A discourse on industrial labour is organically linked with a discourse on industrial capitalism. It is impossible to understand the history of labour without understanding that of capital. For a long time the British model acted as the dominant paradigm of industrial capitalism at the theoretical level. The historical fact that Britain was 'the first industrial nation' played a role in the perpetuation of the myth that the British experience should be followed by other nations. Moreover, a racial arrogance towards the Asian people became a part of the discourse of 'industrial revolution'.

After the Second World War, 'development' in the newly free 'third world' countries that went through the experience of colonial domination became the concern of the 'developed' countries in the West. Since then the 'third world' came under the continuous gaze of the Western powers. And a 'sociology of development' came into being as an academic discipline in the 1950s and 1960s. The theorists of this school of thought, known as 'modernization' theorists, identified some universal parameters of social development. The tradition/modernity couplet was used to judge all human societies. In his search for the universality of industrial capitalism in the Asian countries, David S. Landes went so far


2 T.S. Ashton, one pioneer British historian, in his book, The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830 (1948; Rev. ed., Oxford University Press, 1970), noted with disdain: "There are today on the plains of India and China men and women, plague-ridden and hungry, living lives little better, to outward appearance, than those of the cattle that toll with them by day and share their places of sleep at night. Such Asiatic standards, and such unmechanized horrors, are the lot of those who increase their numbers without passing through an industrial revolution" (p.129).

3 For a critical assessment of the modernization theory, see Hamza Alavi and Teodor Shanin (eds), Sociology of "Developing Societies" (Macmillan, 1985), pp. 1-3.
as to justify the English domination of India by quoting from Karl Marx.

Marx's writings were mostly concerned with Europe. It is also true that up to a point in his career Marx had a conviction in the universal path of capitalist industrialization. In the preface to the first German edition of his magnum opus *Capital* he declared in 1867: "The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future". But there was a significant shift in Marx's thinking in the later phase of his career. By the beginning of the 1880s Marx was seriously thinking of a possibility of social transition in Russia which could bypass the stage of capitalism. This is evident in Marx-Zasulich correspondence (1881). In a letter written in the late 1870s Marx criticized the Russian 'theoretician of later-day populism', N.K. Mikhailovskii, for his attempt to transform his (Marx's) theoretical formulation in *Capital* into a 'suprahistorical theory'. This letter is worth quoting in the present context:

He [Mikhailovskii] absolutely insists on transforming my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophical theory of the general course fatally imposed on all peoples, whatever the historical circumstances in which they find themselves placed...... But I beg his pardon. (It does me both too much honor and too much discredit).

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In the pages of *Capital* Marx developed a powerful critique of capitalism itself. But the 'modernization' theorists have appropriated Marx's writings in arguing for capitalism as a universal system. Here lies the paradox of history. Even a section of the Western Marxists has become a victim of the ideology of 'modernization'.

A powerful challenge to the 'modernization' theory came in the 1960s from the 'dependency' theorists. The 'development of underdevelopment' thesis put forward by them challenged the notion of 'development' of the modernization school. The main contention of this new school of thought is that the Western impact on the 'third world' countries was regressive, rather than progressive. Though the 'dependency' theorists challenged the Western notion of 'progress' at the philosophical level, their metropolis/satellite couplet is too restrictive in understanding the dynamics of a colonial situation. In the discourse of the 'dependency' school, the colonial social transformation of a nation is explained mainly on the basis of its ties with the imperial nation. The internal social relations of the colonized country find a secondary place in this explanatory framework. The concept of the 'World Capitalist System' is an offshoot of the dependency theory. Immanuel Wallerstein, one of the leading proponents of this concept, has argued in a recent paper how India was integrated into the 'World Capitalist System' during the period 1750-1850 and its economic and political structures were reorganized in the process. The danger of

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explaining social change of a particular country with the help of a single system conceptualized as a world-wide mechanism is evident in the following critical observation made by Robert Brenner in relation to Wallerstein's mode of reasoning:

Wallerstein draws the logical consequences of this position [...] : trade in itself will lead to accumulation and innovation via the profit-motivated development of the division of labour; therefore, it logically follows [from his theory] that any region which is part of the apparently interdependent system of exchange which constitutes the world division of labour is capitalist, whatever its methods of "labour control" and of "rewarding labour power".11

Brenner's critique gives us a call to identify capitalism by its mode of 'labour control'. Marx himself theorized the nature of disciplining of labour under the capitalist mode of production in Capital. What he had done in the text was a theoretical characterization of the 'laws of motion' of the capitalist mode of production. In so doing, he cited many historical instances from Britain. In fact, Marx took England 'as the chief illustration in the development of ... [his] theoretical ideas'12. On the other hand, Marx's writings on France bear testimony to his search for the economic, political and cultural complexities of French capitalism13. So we should make a distinction between the theoretical and historical works of Marx.

The economic aspect of capitalism got priority in Marx's Capital. But Marx and Engels emphasized the need for historical enquiry in their


12 Karl Marx (1977), op. cit., p. 19.

13 See Karl Marx, The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850 (Moscow, 1975).
Joint work, The German Ideology (1845-46). They said:

Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production. 

Almost at the end of his life Engels was shocked to find economic determinism in the writings of younger Marxists. And he expressed his anguish in a letter to Joseph Bloch in 1890:

Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle vis-a-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to give their due to the other factors involved in the interaction. But when it came to presenting a section of history, that is, to applying the theory in practice, it was a different matter and there no error was permissible.

The historical rise of capitalism has been studied as an economic phenomenon in the orthodox Marxist discourse. It was the Italian Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, who liberated the Marxist discourse from economism. One interesting point to be noted in this context is that British Marxist scholars had an aversion to Gramsci's writings till the mid 1950s. Though Gramsci did not rule out the 'world of production' in the rule of capital over society, he did not restrict this rule to the economic domain. How 'direct domination' (coercion) and 'hegemony' (intellectual and moral leadership) are combined in capitalist rule was

14 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology (Moscow, 1976), p. 41.
15 Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence (Moscow, 1982), p. 396.
17 David Forgacs, 'Gramsci and Marxism in Britain' in New Left Review, No. 176 (July/August 1989), pp. 72-73.
one of Gramsci's main concerns in his fragmentary *Prison Notebooks*. In his seminal work, 'Americanism and Fordism', Gramsci noted how the lack of 'great historical and cultural traditions' in America played a vital role in the disciplining of labour in American capitalism. While discussing the experiments conducted by Ford, the famous American capitalist, Gramsci observed:

"......it was relatively easy to rationalise production and labour by a skilful combination of force (destruction of working-class trade unionism on a territorial basis) and persuasion (high wages, various social benefits, extremely subtle ideological and political propaganda) and thus succeed in making the whole life of the nation revolve around production. Hegemony here is born in the factory and requires for its exercise only a minute quantity of professional political and ideological intermediaries."

Gramsci also noted in this context that 'attempts [were] made by Ford, with the aid of a body of inspectors, to intervene in the private lives of his employees and to control how they spent their wages and how they lived.'

Thus, by studying the specificity of disciplining of labour, both at the work-place and in the industrial neighbourhood, in American capitalism, Gramsci made a major contribution to the study of capital-labour relations.

The development of industrial capitalism took place in India in a colonial situation. So the specificities of industrial management and

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19 Ibid., pp. 279-318.
20 Ibid., p. 285.
21 Ibid., p. 304.
labour control that accompanied the process of industrialization in colonial India should be taken into account to make the discourse on Indian capitalism historically meaningful.

The present study is concerned with an analysis of labour-management relations in three major Indian industries - cotton, jute and coal - during 1918-39 in the light of the theoretical insights of Marx and Gramsci. Our historical references are related to the Bengal jute mills, Bengal-Bihar coalfields and the cotton mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad. The regions we have selected were the chief industrial centres in colonial India during our period of study. All the jute mills in India were located in Bengal before the termination of the First World War. Even in 1944, out of 112 jute mills 101 were in Bengal. In fact, the mills in Bengal were located on either side of the river Hooghly, about 30 miles north and south of Howrah Bridge, from Bansbaria to the north and Budge Budge to the South. In 1917, more than 90 per cent of the coal output in India were raised in the Raniganj, Jharia and Giridih coalfields. The collieries in the Giridih field were owned by the East Indian Railway. The Raniganj and Jharia fields together were found to contribute about 79 per cent of coal production in British India in 1935. More than 65 per cent of the looms in the Indian cotton textile industry were installed in Bombay and Ahmedabad in 1913-14. A number of textile centres developed in India during the inter-war years. But Bombay and Ahmedabad, as old centres in Western India, retained their dominance

at the beginning of the Second World War. In 1938-39, the cotton mills in Bombay city contained 33.2 per cent of the total looms in India. The share of Ahmedabad in the total number of looms was 23.2 percent at that time. The centres we have incorporated in our study developed as industrial regions by the turn of the 19th century.

There is some justification for the selection of the inter-war years as our period of study. The exclusive control of the Europeans over the Bengal jute industry came to an end after the First World War because of the entry of mainly the Marwaris, a well-known Indian business community, in the industry in multiple ways. (The Marwaris also made their presence felt in the coal industry of Eastern India and Bombay cotton textile industry in the 1920s and 1930s). The period between the two wars also witnessed the rise and fall of a number of Indian business firms in the industrial field and a significant change in the political landscape of India in the wake of the ongoing nationalist movement.

After the First World War, the question of industrial labour got international attention and 'social peace and progress in every land' became an international concern. So along with the League of Nations the International Labour Organization (I.L.O.) came into being. In justification of the birth of the I.L.O. (in 1919) one important European official of the time at the Government level, E. John Solano, said:

"......social and economic problems of our day.....involve dangers to the domestic peace of every nation - dangers in some respects as disastrous and wasteful as the ravages of war". To alleviate this danger, the I.L.O. constituted an 'international charter for the physical, moral and intellectual well-being of the industrial workers of the world'.

This danger was also felt by the Government of India. The countrywide outburst of 'labour unrest' and 'a fear of Bolshevism' forced the Government to take interest in working class conditions in India. It took an active interest in the process of the I.L.O.'s formation and was pledged to its goals. A number of labour legislations were passed by the Government of India in the post-war years. This shift in the labour policy of the Government of India after the First World War was categorically emphasized in an official publication of the Government in the late 1920s.

The orientation of the study is to trace labour-management relations more from the point of view of control of 'labour' by 'capital', that is, to trace the managerial outlook and practice in the selected industries during the period under consideration. But as labour-management relations

28 Ibid., p. xiv.
cannot be precisely understood without understanding the background, composition and characteristics of 'labour' and 'capital', we have situated our examination of the labour-management relation in the wider perspective of probing into the growth of 'capital' and 'labour' separately before considering their interface in our specific context.

In the following chapters multiple aspects of industrial capitalism in colonial India have been examined. Chapter-2 discusses the socio-economic background of the industrial entrepreneurs. In this context the character of the representative associations of the entrepreneurs in the different industries has been taken into account to locate how far the entrepreneurs belonged to a collectivity. The entrepreneurial role of capital in the form of promotion and control of Indian industries was performed by a typical system, known as the Managing Agency System. The dynamics of industrial management during our period of study has been examined in Chapter-3 in the light of the policies pursued by the managing agents in relation to their own remuneration and wages, technology and managerial personnel in the industries under consideration. Chapter-4 deals with the social composition of the industrial workers in terms of their place of origin and caste, community, gender and cultural identities. The nature of labour control in the Indian industries is explored in Chapter-5 with reference to the modes of recruitment and supervision of labour and power relations in the industrial neighbourhoods. Chapter-6 examines the attitude and role of the state and the employers of the industries (under consideration) towards the burgeoning labour protests and trade union activities in response to the managerial practices of the period. In the conclusive
An attempt has been made to integrate our findings theoretically. Our information base is restricted to books, periodicals and official documents.