The present thesis represents an earnest endeavour to study the history of Working Class Movement in Travancore, the southern part of present day Kerala, from 1922 to 1949. With a mind to select a socio-economic topic for my research work, I have been going through the published materials on Kerala History for a quite long time. And naturally a brewing struggle between the labourers and the capitalists in contemporary Travancore and Malabar areas fell into my attention. It was a good time for me to collect a plethora of information for an intensive study of the labour problems and administrative responses. It was originally intended to select an area common to the entire Kerala, but as Travancore formed a separate political entity under a princely order it was found essential to concentrate exclusively on that State.

Since the growth of a movement among the workers under a political leadership could not escape external influence, it was found essential to treat the subject in the perspective of similar developments in the neighbouring states. Moreover in their struggle to set up a democratic government in the State, the Travancore factory workers had always united with the agricultural labourers. Thus under the purview of the title Working Class I had to join both the factory and field workers into a single power. A timely discussion with my research supervisor led me to restrict the period of study between 1922 and 1949,
for 1922 and 1949 synchronised with important landmarks in the working class movement.

The Working Class in Travancore, through their organised trade unions, responded to every phase of social reforms in the State. Thus a study of the organised labour force in Travancore is a new trend at work in historical writing. Restricted by ideology and leadership, the consolidated force of the labourers as a class had undergone different overtones. And, in fact, the improperly catalogued records in the Government Secretariat at Trivandrum furnished neither complete nor succinct information on the subject. But to my excitement, the normally ignored papers, the Cochin and Madras Files and the Revenue Section Books in the English Records Section in the same Secretariat came to my help. Interestingly in the course of my research I could find a growing trend in the leftist movement in Travancore. The Travancore Police Reports and Bulletins, Government Publications and Private Papers shed light on the different facets of the Movement. In the discussion I have made a sincere effort to explain the various factors that influenced the organisation of the industrial as well as the agricultural workers. The condition of labour, idea of organisation, drift to political parties and finally the workers' pursuit for the establishment of a workers' government in the State are dealt with their historical setting.
I am greatly indebted to my Guiding Teacher Dr. K.M. Mathew, M.A., Ph.D., Reader, Academic Staff College, Goa University. With sincere and heartfelt thanks I remember the days I spent with my professor whose patient guidance, constant encouragement and ready help made me to complete the thesis in time. A historian with balanced approach and critical analysis, he extended to me his support and helped me with suggestions in the course of my research work.

In my attempt to interview personally the labour leaders directly connected with the Movement, I approached a large number of people. Among them I could get the benefit of the counsel of late Mr. M.N. Govindan Nair. A popular trade union leader of Kerala, he recollected for me, the predicament of workers before the formation of unions and the influence of political parties on the labour movement in Travancore. My thanks are due to the Government of Kerala for giving access to the English Records, Home Department, Government Secretariat, Trivandrum. The personnel of English Records Section assisted me in the consultation of records even uncatalogued, I convey my sincere thanks to them. The Staff of the State Archives, the Kerala University Library and the Legislative Library all at Trivandrum and the T.P.M. Library at Madurai Kamaraj University permitted me to refer the rare books and newspaper bundles relevant to my topic. I owe my indebtedness to them. Finally I convey my sincere thanks to Mr. E. Mothilal, M.A., for doing an excellent job in typing the present thesis so neatly as it is.

K. CHANDRAN