PREFACE

Industrial relations constitute one of the most delicate and complex problems of modern industrialised society. Virtuous industrial relation is imperative for the improvement of industrial democracy, increased productive efficiency and for the avoidance of industrial strife. But increasing complexity of the modern industrial system has widened the hiatus between the management and the employees in the industrial scenario which results in fall in production, besides hardship to the society.

It is generally acknowledged that industrial harmony cannot be achieved by creating a plethora of labour legislations. It requires unprecedented cooperation between the parties and deep understanding of national requirements. Jawaharlal Nehru rightly pointed out that, “an economic progress is bound up with industrial peace and industrial relations are not a matter of employees alone but a vital concern of the community.”

The present study has been undertaken to assess the industrial relations in the public and private enterprises in Kerala. In particular, it attempts to assess the nature and causes of disputes, the role and involvement of employees, trade unions and management personnel in disputes, the involvement of employees in trade union activities and the union-management relations. The attitude of respondents to the performance of the dispute settlement machinery is also included under the purview of the present study. The assessment has been made by collecting the perspectives of employees, trade union leaders and management personnel. However, the main focus of the study is the employees. Although, there are 648 public and private enterprises functioning in Kerala, the study covers only 103 medium and large scale manufacturing/trading units in the public and private sector employing more than 100 employees with a capital investment of Rs.5 crore or more.

The study covers a decade from 1996 to 2005. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data required for the study were collected from the respondents (i.e., 426 employees, 73 trade union leaders and 141 management personnel) in the public and private enterprises in Kerala, based on a structured interview schedule. Stratified random sampling
and simple random sampling were used for selecting the respondents for the study. Secondary data required for the study were collected from sample organisations, office of the labour commissioner, Thiruvananthapuram, books, periodicals and reports. The data collected were classified in order and suitably analysed by taking the appropriate statistical tools, considering the objectives set for the study.

The study is organised in nine chapters. Chapter one gives an introduction to the concept of industrial relations, approaches, importance, history and industrial disputes in the public and private enterprises in India and Kerala. Various studies available on industrial relations have been reviewed in the second chapter. The third chapter presents the problem, explains the scope and methodology and objectives of the study. Chapter four gives the personal profile of the respondents, nature and causes of disputes, reasons for the success of disputes and their failure. The role and involvement of employees, trade union leaders and management personnel in disputes is assessed in chapter five. Chapter six presents the involvement of employees in trade union activities in the unit. Union-management relations existing in the unit have been analysed in chapter seven. Chapter eight deals with the dispute settlement machinery and its performance in settling industrial disputes. The last chapter (chapter nine) contains the summary of the findings and recommendations.

The findings of the study would hopefully be useful to employees, managers and executives of private and public sector, policy makers, scholars and academics.

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