CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
In this section, an attempt is made to review the available literature and to organise them in a chronological order. For the purpose of convenience, the studies are classified into four groups. First, studies on trade unions having international coverage, second, relevant studies in the context of India, and thirdly, studies relating to trade unionism in the context of Kerala, and finally studies based on “Gandhism”. Gandhism mainly includes the works of Mahatma Gandhi themselves.

Marx and Engels consider trade union solely as the organ of class struggle and it cannot progress or establish socialism. They explained that union is the instrument to oppose capitalists and to carry on the economic struggle of workers, the first step in bringing out a classless society. The unions should be rendered guidance and the workers should be taught the revolutionary role of working class. “The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class to win the battle of democracy”1.

According to Webbs, trade unionism “is not merely an incident of the present phase of capitalist industry but has a permanent function to fulfil in the democratic state”2. They not only advocate peaceful parliamentary reform to achieve socialism but also express that society must accept industrial or economic democracy. “The trade union of the future will, therefore, be coexistent with its craft, national in its scope, centralised in its administration and served by an expert officer staff of its own”. They hope for the spread of
democratic relations to industry, including economic and political decision-making. For them, the goal of trade unionism is to democratize industry within the framework of the present social order.

Perlman on, the other hand, tries to distinguish between ‘organic’ labour as it actually exists in the industry and labour viewed by intellectuals, and explains that “mature” trade union movement “is not dominated by intellectuals” conceptions, instead “by the homegrown philosophy” or “ideology” developed by the needs and aspirations of “organic labour”, “Job consciousness” is the primary cause of unionism and the ultimate goals are limited to the control and ownership of the job within the same social framework.

To Hoxie's sole economic interpretation of unionism is not sufficient to explain its origin, goals and functions. He gives pluralistic casual interpretation of unionism and asserts “if we are to study unionism, we shall study not a narrow slice of reality, but society as a whole from one particular view”. He feels that the nature of unionism can be explained not only by environmental factors but also by workers temperamental characteristics.

From the above theories, it can be noticed that Marx views union only as an instrument to establish a proletariat society with the guidance of intellectuals, while Webbs’ theory stresses the democratic aspect of unions and inside leadership. Hoxies’ theory presupposes the presence of out side
leaders who possess necessary competence, skill and knowledge to guide the union for its effective functioning.

Further, Aristotle\(^5\) expresses that democratic government is possible only in middle class societies. His views implies that democracy is possible only in rich countries where large middle class and comparatively well educated and well-paid working class exist. If the same principle is applied to unions, we can expect democracy only in unions whose members are well educated, have economic as well as job security and the status gap between the leader and the members is not great. He emphasizes that the presence of a large middle class is a necessary condition or the working of democracy for they will not shrink from the responsibilities of government.

Thus, democracy compels man to both a master and a servant, master in the matters of general; interests and servant in his professional occupation. Knowledge and capacity in a society can progress only if the average capacity of the common man is improved. Hence, the emergence of democratization of the institutions. As Webbs\(^6\) argues, "democracy is the only practicable expedient for preventing the concentration in any single individual or in any single class of what inevitably becomes, when so concentrated, a terrible engine of oppression." They state that unionism "affords some indications as to the probable working of democratic institutions." James Sterling commented more than a century ago ."The relation between workmen and their employers has permanently changed its character. The democratic idea
which rules in politics has no less penetrated into industry. The notion of a governing class exacting implicit obedience from inferiors and imposing upon them their own terms of service is gone, never to return. Hence, forward, employers and workmen must meet as equals. Mathur expresses the view that besides acting as a bulwark of democracy, trade unionism contributes to political and social stability and economic development.

In the modern form of democracy, some researchers noticed that though the form of union is democratic, the practices are undemocratic.

Marx and Engels consider oligarchy as part of the preliminary stage of the politicisation of working class.

Allen makes clear that oligarchic unions may be considered as democratic because, the unions are voluntary in nature in which members have their own choice. Weber on the other hand, points to the emergence of professional leadership which thwarts the democratic processes but agrees that this obstacle could be overcome. However, some empirical studies point out that along with internal opposition, formal constitutional democratic sanctions, turnover of officials and elections may be considered as indicators of union democracy. Some theories point out, that democracy is institutionalized in large organizations which can maintain loyalty to the central organisation while retaining autonomous centres of power within the organization.
Maciver\textsuperscript{15} suggests that the transformation of power was a consequence of the rise of the democratic principle. Power to be transformed, members should be alert and critical. It is said that a basic pre-condition for union democracy is interest and participation in union affairs by rank and file activists\textsuperscript{16}. Because of the poor attendance of membership at union meetings, decisions of unions concerning use of union funds, political issues, etc, which the majority of members should decide are left to the active minority.

Among Indian studies, Sheth\textsuperscript{17} and Sharma\textsuperscript{18} suggested that workers' participation in union affairs is very low. Pandey\textsuperscript{19}, Pandey and Vikram\textsuperscript{20} and Arya\textsuperscript{21} also arrive at the same conclusion. Crouch\textsuperscript{22} describes “The Indian workers as “status conscious’, possessing a mentality to obey and hence disinterested in union work”.

A recent study on woman workers confirms the same trend\textsuperscript{23}.

Internal opposition, though present in Indian Union, results only in intra-union and inter-union rivalry leading to “quantitative growth of the unions’ but not conducive for strong and independent unions.\textsuperscript{24} Trade union election scene in India also does not show a positive indication of union democracy.\textsuperscript{25}

From the standpoint of requirement of trade union democracy, many writers emphasize the crucial role of leadership. They suggest that the leadership should be democratic, participating and communicative. The
concept of "group dynamics", now emerged focusing on members rather solely on leader. "The true symbol of democratic leadership to some was the meeting and the less directed from the top the more democratic it was\textsuperscript{26}. In a tightly organised society, the leaders at the top may dominate and rule, but unless the followers have some choice to follow or not to follow, there is no personal leadership. Hence, in a purposeful world, leadership would take account of free choice of those who are led.

Hoxie\textsuperscript{27} in his analysis of trade union leadership points out, that unionism is the spontaneous outcome of workers' needs and problems, but in actual practice unionism is taught to workers by leaders because the workers have neither experience nor leisure. Unions should depend upon leaders who are specialists, which is "the natural and necessary outcome of the situation", though power is concentrated in the hands of leaders. He also admits that leaders are natural born politicians possessed of considerable administrative ability, men with the talent and instinct of boss and employer, men who love power for its own sake. He concludes that "here is a great weakness of unionism, it dies at the top". So he expresses that though the unions promote industrial democracy, in their actual administration they are hardly democratic.

Indian studies confirm that politically active leadership, supplied by intellectuals reformers and politicians, is the prominent feature of Indian trade unions\textsuperscript{28}. Generally speaking, every union leader is associated with a
large number of unions in the leadership role. It is true that the political parties do not encourage the union leaders to be independent of party control and in fact, the leaders do union work as part of their political work. However, some researchers found that a major proportion of the leaders are associated with only one union. Moreover, since 1927, the outsiders do not form majority, if the term "leadership" is meant all officers and members of union executive. The key posts of president, general secretary and treasurer are normally held by the outsider's influence. Now, some studies report that outside leaders do not dominate the trade unions.

Leadership in Indian trade unions has been traditionally supplied by the middle class. But Ramaswamy finds that "the middle class professional and intellectuals who figure prominently in Indian trade unionism are absent." Professional leaders, frequently of the Brahmin caste, have assumed union leadership. Some other researchers point out that the non-Brahmin castes, other than scheduled castes are common.

Crouch cites from the views of the leaders that "caste and communal factors play no part in trade unionism". But, Kulkarni, a trade unionist, estimates that "caste and communal factors would continue to be important for another twenty years". Finally, Ramaswamy concludes that "The Brahmin domination of leadership positions witnessed elsewhere in the county is absent" and the leaders are drawn from the very castes from which the workers hail.
The union leaders are moderately educated\textsuperscript{39} though a recent study claims that a majority of the leaders have university level education\textsuperscript{40}. It is clear from the research studies that there is high difference in the level of education between the leaders and the members\textsuperscript{41}. Kennedy, on the other hand, recognizes that the status gap in India arises due, not only to the social and educational distance, but also due to traditional authority structure\textsuperscript{42}. Along with heterogeneous leadership and membership, heterogeneous and multi-regional membership is a feature of Indian Unions\textsuperscript{43}.

Strictly speaking, trade unions are powerful democratic organizations of a welfare state and union leaders are “the new men of power”\textsuperscript{44}. Some studies in the West, however, reveal that though the principles underlying the government of trade unions are democratic the practices followed by the unions are often undemocratic\textsuperscript{45}.

It was also found that though the decisions are ostensibly taken by the whole population of an union, they are in fact the decisions of a few persons. In short, many of the studies in the West found that “... they (labour organizations) have fallen victims of Michels’ iron law of oligarchy”\textsuperscript{46}.

But some scholars justify the undemocratic practices in trade union organizations on the plea that trade union organizations are not suitable for democracy and some others do so on the basis that trade union organization are after all, economic institutions which are meant to protect and improve the living standards of their members than teaching the members self
government. They, therefore, feel that the question of whether or not an union is democratic is irrelevant so long as the union protects their members and improves their living standards.47

On the other hand those who advocate for democracy in trade unions feel that if there is no democracy, the trade union organization would not be the organization of the workers but for the workers, which is prone to the weaknesses such as the influence of political parties, multiple unions at plant level, the problem of outside leaders controlling the affairs of the unions, etc.48. Supporting this argument, Kerr adds “If democracy is a superior form of government, as most of us would insist, it should be preferred in practice wherever it is possible.”

Political influence on trade unions is traced back to the independence movement - both the movements were closely related.50

Agarwal writes, “Even at the industry and plant level, trade union activities have a political aspect as they have been to a very great extent dominated and controlled by political parties.” According to Weiner, “the leading trade union workers, with a few exceptions, come from political parties and do their trade union work as part of their political work.” Punekar and others write that at present the unions are divided on political lines, leading to multiplicity and rivalry among the unions.53
There exists a number of studies on trade union movement of the production sector in Kerala. K Ramachandran Nair\textsuperscript{54} attempted to examine the hypothesis that Kerala labour and industrial unrest are direct manifestations of the underlying deficiencies of the system of labour management relations that prevail in the state. The study has concluded that the general view regarding industrial unrest is considerably exaggerated and the record of labour management relations and practices in the state, properly interpreted, does not lend support to it, though there exists a number of studies on trade union movement of the production sector in Kerala. A.V.Jose\textsuperscript{55} undertook a study in the late 70’s on agricultural labour. In his paper, Jose tried to bring the emergence of militant labour organisation in the major conditions leading to the agricultural sector of Kerala till the beginning of seventies.

K.P. Kannan\textsuperscript{56} has tried to analyse the process of wage bargaining and its implications on the conditions of labour and the organization of production in the cashew processing industry of Kerala. According to this study, the outmigration of the cashew industries from Kerala to Tamil Nadu is due to high wages (compared to neighbouring states) and organised labour market (due to trade union activities) existing in Kerala. The study has concluded with a note that the existence outside state of a still cheaper and unorganised labour market threatens the prospects of employment to organised workers in Kerala.
Thomas Issac\textsuperscript{57} and Michal Tharakan\textsuperscript{58} have made an enquiry into the historical roots of industrial backwardness. Vijaya Sankar\textsuperscript{58} has studied the development of trade union movement and its consequences on an important segment of the urban informal (unregistered) sector in Kerala. The study has reached the conclusion that the unions were able to create barriers to entry in the labour market as a whole and prevent the free flow of labour in the labour market through extreme level of labour market segmentation.

B.A. Prakash\textsuperscript{59} has made an attempt on the causes of unemployment in Kerala. The study concluded that the unfavorable labour atmosphere arising out of the frequent strikes, confrontations bandhs, inter-union rivalries and prolonged closure of industrial units due to militant trade union activities have created a bad impression about the industrial climate of Kerala, which is one of the major causes for the low pace of industrialization in the state.

S. Mohanakumar\textsuperscript{60} has made an empirical analysis of the trends and patterns of industrial disputes in the organised sector of Indian Economy. The study has made the finding that the man days lost ratio sharply increased from 1978 onwards. It is also found that the proportion of lock out to strikes has considerably increased overtime, particularly from the late seventies.

According to the survey of Task force for review of implementation of plan scheme under industrial sector\textsuperscript{61} the biggest problem is the labour front outside the factory (i.e., construction, loading, and unloading workers).
According to Gandhi, "A labour workers’ aim should be to raise the moral and intellectual height of labour and thus by sheer merit to make him or her capable not merely of bettering his or her material condition but making labour master of the means of production instead of being the slave that it is. Capital should be labour’s servant, not its master. Labour should be made conscious of its duty from whose performance rights follow as a matter of course." 

B. Bhattacharya, says the crucial values which Gandhi advocated, preached, practised and insisted for realization into practice by the human being are the following. They are: Truth, non violence, kindness, charity, repentance, self purification, suffering altruism tolerance, sacrifice, benevolence, fearlessness, equality, continence, non possession or voluntary poverty, humility, generosity, freedom, honesty and simplicity. From the above we can understand what Gandhi wish and what was Gandhism.

Gandhi accepted truth and non-violence as the basic values. Gandhi says, "truth means that which exists and that in reality, logically, nothing exists except truth."

Desar rightly holds, “Gandhi’s thought is India’s most enlightened and modernizing gift to the world. It can become the basis for social action which enables each individual and each community to enrich the world’s diverse cultural heritage without claiming privilege and hurting another’s susceptibility or legitimate interest.”
Gandhi\textsuperscript{66} who himself helped found a union in 1918, wrote in 1921:

"The political situation too is beginning to affect the labourers of India. And there are not wanting labour leaders who consider that strikes may be engineered for political purposes". Gandhi was opposed to the infusion of nationalist politics into the labour movement. He wrote: "It does not require much effort of the intellect to perceive that it is a most dangerous thing to make political use of labour until labourers understand the political conditions of the country and are prepared to work for the common good\textsuperscript{67}.

Gandhi placed before the trade union the purpose of raising "the moral and intellectual height" of labour and thus make it capable not merely of bettering its material condition, but also of becoming master of the means of production instead of being a slave to it.\textsuperscript{68}

According to K.B.K. Singh\textsuperscript{69} "For Gandhi, equality, justice and liberty are fundamental values through which a perfect social order can be attained and established." In consonance to these values Gandhi cherished the ideal of Sarvodaya and Ram Raja society. In such a society there shall be no place of inequality, exploitation and injustice. Gandhi warned labour to reject the principle that "might is right" and to uphold the dictum that "Truth alone conquers, that truth knows no mishap, that the strong and the weak have alike a right to secure justice."\textsuperscript{70}
References


7. Ibid., p.841.


29. Ibid., p. 55


34. Ramaswamy, op. cit., p. 165.

35. Crouch, op. cit., pp. 30-31

36. S.D. Punekar and S. Madhuri, op. cit., p. 43


38. Ramaswamy, op. cit.
   p. 56. Dayal, Ishwar and Sharma Baldev, R. Management of Trade
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41. See Mathur and Raman, op. cit., Pandey, op. cit., p. 153; Sheth, N.R and
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43. G. K. Sharma, Labour Movement in India, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi,

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70. Ibid pp.203-204. It is no more accident, but a tribute to the impact of Gandhi on the nation, that the free Republic of India adopted as its official motto: Satyameva Jayate (or Truth Alone Triumphs).