Trade unions and labour movement are used synonymously. But that is not so as labour movement is conceived as "All of the organised activity of wage-earners to better their own conditions either immediately or in the more or less distant future." According to Prof. Cole, "Labour movement implies in some degree, a community of outlook. It is an organisation, or rather many forms of organisations based upon the sense of a common status and a common need for mutual help." It emerges from a common need to serve a common interest. It seeks to develop among workers a spirit of combination, class consciousness and solidarity of interest and arouses a consciousness, for self-respect, rights and duties. It creates organisation or organisations for their self-protection, betterment of their social and economic position and safeguarding of their common interest. A trade union is an essential basis of a labour movement because the labour movement cannot exist without it and moreover the trade unions are the principal schools in which the workers learn the lesson of solidarity and self-reliance.

The growth and development of the labour movement, and for that part of the trade unions, in India, can be
divided into following periods, each of them revealing different tendencies that mark it from others.  
1. Social Welfare period from 1875 to 1918.  
2. Early Trade Union period from 1918 to 1924.  
3. Left Wing Trade Unionism period from 1924 to 1934.  
4. Trade Unions' Unity period from 1935 to 1938.  
5. Second World War period from 1939 to 1945.  
6. Post Independence period from 1947 to date.  
Now, let us discuss these various periods.

Social Welfare period (1875 to 1918):—

The development of industries led to large scale production on the one hand and social evils like unemployment and exploitation of women and child labour and the deplorable working conditions, the Governments' attitude of complete indifference in respect of protection of labour from such evils, on the other. Some of the worst features of industrialism marked the history of early factory system in India. In certain respects, conditions of labour in Indian factories were worse than in the early factories in England. Unfortunately, there was no effective public opinion which could represent the sufferings of the working class. The workers who were for the most part villagers endeavouring to improve their position by a temporary alliance to industry were submissive and unorganised; and if conditions became too distasteful, the natural remedy was not a strike but abandonment by individuals of the mill or of industry generally or they migrated to other industrial centres or went back to their villages. There was no attempt at collective bargaining or at obtaining redress through
concerted action. It was at this juncture that the Indian humanitarians like Shri Sorabjee Shapurji Bengali (1875) and Shri N.M. Lokhanday (in 1884) who himself was a factory worker drew attention of the Government towards the unhappy working conditions of the labourers and demanded an early legislation to protect their interests. At the same time, the Lancashire interests also forced the British Government to restrict the employment of women and child labour in Indian industries, not on any humanitarian ground, but on the ground of their own protection from cheap Indian goods. Accordingly, the Indian Factories Act was passed in 1881, and then amended in 1891 and 1911 respectively. These Acts introduced some improvements in regard to shorter hours and conditions of work for children and women labour.

Though the history of modern industrialism in India began as early as 1850, the labour movement in India, rather, started very late. The Factory Commission in (1875), the Factories Act (1881), the investigation of Mr. Meade Moor (in 1874), the second Bombay Factory Commission in (1884), the Workers’ meeting organised in Bombay (in 1884) and the submission by them of a memorial to the second Bombay Factory Commission, and investigation of Mr. Jones (a Lancashire Factory Inspector) and the holding of a mass meeting in Bombay (on April 21, 1890) which was attended by about 10,000 workers and the submission to the government of another memorial signed by about 17,000 workers were the important events which nursed the infant labour movement.

The memorial demanded: (i) a complete day of rest every Saturday; (ii) half an hour’s rest at noon; (iii) working hours not earlier than 6.30 a.m., which should cease
at sunset; (iv) the payment of wages not later than the 15th of the month in which they were earned, (iv) payment to injured workers until they recovered together with suitable compensation if they are permanently disabled. The year 1884 can legitimately be regarded as the beginning of the labour movement.

The mill owners agreed to grant a weekly holiday to workers. Encouraged by this success, Bombay Millhands Association was formed in 1890 by Shri N. M. Lokhanday. The purpose was to provide a clearing house for the grievances of mill workers and to help in drawing public attention to the cause of labour. This was the first union in India which earned for its founder the title of being the "first trade unionist" of the country. He also published Dinbandhu, a working class newspaper, to place before the authorities and the employers the legitimate grievances of workers. In subsequent years a number of unions were formed, such as: the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India and Burma (for European and Anglo-Indian railway employees) to cater to their economic needs, through mutual insurance schemes. The Printers' Union of Calcutta, 1905; the Bombay Postal Union, as also at Calcutta and Madras, 1907; the Xanger Hitwardhan Sabha, 1909; and the Social Service League, 1910. These associations were loose organisations, more for than of workers. The leaders were primarily social reformers belonging to the moderate schools of politics. The Satyashodhak Samaj in Maharashtra, the non-Brahmin movement in Madras, the Theosophical Society in Madras and the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta were other early
associations of workers which took philanthropic interest in the general masses.

The movement received a set-back on the death of two pioneers and nothing remarkable happened during the succeeding years. However, during the first decade of the 20th century there was some spurt in the movement. Dr. Giri observes that "between 1904 and 1911, there was a remarkable advance in the organisation of the labour movement. A strike in Bombay mills, a series of strikes in railways (specially in the Eastern Bengal Railways), in the railways workshop, and in the Government press in Calcutta occurred prominently. The climax in the labour movement was reached with the 6-day political mass strike in Bombay in 1908 against the sentence of 6 years imprisonment of Shri Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak for offence of sedition. This strike highlighted the beginning of the political consciousness of the Indian working class. But trade unions in India had yet confined, by and large, to the upper ranks of the working class i.e., European and the Anglo-Indian railwaymen and Government employees and trade unionism in the organised industry was anything but local, loose and sporadic in character.

The political factors associated with the partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi movement of 1905 also helped the movement. However, two factors were responsible for the slow and steady growth of the movement, namely, the slow and gradual proletarisation and the weakness and disability of the Indian working class.
The labour movement till 1918 was strictly constitutional and relied mainly on moderate methods such as petitions, memoranda, committees, commissions, investigations and legal enactments.

The most noticeable features of the period, 1875-1918, were:

1. Complete absence of radicalism in the labour movement. The methods used by the workers were "characterised by a tendency to petition, memorials and seek redress of grievances by mild pressure." These methods reflect the influence of leaders like Shapurjee Bengali, Naryan Meghajee Lokhanday, S.N. Banerjee and others who were all political moderates and law abiding persons. They were rather social workers desirous to serve the society through amelioration. "With these characteristics" writes Punekar, "the labour movement could hardly tackle such problems as excessive hours of work, few holidays, irregular payment of wages, incompetency of mill managers, inadequate fencing of machinery and the ill-ventilated and filthy state of many workplaces." (15)

2. The movement depended greatly on external philanthropy. "Philanthropic agitation was the fore-runner of labour movement in India and having originated in philanthropy its motive force was sympathy rather than justice.... Born of philanthropy, it was a movement for the worker rather than by the workers." (16)

3. Due to lack of definite aims and constitution, most of the organisations were unstable and of loose type. Once the particular grievance was settled the association would disband.
(4) There was little conception of permanent trade union membership, the payment of dues or organised collective bargaining. About the Bombay Millhands' Association, Shri Dutt observed, "The Association has no existence as an organised body, having no roll of membership, no funds, no rule."\(^{18}\)

(5) The movement developed mostly among the educated class of workers such as the postal clerks and railway employees. It, however, did not make much progress in organised industries like mining, plantations and textiles.

(6) The early leadership was provided by three types of persons. First, intellectuals such as lawyers, reformers, editors, teachers and preachers, who readily came forward to organise and lead the workers. Second, the careerists, who saw in the needs of workers opportunities for furthering their own ends, jumped in, masquerading as labour leaders.\(^{19}\) The third group from which labour leaders emerged consisted of politicians and nationalists like B.P. Wadia, V.V. Giri, M. Vardarajulu Naidu, B. Shiv Rao, Annie Besant and B.G. Tilak.

The important factors which have helped in the emergence and growth of industrial labour movement are.

*(1) While the economic hardships of workers have been present as a latent force, the impetus for the growth of labour movement is provided by the major political currents, particularly the movement for national independence.*

(2) The failure of workers' initial attempts to organise led them to seek the help of philanthropists and social workers who generally came from classes higher in economic
Thus, the main characteristic of these early efforts of forming labour associations was their lack of continuous organisation. These associations existed but they were not an organic growth out of the working class. Workers supported their associations when suited them such as during strikes or in order to get benefits from welfare activities. Otherwise, they ignored the associations. Hence, they were usually weak.

The entire period, on the whole, has been divided into two: the Regulation Period (1875-1891), when the child and women labour in factories was regulated by legislation, such as the Factories Act of 1881 and 1891; second, the Abolition Period (1891-1917), when a successful protest was made against the indentured system under which Indian Labourers were sent out to British colonies to work as plantation labour.

By some, this entire period has been termed as the period of temporary organisations and a period of labour movement rather than that of the trade union movement, because during this period a number of loose organisations and social service agencies or welfare societies came to be set up.

Early Trade Union Period (1918-1924):

The year 1918 was an important one for the Indian Trade union movement. "It marked the start of a new era, an era of growth and one in which the leadership of the trade unions was to pass from the hands of the social workers into the hands of the politicians. The movement could take permanent roots in the Indian soil only after the close of World War I. This situation was due to
(i) the industrial unrest that grew up as a result of grave economic difficulties created by war. The rising cost of living prompted the workers to demand reasonable wages for which purpose they united to take resort to collective action. (ii) The Swaraj movement intensified the movement, widened the gulf between the employers and the employees and brought about a mass awakening among the workers demanding racial equality with their British employers. The new consciousness produced restlessness, discontent, a spirit of defiance as well as a new ideal and aspirations. (iii) The success of the Russian Revolution of 1917 created a revolutionary wave of ideas and a new self-respect and enlightenment and added momentum to the feeling of class-consciousness among labourers (iv) The establishment of the I.L.O., in 1919, gave dignity to the working class and also an opportunity to send delegation to the annual conference of this body. It was from this body that labour movement in various countries derived their inspiration, help and guidance (v) Immediately after the war many Indian soldiers (who previously belonged to the working class) in the British army were demobilized and forced into the labour market. These ex-soldiers who had seen workers and the working conditions in Europe found that Western workers enjoyed better conditions of living because of their greater solidarity and of more opportunities available to them but Indian workers were denied these opportunities. By 1920, a large class of genuine proletariat developed. Hence, these were new opportunities for the creation of trade union. (vi) The non-co-operative movement of Gandhiji during 1920-21 and his support to the demands of industrial
labour also greatly influenced the working class movement.

At about this time, many unions were formed, such as the Indian Seamen's Union both at Calcutta and Bombay, the Punjab Press Employees' Association, the G.I.P. Railway Worker's Union, Bombay, M.S.M. Railwaymen's Union, Madras, the Madras Textile Labour Union, the Postmen and Port Trust Employees' Union at Bombay and Calcutta, the Jamshedpur Labour Association, the Indian Colliery Employees' Association of Jharia and the Unions of employees of various railways.

The Madras Textile Union was the first union in the modern sense, which was formed in 1918 by B.P. Wadia. Three factors were responsible for its formation: (i) extremely short interval for mid-day meal, (ii) frequent assaults on workers by the European assistants, and (iii) inadequate wages in the face of rapidly increasing prices. This union adopted collective bargaining and used trade unionism as a weapon for class-struggle. The union was successful in getting the mid-day interval extended to an hour. It also tried to bring about the upliftment of workers by opening a library for its members. Altogether, 17 new unions were formed between the end of 1917 and the end of 1918. In 1920, a spinner's Union, as well as Weaver's Union were formed at Ahmedabad at the initiative of Mahatma Gandhi.

The Textile Labour Association was formed in 1920 at the initiation of Gandhiji. It adopted the ideology of Truth and non-violence as its means to get the demands fulfilled.

...
On October 30, 1920, representatives of 64 trade unions with a membership of 140,854, met in Bombay and established the All India Trade Union Congress under the Chairmanship of Lala Lajpat Rai. It had the support of such national leaders like Motilal Nehru, J.L. Nehru, C.R. Das, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose, Gulzarilal Nanda and others from the Indian National Congress. This loose, federal organisation was brought into being chiefly to facilitate the selection of delegates to represent Indian Labour at the I.L.O. Conference, but it also set before itself the task of co-ordinating the activities of several individual unions existing in the country, promoting the interests of Indian Labour in economic, social and political matters and mobilising the labour force in the service of the Swaraj movement. The total number of unions affiliated to AITUC was 125 with a membership of 2.5 lakhs.

The workers' organisation sprang all over India chiefly in the jute and cotton textiles, in the railways and among the transport workers in general. The subsequent inter-war period saw the consolidation of the trade union movement, the assertion of the rights of the workers, periodic industrial strike and first attempts in evolving a machinery for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes. Trade unionism, after 1919, spread to centres other than Madras, Ahmedabad and Bombay. The movement, however, did not make any steady progress in the well established textile
industries. It was developed only in railways, posts and telegraphs, shipping, engineering and communication but was weak amongst the mine, jute and cotton textile workers. The majority of the unions had very little continuity and they were formed for some temporary and immediate purpose such as getting enhanced wages.

Among the political leaders who entered into the trade union movement at this time were such national leaders as Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, V.V. Giri, C.R. Das and Subhash Chandra Bose. Besides, there were active communist leaders like Dhundiraj Thengdi, Shripat Amrit Dange, S.S. Mirajkar, K.N. Joglekar, S.V. Ghate, R.S. Nimbakar, Phillip Spratt and S. Saklatwala.

Left-wing Unionism Period (1924-1934):

In 1924, violent and long-drawn-out strike by unions led to the arrest, prosecution, conviction and imprisonment of many communist leaders. The AITUC emerged as a sole representative of the Indian working class. By 1927, it united 57 unions with a membership of 150,555. The rapid growth of the trade unionism was facilitated by several factors, such as (i) the growth of anti-imperialist national movement; (ii) the brutal violence and repressive measures let loose by the British Government, particularly the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Rowlatt Act, indiscriminate arrests and imprisonment of national leaders and satyagrahis; (iii) the phenomenal profits earned by the capitalists in the face of the falling real wages during the post-war period.
By 1926-27, workers' and peasants' parties sprang up and in 1928, various local units of these parties were united into an All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party. Its formation gave an impetus to the left influence in the working class movement and many trade unions opted for left-wing leadership. This resulted in a large number of strikes. In 1928, the man-days lost totalled to 316 lakhs. The Communist regained their influence in the trade union field by organising the cotton mills workers of Bombay in the Girni Kamgar Union (Red Flag) and the workers of the G.I.P.Railway in G.I.P.Railwaymen's Union. These two unions had 54,000 and 45,000 members respectively. The Communists were entrenched in the trade unions in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Delhi, and Calcutta. The influence of the communists was so great that the Government had to stage in 1929 one of the longest and costliest trials of the world (namely, the Meerut Conspiracy case), which lasted for 4½ years and involved a total cost of Rs. 20 lakhs. In this strike as many as 31 ring leaders were arrested. The Meerut Trial tried to crush the movement. The moderates (like Diwan Chamanlal, V.V.Giri, N.M.Joshi, B.Shiva Rao and Guruswamy, etc.,) who were stigmatized as weak-kneed, lost their hold in several industrial centres. Two distinct parties grew in the movement called by some as the 'Rightists' and 'Leftists' and by others 'Geneva-Amsterdam Group' and 'Moscovites'. Heated discussions took place on questions of international policies and ideologies of the working class movement. The leftist demanded that the AITUC be affiliated to the Third International (i.e., the League
against Imperialism - the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, Moscow, a camouflaged communists organisation, while the Rightist preferred the International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam). Second, Rightists opposed militant action, specially strikes and demanded that trade unions should concern themselves more with economic issues rather than political action. On the other hand, the Leftists argued that trade unions are 'class organisations', the ultimate aim of which is to overthrow capitalism and establish a socialist society. They, therefore, pointed out that the working class should resort to militant action and combine economic with political struggle in order to capture political power.

Finding compromise with the communists unacceptable, the moderates (under the leadership of Shri N.M. Joshi) and the representatives of 24 affiliated unions seceded from the AITUC saying that, "the control and direction of the new majority in the Executive Council will be fundamentally opposed to the genuine interests of the working class." They formed a separate union - the All India Trade Union Federation (AITUF). The split reduced the strength of the AITUC from 51 affiliated unions with a membership of nearly 9 lakhs to 21 unions with a membership of 94 thousands. Accordingly, as a result of split, the AITUC resembled Samson* shorn of his locks. The new federation believed more in constructive policies of furthering the interests of the working class. By 1930, 104 unions were registered with a total membership of 2.42 lakhs. In 1931, there was another rift in the AITUC at the Calcutta session, due to
the fundamental differences between the Communists and the left wing unionists. The communists led by B.T. Ranadive and S.V. Deshpande formed the Red Trade Union Congress (RTUC).

Thus at the beginning of the thirties, the trade union movement presented a picture of disunity. There were three unions, namely, (i) the AITUC, led by the Royists and militant nationalists; (ii) the AITUF, led by Congress nationalists and moderates; (iii) the RTUC, consisting of orthodox communists, the objective of which was dictatorship of the proletariat. Besides, there were some other independent organisations which followed their own methods and policies, notable among them being the All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) and the Textile Labour Association (TLA) of Ahmedabad. The AIRF originally started in 1921 and after dormancy, again revived in 1925, grew rapidly thereafter. Practically all the railwaymen unions were affiliated with it for the time being.

Trade Unions' Unity Period (1935-1938):

Such a state of divided labour movement was naturally thought undesirable and soon after the first split, attempts at trade union unity began to be made through the efforts of the Roy Group on the basis of a platform of unity. The initiative taken by All India Railwaymen's Federation (a neutral body) had shown fruitful results. This federation, in its Conference at Bombay, formed a Trade Union Unity Committee in 1932. The Committee
adopted the following "platform of unity". "A trade union is an organ of class struggle; its basic task is to organise the workers for advancing and defending their rights and interests. Negotiation, representations and other methods of collective bargaining must remain an integral part of the trade union activities."

It also laid down certain broad conclusions agreeable to both wings of labour—the AITUF and the INTUC. The final decision was taken in Delhi in 1933, when National Federation of Labour (NFL) was formed to facilitate the attempt towards unity. The AITUF and the railway unions amalgamated themselves with the NFL under the name of the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF). The AITUC and the RTUC, however, remained aloof from these efforts.

In 1935, the RTUC was merged into the AITUC. The unity efforts were synchronised by a popular upheaval as evidenced by the 1937 general elections. The Indian National Congress approached the working class with the pledge that it would endeavour "to secure to the industrial workers a decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour in conformity, as far as economic conditions of the country permit, with international standards, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, protection against economic consequences of old-age, sickness and unemployment and the right of workers to form unions and to strive for the protection of their interests."
As a result of this alluring Manifesto, the Congress Government assumed charge in seven states and a big change occurred. There was a new upsurge of industrial unrest culminating in big strikes. In 1937, there were 379 strikes, which involved 6.47 lakhs workers and resulted in a loss of 89.82 lakh man-days. The inauguration of the Provincial Autonomy, the greater freedom enjoyed by workers during 1937-38, the sympathies obtained by workers from the congress ministries in the assertion of their rights to organise, the larger representation accorded to organised labour in various Provincial Assemblies and the diminishing attitude of hostility on the part of several employers towards trade unionism led to a remarkable increase in the number and membership of the unions. The number of trade unions increased from 271 in 1936-37 to 562 in 1938-39 and the membership rose from 2.61 lakhs to 3.99 lakhs.

The one important development of this period was that through the efforts of V.V. Giri, the path of unity was paved in 1938 in Nagpur when the AITUC finally decided to accept the conditions of merger as laid down by the NTUF. Thus, after 9 years of split the trade union unity was complete in 1940 when the NTUF dissolved itself and merged with the AITUC and the AITUC again became the sole representative of the organised labour. According to Punekar, "During the decade 1930-40 Indian Trade Unionism was a divided house and the average industrial worker kept himself aloof from organised action.

Second World War Period (1939-45):-

The Second World War broke out in September 1939.
and this created new strains in the united trade union movement. These strains arose because of the different political factions in the AITUC related in different ways to the role of India as a protagonist in the war. A large group of trade unionists led by the members of the Radical Democratic Party (such as J. Mehra, V.K. Karnik, M.N. Roy and Miss Maniben Kara) was of the opinion that the AITUC should support and take part in the anti-fascist war irrespective of the acts of omission and commission of the British Government. An equally large number (supported by Shri S.C. Bose and others) were against that view on the ground that it was an imperialist war of Great Britain with which India was not concerned. Hence, again a rift took place in 1941 and the Radicals left the AITUC with nearly 200 unions with a membership of 3,00,000 and formed a new central labour federation known as the Indian Federation of Labour. In 1941, this Federation was recognised by the Government as an organ representing labour class. The IFL called: (i) for mobilisation of Indian Labour for conscious and purposeful participation in the industrial programme geared to the needs of the war; and (ii) for securing for the workers bare minimum of wages and amenities which the wartime conditions demanded and without which maintenance of workers’ morale was an impossibility. In this effort it was aided by the Government of India, by providing large funds at the rate of Rs. 13,000 per month. The IFL grew very rapidly and by 1944, it claimed 222 unions with a membership of 407,773 workers.

The shifts in the national political situation
continued to affect the very fibre of the Indian trade union movement. In this connection, two important developments were the German invasion of Russia in June 1941 and the intensification of the struggle for Indian Independence in 1942. When Hitler invaded Russia, the communists abandoned their policy of opposition of war and declared their support. As a result in July 1942, the communist leaders were released from the jail. The Indian National Congress had launched a policy of non-cooperation at the beginning of the war. By August 1942, the political atmosphere had become highly charged and cries of 'Quit India' flew about like so many sparks of electricity. A large number of Congressites and socialists were arrested, with the result that the non-Communist strength, in the AITUC, especially at the level of the top leadership dwindled and the organisation fell into the hands of the Communists.

During war-time certain factors helped to enhance the status of the trade unions in the country, namely, (a) the government as well as employers launched a number of labour welfare measures with a view to increasing production of war materials and other essential goods and maintain high profits (b) Recognition to trade unions was accorded by many employers. This fact gave a moral strength to the unions. (c) Ban was placed on the strikes and lockouts, during war-time, under the Defence of India Rules 81-A, and all disputes had to be referred to adjudication and their awards were enforced. (d) A tripartite Labour Conference was convened in 1942, for the first time, to provide a common platform for discussions and mutual
understanding, between the labour and the employers.

During war-time, the trade union strength grew from 420 in 1937-38 to 865 in 1944-45 and the membership from 3.90 lakhs to 8.89 lakhs. The later years of war witnessed an intense rivalry between the two trade unions, the AITUC and IFL for primacy in the field of leadership. The investigations in 1944, of the Chief Commission of Labour, gave verdict that, "AITUC was increasingly becoming more representative from almost every point of view, and, that IFL was gradually losing on that score." The basis of this decision was that the membership of IFL was only 407,773 as against 456,000 of the AITUC. In 1947, 601 unions were affiliated to it with a membership of nearly 8 lakhs.

Thus, by the end of the war, there were three principal political groups in the field: The Communist dominating the AITUC, the Royist having a hold on the IFL and the Nationalist and the Socialist trying to build up a 'labour front' which was limited to only two centres—Ahmedabad and Jamshedpur.

The impact of the Second World War on the trade union activity was tremendous. One great qualitative change that had taken place in Indian trade union related to their ability to participate in negotiations with employers and the tripartite deliberations.

From 1919-20, the number of Registered Trade Unions increased from 107 to 1833 till 1946-47. In this period the number of unions submitting returns increased from 64 to 998. Similarly, the total membership in this period increased from 141000 to 1332000.
The Post-Independence Period (From 1947 to-date):

When attempts to restructure the AITUC failed, those believing in the aims and ideals other than those of the AITUC separated from the organisation and established the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in May 1947. The reason for forming a new union was expressed in the communication of Shri G.L. Nanda (the Secretary of the H.M.S.S.) addressed to all the Congress-minded trade unionists. It reads: "Congressmen in general and particularly those working in the field of labour, have found it very difficult to cooperate any longer with the AITUC which has repeatedly been adopting a course completely disregarding, or even in opposition to, the declared policy and advice of the Indian National Congress." 34

The INTUC was formed by Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Santh, a creation of the pro-Gandhi wing in the Congress, who were associated with the Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad. The ATLA became the guiding and driving force behind the INTUC. It also supplied 55,000 of the INTUC's initial membership of 575,000. 35 The long experience of the ATLA in trade union affairs also resulted in a large proportion of the INTUC leaders coming from Ahmedabad. Ideologically as well as administratively the bloodstream of the INTUC flowed from Ahmedabad. Here the ATLA provided it with a strong membership nucleus, a rich treasury, and a cadre with a long experience in labour work. The INTUC itself joined the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) as an affiliate. The INTUC had at the time of its inception 200 unions affiliated with it with a
a membership of 575,000. It grew rapidly in strength and it had the claim of being recognised as "the most representative central organisation of organised labour in India." The AITUC, which for nearly 30 years had been considered as the "Voice of Indian Labour," thus lost its premier position. According to its sponsors, "the INTUC represented an attempt to go to the working class with a new and fresh approach to the solution of the problems."

Since the beginning, the INTUC shared and supported the political outlook of the Indian National Congress, its popular image was identified with that of the Congress, and hence, its policies are subject to directives of the Congress party. The constitution of the INTUC emphasises negotiation, conciliation and, if necessary, the adjudication of industrial disputes. It believes in democratic and peaceful methods, which are in harmony with the traditions, culture and aspirations of the people.

When the socialist group broke away from the Congress in 1948 and formed a new political party (Praja Socialist), socialist trade union leaders who were operating within the INTUC seceded from it and formed a new central trade union organisation called the Hindustan Mazdoor Panchayat (HMP). This organisation and the Indian Federation of Labour came together under the name of Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), the main objective being to organise and promote the establishment of a democratic socialist society. The HMS was launched ostensibly with a view to keep the trade union movement free from domination by Government and political parties and the...
methods to be employed were to be peaceful, legitimate and democratic.

A group of left-wing trade unionists dissatisfied with the attitude of the majority of the socialist party, who had influence in the H M S, formed yet another organisation, United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) in 1949 to conduct trade union activity on the broadest possible basis of trade union unity, free from sectarian politics led by leaders of the leftist parties; the UTUC co-operated with the communists even though opposed to the communist party's emphasis on violence.

The post-war period has been marked by the most rapid strides so far made by the trade union movement in India. The most important factors being:
(i) the constant inflow of outside and international influences;
(ii) the pressure of trade union rivalries, often based on political or ideological differences;
(iii) Governments' Industrial Relations Policy with its provision for compulsory adjudication machinery;
(iv) the enactment of labour laws conferring special privileges on registered trade unions,
(v) desire of workers to unite for safeguarding their interest especially to face harder conditions for labour such as retrenchment, lay-off, etc., and
(vi) attempts made by some employers to set up unions under their influence.

Thus, we can say that modern trade unionism in India which is essentially an outcome of the factory system...
of production and the capitalistic order of society, came relatively late in the field. The reasons of this lateness can generally be given as the slow progress of industrialization of the country, the special difficulties arising out of the illiteracy of the workers, their migratory habits and the heterogeneous composition of the labour force in the industrial centres. Though the germs of the movement in the country are to be found in the last quarter of the 19th century when sporadic efforts were made to organize labour, they were just a medley of ill-directed and haphazard moves. The birth of the trade union movement in India as at present understood, may, however, be traced back to the first quarter of the 20th century, although some form of trade union organisations came into existence after the establishment of factories in India in the eighteen eighties. The labour movement in India has passed through different stages of its development. The pattern of growth and character of the movement in different periods was shaped by the existing social, economic and political characteristics of each period. In the pre-First war period, the labour movement was humanitarian in nature and aimed at the enactment of factory legislation. In the post war and pre-independence period, the movement took a political character. Under the influence of nationalism, the labour movement played a vital role in the freedom movement.

Thus, the development of trade unionism in India has had a chequered history and a stormy career. Though the Indian labour movement has a very short history, but it has crowded
more experience and deeds of revolutionary heroism into
the few years of its existence than any other labour movement
into a period twice or thrice as long. As in most other
countries, trade unionism in India has been the product of
industrial development. Hence, in the middle of the last
century, after the establishment of large scale industries,
it was natural that some attention came to be paid to
industrial organisation. Employers, were, however the first
to organise themselves into unions to safeguard their own
interest against the workers. European employers were the
first to combine and they were even successful in getting
the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act passed in 1860, accord-
ing to which the workers could be prosecuted for leaving
the job. Since then, the employers have organised themselves
into strong associations known as Chambers of Commerce, which
have greatly influenced the Governments' labour policy from
time to time. The workers' organisations could not develop
till the out-break of the war of 1914-18, as the conditions
for the growth of trade unions did not exist. The workers
were too poor and weak, the employers were very strong, the
Government was unsympathetic and the public was indifferent.

However, that does not mean that no attention was
paid towards organising the workers for their welfare during
the early history of industrial development. But such efforts
were largely dealt with by social workers, philanthropists
and other religious leaders, mostly on humanitarian grounds.
There was no collective bargaining and emphasis was largely
laid on charitable motives. In 1872, Mr. P.C. Majumdar, a
Brahmo preacher from Bengal, established eight night schools
for the benefit of the workers in the city of Bombay.

In Calcutta, under the auspices of the Brahmo Samaj the 'Working Men's Mission' was established in 1878, which preached practical religion and morality and established night schools for workmen and depressed classes. Mr. Sasipada Banerjee also started the Baranagar Institute at this time for promoting education and social welfare among the jute workers.

It is significant that some labour unrest also appeared at this time. There is a record of a strike in 1877 at the Empress Mill at Nagpur over wage rates. Between 1882 and 1890, twenty-five strikes were recorded in the Bombay and Madras presidencies.

It was in 1875, when a few philanthropists under the leadership of Mr. Sorabjee Shapurjee Bengalee, started an agitation in order to draw the attention of the Government to the miserable lot of the workers, especially women and children, and to the need for some legislative protection. But the progress of the movement was not very encouraging. The Government passed the first factory Act in 1881, but that was very inadequate and there were protests in Bombay on behalf of the workers. At this time arose the first labour leader in India, Mr. Narayan Meghajee Lokhande, who started his career as a factory worker and devoted his whole life to the cause of labour movement. He organised a conference of Bombay Factory Workers in 1884, and drew up a memorandum containing a series of resolutions in favour of a weekly holiday, limitation of working hours and for redressing other grievances of the workers. It was presented to the Indian Factory Commission, which had been appointed just before.
The Commission considered the memorandum, but the
Government took no action on the Commission's Report.
The agitation for factory legislation continued and
the workers, under Mr. Lokhande's leadership, continued
to take part in it, a petition, for example was sent in
1889, to the Governor-General, appealing for protection
and this was followed by a mass meeting of over 10,000
workers in Bombay, in April 1890, in which two woman
workers also spoke. A memorandum requesting for a weekly
holiday was presented to the Bombay Millowners' Association
the same year, and this demand was happily conceded.
Encouraged by this victory, Mr. Lokhande, in 1890, succeeded
in forming the first organisation in India, namely the "Bombay Mill-hands' Association", and started a labour
journal called the "Dinbandhu" i.e., "The Friend of the
poor." Mr. Lokhande rose to a position of considerable
influence and became the Bombay representative chosen to
procure evidence for the Factory Commission of 1890.
However, it has to be noted that the Bombay Mill-hands'
Association was not an organised trade union, having no
roll of membership, no funds and no rules. Mr. Lokhande
was more a philanthropic promoter of labour legislation
and of workers' welfare, than a pioneer of labour organisa-
tion or labour struggle. 40

With the passing of the Factory Act of 1891, the
first phase of the labour movement came to an end. After
that there were some local agitations and a few organisations
grew up, but the progress was very slow due to plague, famine
and economic depression that followed. The deaths of
Mr. Bangalee and Mr. Lokhande also deprived the movement of its leadership. A mention may be made of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India, and Burma, which was formed in 1897 by mostly European and Anglo-Indian Railwaymen and was registered under the Indian Companies' Act. Its functions were primarily concerned with friendly benefits and although it has continued its existence into the modern period, changing its name in 1928 to the National Union of Railwaymen, it has played little part in the Indian labour movement.

The elements of labour movement again appeared at the time of the partition of Bengal in 1905. The partition led to political agitation in Bengal and a few of the political leaders took up the cause of the industrial workers. The Swadeshi movement started at this time also fitted in well with the attempt to improve the conditions of workers in factories. There was also demand for higher wages, with the revival in trade and business after a period of depression. At the same time, owing to the extension of the hours of work in Bombay mills, made possible by the introduction of electricity, an agitation had arisen in support of the Government proposal to restrict the hours of adult male workers. The result was a wave of strikes during 1905-1909. There were a number of strikes in several Bombay mills, serious strikes on the railways, especially the Eastern Bengal State Railways and the highest point was reached with the six day political mass strike in Bombay against the sentence of six years' imprisonment on Tilak in 1908. Some important organisations
of the workers came into existence. The Printers' Union was organised in Calcutta in 1905 and the Bombay Postal Union was formed in 1907. Then in 1910 the second important organisation of the Bombay Factory Workers was formed namely the Kamgar Hitavardhak Sabha, i.e., Workers' Welfare Association. This also started a labour weekly, called Kamgar Samachar, i.e., Labour News. This Association did very good work in helping to settle many disputes and also sent petitions to the Government for limiting the hours of work, for paying compensation for accidents and for improving living and working conditions. With the passing of the Factory Act of 1911, the second phase of the labour movement came to an end.

Till this period the organisations of workers were not like a continuous body. They were merely ad hoc committees formed for the purpose of specific grievances on specific matters. The real start of trade union movement was made towards the end of the war period, when a number of causes combined together to create a general feeling of insecurity and unrest among the workers. Unrest had been latent before the war also, but did not become manifest owing to the illiteracy, lack of discipline and absence of organisation and leadership of the workers and owing to their patience, resignation, the tradition of subordination and the possibility of returning to agriculture if conditions became unbearable. The war of 1914-18 greatly changed this position. It was responsible for mass awakening, especially among the industrial workers. Many soldiers, who had gone out, came back with the news of good labour conditions in
other countries. The Russian Revolution created a world-
wide revolutionary wave and the Indian working class
could not remain unaffected. New ideas came to be preach-
ed and new aspirations cherished. A spirit of defiance,
discontent and restlessness became visible. Besides, the
cost of living was rising, prices had more than doubled
and the wages did not keep pace with the rise in prices.
The capitalists were reaping a rich harvest of war profits
and the workers wanted their own share. The workers also
became conscious of their rights with the political unrest
in the country. Congress-Muslim League unity had been
achieved on the basis of programme of immediate self-
government. Mahatma Gandhi had come on the political field
with his programme of achieving Swaraj. The various repressive
measures of the Government of India, e.g., Matrial Law, the
Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh incident and the increasing
burden of taxation all had an unsettling effect. Then the
establishment of the International Labour Organisation of
the League of Nations gave some dignity to the labouring
classes and the workers' organisations were given the right
to have a delegate, recommended by them to the annual
conferences of this I.L.O. All these had an affect on the
working classes in the country. "With the social mind sur-
charged with war spirit, political agitation and the revolu-
tionary ideal, the labouring classes could no longer remain
patient and tolerant under the old social wrongs and new
economic disabilities." The result was that the strike
movement which began in 1918 and swept the country in 1919
and 1920, was overwhelming in its intensity. The end of 1918
saw the first great strike affecting an entire industry in a leading centre in the Bombay Cotton Mills by January 1919, 1,25,000 workers covering practically all the workers were out. The response to the hartal against the Rowlatt Act in the spring of 1919 showed the political role of the workers in the forefront of the common national struggle. During 1919, strikes spread all over the country. By the end of 1919 and the first half of 1920, the wave reached its height. In the first six months of 1920, there were 200 strikes, involving 1½ million workers.

These were the conditions in which Indian trade unionism was born. Most of the Indian trade unions, in the main industries and centres, derive from their period, although due to inevitable conditions the organisation has seldom been continuous. This great period of militancy was the birth of the modern Indian Labour movement.

Thus, in brief we can say that the trade union movement in India started rather late, though the industrialisation of the country began about 1850. The first trade union was founded by Mr. N.K. Lokhande in 1890 and was known as the Bombay Mill Hands Association. This was followed by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in India, 1897, the Printers' Union of Calcutta, 1905, the Madras and Calcutta Postal Union, 1907, and the Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha, 1910. All these trade unions aimed at promoting welfare activities for workers, spreading literacy among them and redressing their grievances by constitutional methods. They were, however, not trade unions in the true sense of the phrase but rather social unions and they were
completely free from even the most rudimentary touch of radicalism. The movement was for the workers rather than by the workers and was generally confined to the somewhat educated class of workers. Due to this, it did not make much headway among those employed in the plantation, mining and textile industries. The leadership in this movement was provided mostly by careerists, politicians-cum-nationalists and social reformers.

The movement developed somewhat during the First World War, although it began to take roots in the country only after the end of this catastrophic conflict spiralling prices, the Swaraj Movement, the Russian Revolution and the setting up of the International Labour Organisation (the ILO). All these affected the ideas of the workers and intensified the sense of class-consciousness among them. By 1920, there was a fairly large class of industrial employees, many of whom joined the various unions - the Indian Seamen's Union, the Madras Textile Labourers Union, the Jamshedpur Labour Association, the G.I.P. Workers' Union and the Colliery Employees Association of Jharia. The Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association came into being following the initiative taken for that purpose by Mahatma Gandhi, which was the forerunner of the Indian National Trade Union Congress set up in 1947. National leaders provided the political climate in which the trade union movement thrived. At the same time, the manner in which it was conducted generated a mounting sense of bitterness among the employers for trade unions were generally somewhat loosely formed organisations which came into being primarily for the purpose of getting higher
Now let us discuss the ideology concerning the trade union movement. The origin of the trade unions has been interpreted in different ways by different authorities. Their views are expressed in the form of ideologies, principles, approaches, theories or philosophies. The purpose of such theories has been to explain the basic motivating factors behind union organisation, growth and bargaining policies. Unions engage in a wide variety of functions, ranging from conducting strikes to maintaining and protecting the rights of the members. Following are the theories of labour movement.

American approach represented by Robert Hoxie's socio-psychological theory, propounded in 1920; Perlman's scarcity consciousness theory, produced in 1928; and Tannenbaum's sociological theory, which was originally expressed in 1921 and substantially revised in 1951; and the general theory put forward by the four American labour economists (Clark Kerr, J.T.Dunlop, F.H.Harbison and C.A. Myres).

European approach, represented by Sydney and Beatrice Webbs' (of England) separation of functions of ownership and control and execution theory, produced in 1897; and Karl Marx's classless theory, put forward in 1867.

Indian approach—propounded by Mahatma Gandhi, based on the application of the Principles of Truth and Non-violence.

It is to be noted that though these theories/approaches—are divided into American, European and Indian,
this does not mean they are geographically limited in their application. Each writer has attempted to set forth universal application of labour movement. Theories by Perlman and Tannenbaum view workers' organisations as essentially conservative, not desiring to make basic changes in the socio-economic structure; that of Webbs view them as essentially radical. Marx thought unions would be radical only if they followed "enlightened" leaders. Hoxie gave a qualified answer by saying that unions would differ depending upon the conditions surrounding their birth and growth. Gandhiji's view was that trade unions should not be on the basis that capital and labour are antagonistic but must be based on class-collaboration.

Hoxie's thesis is that different types of unions grow out of different social-psychological conditions and different temperamental characteristics of the workers. According to him, trade unionism is essentially pragmatic and non-revolutionary in its function.

The Webbs viewed the union movement as a reaction to the competitive pressures of the capitalistic society and believed it would eventually change the structure of the society, through political techniques. They saw the solution of class-conflict in equality of bargaining power and collective negotiation. They observed that for this "Industrial Autocracy" should be replaced by "Industrial Democracy".

Tannenbaum viewed the trade union movement as labour's reaction to the dominance of the machine in the modern industrial society. The machine is the cause and the labour movement is the result, because the machine
degrades the workers and makes him insecure. The trade union aims at control over the machine so as to overcome insecurity. He feels that "the emergence of unionism is spontaneous and unpremediated. It is inherent in the growth of capitalism. It reflects the urge of human beings to create a society of their own so that it may have control over the corporations."

Perlman saw the worker as a person with a pessimistic outlook, a feeling of scarcity of economic opportunity and consequently in need of an organisation which would control the scarcity of opportunity and retain it on some pre-determined and fair basis. According to him, "trade union is essentially pragmatic and struggles constantly for the betterment of the economic conditions and relationship through broad schemes of social and economic reform."

According to Marx, trade unions are based upon the concept of "class-struggle" between the capitalist employer and their workers. He views trade unions as revolutionary and political organisations. They are the instruments for complete displacement of capitalists in government and industry by their revolutionary programme.

Kerr and his associates think that workers' protest is inherent in industrialisation and they give an explanation of workers' protest which arise due to stresses and strains of industrialisation. In their view, organised form of protest is labour organisation.

In contrast to these views, Mahatma Gandhi discussed the role of trade unions and considered these as essentially reformist organisations and economic institutions - based on
the Sarvodaya principles of Truth, non-violence and Trusteeship - to promote class collaboration as "capital and labour should supplement each other and live in unity and harmony."

According to G.D.H. Cole (The World of Labour), the ultimate objective of trade unions should be the control of workers over industry, though the immediate objective may be the realization of higher wages and better conditions of employment for the workers. He also recognizes the inevitability of class struggle and according to him trade unions exist to carry on this class struggle. He says, "The class struggle is preached not on the ground that it is desirable but on the ground that it is a monstrous and irrefutable fact. The class structure is established in our social institutions and it is only by means of the class struggle that we can escape from it."

S.H. Slitcher, extending the Webbs' theory still further in his analysis of the purposes of unionism stated that wage-earners could not exercise much control over working conditions through individual bargaining because of various reasons. In his view, "Individual bargaining is an unsatisfactory way of controlling work and working conditions because, employers who use methods which improve the labour supply, are not sure of gaining as a result and employers who use methods which spoil the labour supply suffer no direct loss." Consequently he believed that workers, through their unions developed a system of work rules and traditions - "a system of industrial jurisprudence which served as a means of production to employees in their work."
In conclusion, we can say that trade unions were born of the necessity of workers to protect and defend themselves from encroachment, injustice and wrong done to them by the employers, and to protect the workers in their alienable right to higher and better life.

Thus, the workers join trade unions because they are constrained by circumstances to do so, because they want:

(i) To get economic security, i.e., they want steady employment with an adequate income;

(ii) To restrain the management from taking any action which is irrational, illogical, discriminatory or prejudicial to the interest of labour. Workers desire that the assignment of jobs, transfers, promotions, the maintenance of discipline, lay-offs, retrenchment, rewards and punishment should be on the basis of a pre-determined policy and on the basis of what is fair and just;

(iii) To communicate their views, aims, ideas, feelings and frustrations to the management, i.e., they want to have an effective voice in discussions which affect their welfare;

(iv) To secure protection from economic hazards beyond their control; for example, illness, injury, accident, death, disability, unemployment and old age;

(v) To get along with their fellow-workers in a better way and to gain respect in the eyes of their peers; and

(vi) To get a job through the good offices of trade union.

Thus, the interest of the trade unions in the larger economic policies of the country where they function has been gradually increasing. They also now demand a greater share in the management of the nations' industries. The objectives of
trade unions today may be stated as follows:

(i) Defending or improving the wages and conditions of employment of labour; (ii) raising the status of the worker as a citizen of industry and of society; and (iii) extending the area of social control of the nations' economic life and participating in that control. Clyde E. Danker (An introduction to Labour) emphasises union aims as threefold viz., economic security and betterment, industrial and social status and the role of unions as political institutions.

It does not imply that the trade unions in every country must definitely pursue the objectives stated above. In fact the extent of industrial development and the political and social conditions of a particular country, all have an important bearing upon the development of trade unions and their objectives. Trade unionism in every country is, thus, being shaped and influenced by the peculiar stage of development in that country. According to Kerr and Siegel, a trade union gets workers organized and disciplined which is indispensable for industrial development. Anarchy and industrialization are incompatible. However, this view does not throw any light on the basic purpose of a trade union.

One can make interpretations regarding the origin and ideology of the trade union movement in India. The development of industries, social evils and the significant political developments went a long way in paving the way for the trade union movement in India. The whole period of the growth and development of the trade union movement in India has been divided into six periods with each period having its distinct features. The impact of the two world wars on the trade union movement has been tremendous. Important acts have also been
discussed which played an important part in the improvement of the working conditions of the workers. International developments like the formation of the International Labour Organisation have also been taken into account. Though the industrialisation of the country began earlier, the trade union movement started relatively late. The political climate in which the various trade unions thrived was provided by the national leaders.

As regards the ideology of the trade union movement, several theories or approaches have been expressed by various thinkers. The American approach is represented by Robert Hoxie, Perlman, Tannenbaum, Clark Kerr, J.T. Dunlop, F.H. Harbison and C.A. Myres. The European approach is represented by Sydney and Beatrice Webbs and Karl Marx. The Indian approach is represented by Mahatma Gandhi. There is, however, no geographical limitation as regards these theories are concerned. Universal application has been attempted by the various writers. Thus the various ideologies form the very basis of the labour movement as they have practical application in the various spheres of the labour movement.

Some of the important Indian thinkers of the labour movement are Dinkar Mehta, M.N. Roy, Ashok Mehta, Indulal Yagnik, J.P. Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, S.A. Dange, Dhamwat Ojha, Yusuf Mehr Ali, M.G. Ranade and others. M.N. Roy was greatly fascinated by the ideology of Marx. His philosophy was Radical Humanism. He held the existing economic system responsible for crushing the industrial freedom and insisted that the industry should
be controlled by the people and there should not be exploitation of the poor by the rich. He, therefore, pleaded for adoption of a co-operative economy in which the various sections were to work in co-operation with each other. He contributed the idea of peaceful revolution, or social changes through non-violent and peaceful methods.

M.G. Ranade had a sense of history and a firm grasp over historical facts which led him to make fundamental contributions to Indian economic thinking. The acceptance and advocacy of modern industry by the Indian is best expressed in the following exhortation to his countrymen by Justice Ranade, the apostle of industrialisation in modern India:

This is the practical work which Providence has set down for us to learn under the best of teachers... We have to improve our Raw Materials, or Import them when our soil is unsuited to their production. We have to organise Labour and Capital by co-operation, and Import freely Foreign skill and Machinery, till we learn our lessons properly and need no help. We have rusticated too long; we have now to turn our apt hands to new work, and bend our muscles to sturdier and honester labour. This is the Civic Virtue we have to learn, and according as we learn it or spurn it we shall win or lose in the contest... I feel sure it will soon become the creed of the whole Nation, and ensure the permanent triumph of the modern spirit in this Ancient Land.45

45
During the civil disobedience movement of 1930, Achyut Patwardhan and Ashok Mehta felt the need of adding a socialist dimension to the Congress creed. They sketched the outlines of a Congress Socialist Party during their stay in Nasik jail in 1932. Two years later, the All India Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was formed in Bombay, with complete Swaraja and a socialist pattern of society as its aims.

Jayprakash Narayan, an ex-revolutionary and former socialist leader, turned into an exponent of the sarvodaya view of politics which aims at eschewing party politics and building an "organic democracy" based on the village community. He was a man of enormous popularity and great personal integrity and he possessed a truly universalist outlook. He viewed man as an organic entity and living cell of his "communitarian society."

In spite of the heavy hands of repression with which the British Government sought to stifle the Indian Press, may old newspapers continued to foster the spirit of nationalism and a number of new Monthly Magazines, Dailies and Weeklies made their appearance. Indulal Yagnik was the editor of the newspaper called Navjiban. Mahatma Gandhi took it over in 1919 and the newspaper became famous. Indulal Yagnik was activized by the Home Rule movement. Indulal was a disillusioned Gandhian Veteran from Gujarat who became Editor of the Kisan Bulletin. The Kisan sabha focussed mainly on the grievances of
peasants with some (and at times considerable) land vis-a-vis Zamindars, traders, money-lenders and the Government.

A few individuals and groups on the fringes of the labour movement were beginning to lean towards Marxism. A radical young student S.A. Dange in Bombay, talked of his rapid transition from being a chela (disciple) of Tilak to that of Lenin in the course of 1920-21, or the elderly lawyer Singaravelu Chettiar in Madras. It is an interesting fact to note that though Lala Lajpat Rai, who was an important leader of India, presided over the first AITUC session and quite a galaxy of leading Indian politicians attended it, Mahatma Gandhi kept sternly aloof, not even sending a message and his Ahmedabad Majoor Mahajan never sought affiliation to the AITUC even when it was controlled by entirely moderate groups. The very effective and non-violent, but socially far-reaching, weapon of the political general strike would never be allowed to enter the armoury of Non-Cooperation. Thus, S.A. Dange was a part of the Radical student group which included R.S. Nimbkar, V.D. Sathaye and R.V. Nadkarni (later joined by S.V. Deshpande and K.N. Joglekar), very active in Non-co-operation but increasingly critical of Gandhi and developing an interest in Marxism through literature supplied by a millionaire with socialist leanings named R.B. Lotwalla. In his Gandhi versus Lenin, written in April 1921, Dange attempted a point-by-point comparison of the philosophy of Gandhi.
(which he traced back to Tolstoy) with that of Lenin and visualized a swaraj which would nationalize big factories, impose a ceiling on wealth and redistribute zamindari land among peasants. While accepting non-violence as an effective tactic, the pamphlet emphasized the need to use the weapons of no-tax and the political general strike—

"If we win, we will win only by the help of the proletariat, i.e. the labourers and peasantry." Thus, S.A. Dange was associated with the Communist group which had emerged from out of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat experience in Bombay. From August 1922 Dange was bringing out the weekly "Socialist" from Bombay, the first definitely Communist journal to be published in India. In a letter to Dange on 2 November 1922, M.N. Roy outlined a plan for 'a dual organisation, one legal and another illegal' - a secret Communist nucleus working within a broad-front workers' and peasants' party. The "Socialist" of 16 September had in fact made a similar suggestion already, proposing a 'Socialist Labour Party of the Indian National Congress', and Singaravelu in May 1923 announced the formation of a Labour Kisan Party. In May 1924 S.A. Dange was jailed in the 'Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case'. The Communists were achieving real links with working-class. The Communists were quite prominent in the Kharagpur railway workshop strikes of February and September 1927, giving expression to the discontent of the workers the highly moderate Union leadership of V.V. Giri and Andrews. When Andrews opposed the very sensible—Communist suggestion that efforts should be made to extend the strike beyond Kharagpur to workshops like Lilluah, Dange attacked
him for wanting to be the Hume of the trade union movement — to divert and mislead it. That shall not be — workers shall become the masters of their own destiny." The Congress desire to placate the bourgeoisie and curb labour unrest in the strongest base of the Communists was reflected in the very drastic provisions of the Bombay Trades Dispute Act (November 1938), which Governor Lumley described as 'admirable'. Rushed through in two months without select committee discussions, the Act imposed compulsory arbitration, six months jail for illegal strikes (but no corresponding penalties for lockouts) and new trade union registration rules making things very difficult for unions not recognized by the management. With the exception of the Ahmedabad Gandhian labour leaders (Gulzarilal Nanda and Khandubhai Desai), the entire trade union movement opposed the Act, along with most non-Congress parties (including the Muslim League). 80,000 attended a protest rally in Bombay on 6 November addressed by Dange, Indulal Yagnik and Ambedkar and next day there was a partially successful general strike throughout the province.

Thus, we have briefly discussed some of the important leaders who made their contributions to the Indian labour movement according to their own respective ideologies. M.N. Roy becoming the first Indian to be elected to the leadership of the Communist International, the arrest of S.A. Dange in 1924 by the Government accusing him of spreading Communist ideas and being tried along with others in the Kanpur Conspiracy case and the Communist
Party coming into existence in 1925 are some of the important landmarks in the trade union movement in India. Thus, the idea of a distinct socialist ginger-group, working within the Congress but trying to push it leftwards, had been floated in Nasik Jail meeting in 1933, where the participants included Jayprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meherali, Ashok Mehta and Minoo Masani. The U.P. Congress leader, Sampurnanand drew up 'A Tentative Socialist Programme for India' in April 1934 and the Congress Socialist Party was formally started next month at a conference in Patna chaired by Narendra Deva. Ambiguities were there from the beginning, for the C.S.P. wanted to remain within the Congress, but was sharply opposed to its leadership and ready to co-operate with non-Congress Leftist groups. The ideology of its founders ranged from vague and mixed-up radical nationalism to fairly firm advocacy of Marxian 'scientific socialism', which Narendra Dev at the Patna meeting distinguished sharply from mere 'social reformism.'

Finally, we can say that the origin and growth of the Indian trade union movement has been very eventful and interesting. The ideologies concerning the various thinkers and leaders have been very significant and largely responsible for the course which the trade union movement took. In spite of the weaknesses of the Indian trade union movement, it has brought manifold advantages. Economically, the relative lot of the workers has improved. Politically, the movement has produced a mighty secular, anti-imperialist,
anti-capitalist, egalitarian and socialist force in the country. Socially, the trade union movement has emerged as a unique force of national integration in spite of the hindrances offered by illiterate and rural background of the workers; by communalism, linguism and casteism. This rich heritage is of strategic importance for building a socialist society - which is the declared social objective of India.
FOOTNOTES


3. Some authorities have divided this period as
(1) Pre-1920 era (before the formation of AITUC);
Kumar studies the development of the movement into four distinct eras; Early beginning (1875-1918);
the Interwar Period (1918-1938); Second World War (1939-1945); and the Post-war Period (1946-1958),
Kumar, C.B., Development of Industrial Relations in India - 1961, p.5.

4. The Governments' anxiety seemed "to have been to protect the social system from the workmen, rather than to protect the workmen from the social system,"


The main causes for it were: the character of the proletariat, small in number, weak and poor, the absence of class consciousness whereby a submissive attitude prevailed and class conflicts as such hardly any place, the lack of radical leaders and of the press, absence of revolutionary doctrines and the dominance of the Indian National Congress which threw all other movements in the background;

Das, R.K., op. cit.

Sharma, G.K., Labour movement in India, New Delhi, 1963 p.69.


Gurtu, Sachirani, op. cit., p.38.

Dutt, Rajni Palm, India Today, Bombay 1949, p.375.

Crouch, Harold, Trade Unions and Politics in India, 1966, p.58.


22. The cost of living index, which was 54% higher at the end of the war than at the beginning of it, rose to 175 in 1919 and reached a peak of 183 in 1920 (1914 = 100) Labour Gazette, Bombay, II n.5, p.10.

23. Nehru observes, "A demoralised, backward and broken-up people suddenly straightened their backs and lifted their heads and took part in disciplined, joint action on a countrywide scale." J.L. Nehru, Towards Freedom, 1941 p.75.


31. The main conditions were: (i) that the constitution of the NTUF be accepted by the AITUC in toto; (ii) that any decision on political issue be not taken unless decided by three-fourths majority; (iii) that there be an equal representation of the NTUF and the AITUC in the Executive Council; (iv) the NTUF will have the right to seek affiliation to any foreign collaboration, while the AITUC will not have such right- S.D. Punekar, op. cit., pp.332-334.

32. Ghosh, S., Trade Unionism in underdeveloped Countries, 1960, p.34.
34. Soman, R.J., Peaceful Industrial Relations: Their Science and Techniques, 1957.
40. Ibid, p.375.
42. Dutt, Palme: India Today, Bombay 1949, pp.377-78.