33 –

There were 288 tea factories under the Tea Factories Act, and the total daily average number of operatives employed was 15,722. This number excluded those employed in gardens out sides the factory (Report on the Admn. of Bengal, 1932-33:143).

In tea plantations both male and female, child and adolescents are working Employment of adolescent and child labour is a special feature of the plantation industry especially in Assam and West Bengal, but it is minimum in South India. The tea industry in general has more female workers than male workers (Bhowmik, 1981: 5). And this trend is followed in most Asian countries. In the then Ceylon and Vietnam woman account for over 50 per cent of the labour force in plantations. In Malay and India the Share is over 40 per cent and in Pakistan and Philippines it is around 35 per cent (Boserup, 1970: 76). The table 2.6 will illustrate the tea producing areas and number of workers plantation area wise with an age group and sex.

Table 2.6: Employment of Workers in Tea Garden in 1973

Place	Male	Female	Adolescent	Children
Dooars	61,358	57,959	5,335	8,040
W. Bengal	85,032	92,901	6,668	11,558
N. India	275,314	277,354	19,172	41,474
S. India	55,461	81,924	3,052	1,285
All India	341,775	359,278	22,242	42,759

Source: Bhowmik, 1981: 6.

The exports of Indian tea from British India (including the State of Travancore) in 1915-16 were: to United Kingdom, 250,290,000 lb.; China,

9,865,000 lb.; Australia, 9,591,000 lb.; Ceylon, 4,307,000 lb.; Asiatic Turkey, 2,327,000 lb.; United States, 3,443,000 lb.; elsewhere (including exports across the land frontiers), 15,178,000 lb.; total 340,433,000 lb. (Statesman's Year-Book, 1918: 136).

Though coffee was not a common beverage like tea, but it was one of the important plantation industries of South India. Coffee was imported from Arabia and Abyssinia (through Mocha) as a costly beverage taken by high society in Mughal period. But unlike tobacco it did not become popular before the second half of the 17th century and was not acclimatised (Sarkar, 1987: 28).

Coffee was cultivated extensively only since 1823. The Government encouraged coffee cultivation by permitting the planters to hold land for a long series of years. Coffee was produced in Bengal also. In Bengal 400 acres had been led out in coffee. Here the sun was too powerful for coffee cultivation (Dutt, 1956: 283).

As the tea plantation is the most important industry in Eastern India, coffee plantation became the centre of activities in South India (Chowdhury R.C., 1987: 88). The most important areas for the coffee industry are the Madras Presidency and Coorg in British India and the states of Mysore, Travancore and Cochin; in 1936-36, the number workers was 31,655 in the Madras Presidency, 21,623 in Coorg, and 48,117 in Mysore (ILO Report of Indian Labour, 1938: 37).

Most of the coffee was exported to European countries like France and Norway. It may be mentioned that whereas tea is consumed mostly in U. K. and her dominions and coffee in European countries other than U. K. and America. The exports of coffee were earlier in origin than those of tea from India, and had greater importance for sometime, but with the growth of tea industry, coffee got a lower position (Vakil *et al.*, 1931: 57). Principally, the whole of the production was exported. The following table 2.7 shows the figure of the trade during the five years.

Table No. 2.7: Figure of the trade of coffee in five years.

Year	CWT	Rupees
1899-1900	281,353	1,48,47,146
1900-1901	264,431	1,22,84,498
1901-1902	255,042	1,25,02,200
1902-1903	269,165	1,32,12,628
1903-1904	291,254	1,36,73,773

Source: *Review of the Trade of India*, 1903-04.

Through these economic activities labour force was emerging gradually in Bengal and India as well. People were getting employment with

the development of agro-based industries side by side with the agricultural sector.

Jute was regarded as the golden fiber of Bengal, and it was growing in Bengal for a long time past, especially in East Bengal. Bengal was the largest producer of jute in the world. But Bengal jute was mostly used in the early 19th century. Later on the use of jute began to increase in place of flax and hemp. Thomad Neish, a Dundee merchant, persuaded the Dundee spinners, Messers Bell and Balfour, to try spinning jute with their machinery. The experiment was successful. 18 tons of jute was imported by the Dundee manufacturers in 1828. The figure rose to three hundred tons in 1933. By then a large part of flax machinery had been adjusted to jute, and in 1833 saw the beginning of the mechanical manufacture of jute yarns and fabrics (quoted in Chakrabarty, 1996: 16). Pure jute yarn was put up for sale for the first time in 1835 and within a few years jute appeared in the European market as a competitor of flax and hemp (Ahmad, 1966: 16). Raw jute was exported in the early days of East India Company to Dundee where jute goods manufacturing industry had been developed rapidly. But later on company thought that labour was very cheap, so they could start mills in Bengal which would earn more profit.

Use of jute increased appreciably by the decision of the Netherlands Government, about 1833, to replace flax by jute in the manufacturing of coffee bags for East Indies. And the Crimean war (1854-55) cut off the supply of flax, the main source of which was Russia. So the Bengal Jute began to flow in European market and it became popular (Sinha, 1967: 255).

Mr. George Auckland, formally a coffee planter of Ceylon started the jute-spinning mill - the Rishra Yarn mill component at Rishra near Srirampore in the Hoogly district in 1854. It started with the production capacity of 8 tons of yarn per day. Two years later the first weaving mill was established at Baranagar. The name of the mill was Borneo Company, which, came later on to be known as the Baranagar jute factory limited. This company first installed 192 power looms in India (Ahmad, *Year Book on Jute*, 1967: 17-18). With the establishment of first jute mill in 1854 in Bengal and first cotton mill in 1851 in Bombay factory system had been introduced in Bengal as well as in India. This was the real birth of industrial labour in India in the truest sense. With the establishment of factory system industrial labour force began to grow slowly.

Jute mills began to increase gradually as it was very much profitable. The five jute mills were established between 1855 and 1866. And by 1872-75 thirteen new mills were set up and the number of looms increased from 1,250 in 1873 to 3,500 in 1875 (Sinha, 1967: 255). Almost all the jute mills were set up around Calcutta. From 1879-80 to 1935-36, the number of mills rose from 22 to 104, and the number of looms and spindles increased from 4,946 and 70,840 to 63,700 and 1.27 million respectively (*Statistics of British India*, Vol. 1, 1922: 76).

With the establishment of first jute mill in 1854 setting up of new mills was marked, as it was a profitable industry. The data persuaded in table 2.7 shows the progress of the jute mills.

Table 2.7: Quinquennial Progress of the Jute mill industry in India from 1879 to 1915 and 1918-19

Year	Number of Mills at Work	Persons employed
1879-1880	22	27,494
1884-1885	24	51,902
1885-1890	26	59,541
1890-1895	28	74,357
1895-1900	34	102,440
1900-1905	38	133,162
1905-1910	60	204,104
1910-1915	70	238,274
1918-1919	76	275,500

Source: *Statistics of British India* Vol. 1, Commercial statistics, 1921, p. 74.

Out of a total of 243,000 tons of jute exported during the financial year 1942-43, 89,000 tons were consigned to the United Kingdom and 124,000 tons to the United States of America. Brazil, U.S.S.R., Argentina, Canada and Australia were other important customers for Indian raw jute (*The Review of the Trade of India in 1942-43*: 15). Table 2.8 shows the export of raw Jute and manufactured jute goods from India.

Table-2.8: The export of jute & jute goods in three consecutive years

(In thousand of Rupees)

Items	1940-41	1941-42	1942-43
Raw Jute	7,84,60	10,41,78	9,01,57
Jute manufactures	45,38,46	53,89,54	36,40,93
Total Value of export	53,23,06	64,31,32	45,42,50

Source: *Review of the Trade of India in 1942-43*, p. 80.

The number of workers in jute and other fibers, with their families, has risen from 461 to 649 thousand. About one third of the total area operatives, etc, in the Bengal jute mills and jute posses, who aggregate 143,000 compare to only 38,000 ten years ago (Census of India, 1901: 214). Population supported by jute hemp, Flax, Coir, etc. Were 461,193 and

649,604 in 1891 and 1901 respectively (Census of India, 1901, Vol. 1, Part-I, Report: 239).

Regarding the labour force in the jute mills Foley reported in 1906:

"Twenty years ago all the hands were Bengalis" (Quoted in Sen Sunil Kumar, 1981: 312).

The Bengali workers who came from peasantry and weaving formed 53.6 per cent of the labourers in the jute mills in 1895. The number of Bengali workers began to decrease when a good number of labours started coming from Bihar, United Province, Orisa and joined the industry (Sen, 1981: 312). There might be a question why there was a continuing flow of immigrant labour in Bengal? There were so many reasons for this influx. Although Bengal is a fertile land with green vegetation, moderate weather and easy going life than other regions of India. In British period Calcutta was the capital till 1911 and Bengal Presidency was the most important presidency than Madras and Bombay. Political, economic and cultural activity of India was controlled by Calcutta. So people all over India used to come to Bengal in search of job, who settled permanently. Moreover, the recruited contractors and sardars were non-Bengalees. They were involved in regional nepotism, encouraging the concentration of migrants from the same area in the same industrial centres (Sen, 1981: 313).

Classification of jute mill employees according to castes was not vivid in the 1921 census. Only 21 castes were started while at the census of 1911 no less than 71 castes were enumerated. According to the censuses of 1911 and 1921, Muhamadans constitute a substantial proportion of the workers. Muslims were called *Jolahas* and Hindu weavers were known as *Tanti* and *Tatwa* (Broughton, 1924: 77).

The following data shown in table 2.9 will give a clear picture of jute workers in the province of Bengal according to caste or race.

Table 2.9: Caste or Race of jute workers in the province of Bengal

Caste, Tribe or Race	Skilled	Unskilled
1. Muhamadan	46,917	33,179
2. Chamar and Muchi	6,941	21,883
3. Tanti	4,811	6,812
4. Chasi Kaibartta	4,022	2,219
5. Teli	3,677	6,143
6. Bagdi	3,546	4,429
7. Jali Kaibartta	3,489	3,978
8. Goala	2,739	4,454
9. Brahmman	2,154	4,614
10. Unspecified	83,604	58,586

Source: Broughton, 1924: 76.

The Baranagar Jute Factory Limited installed the first 192 power looms in India. In 1946-47 the number rose from 1 to 108 and that of looms from 192 to 11,300 (Ahmad, 1969: 17-18).

The long heritage of highly skilled craftsmanship of Bengal weavers and comparatively low price produce made its textiles attractive to Asian merchants for centuries (Sushil, 1997: 257-58). Not only Asia Bengal's cheap and high quality textiles attracted the European countries too. But our craftsmen and artisans were always deprived of proper wage and benefits and services programmes. So they had no general standard of living. They were so ill paid that they had no social status. In order to maintain minimum standard moderate wage was essential.

The handicrafts manufacturing industry of Bengal, especially in the field of textile and silk production was at its peak during the rule of the Bengal Nawabs, supplying the enormous demand of both Asia and Europe (Sushil, 1997: 31). Not only the Bengal under Nawabs, rather throughout the medieval period this country was famous for its textiles attracted the European countries too. Robert Orme found the cotton manufacture to be a national industry of Bengal about mid 18th century as there was hardly a village near large towns and on the principal roads where every inhabitant man, woman or child, was not engaged in manufacturing. But this distinction had not grown in a day; it had a tradition of at least several centuries. Besides Tanda, Maldah and Salgaon, Sonargoan (The old Muslim capital of Eastern Bengal) was noted for the production of 'a species of muslin very fine and great quality' in the time of Akbar (Sarkar, 1987: 49).

The export trades of the European Companies Bengal textiles were the most important single manufactured article both in terms of value and volume. Bengal provided more textiles to the European Companies than the rest of Asia put together (Sushil, 1997: 157).

N. K. Sinha added the following –

"The export of Bengal cotton textiles was major part of the East India Company's commercial activities since it had started its operations in Bengal. It had its manufactories at Santipuram, Dacca, Tandha and Birbhum" (Sinha, 1967: 350).

In the medieval period, Bengal was not only famous for cotton textiles but also silk product in the European and Asian Market. As far as the actual exports of Textiles, were concerned. Dutch company used to export more

than the English, British went ahead of the Dutch in early 18th century. During this decade the Dutch and British exported about 203,353 and 278,588 pieces respectively. Before 1757 the export of Bengal textiles by Asian merchants were larger than those by Europeans. The total export from Dhaka in 1747 the Asian share including that of the Americans stood by two third of the total compared to the one third of Europeans including the European Private trade in 1774 (Sushil, 1997: 260-61). The total value of annual textile export formed roughly about 70-90 per cent of the total value of the company's export (Sushil, 1975: 205).

As far as the employment in the handloom cotton textile industry is concerned in 1776 the weaving of the cloth in the Dacca district alone provided employment to some 146,751 individuals which included 25,200 weavers and 8,000 spinners. In and around 1825 there were about 1.5 million in the province who were directly engaged in the production of cotton textiles (Awal, 1997: 355-56).

Production and trade of cotton textile was very much satisfactory, but that was the age of cottage industry; modern factory had not been introduced at that time. The production was carried out with the help of family members or few hired labour' in separate rooms and corridors. Weaver was the chief of the family and the production process, and the family members were the personnel of his production unit.

Regarding the establishment of cotton mills in India the Indian Cotton Industry, 1940 annual (The Indian Cotton Textile Industry, 1940: Annual, September, 1940: 1) says that –

It was as early as 1818 that the first cotton mill was established at fort Gloster near Calcutta, but the real development of the cotton mills on the modern joint stocks principle in this country dates from 1851 when the Bombay Weaving and Spinning mill was established in Bombay.

But within few decades there are good numbers of mills in India. This report (The Indian Cotton Textile Industry, 1940: Annual, September, 1940: 29) further says regarding the development of the industry –

.... Towards the end of the last century, we had no less than 156 mills and by 1914 the number had increased to 239 with a total nominal capital of Rs. 20,00,14,000 and equipped with a total compliment of 90,268 looms and 6,208,756 spindles. By the end of 1939 the total number of equipped mills in this country stood at 389.

This is the beginning of the factory system in India. After that, mills and factories began its establishment in different places of India. By the end of 19th century 144 cotton mills and cotton twines of over 77 million lbs were exported (The Indian Cotton Textile Industry, 1940: Annul, September). Steady progress was made by the textile industry at the beginning of the 20th century as anti British movement got impetus due to *Swadesi* (self Government) movement and the partition of Bengal in 1905 when it was resolved not to use any cloth made in Lancashire or Manchester cotton textile mills. These movements had a direct impact on cotton textile industries of India.

By 1914 India had become the fourth greatest cotton manufacturing country in the world (Anstey, 1952: 262). The number of workers working in cotton sectors is shown below in the table 2.10. According to 1901 census report of India:

Table 2.10: Workers of Cotton Sector According to Sex & Their Percentage

Order of suborder Cotton	Number of actual worker		Number of females per 1000 male
	Male	Female	
1. Cotton cleaners, pressers and ginneres	153,801	89,942	585
2. Cotton weavers, hand industry	1,386,434	832,594	458
3. Cotton spinners, seizers and yarn beaters	90,295	509,200	5,639
4. Cotton yarn and thread sellers	23,284	10,472	450
5. Cotton dyers	72,854	27,366	376

Source: *Census of India, 1901, Vo. 1, Part-1, Report, p. 232.*

Progress of cotton mills was satisfactory. We get a more clear picture of the progress from table 2.11:

Table 2.11: Progress of cotton mills in India from 1932 to 1938

(Figure in thousands)

Year ending 31 st August	Number of mills	Average No. of hands employed
1932	339	4,03
1933	344	4,00
1934	352	3,85
1935	365	4,15
1936	379	4,18
1937 (a)	370	4,17
1938 (a)	380	4,38
1939 (a)	389	4,41

(ii) Includes Burma.

Source: *The Indian Cotton Textile Industry, 1940, Annual: x.*

But as a whole the conditions of labour in Bengal and India remained deplorable. They had to work for 11 or 12 hours a day with half an hour's recess, sometimes it extended up to 14 or 15 hours or more. No extra payment for that – no facilities or amenities of life that a human being

deserves. In Calcutta the working time was a bit different in different mills. The position of workers was better than other states. The report of the Indian factory labour commission of 1908 (*Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1908: 6-10*) describes regarding the working hours¹ in case of textile or other factories in detail.

Next to textile, raw silk was one of the most important exportable items of the European Companies from Bengal almost in the seventies of 17th century. Indian silk had a long tradition for its high quality and cheap price. Silk was produced in different places in India such as – Malda, Rangpur, Dacca and Kumarkhali (Nadia) and the Southern India. European Companies especially the Dutch and English were interested in Chinese and Persian silk. In the middle of 1670 they turned their attention to the Bengal silk, which was of high quality and less costly than Chinese, Persian, Italian or Spanish silk. So it was easier to earn huge profit by exporting Bengal silk to English and other European markets. The average annual export of Bengal raw silk to England during the decade 1776-1785 rose to 560,283 (small) lb., while that from Italy, China and other countries did not altogether exceed 282,306 lb. (Sinha, 1927: 175). The major silk production and trade centre in Bengal was Kasim Bazar and its neighborhood including Murshidabad, Bauleah (Rajshahi), Kumarkhali, Malda, Radanagore, Rangpur and Rangamati (Sushil, 1997: 249-51).

European companies exported quite a large amount of raw silk from Bengal, but they could hardly control the silk market of Bengal. The large number of Asian merchants were engaged in the silk market of Bengal. European Companies had to face tough competition from the several of Asian merchants from Gujarat, Lahore, Multa, Beneras, Gorakhpur, Hyderabad, Delhi ('Calwars') and Jangipur (Murshidabad) and Armenians too. The Asian merchants exported larger amounts of raw silk from Bengal than the total exports of the European Companies taken together in the 1740s and 1750s (Sushil, 1997: 252-255).

In addition to cheap labour, Bengali artisans' ability and attitude, finest quality of silk and its colour made our silk industry famous in Asian and European market. In 1853 a Dutch factory was established in Kasim Bazar for reeling raw silk. When the factory operated in full capacity it would reel about 1,500 bales of raw silk per annum and employed over 300 men. But when the factory faced dull time workers strength came down to less than hundred (Sushil, 1997: 252).

Salt is another essential item widely produced in Bengal. It was manufactured in the costal region of Bengal Presidency by a class of people know as *malngis*² whose profession was, by and large hereditary. Salt was produced in two ways – first, by solar evaporation; secondly, by boiling the brine. The second one is expensive and a laborious process. But it was widely practiced in Bengal. People of Bengal mostly used this type of salt. Labourers had to be hired for the whole salt season, in some places, where the labours were scarce; the manufacturers were obliged to pay the entire season's wage (Serajuddin, 1973: 55).

Salt was produced in Bengal along the costal belt between Balasore and Chittagong, in Hijli, Tamruk, the Twenty Four Parganas, Dacca, Noakhali and Chittagong. Bengal produced 30,28,342 mds. In 1795 and 26,99,286 mds. of salt in 1796. On the average Bengal produced about 28 Lakhs mds. of salt every year (Sinha, 1965: 216)

There were two types of salt worker (*malangis*) in Bengal at that time namely *ajoorah* and *thika*. The total number of workers were about 60,000 of which *thika malangis* constituted one-third of the total. The *ajoorah malangis* were tied to the soil and there was no recession from it. The house and lands of the *ajoorah* were close to the *Khalari* (salt workers) lands. The manufacture of salt was a family concern. The price of *ajoorah* salt was gradually increased from Rs. 14 per hundred mounds to Rs. 26-10-12 in Hijli and Rs. 27-2-9 in Tamruk. The lowest rate of payment to *thika malangis* was 40 Arcot rupees per hundred mounds in Hijli. Their daily wages amounted to 1 anna 2 gandas and 3 cowries. The common labour got 13 gandas per day (Sinha, 1965: 18-19).

Except all these agro-based manufacturing industries and many other non agriculture industries there were so many industries in existence in pre-colonial India. The rich heritage of handicrafts or cottage industries, constituted a characteristic feature of rural economy of India and Bengal as well, one of her richest province. We are going to mention some other important industrial products labour involved in it, which had national and international importance.

As regards sugar industry, according to historian Abul Fazal, five types of sugar were produced from sugar cane and palm trees by peasants of that time:

(a) Jaggery (Gur); (b) red or brown sugar; refined form of gur, (c) white sugar; powdered fine grained, more refined modern form, (d) white candy, (e) Nabat; refined sugar balls. White sugar, chiefly manufactured in Bengal,

Orissa, Agra-Bayana, Multa, Ahmadabad and Cambay. According to Abul Fazal, Bengal sugar was ranked first in production. It was taken by river to the imperial capitals, where it would cost 128 *dams* a mound. And it was sent by sea to Malabar. According to French Bernier (1656-58) Bengal sugar in large quantity was supplied to Golkanda and Karnatik, to Arabia and Mesopotamia through town of Mecca and Basra and even to Persia by Bandar Abbas. In the 17th century the production of sugar in Bengal possibly increased with the establishment of new markets for it in Europe and Persia by the Dutch and the English (Sarkar, 1987: 26-27).

Saltpetre is an essential element of gun powder. The Europeans were attracted to this trade quite early. But in international trade in it as an ingredient of gunpowder originated in the military needs of Europe during the 17th century. In the 16th and 17th century saltpetre was used internally in India for cooling water and as an ingredient of gunpowder, in preparing explosives and fireworks. It was highly prized by the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English and the French for export to their respective countries. Regarding the export of Saltpetre East India Company had the monopoly. During the twelve years of peace from 1763 to 1772, the Company sold on an average 22,620 bags of Saltpetre per annum. The Company's export of Saltpetre to England brought a profit of £5, 381 in 1776 (Sinha, 1927: 176-177). Saltpetre was found in marked degree in different districts of Indo-gangetic plains, especially in Bihar. It gave employment to peasants of different places e.g. Bihar, Bengal, Gujarat (Sarkar, 1987: 69).

Water way is the oldest media of transports. People used to carry necessities and passengers from one place to another through rafts and country boats from the pre-historic ages. Making of boats developed gradually through the evolution of civilisation. So, shipbuilding industry came up in due course.

The Mughal Emperor Akbar founded and maintained an imperial naval establishment in Bengal. The department was known as *nawara*. A large shipyard was established in Dhaka for building new ships and repairing the old ones during his viceroyalty, Shaista Khan. He also ordered as many boats as was possible to build at the ports of Hugli, Balasore, Murang, Chilmory, Jessore and Caribari (Awal, 1997: 397). Local made ships were far better than British or any other Western ships. It was possible as the materials were cheap and plenty, moreover there were local artifices and

labourers were also in good number and cheap. They may not be considered as marine engineer but shipwrights they proved themselves to be the excellent ship carpenter.

This industry had created employment for both skilled and unskilled labour. Expanding domestic and foreign trade gave a definite boost to ship building industry. In British period Khidirpur (Calcutta) dock and marine yard had been established in 1780 (Awal, 1997: 398). As the industry flourished number of labour increased side by side. The census figure for 1921, indicate the total number of persons supported by industry was 33,709,709 in India (Census of India 1921: 282). Rajani Palm Dutt expressed his dissatisfaction regarding the number of working class in India. He says-

The industrial working class in India, in the modern sense, is not numerically large in relation to the population; but it is concentrated in the decisive centres, and is the most coherent, advanced, resolute and basically revolutionary section of the population (Dutt, 1969: 383).

Other than the above-discussed industries there were numerous types of industries and commercial activities in all over India and Bengal, such as food grains, Tobacco, Opium, which were commercial crop. Many agro-based industries developed with these products. Some non-agricultural industries like Hides, Skins and leather goods, wool, house hold utensils, paper, Tailoring, pottery etc. made this country economically self sufficient which enjoyed favorable balance of payment altogether.

Before the advent of factory system labour was scattered all over the country with the small unit of cottage industry. With the gradual industrial development in India labour as a class emerged. But the labours financial position was at stake. They had to sell their labour at a very low wage. Moreover in July 1925 the Mill-owners Association announced eleven percent reduction of wages. This decision caused serious strikes that India has yet to witness. Afterwards the wage-cut was withdrawn (Anstey, 1952: 263).

It is worth mentioning that production may increase, profits may double or tripled but wages will remain as it was. Other factors of production will get return except labour. It had been in practice and it is still in practice. But it may be mentioned here that this problem is more acute in developing countries than developed countries as far as wages and hidden payroll is concerned. In developed countries like the U.S.A, the U.K. other European countries, Japan,

Korea and rich Middle Eastern countries labourers are paid in such a manner that they can cope up with the expenditure. But labourers' in Bangladesh or in other developing countries are leading a subhuman life.

2.3. Trade Union Movement upto 1920

As long as industrial production remained in the hands of a number of independent master craftsmen and artisans, each working in his own or with the help of a limited number of apprentices, Journeymen or hired labour, a personal contact was possible between master and the working people. This was the age of cottage industries and small traders. But the growth of factory system and later on industrial revolution completely changed the profile of the industrial arena. Gradually large-scale production and distribution came up that required engagement of vast labour and use of huge capital. This new production system required installation of large number of complicated machines that needed repair and replacements. So it was an era of transition from handicrafts to large-scale production and distribution, i.e. from labour-intensive to capital-intensive techniques of production. Everything changed rapidly but the conditions of labours remained static. Capital began to flourish, industries started growing, production increased but wages remained static and other conditions went down. Moreover, expansion of industries made, personal contact between worker and management impossible. So workers could not take up their legitimate grievances to the management. The only weapon available to the workers was the formation of trade unions. Trade union thus started as continuing defuses pacts among workers against the inroads made into their rights and standard of living exigencies of capitalist self-interest (Subramanian, 1967: 5).

The trade union movement in the subcontinent took its birth in the 19th century. It is the development of factory industry which began after the industrial revolution in the U.K. that created conditions favourable for the organisation and growth of trade unions (Karnik, 1981: 1). So unionism has been one of the first fruits of the industrial revolution all over the world (Subramanian, 1967: 4). After industrial revolution in the U.K. labour class infused a new zeal to the increased number of labourers to get united to form an organisation, i.e., the trade union organisation. And it had a tremendous impact on the rest of the world especially on her colonies – India was one of her big colonies.

The history of the evolution of trade Union movement in India may be traced back to the earliest times when guilds and panchayats in every village settled disputes between their members and their masters (Giri, 1962: 1). Working class of that time used to take up their grievances to the panchayats. Panchayats tried to redress their grievance to their level best, and in turn members followed the code of conduct of it. The scenario of every stage of the Indian trade union movement was same in Britain. The first form of permanent organization among wage earners was the local trade club of the eighteenth century (Flenders, 1962: 9). But those trade clubs or guilds even in the U.K or any other western countries could not discharge any such function as modern trade unions do.

In India too, the position of the workers was same. The guilds used to discharge some fraternal functions such as the grant of small financial assistance and enforced its members to a strict apprenticeship and high quality workmanship. The majority of Indian guilds were concerned with social affair and economic matters as well. Guilds used to regulate commercial and service activities as well as fix up appropriate wages so that its members would not accept, or be paid lower wages. But the characteristic feature of the guilds was that there was no element of collective bargaining over wages and conditions of service between employees and workers as, it happens in modern trade union (Subramanian, 1967: 2).

It goes without saying that the trade union is the outcome of modern factory system. Factories had been established very late in Indian sub-continent in comparison to the U.K and other western countries. The first cotton mill was established in 1851 in Bombay and the first Jute mill in 1855 in Bengal. This was the beginning of modern factory system in India (Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 12). But Mr. Kamruddin Ahmed differs regarding the year of establishment of Jute mills in Bengal and furnished some detailed information about the mill. He stated that one Mr. Auckland started the Wellington Jute Mill in Serampore (Bengalee), the first of its kind in India in 1854 (Ahmed, 1978: 4). He further mentioned that by 1876, a fairly large number of Jute mills had been established in Bengal on the banks of the river Hoogly (Ahmed, 1978, 4). K.N. Subramanian also expresses the same opinion regarding the establishment of the mill. According to him the first Jute mills was established at Serampore in 1854 (Subramanian, 1967: 7). So it maybe said that the mill was established in 1854. Whatever may be the year

these two mills may be treated as the milestone in the way of modern factory system in India. After setting up of these two mills, mills and factories began to establish in different places of the country, especially by the British entrepreneurs, who have grabbed political power and economy too. By that time colonial rulers had never the intention to industrialise the country in truest sense. They did what they were supposed to do for their own interest.

Labour class began to grow gradually with the establishment of mills factories in India. But the economic condition of the working class was not improved. They were unorganised, not sufficiently literate and financially solvent. They had no working hours. There were no rules of wages, welfare programmes and legal support. They used to get subsistence wage and led a sub-human life. Not only in Bengal, in India the vast majority of workers got a wage which was not enough to provide them with the meanest necessity of life (Dutt, 1956: 388). S.A Dange has given a painful picture of Indian working people. In his language-

From 1850 to 1880 the working class in these factories was exploited most inhumanly and without pity. Arrogant Britishers and their natives irrespective of their religion, nationality, language or country in bleeding men, women and children in their slaughter house of capital. There was no limit on hours of work. Men women or children were herded in the dues of capital to work from 12.16.18 and even 23 hours per day. There was no Sunday, no holiday, no starting and closing time. And when they died or maimed in the machine, there was no value of their file or limb (Dange, S. A).

Thus from above delineation, it is clear that with the production of coal in 1775, first tea cultivation in 1834, and the setting up of Assam tea company in 1839, coffee plantation in 1840, first establishment of cotton mill in 1854 and Jute mill in 1855 and opening of railway in 1853, industrial activity in Bengal as well as in India began to grow and a new class of industrial labour emerged gradually (Ramanujam, 1986: 5-6).

In this juncture the labour movement in India may be said to have began in 1875, when few philanthropists under the leadership of Mr. Sorabjee Shapoorjee, Bengalee started an agitation in order to draw the attention of government to the wretched conditions of the workers, especially women and children, in factories, and to the need for legislation, but the progress of the movement was disappointing (Panadikar, 1933: 15-16).

The History of trade union movement of undivided India may be divided into three periods: (i) From 1875-1920, (ii) From 1920 to 1930, (iii) From 1930 to 1947.

The first division of the period of trade union movement of India has some logical basis. The very year 1920 may be treated as the demarcating line in the history of the movement. Union movement did not begin till 1918 in proper sense. Few organisations started their journey in the same year. International Labour Office in 1938 reports:

“It was not until 1918, however, that the trade union movement can be said to have begun in India. In that year, industrial organisation was started among the textile workers at Madras, and the clerks’ the union and postmen union were also founded; since then the number of organisations has been rapidly increasing in almost all industries throughout the country” (ILO Report, 1938: 123).

Another eventful incident that engulfed the whole world in a state of mental agony and dissatisfaction was the First World War. It was the first experience of mechanical war which thundered the world civilization. The devastating war ended in 1917 but the world had far reaching effects of it in every sphere of life. League of Nations had been closed and the U.N.O. came into being with new hopes and aspiration. World started afresh in a new dimension. People became more conscious about peace, liberty and freedom.

After the end of the First World War, labour unrest and the formation of unions became almost a common affair all over India. Several factors contributed to this. The war-ravaged economy was left for the working class and people as well. Rising prices affected not only the industrial workers in the towns but also the rural workers. Along with this economic distress came political upheaval: the ‘Jalianwalabag Massacre’ and the intensified ‘swaraj’ or ‘Home Rude Movement’. The setting up of the ILO at Geneva In 1919 acted as a symbol of recognition of the workers right to organize. Another factor was the success of the Russian revolution which gave an impetus to the labourers and the leaders (D’Costa, 1963: 86) And finally, the year 1920 saw the establishment of the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) as the central organisation of all the unions of this organisation enabled the Trade Union movement to emerge as a strong and stable force (Karnik, 1981:16). This was also a great achievement to working class and it acted as a stimulus to the labour movement. Trade union organisations got

a strong legal and secured platform as well. It can be treated as a milestone of the trade union History. So we can take the very year 1920 as demarcating line and dawn of an era.

All these events and incidents made the labourers more conscious than before. Gradually they began to think that they should not be neglected, as they are the inevitable part of the production and distribution system. Among the four production functions they are not least important. Capital is not the only factor of production. Labour is as important as capital. And if they are united they can challenge their lot and even they can change the system as a whole as it happened in Russia. Gradually they could consider labour as a strong class which capital and their puppet country administration can not withstand so easily. So class-consciousness began to develop gradually. Class-consciousness helped the labour to be united more strongly than ever before.

With the establishment of some mills and factories in 1870s some labour organisation began to grow. By 1879 there were 56 cotton mills employing 43,000 workers and 22 Jute mills employing 27,494 workers, due to the opening of railway in 1853 slow rise of collieries got speed and momentum which resulted in 56 mines in Raniganj area by 1879-80 (Subramanian, 1967: 7-8). In the next twenty years rapid industrial growth took place in India. So by the end of 19th century industrial activity built around tea and coffee plantations, coal, cotton and jute industries. At the close of the 19th century there were 144 cotton mills and twines of over 77 million were exported. The number of Jute mills was nearly 30, out of which 26 were in and around Calcutta. The coalmines employed about 43,000 workers who produced nearly 3 million tons of coal. Tea plantation industry had also tremendous expansion and prosperity at the end of the previous century. Iron and steel industry was established in Jamshedpur by Tata in 1907 (Ramanujam, 1986: 6). So number of people increased rapidly with the increased number of industries. It goes with out saying that labour is the outcome of industries and trade unions is the outcome of labour. So without the growth of labour class the existence of trade union cannot be thought of.

Within two decades of the establishment of factories in India, the ludicrous condition of workers drew public attention and criticism. Major More, inspector in chief of Bombay cotton Department, wrote in his Administration Report for 1872-73 that the hours of work of cotton mills had not been subjected to any regulation but as that women and children had

been employed in large numbers the work was fatiguing, it was desirable to regulate at least the hours of labour for them. Major A. J. Ballard, Mint Master, Bombay also draws the attention for the necessity of factory Act for them. The secretary of state for India took notice of report and in 1857 drew the attention of the Bombay Govt. to the need for action (Subramanian, 1967: 8-9). Apart from this in 1875 few social reformers and philanthropists under the leadership of Sorabji Shapuriji Bengalee started an agitation against the appalling condition of factory workers (Giri, 1962: 2). As a result, first factory commission was appointed in Bombay in 1875. The commission recommended at least a simple legislation for the protection of workers.

England sensed the precarious conditions of the factories and their interest at state raised their voice for the introduction of the Factories Act in India. On 30th July, 1875 Earl of shaft beery stated – we must bear in mind that India has the new material and the cheap labour; and if we allow the manufacturers there to work their operatives 16 or 17 hours and put them under no restriction, we are giving them very unfair advantage over the manufacturers of own country and we might be undersold even in Manchester itself, by manufactured goods imported from the east (Ahmad, 1978: 5).

Second factory commission appointed by this time met in 1884, where Indian sympathizers had arrived on the scene. A person who played a notable part in advocating the cause of labour and in supporting progressive factory legislation the early days was Sorabji Shopurji Bengalee, a member of both the 1884 and 1890 commission. Mr. Bengalee was not a trade union leader or representative of workers, but just an active sympathizer of them. M.N. Lokhande appeared as a witness before the 1884 commission, advocating the cause of labour (Subramanian, 1967: 30). The recommendation of the Indian factory Commission (1884) was under consideration of the Government, chief inspector of factories in the U.K. alleging miserable conditions of work of Bombay, Manchester chamber of commerce moved for extending English Factories Act to India, the demand of two members in the British Parliament in favour of factory legislation in India and the resolution adopted at the Berlin International labour conference in 1890 compelled the Government for the appointment of the Indian factories commission in 1890 (Sharma, 1971: 50).

In 1877 the first strike over wage rates was recorded at the Empress mills at Nagpur, and few other strikes were also recorded in the eighties (Giri,

1962: 2). Sorabjee Shapurjee Benglee, a time started first agitation for factory legislation. He drafted a bill and sent it to the Governor of Bombay in April, 1878. Obstinate resistance and organised opposition was put up by the Bengal and Bombay chamber of commerce, the Mill owners association, Bombay and Calcutta traders association, the British India Association, the Bombay mill owners Association, managers of different mills and a good number of private individuals for not introducing such legislation. The draft bill (1879) of the Government of India was originally based on Bengalee's Bill, but in the face of opposition from the business and manufacturing class it was very much whittled down (Sharma, 1971: 48). Despite so many obstacles and agitations, the Government of India introduced a bill in the central legislation in 1879. The bill became an Act in 1881 (Ramanujam, 1986: 8). This was the first Factories Act. In India, though it did not come up to the expectations of labour. Whatever may be the reaction of the labour class as first factories Act it was a landmark in the manufacturing history, was also significant to the emergence of the working class' point of view in subsequent years, and ultimately to the birth of the labour movement in India.

Factories Act 1881 was made applicable to all manufacturing premises using mechanical power and employing 1000 or more hands and labour working for more than four months in a year. This Act also made provisions for limiting the working hours of child labour, prohibiting employment of women in night shifts, and appointment of factory inspector for the first time of its kind (Ramanujam, 1986: 8). During the said period (1875-1920) trade union activity took place haphazardly which were not in western variety. The emergence of large-scale industrial and business organisation appeared very late in India in comparison to western world, union activity also started lately. Union activities of the said period were irregular, isolated and sectarian in nature. Those organisations were friendly and social welfare type especially in its early period of development.

In this sensitive situation the first labour leader in India Mr. Narayan Meghajee Lokhande, started his career as a factory worker and devoted his whole life to the labour movement. In 1884 he organised conference of the workers in Bombay factories for representing their grievances to the commission which had been appointed just before, and their memorial was duly considered by the commission (Panadikar, 1938: 166). The first recorded case of collective representation of their claims by Indian workers was in 1884,

when a conference of workers was called in Bombay for the purpose of drawing up a memorial to the Factory commission then sitting in that city (ILO Report, 1938: 123). But as no action was taken by the Government, the workers of the Bombay cotton mills sent a petition to the Governor General in 1889 reiterating and appealing for protection (Panadikar, 1938: 166).

M. N. Lokhande, organised a meeting of 10,000 workers in Bombay on 24th April, 1890 and presented a memorandum containing demands for reducing the hours of work, weekly rest day, mid-day recess and compensation for injuries. In response to these demands mill-owners of Bombay granted a weekly holiday. Encouraged by this success, Lokhande organized the Bombay Mill Hands Association in the same years, of which he was elected president (Giri, 1962: 2). This was the first labour association in India. In order to ventilate the aspirations and grievances of labourers a labour journal 'Dinabandhu' was launched. Through The Bombay Mill Hands' Association cannot be considered a trade union in real sense of the term. It did not exist as an organized body. The association had no role of membership, rules and regulation or funds (Mathur, 19: 16). Whatever it might be it was the first organisation of workers and may be regarded as the foundation of trade union organisation in India.

Though the first Factories Act was passed in 1881, the Act was inadequate and disappointing. But the condition of workers did not improve. By this time another commission was appointed in 1890. Therefore another representation was submitted to the Government in 1890. This representation also reiterated the demand of 1884 and was signed by about 17,000 workers (Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 13). Mr. S. S. Bengalee was appointed as a general member and Mr. Lokhande as a local member for the Bombay Presidency on the Labour Commission of 1890 (Panadikar, 1938: 166). Later on new Factories Act was passed in 1890 which introduced several amendments. In this regard ILO report said –

In 1890 a union, called the Bombay Mill Hands' Association, was organised, but this was loose combination rather than a corporate body, as it had neither a definite constitution nor paying membership (ILO Report, 1938: 123).

Several strikes were recorded in the various parts of the country between 1882 and 1890. The workers of Great Britain also extended their moral support to the Indian workers. The textile workers of Lancashire

organised a demonstration before the secretary of state for India demanding introduction of proper factory legislation in India (Ramanujam, 1986: 8). Two strikes took place in Bombay in 1894, but of little consequence. The first big strikes of mill operatives were recorded at Ahmedabad in the first week of February, 1895. The Ahmedabad Mill-owners' Association decided to substitute a fortnightly wage system for a weekly one which had been in force since 1869. This forced the weavers, over 8,000 in number to leave work, but the strike was unsuccessful (Mukhtar, 1935: 13).

Indian labour being dutiful and hard working, worked 12 to 14 hours, sometimes 18 hours despite of the consistent indifference to their necessities of life. This condition made them frustrated and frustration brings violence. But Indian labour did not choose the violent way. They went for peaceful strike to ventilate their grievances and resentment.

On 11th May, 1897, the Mill Owners' Association, Bombay, decided to discontinue the daily payment of wages. This led to several strikes which were resulted in resuming a partial continuance of daily wages (Mukhtar, 1935: 14). Labour organizations during those days were unorganized and few workers were interested into membership. In such a situation the first labour organization in India was the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India and Burma, which came into existence in 1897 and was registered under the companies Act. Early in the last century isolated unions were also started in several places, such as printers' union in Calcutta in 1905, the postal union in Bombay city in 1907, and the *Kamgar-Hitwardhak-Sabha* (Workmen's welfare Association) also in Bombay city in 1910 (ILO Report: 123).

Political leaders of this subcontinent have played a vital role uniting the labourers to form an association of their own. Political front had its reciprocal interest, as at the time of need workers association will respond to their call and simultaneously they could respond back when workers interest will be at stake. Politically British India was passing through a crucial time, as unrest prevailed all around. In this state of political situation the Swadeshi movement that added momentum in Bengal in 1905 grabbed the opportunity to be involved into the workers political activities. They were directed to create trouble for the big employers including Government (Subramanian, 1967: 34).

Strikes took place in many other places all over India in early 20th century. A strike was recorded in the workmen in the press and machine

section of the Madras Government Press in 1903 against overtime work without payment. The strike continued for about six months and after much suffering they returned to duty. In September 1905, the employees of the Government of India Press at Calcutta went on strike. Their main grievances among others, were – (i) non-payment for Sunday and Gazetted holidays, (ii) imposition of irregular fines, (iii) low rate of overtime pay, and (iv) the refusal of authorities to grant leave on medical certificate (Mukhtar, 1935:14).

But the result of this strike was quite unsatisfactory. Seven ring leaders were dismissed and workers achieved very little out of this one month long strike. Another strike occurred at Samastipur Railway workshops in Bengal in 1907. The workers resumed work after six days, only when the authority granted a famine allowance (Sharma, 1971: 62).

Lokamanya Tilak was sentenced to six years' rigorous imprisonment in 1908 and so the workers of Bombay went on a six-day political mass strike (Subramaniam, 1967: 34). Here it becomes vivid why the politicians were interested in organising and patronising the labour union. The entire population was almost against the British rule and naturally labourers were not the exception. And moreover a good number of the owners of factories and business were the Britishers or their close allies. So the labourers had a hostile attitude towards the administration and considered the politicians of this country as friends. Naturally any oppression on the political leaders was considered as anti liberation and anti people activity.

The all-India telegraphic strike which took place in 1908 was successful. During this period (1907) some labour organization like, Bombay Postal Union also started. It was in every sense a trade union. Indian Telegraph Association was erected in 1908 which used to publish one journal, Telegraph Recorder. The Postal League started in 1902 (Sharma, 1971: 66).

In 1910 they organised another strike demanding reduction in working hours. In the same year Bombay workers established two organisation, namely, Kamgar Hitawardhak Sangh and the Social service league. In 1911 the Government of India set up a commission for the reduction of working hours and it was reduced to 11 hours a day following the recommendations of the commission (Ramanujam, 1986: 10).

By this time the political situation was striving fast towards the achievement of total liberation of the country. Hot political situation gave

impetus to the labour movement in the country. Moreover First Great War broke out in 1914. The whole world had to face holocaust of war and India was not an exception especially her international trade took a serious blow. In war time British policy towards Indians was soft-end to some extent. By and large it can be said that the trade union movement in this subcontinent during 1875 to the end of World War-I was essentially humanitarian. Some friendly societies were formed to look to the welfare of the workers. These unions were sporadic in nature (Sahoo, 1999: 173).

The First World War ended in 1917. As an aftermath effects of war prices of essentials shot up like any thing, especially for the evil design of whole sellers and hoarders business became dull which caused the fear of retrenchment and unemployment for the labourers and the political front and labour front took new speed and momentum after arrival of Mr. Gandhi from South Africa. The Civil Disobedience Movement and Jallianwalabagh massacre turned the anger and furry of the people to a great extent against the foreign ruler. By this time workers revolution in Russia brought some new hopes to the toiling masses of all over India. After Russian Revolution communism gained considerable ground in many countries of the world including India. Several strikes were recorded in the year 1917. By that time Mr. Gandhi started working for the labourers. Several meetings were organised by Mr. Gandhi in 1917. The stalwarts like Mr. Gandhi, Lokamanya Tilak, Annie Besant, and B. P. Wadia were very much active in the political as well as industrial arena. Labour politics got a dimension to activate the participation of those leaders (Subriamian, 1967: 36).

The General awakening thus created among the working class led to a movement towards the organisation of labour. And as a result, the Madras labour union stood out very conspicuously in 1918 with Mr. B. P. Wadia as its first chairman (Mukhtar, 1935: 17-18). It was one of the first well-organised trade unions in the country developed according to modern concept. Mr. Wadia made a few concrete suggestions to Messrs Binney & Co. for the improvement of the conditions of their employees. But, Messrs Binney & Co. did not reply. A largely signed petition from the workers suggested the alternative of a strike. In spite of giving reply Messrs Binney & Co. declared the first lockout in October 1918. Again on the morning of 27th November 1918, a second lockout was declared on the plea that manager and weaving master were assaulted by unknown hands. Finally the mill reopened on the

17th December 1918 with partial fulfilment of the labourers demand (Mukhtar, 1935: 19). Another strike by weavers was recorded in Ahmedabad in 1918 on bonus issue against the Mill Owners' Association. At a later stage Mr. Gandhi declared vow to fast till the matter was settled. The Mill Owners' Association had to accept the demand according to Mr. Gandhi's proposal (Mathur & Muthur, 1962: 17) I. L. O. Report says that -

In 1918 an industrial organisation was started among the textile workers at Madras, and clerk's union and postman's union in Bombay and the seamen's union in Calcutta were founded; since then the number of organisations has been rapidly increasing in almost all industries throughout the country. In this development of trade unionism, the existence of the international labour organisation has played an important part (ILO Report: 1938: 123).

World war first not only brought huge profits to industrialists but also led to a sharp rise in prices. The consequent distress to workers, wages were not correspondingly increased, generated a series of strike waves in 1918-19 (Giri, 1962: 10). Madras became the champion in case of labour activity. Strikes were taking place one after another, not only in Madras but also dissatisfaction and unrest prevailed throughout the country. Anti-British movement was also mounting day by day. Sixteen strikes took place in the Madras Presidency and the demands of the workers regarding increase in wages, grant of bonus, rice allowance, reduction of working hours and extra holidays continued. Eight strikes were recorded in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam. Another general strike was recorded in Bombay where they gained an increase in wages (Mukhtar, 1935: 20).

Ten other unions were organised in 1919 of which five in Bombay, two in Madras, one each in Bengal, U.P. and Punjab. The Employees Association, Calcutta, the Seaman's Union, Bombay and M. S. M. Railway Union, Madras were the important unions that were organised during 1919 (Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 17). During the winter of 1919-20 again there was a major strike in the cotton mills of Bombay, involving 1.5 lakhs of workers. The factors responsible for this strike were larger hours of work, lack of amenities and facilities and victimization of workers by the supervisory staff (Giri, 1962: 10).

2.4. Trade Union Movement from 1920-30

The period from 1920 to 30 is marked as beginning and growth of organised and continuous trade unions, the seed of which had already been

sown through the establishment of Madras labour union in 1918. By this time things had changed. Workers became more courageous with the help of the politicians. The Indian National Congress began to take interest in Trade Union Movement since 1919. The Trade Union Movement thus became an integral part of freedom movement (Sharma, 1990: 90). By this time the all India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in the year 1920. Its first session was presided over by Lala Lajpat Rai who was then also president of the Congress (Ramaswami & Ramaswami, 1981: 89).

During the annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1921, the National Congress welcomed the formation of the AITUC in 1920 and in the Gaya Session in 1922, the Indian National Congress had also appointed a committee to assist the executive of the AITUC for the organisation of Indian labour (Sharma, 1990: 93). The formation of AITUC was the direct result of the formation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919. It was very much necessary to have a national central organisation of labour. Moreover, in order to nominate a delegate to the ILO, it was necessary to have a centre like that (Ramaswami & Ramaswami, 1981: 89). Large number of trade unions was formed by 1920. Just after of the establishment of AITUC 64 trade unions with a total membership of 140,854 were affiliated with it (Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 17).

So they had associated themselves more with the national movement. In this way Trade Union inclined gradually with politics. Prior to First World War trade unionism was confined to a small section of workers, but after the war it went up to the whole working class. So the period from 1920 to 1930 was the period of growth of organised labour in India. Due to First World War there was acute price hike, profit maximisation to industrialists, growing political agitation with labour unrest that gave an impetus to trade union movement. But wages were not increased.

The period between (1920 and 1930) was very eventful. And during this period many agitation and strikes and organisational development of trade union took place in India and Bengal as well.

The following table [2.12(a) and 2.12(b)] summarises the position of trade union affiliated to AITUC in 1920.

Table 2.12 (a): Unions Affiliated and Sympathetic to AITUC in 1920

	Number of affiliated and sympathetic unions	Number of afflicted unions	Membership of Affiliated unions
I. According to provinces			
Bombay	56	44	48,881
Bengal	5	1	2,505
U. P.	08	3	15,800
C. P.	6	2	128
Sind	2	1	128
Madras	16	8	3,559
Bihar	1	-	-
Punjab	9	4	70,253
Delhi	2	-	-
Indian states	1	1	1,600
And Ceylon	1	-	-
Total =	107	64	140,854

Table 2.12 (b)

II. According to Industries	Number of Affiliated and sympathetic	Number of afflicted unions	Membership of Affiliated unions
Railways	21	11	91,427
Textiles	12	9	7,719
Shipping	4	3	19,800
Transport	4	2	2,470
Chemical	7	6	856
Engineering	8	7	7,590
Post and telegraph	15	5	1,685
Printing and papers	7	3	1,844
General	29	18	7,463
Total	107	64	140,854

Source: Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 18.

It is marked onward the Tendency of the spread of trade unionism with large number of strikes. Industrial relations were deteriorating fast. Mistrust developed amongst the workers due to the long deprivation and suppression and oppression. Though the attitude of management to some extent had changed by that time, the workers could not trust or depend on their masters so early.

International Labour Organisation estimated the total membership of Indian trade unions at 5 lakhs. But Dr. Punekar did differ regarding the number of workers. He opined that there were 125 unions with a membership of 250,000 (Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 18). Unrest was on throughout India in this period. The economic condition had worsened even further and nearly 200 strikes were declared all over the country in 1920. Important strikes during 1920 were the general mill strike in Bombay, the

general spinners strike in Ahmedabad and a general strike in Borach and Sholpur. In Punjab the Railway workers went on strike. Sixty-two strikes were declared in Madras and particularly all industries were affected in Bengal, Orissa and Assam. Government of India started collecting information about strikes in 1921. In all 400 disputes involving 523,151 workers were recorded. The strikers' main demand was higher wages in 174 cases; bonus in 75 cases. The question was involved in 63 cases and other personnel's for leave etc. 162 strikes were declared in Bombay and 135 took place in Bengal (Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 19). So we see that there were waves of strike in early twenties of the last century. This proved that the workers became more powerful than before. Organisationally they were stronger as they had good number of labour unions and in 1920 AITUC came to action. Moreover they were getting low wage and very poor employee benefits and services programme. This was the major reason of dissatisfaction in the labour front.

In 1922, 278 strikes involving 435,434 workers were successful. In 127 cases increased wage demanded and another 32 strikes the issue involved increased wages and in another 32 strikes the issue of hours of work. Bombay, Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa were the chief provinces of industrial unrest (Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 19). Next, in Ahmedabad serious strike was recorded on the 1st April, 1923. It affected 56 cotton mills, involved 43,113 working people which resulted in total time loss of 2,370,933 working days. 132 strikes were recorded in 1924, large numbers of which were unimportant, and short-lived. There were 56 disputes in Bombay alone, resulted a loss of 7,559,401 working days; 25 per cent of these strikes were settled in favour of the employees, 8 per cent were compromised and the rest were failed. 134 strikes took place in 1925 and 33 per cent of these were successful. In the same year serious type of strike broke out in Bombay against reduction in their wages. All the mills especially cotton mills were closed down completely on 2nd October 1925, and the strike was brought to an end after involving a loss of about 11 million working days (Mukhtar, 1935: 40).

Ideological difference and international outlook may exist among people. This difference of ideologies or opinion some times creates conflict. It was infused among the labourers especially after the success of Soviet Russia. Actually after the rise of Soviet system labour as class of the world

has been demarcated two blocks. And which was almost clear in the trade union congress in the Geneva international conference. India was not an exception to that; rather this division became apparent within a short time.

V. V. Giri, regarding the Indian scenario, said –

“By 1927 two distinct parties grew in the Indian trade union movement. They were called by some ‘rightists’ and ‘leftists’, and by others, Geneva-Amsterdam groups and Moscowvites” (Giri, 1962: 13).

Influenced by the international labour politics division of the working class of India became imminent Division and disunity brings partial fulfilment of the objective. Moreover economic and social condition of the working class of India was wrecked. Disunity strengthened the hands of the capitalists and their close allied Government administration. But it was the reality that the conflict between the communists and the moderates surfaced in the late twenties. The communist believed in class-war and utilisation of the labour movement for the overthrow of the moderates could not pull on together. Moderates formed the Indian Trade Union Federation (ITUF) in 1929 (Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 27). The first split took place at the tenth session of the AITUC held in Nagpur in 1929 (Sharma, 1997: 92). Meanwhile, the hardcore communities had left the AITUC to form the Red Trade Union Organisation named All-India Trade Union Federation was in 1932 (Sharma, 19: 99). The constant sperms of division and unity that is the legacy of Indian Trade Union Movement (D’Costa, 1963: 86).

By this time, in the middle of 1929 Royal Commission of Labour was appointed and the commission submitted its report in 1931. The influence of the communists began to decrease after 1930. The failure of the general strike sponsored by them during 1929-30 produced harmful effects. Other strikes also proved ineffective in getting concessions for the workers. These failures made the workers distrust the communist leadership. There was also a vacuum of leadership as the old experienced communist leasers were involved in the Meerut trials. Moreover, the communists had lost credit as a result of the split in the AITUC and the very way to control the Congress. Finally the Civil Disobedience Movement engaged the public attention. By this way Communists lost the public sympathy because of their aloofness from the political movement from the country (Mathur, 19: 30).

So after 1930 the trade union movement of India got two split which may be considered a disaster to the rising united movement against the

exploitation and deprivation. The trade union movement of India was going ahead in one platform, but from 1930s it went on in the divided way.

2.5. Trade Union Movement from 1930-1947

The growth of trade unions, however was not a smooth one, it had its ups and downs. Mohmmad Anisur Rahman said the period 1926-39 is characterized by three distinct features; *viz.*, (i) the economic recession during the thirties, (ii) the formation of popular ministries in the Indian province, and (iii) conflict in the trade union leadership (Rahman, 1968: 45).

The country had to face an economic depression in the early 1930s. During 1929-34 the economic problem became very acute. Real war started after the war, i.e. socio-economic war, which happened in India. Side by side political problems also mounted up. The dominant trade union leaders were arrested in 1929 in connection with Meerut conspiracy case. Finally the situation was further aggravated by the serious split up of AITUC. Employers took the full advantage of the situation. They adopted a policy of retrenchment of workers on a large scale, imposed wage and stated demoting employees to lower grades (Giri, 1962: 16).

Workers used the instrument of strike to get hold of their employers, but could not succeed in many cases, as the economic recession was on and the workers were divided. In 1932 we get a signal of unity. Red Trade Union Congress, which was born due to a split in the Trade Union Congress, again united to the parent organization (AITUC) (Giri, 1962: 17).

In 1930s the climate was unfavorable for the growth of trade union movement. Gandhiji's civil disobedience movement launched in 1930, had drawn the attention of the political leaders and the Government of India. The arrest of the prominent communist leaders in the Meerut conspiracy case and the failure of Bombay textile strike of 1929 also brought stagnation in the trade union activity (Giri, 1962: 16).

In 1930s, 148 strikes were recorded but only 196,301 men were involved in them. The loss of working days amounted to 2,261,731 and the workers failed to gain any concession in 61 per cent of the strikes. In the same year in protest of Mr. Gandhi's arrest ships loading work was delayed in the port of Rangoon. And simultaneously the coolies, generally Tolugus, struck work on the demand of higher wages. They were successful to

Table 2.13: Number and membership of registered unions in India

Year	Registered unions	Registered unions submitting returns	Total membership	Average membership per registered union.
1927-1928	29	28	100,619	3,594
1928-1929	75	65	181,077	2,86
1929-1930	104	90	242,355	2,693
1930-1931	119	106	219,115	2,067
1931-1932	131	121	235,693	1,948
1932-1933	170	147	237,369	1,615
1933-1934	191	160	208,071	1,300
1934-1935	213	183	281,918	1,557
1935-1936	236	205	268,326	1,309

Source: ILO Report, 1938.

We see a good sign of unity in Indian Trade Union Movement in 1935, which is essential for the development of trade union movement. The communists dissolved the Red Trade Union Congress and rejoined the AITUC in 1935. Thus, the AITUC once again become the sole representative of the organized labour (Sharma, 1990: 99).

A new constitution was adopted in 1935. Under the constitution, labour representatives could get themselves elected through labour or trade union constituencies (Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 29). This decision caused harm to some extent because the dissension amongst the leaders was affecting the interest of the workers, therefore the efforts of unity was hampered. Another important event took place in 1937 in the political history of the sub-continent. Under the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935, general election was held in 1937. In the election leaders and people of this land contested the election, and popular ministries were formed in different provinces of India (Rahman, 1968: 46). This change in Government machinery in the states created hopes and aspirations among the workers. They thought that their conditions would be improved. The popular ministries took some time to implement their programmes, but workers could not wait for long i.e. there was a gap between expectation and reality.

The delay in realising the workers' expectations resulted in a recurrence of labour unrest all over the country. There were strikes in almost all the major industrial centres, for example Bombay, Calcutta, Ahmedabad, Kanpur and Madras, for higher wages and restoration of wage cuts on the ground that there was prosperity in trade and business. Again they were dissatisfied regarding their working and living conditions (Giri, 1962: 19).

The general and big strikes occurred between 1937 and 1939. Among those were the general textile strikes at Kanpur (1937-39). The Jute workers strike in Calcutta (1938), Digboi Oil Fields Strike (1939) and the UP Glass Bangle factories strike (1939) were recorded accordingly. The number of registered trade unions increased from 241 in 1935-36 to 555 in 1938-39. The number of registered trade unions between 1939-40 and 1944-45 increased from 666 to 865. The table 2.14 shows the progress of trade unionism between 1934 and 45.

Table 2.14: The Registered to Unions during 1934-1945

Year	Number of Registered trade unions	Number of unions submitting returns	Membership of unions submitting returns	Number of women Members
1934	191	160	208.071	-
1935	213	183	284.918	-
1936	241	205	268.246	-
1937	271	228	261.047	-
1938	420	343	370.112	-
1939	562	394	399.159	-
1940	667	450	511.138	18,612
1941	727	483	513.832	19,417
1942	747	455	573.520	17,094
1943	693	489	685.299	25,972
1944	761	563	780.967	26,866
1945	865	573	889.338	36,315

Source: Subarmanian, 1967: 63-68.

The period from 1939 to 1947 was crucial for the Indians, Government and the rest of the world. The holocaust of the second Great War in 1939 and its prolongation till 1944 and the intensity of liberation movement in India had a tremendous impact of the attitudes of the Indians. During this period they nearly turned against India and the British Government.

The economic consequence of war is of more concern to us. The war brought about considerable changes in the economic spheres of life. There was great shortage of essentials, created by the hoarders and wholesale traders. Production and distribution were also hampered due to transport bottlenecks. As foreign goods were not available in the market due to shortage of shipping during the war, provided an indirect protection to industries to a considerable extent. As a result Indian industries began to increase.

This was the period when, willingly or unwillingly, the Government made efforts to maintain industrial peace by bringing the employees and the

employees to the conference table. Joint consultations with the representatives of the employees and the employees were undertaken; and in 1942, the first tripartite labour conference was organised by the Government (Giri, 1962: 23).

During this period of economic activities money wages increased, but at the same time cost of living went up to a great extent. So the increase of money wages could not cope up with the rising prices, and as a result, economic condition of workers became worse than ever before. So dissatisfaction and unrest among the labour force and common people continued. The Earnings of the workers and profits earned by the industrialists during the year 1939 is sufficient to understand the degree of exploitation. The real earnings of the workers during 1940-45 are shown below in table 2.15.

Table 2.15: Index of Real earnings of Workers during 1940-45 (Base 1939)

Year	Index of Earnings	All India Consumer price index	Index of Real Earnings
1940	105.3	97.0	108.6
1941	111.0	107.0	103.7
1942	129.1	145.0	89.0
1943	179.6	268.0	67.0
1944	202.1	269.0	75.1
1945	201.5	269.0	74.9

Source: Mathur and Mathur, 1962: 38.

The following table will show the index of real profit during 1940-45.

Table 2.16: Index of Real Profits (All Industries) during 1940-45 (Base 1939)

Year	Index of Profits	All India Consumer price index	Index of Real Profits
1940	138.0	97.0	142.3
1941	187.0	107.0	174.8
1942	221.8	145.0	153.0
1943	245.0	268.0	91.4
1944	238.9	269.0	88.8
1945	233.6	269.0	86.8

Source: Mathur and Mathur, 1962: 39.

The post war trade union development will be clear from table 2.17 below

Table 2.17: Growth of Trade Unionism during 1944-45 to 1947-48

Year	No. of Registered trade unions	Registered number of unions submitting returns	Membership			Average
			Men	Women	Total	
1944-45	865	573	8,53,07	36,31	8,39,38	1,552
1945-46	1,007	585	8,25,46	38,57	8,64,03	1,480
1946-47	1,833	998	12,67,16	64,79	13,31,96	1,335
1947-48	2,766	1,620	15,60,63	102,29	16,62,92	1,026

Source: Mathur & Mathur, 1962: 44.

So far the previous pages have discussed the development of trade union movement up to mid 1947. The British Raj in India came to an end with the division of the country on August 14, 1947 and the two independent states emerged to on the world map- Pakistan and Indian union. So the movement rolled over in new dimension with divided scenario.

2.6. Summary

In this chapter an attempt has been made to discuss the state of cottage industry and small trade of India in the medieval period and her golden heritage of indigenous products in home market and abroad. Later on the country gradually switched over from cottage industry to the factory system in the mid 18th century, and that resulted in the birth of industrial labour. From the very inception of the factory system labourers were being deprived of minimum wages and employee benefits and service programmes. Deprivation and suppression induced the working class to be united to form trade union organisation. Mr. M. N. Lokhande formed the Bombay Mill Hands Association in 1890 and it was the first attempt to form trade union. This attempt would be treated as the milestone in the history of the labour movement.

Labour leaders and the politicians had to undergo a long struggle to give a solid stand to the trade unions. First federation of trade unions was formed in 1920 and it was the first of its kind. Due to continuous pressure and joint movement by the workers and political persons, different labour commissions were formed for the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the working class. And finally Trade union Act of 1926 was passed. This Act gave the fundamental right of freedom of association which was denied by the employer. Thus trade union organizations got legal recognition.

After the Second World War political and ideological conflict of left and right intensified globally which had its influence in India too. Division and disunity became apparent in labour front, caused split up within unions and federations. Divided strength strengthens the hand of the employer. In all, we have discussed the emergence of labour with the industrial development of India, socio-economic condition of labourers and trade union movement from the very inception to 1947 in different phases.

Notes and References

¹ In textile factories, excessive hours are frequently works in cotton mills, in all jute mills weavers are employed for excessive hours. In Ahmedabad the average of the whole year was approximately 12 hours & 7 minutes, actual working time in the longer days the operatives come to the mills about 5-30 a.m., and left at 7-30 p.m., giving 13.5 hours working time, the shortest working day is approximately 11 hours. In Bombay the scenario was the same. In some cases, mills worked from 5 a.m. to 19:35 p.m. of over 15 hours actual work. Later on the Bombay Mill Owner Association, at a meeting held in August 1905, passed a resolution in favour of an average 12 hours day. The mills fitted with electric light generally began work about 5-30 a.m. and continued with usual half an hour interval about noon, to 7 p.m. A few mills begin work about 5-40 a.m. working till 7-15 or even 7-30 p.m.; in one, or two others hours are 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. – giving 13 hours actual works all the year round. The mill's working day light hours begin about a quarter of an hour before sunrise, and stopped about a quarter of an hour after sunset; the adverse working time, over the whole year, is approximately 12 hours and 8 minutes; the shortest working day is about 11 hours and 10 minutes, from 6-55 a.m. to 6-35 p.m.; and the longest from 5-45 a.m. to 7-33 p.m.– giving 13 hours actual working time.

One mill worked a 10 hour day only, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; another worked the spinning department for 12 hours continuously from 7-30 a.m. to 7-30 p.m., the weavers working from 6 a.m. to 7-30 p.m.; a third mill daylight hour day, without the midday interval; a fourth worked from 8 a.m. to 8-30 p.m., also without an interval; and a fifth from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., with an interval of 2 hours in the middle of the day in Calcutta. The jute mills worked nominally, from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. without stop. The workers, except in the weaving and sewing are divided into a number of shifts, the hours of work of each shift being arranged so that each worker had an interval of at least two hours – or else is entirely free – at the time when he took his principal mill. Where no longer interval is given – i.e. where the worker ate his food before beginning of work, or after finishing it – each operative had a rest interval of half an hour or so during the term of his shift. The shifts are so arranged that no operative worked more than 11 hours a day.

The usual hours of work were from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the cold season; and from 5-30 a.m. to 7 p.m. in the hot weather. The two largest mills worked on an average, about 11 hours a day only throughout the year; largest day did not exceed 11 hours in Madras town. All the mills in Madras presidency worked in the daylight only, the longest day being from 5 a.m. to 6-45 p.m., and the shortest from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. In no case do the longest hours' exceed 12 hours, and generally the hot weather day does not exceed 12 hours.

All the mills worked daylight hours only in central province. The average working time for the whole year was approximately 12 hours 3 minutes and the longest day in any mill was from 5-25 a.m. to 7-20 p.m. – giving 13 hours 25 minutes actual work. The shortest working day was approximately 11 hours. In the cold season the mills actually worked 13 hours, 14, or even 14 hours a day, beginning as early as 6 a.m., and stopping as late as 9-30 p.m. The hot weather hours' are usually from 5 a.m. to about 7-30 p.m. Some mills allowed interval of one hour, others an interval of half an hour or three quarters of an hour.

The mid day interval of one hour was peculiar in Punjab. In Amritsar and Lahore the actual working hours varied from 11 to 13 hours in the cold weather, and average 13 in the hot season. In Lahore one mill worked similar hours, but the other occasionally worked up to 9 p.m., and had an average 13 hours actual working day throughout the cold season (*Report of the Indian Factory Labour Commission: 1908*).

² 'malangis' – Salt was produced by a class of people known as *malungis* whose profession was by and large hereditary (Awal, Iftekar-ul, 1997).

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