INTRODUCTION

The thesis deals with the interaction between the industrial working class and the Indian national movement in the Madras presidency during the period 1928-1939. The study is intended to analyse the relationship between the two and also to discuss why and how the working class participated in the national struggle for independence while simultaneously fighting for its own class demands. It is also proposed to bring out the understanding of the Indian National Congress vis-a-vis the industrial working class and vice-versa. Also an attempt is made in the study to present an analysis of the approach of the Congress government's during 1937-1939 to the working class problems and its struggles.

There are very few studies which deal with the relationship between the working class movement and the national movement in Madras presidency. In particular, there is no well researched study on the rise and growth of working class movement in the Andhra region of Madras presidency. It is, therefore, of some importance to undertake a study of this kind in order to comprehend the nature and character of the anti-imperialist movement and analyse the substantial contribution made by the working class to the anti-imperialist movement in the
Madras presidency.

The study is, however, confined up to the period 1928-1939 keeping the vastness of the scope of the study and of the sources available on the subject as also the fact that the two dates mark the beginning as also an end of an era. The political stasis of the 1920s was ended in 1928 with the beginning of the Anti-Simon Commission Movement. On the other hand, 1939 brought the constitutional phase of the national movement to an end with the resignation of the Congress ministries and the beginning of the World War II.

The existing studies on the politics of the Madras presidency such as The Emergence of Provincial Politics; Madras Presidency, 1870-1920 by D.A. Washbrook (1977); The Politics of South India: 1920-1937 by C.J. Backer (1976); Political Movements in South India: 1914-1929 by S. Gopalakrishna (1981); and Congress in Tamil Nadu by David Arnold (1977) have not attempted to explain in any substantial manner the role played by the industrial working class in the national movement, or the national movement's contribution to the growth of the organized movement and class consciousness among the workers. Moreover two of these studies cover earlier periods.

Some work has been done on industrial workers and their movements and the activities of the labour
unions and the ideological differences among the leaders. For example, Unions in Conflict: A comparative study of four South Indian Textile Centres 1918-1939, by Emon Murphy (1981) explains the labour problems and the conflicts among the leaders of the unions. No serious attempt is made to deal with or analyse the relationship between the labour movement and the national movement.


These works serve mainly as guides to the study of relationship between labour movement and national movement in general. They do not answer the question fully as to where and how the working class participated in the national movement.

Thus, at the provincial level, particularly in the Madras presidency, workers' role in the national movement and the study of the growth of working class movement in Madras presidency in particular during 1928-
1939 have not hitherto received the attention they deserve. For a more complete understanding of the historical process and a more accurate reconstruction of the history of the national and the working class movements in the Madras presidency, it is necessary to examine the contribution made by the working class to the national movement and vice-versa. This study tries to remedy the lacunae.

Madras presidency comprised of three regions, namely the coastal districts of Andhra, entire Tamilnadu and Malabar region. Madras presidency was relatively backward in industrial development compared to the Bombay and Bengal presidencies. Before 1939, the presidency made very slow progress in industrial development, except in the textile sector.

The significant development of textile industry was mainly due to the initiative of the indigenous capitalist class. In the case of other industries such as jute, sugar and tobacco, there was little progress. It is also important to note that while the Tamilnadu region was more industrially advanced the other two regions, namely, Andhra and Malabar, had very few industries. Thus, the industrial development of Madras presidency before 1939 was characterized by slow growth and unevenness.
The absence of industrial development till 1939 was in fact because of lack of interest on the part of British government in the industrial development of the presidency. This neglect can be seen in the policies pursued by the British government in respect of trade and commerce, absence of sound industrial credit institutions, absence of coherent industrial policy, neglect of technical education, etc.

An industrial working class began in the presidency to develop with the growth of industry and capitalism. The numerical strength of the working class was not much; when compared with the presidencies of Bombay and Bengal, the number of workers was even quite small. However, the workers as a class had become quite significant by 1939. The workers of the Madras presidency, like their counterparts in other parts of the country, began to develop their class organisations by late 1920s and through them they tried to oppose the exploitation of the capitalist class both Indian and British.

The industrial worker worked long hours and got low wages. He was ill-housed and undernourished. He suffered from several other problems. He began to feel that not only the capitalists but also British imperialism was responsible for his miserable life condition.
There was thus a natural and inevitable antagonism between the Indian worker and British imperialism, especially because the British Raj to a large extent aided and assisted the capitalist, be it Indian or European.

In a colonial country like India, there was an inherent contradiction between the worker as a citizen and the foreign ruler. This contradiction is perhaps sharper because the formidable colonial state supported the capitalist class much more forcefully. The antagonism of Indian worker was therefore directed toward two enemies: against the capitalist and against British imperialism. One of the concerns of this study is to explain how far this antagonism was mobilized in the struggle for independence of India during 1928-1939.

A more organized working class movement began to develop in the Madras presidency in the late 1920s. The organized working class movement developed mainly in Tamilnadu whereas in the other two parts of Madras presidency, coastal Andhra and Malabar, the organized working class movement started to develop only after 1934 with the growth of left forces. An attempt is made in the thesis to analyse the growth of class consciousness
and the class organisations of the working class in the three regions of the presidency. The study also deals with the question of how and to what extent did the national movement under the leadership of the Indian National Congress influence the growth of the organized working class movement.

With the growth of awareness and militancy among the workers, there were attempts by the nationalist leaders and workers to organize it around their own class demands and to enjoin them to the mainstream of the nationalist movement. First step in this direction was taken in 1918 in Madras by B.P. Wadia, a Theosophist and an activist of the Home Rule League. The link thus established between the working class and the national movement continued to develop further over the years. As a result there was greater participation of the workers in the national movement during 1918-1922, and 1928-1939. Thus the working class while fighting for their own class demands also fought for national freedom. One of the important objectives of the study is to analyse the problem of how the industrial working class developed anti-imperialist consciousness simultaneously with the class consciousness. The study focuses on the extent to which the working class participated in the national
movement and the pattern of this participation. The study also presents the perception and attitude of the working class and its leaders to the national movement and the Indian National Congress and vice-versa.

The period of 1937 and 1939, during which the Congress ministry was in power, represented a significant advancement in the level of consciousness of the working class and its movement to improve its material conditions. There were intensely fought strike battles in several industries in the three regions of the Madras presidency. The Congress government supported the working class strikes so long as they were conducted in a peaceful and non-violent manner. At the same time it unequivocally opposed the more militant struggles of the working class. This brought the radical left leadership of the working class and the Congress government into sharp conflict. The Congress ministry period also witnessed intense struggle between the radical left leadership and the moderate working class leadership supported by the Congress government to control the working class and its organizations.

The study also focuses on the approach of the Congress ministry to the problems of the working class and its struggles. It presents an analysis of the struggle between the moderate and left elements to
control ideologically the working class and its organizations. The attempts of the Congress ministry to bring forward some legislative measures for the benefit of the working class are also analyzed and dealt with in the study.

There is vast source material on the history of working class struggles and Indian national movement in Madras presidency in Tamilnadu State Archives, Madras, Andhra Pradesh State Archives, Hyderabad, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi, and the National Archives of India, New Delhi. The newspapers both in English and Indian languages and private papers of the participants in the national movement and institutional papers are immensely useful. This study has depended heavily upon primary sources material available in different departments of the Government of India and the Government of Madras presidency. Oral interviews conducted with industrial workers, trade union leaders and Congress leaders of the period under study who are still alive are also used to supplement the archival and newspaper sources. Of course a large number of published works have also been consulted.