CHAPTER V  :  CONCLUSION

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The foregoing analysis indicates that in the city of Madras, the proportion of factory labour to the total working population was small, but the range of small units, trades and commercial occupations was large and that the industrial labourers did not form a class apart. There was hardly any distinction between industrial labourer and non-industrial labourer outside their working hours. They did not live as separate classes. The ties of cohesion among the different classes of labourers were extremely feeble. Poverty, illiteracy and diversity of castes and religions, and languages made them weaker still.

The Adi-Dravidas employed in the mills or factories always lived in parochies in their natural segregation among their kith and kin, pursuing a great variety of occupations. The factory men in the city doing the same duties as western hands had habits which astonished anybody. For, they were mostly governed by received ideas rather than by economic motives. They were still tempered by the system of caste: complete loss of caste status was a paralysing crisis for the individual labourer in Madras.

The analysis also confirms that the nationalistic movement in modern India was nurtured in the garden of Hindu religious revivalism. The thought of restoring the pristine glory of India by resuscitating among her people the spiritual vitality which was dormant but not dead was always the uppermost thought in the minds of the religious nationalists. The new born nationalism gradually assumed a decidedly Hindu character. The Hindu revivalists in fact harboured on Vedic orthodoxy and Manu's fanaticism. They wanted to establish a Hindu India and in their attempt they did not leave even
labour from being affected by their 'fundamentalism'. The Theosophical movement since its advent to India joined hands with the Hindu Revivalists and its leaders were more vociferous than the Arya Samajists in their call for 'Back to the Vedas'. Further, in the South the 'Saivas' and 'Vaishnavas' revived their cults and organised vigorous Dakhti and other religious cults towards theism within Hinduism as a counter to the spread of Christianity. These people also began to conduct festivals to rouse the religious instincts and spiritualism in the masses.

Thus we find that at the turn of this century the Indian labourer was in an atmosphere of Hindu revivalism and that his attitude and responses were conditioned by these environmental forces which were long in operation in society. Being a child of caste and custom-ridden society, the Indian labourer was unable to suppress his caste consciousness. Further, the inborn caste consciousness in him made him unaware of the feelings of comradeship and concern for working class solidarity.

Setting at nought all the religious wranglings, the Justice Party in Madras as the study reveals issued the non-Brahmin Manifesto calling upon the non-Brahmins including the Adi-Dravidas in the South to rise up and to wrench the powers from the hands of the Brahmins, who were well entrenched in the echelons of the state machinery. But the depressed class people were in disharmony with the caste Hindu non-Brahmins. To them, the lines of division which marked off themselves, from the rest of the caste Hindus, were clear and unmistakable. The caste Hindus and the depressed class people were poles apart in trade union affairs too. The depressed classes were used as strike-breakers in many industrial strikes. It is in this context that Periyar
E.V. Ramasami hailed as the Rousseau of modern times and also considered to be the Father of Modern Rationalist. Movement of India, always served as the connecting bridge between the depressed classes and the caste Hindus. He exhorted the labour to give up all their caste differences, and stand united steadfastly to relinquish religion, because he said that both the caste Hindus and depressed class people belonged to the same stock - the Shudras.

It was found that the labour leadership also, like the rank and file, was inhibited by caste prejudices. A cross section of the majority of labour leaders were bourgeois intellectuals with no definite ideas about labour unions. They held reactionary religious and theological beliefs. However a few others were really ultra-radicals with ideas of class war and revolution, by means of mass violence. There was another group of leaders who believed in revolutionary methods and welcomed strikes as a potent weapon to prepare the workers for the ultimate revolution. However, the followers of Gandhi advocated 'class collaboration'. Therefore this became the creed and article of faith in labour matters of the Congress ministries that came to power in 1937. On the contrary the Communists emphasised the class character of the labour movement thereby causing conflicts in the labour movement. They too realised that caste prejudices and religious beliefs created obstacles in the way of class unity and therefore they advised their comrades to fight against them. These are quite evident from the trade union approaches of the early communists of the South led by N. Singaravelu and P. Jeevanandam.

The idea of universal class war being alien to Indian mind, the caste system precluded the passionate
envy and hatred, often provoked among the masses by the concentration of wealth in a few hands. The Indian labour was thus always ready to sacrifice class solidarity due to the overriding considerations of caste solidarity. The main thrust of this thesis is that in the endless struggle between class-war and caste-war, the caste strife pre-empted class strife. The caste conflict that broke out during the L & C Mills strike in 1921 could be considered as one of the most important conflicts that had ever broken out between labour and capital in India's trade union history. It demonstrated quite clearly that class solidification of labour in Madras was a mere illusion. This study points out that the labour, instead of waging a class war with the capitalist split into natural caste groups whenever caste prejudices and considerations intervened. In other words, during the period under survey, the industrial labour in Madras, just as in other parts of India, never lived as one united class but only as disharmonious, heterogenous caste-groups.

The conclusion emanating from this study is that the abolition of caste system with its religious moorings is a concomitant prerequisite for the emergence of an effective Indian Labour Movement on Marxian class lines, or on any revolutionary socio-economic path of reforms.