CHAPTER V

MAKING OF THE MILL-HANDS

The scientific inventions which hastened the Industrial Revolution, started in England, spread to the entire World and created two new basic classes called bourgeoisie and proletariat. Coincided with the imperialistic policy, the industrial revolution of England destroyed the traditional handicrafts and cottage industries of India. As a result, it dispossessed the artisans and craftsmen and they were compelled to depend on the village economy. Thus, they lived as landless peasants and agricultural labourers. However, with the introduction of railways and the establishment of textile industries, a section of these labourers entered into these modern industries. Thus the railways and textile workers became the harbingers of modern Indian working class. Moreover, the industrialization of India caused the internal migration of the people. Big groups of the impoverished masses moved from their native villages to distant places in search of jobs where new industries were set up. Coupled with industrialization, the internal migration of labour caused the growth of modern urban centres. Indeed, the study of Coimbatore textile labour gives a fresh contribution to the modern economic history. In this chapter, the study will be concentrated on the early mill workers of Coimbatore, i.e., their caste composition, migratory character, recruitment pattern, their working and living conditions and their class consciousness towards organization.
Social Background

From the available statistics, it is inferred that the average daily mill workers of Coimbatore by 1895 were 715.\(^1\) Since the growth of mills in the district was very less in the early years of mill floatation, the number of mill-hands who were working in the mills also were very less. However, the average daily workers who worked in the Coimbatore mills during the year 1929-30 became 6,529.\(^2\) With the establishment of more mills during 1930s, the recruitment of labourers to the mills also increased. As a result, the average mill-hands, who worked daily in the cotton mills of Coimbatore in 1946 became 36,420.\(^3\)

Compared to other textile centres of South India, neither caste nor community was the stumbling-block to the labour consciousness in Coimbatore. Though untouchability was the common practice throughout the Madras Presidency during the colonial period, in the textile mills of Coimbatore the workers from different castes were recruited. Moreover, while the other mill centres of the Presidency were employing the untouchables as strike breakers, in Coimbatore,

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it was left in the hands of goondas. But in some instance the Coimbatore mill-owners also used untouchables to assault the union activists.⁴ It shows that there was a mutual understanding among the different castes of the textile workers of Coimbatore. It is further expressed by A. Rockley that the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills employed all castes who worked beside each other.⁵ As a true Christian, Robert Stanes, the founder of the above mill provided the workers biscuits and coffee at 6 a.m. every day. But, some of the upper class people did not take coffee.⁶ It is further coined in the following statement. In the 1970's a worker from a Coimbatore mills remarked that once he was about to drink water from a glass which was used by a Harijan, a woman from his caste caught his hand and stopped him.⁷ It shows that untouchability was prevailing among the workers.

The Caste Composition

When we look at the caste composition of the Coimbatore Mills, we have some interesting facts to notice. All most

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6. Ibid., p. 320.
twenty-six castes were represented in these mills. Among these, the Gounders, Naidus, Harijans, Thevars, Chettiars, Naickers, Konars and Pillais were the dominant. There was also a relationship between the caste-composition of the mills and the caste identity of the mill-owners. For eg., in the Naidu owned mills one could notice a higher percentage of Naidu employees, proportionately more than their percentage in the population in the district. Similarly this could be said in the case of Gounder owned and Chettair owned mills also. For example, the Gounders, the single largest caste in the district represented 61.8% in the Gounder-owned mills. The percentage of Naidu population in the district in 1921 was 4.2%. But, their representation in the two Naidu-owned mills was 19% and 25.9% respectively.8

The Christian workers, working in the mills of Coimbatore were numerically more. It was estimated in 1943 that there were 2,000 Christian workers working in the textile mills in and around Coimbatore town.9 Among them, nearly 1,400 were working in the three town mills viz., Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills, Kaleeswarar Mills and Somasundaram Mills. About three hundred Christians were working in the Pankaja Mills and Vasantha Mills, and the remaining were working in the Podanur Mills.10 Another

10. Ibid.
peculiar character of the Coimbatore Mills was that the untouchables, Muslims and the Migrant Nairs from nearby Malabar were numerous in the town mills, though they were hardly represented in the country mills.11

The caste and the community composition of the mill hands clearly showed that there was certainly an element of caste affinity while the recruitment used to take place. Perhaps the caste differentiation within the working class had acted basically as a negative factor in their mobilization. But the experience of Coimbatore Mills showed that in the long run, the conditions within the factories and the political scenario outside compelled them to forget their narrow caste divisions.

Migration

The early mill workers of Coimbatore, as in other centres of India were basically landless labourers, facing deprivation in their villages. It was a common practice that the agricultural labourers were searching for better work in order to survive and sustain themselves. This situation in rural India was an inevitable result of the colonial rule which destroyed the Indian handicrafts during the early 19th century. The decline of the traditional manufacturing centres and the destruction of the handicrafts resulted in increasing pressure on the agricultural sector. The British

11. Eaman Murphy, Unions in Conflict, pp. 54 and 60.
land revenue policy also further resulted in increasing differentiation within the peasantry. The rank of the poor landless peasants and agricultural labourers increased. Moreover, the agricultural work was more seasonal and low paid and this attracted them to migrate to the industrial centres which were paying a regular and better wages. Further, the availability of labour force in the agricultural sector was in excess. As a result, it was burdensome on land. Hence they were ready to migrate to industrial sector at any moment.\textsuperscript{12} Thus the keen struggle for existence in the villages among the agricultural population of Coimbatore compelled them to move towards the industries.\textsuperscript{13} In addition to these during the 1930s World Depression many people left their villages and migrated to towns and other distant places where labour was available.\textsuperscript{14} However, it was the turn of the landless labourers first to migrate to the industrial centres. Followed by them, the cultivators of small uneconomic holdings also migrated during the slack season or drought or during the time of famine.\textsuperscript{15}

Moreover, the increasing land rent in the ryotwari areas and the resultant increase in rural indebtedness, coupled

\textsuperscript{13} Letter, Tahsildar, Palladam Taluk, Tirupur to RDO, Pollachi, 20 Dec. 1931, R. Dis., 14036/31, Rev. 18 June 1932, District Record Centre, Coimbatore (DRCC).
with poverty and unemployment drove the agricultural workers to factories in search of employment. This, Singanallur, one of the sub-urban mill centres of Coimbatore alone was having about 7,000 workers in 1938, who were drawn completely from near and distant villages. However, at the time of the establishment of the first three mills in the heart of the Coimbatore town, the working population of the town area generally hesitant to join in the mills, since they were not having the idea of factory system. Moreover, they were having the fear that their freedom of work and living would be curtailed. So, the mill-owners who established mills in town could recruit the workers from the poorest class who were dwelling in town. In due course, when they expanded their mills they recruited labourers from the nearby villages and the nearby Malabar district. The lower castes who were considered as untouchables of the Hindu Society, found the industrial areas to get caste freedom, showed their readiness to migrate to industry particularly to the town areas. Moreover, the hereditary weavers also did not like the mill job. Because, their earning was much higher than

the mill wage. But they migrated to the mills whenever they found glut in the market to their finished goods or due to the lack of sufficient yarn for their manufacture. It is inferred that during the World Depression, particularly in 1932-33, a large quantity of Japanese cloths were imported to Madras Presidency. As a result, in Coimbatore about 10,000 weavers were thrown out of employment and they found work in the ever growing textile mills of Coimbatore.

The supply of labour force to the industries at the early years of the industrialization in India was quite inadequate. But, in Coimbatore there were no scarcity except during the harvest season. Further, the new recruit from the villages did not know in the beginning how to handle the machinery. But in course of time he learnt the work which he had to do. Moreover, as part of their improvement in skill development, they were offered prizes for the most satisfactory work. Again, because of the rural identity, the working class consciousness was absolutely absent during the early years of industrialization. Apart from this, the caste-based rural background of the mill-hands forced them to

20. M. Venkataramayya, Court of Enquiry, p. 44.
tie their relationship with the mill-owners as big bosses. On the other hand the employers exploited the labour of the labourers for a meagre wage and forced them to work in the factory from dawn to dusk and treated them as slaves.

Recruitment

Except the skilled labourers, the small textile centres everywhere in India recruited their required labourers from the surrounding rural areas. So, Coimbatore was not an exception and most of the cotton mills which were established in the outskirts of the town area, recruited labourers locally from the neighbouring villages. It is true that the skilled labourers and the Managers for the first Cotton Mill of Coimbatore were recruited from England. Again, while the same mill introduced weaving, imported weavers from the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills which were controlled by the British Capitalists. In the later years of the mill establishment, the old mills provided the skilled labourers to the newly started mills. Again, the work in the spinning and weaving mills was largely unskilled and only a very low degree of skill was required. It is further evidenced from the classification of duties and work loads in the textile mills of Coimbatore which were done in 1957 by the Southern India Mill-owners Association, Coimbatore. Accordingly, out

24. RCL - Report, p.16
of eighty job categories, fifty-seven were unskilled, twenty-two semi-skilled and just one skilled.  

However, during the early years of the mill floatation, the labourers were recruited in informal ways. They used to go to the mills every morning and were absorbed in the mills through jobbers on the basis of the availability of the work. During the time of new floatation or at the time of expansion of the already existing one or at the time of acute shortage of labour due to harvest season, the management sent word by 'tom-tom', the traditional way of passing on information around the countryside that work was available. In some occasions, the mills hired cart drivers to tour the villages around and picked up anybody looking for work. Again, during the time of industrial disputes, these jobbers were sent to villages to seek sufficient hands to break the strike. On the other hand, finding the inadequate work-force in the city of Bombay, even during the normal days of the early mill floatation, the mill managements sent jobbers to the countryside to recruit labourers to the mills. They visited economically affected villages, motivated the villagers by picturing the urban factory life and offered them travel expenses as an additional inducement.

27. E.A. Ramaswamy, *The Worker and His Union*, p.15
28a. Eamon Murphy, *Unions in Conflict*, p.34
28b. Ibid.
In the early years of the history of the mill industry of Bombay, the jobber was selected from the more intelligent class of Maratha and Deccani workers who were not only stronger in physique but also could tackle and operate the machines with greater skill and efficiency compared to the general body of cultivators and field workers who came from Ratnagiri or Konkan Districts. Moreover, the early mill entrepreneurs of Bombay found the jobbers very useful to extract work from the mill hands by threats and abuses. In such a way Robert Stanes who laid the foundation for the Capital formation in Coimbatore in the form of mill industry, found it useful to keep the jobber system.

In due course, the system of recruitment was slightly changed in Coimbatore. In some of the mills recruitment was done directly by the managers while in most of the cases it was done through jobbers and Time Officers. Moreover, at the time of the failure of agricultural seasons a large number of agricultural labourers from the villages crowded to the mills, got through the jobber by paying bribe, taken in haphazardly and were discharged whenever their services were not required.

31. Ibid.
However by 1940s in some of the mills, the workers were treated as permanent. In some other mills, they were made permanent only after three months of satisfactory service. In all the other mills of Coimbatore a large proportion of the workers were treated as permanent. The temporary workers, however, in all the mills got many of the concessions and privileges of permanent workers. But whenever their services were not required, they were discharged without prior notice and without any promise of being taken back either in the near or distant future. In some other cases, even the permanent workers were also dismissed without prior notice in the pretext of misbehaviour. Moreover, the dismissed workers were also prevented to work in other mills. In fact, the workers worked in the mills at the pleasure of their employers.

Jobber System:

The recruitment of labourers through jobbers was quite common in all the textile centres of India. The jobber was known in different parts of India by different names, such as Sardar, Mukadam, Maistry or Choudhri. In Coimbatore, the jobber was called maistry. Regarding the origin of the

33a S.R. Deshpande, Report on an Enquiry into conditions of Labour, p.57
jobber system, Kasthuri Sreenivasan says, "In England the textile workers had a chance to learn technology for promotions through the evening schools which were established in the second half of the nineteenth century. Those who got technical training were promoted as jobbers or overlookers and even went on to become managers. With the establishment of textile mills in India, these people migrated to India as skilled labourers or technicians. Since the mill workers of India were illiterates and unskilled, the British technicians needed some one with a little enterprise and initiative to carry out his instructions. And so, the jobber system was evolved".

One can not reject the analysis of Kasthuri Sreenivasan regarding the origin of the jobber system in India. Because, the Bombay mill entrepreneurs, the early capitalists of India selected jobbers from more intelligent class who were not only stronger in physique, but also could tackle and operate the machines with greater skill and efficiency compared to the average agricultural labourer who was weak and poverty-striken. In course of time, the jobber acquired the power to supply workers to the mills and became managements' mouthpiece. They carried out the instructions of his supervisors to whom he was extremely subservient and became a force to reckon with as far as the workers were concerned. Thus, the jobber acted as an assistant mechanic, labour

37. Ibid., p. 49.
recruiting officer, the labour supervisor while at work and in some cases he was also expected to give technical training to the labourers. As the jobbers were the intermediaries between the capitalists and workers, mill-owner approached the jobbers whenever they wished to notify a change to the workers. Similarly, from the jobbers, the capitalists derived information regarding the needs and desires of their workers. Moreover, in Bombay, the jobber acted as money-lender to his fellow labourers. After exhausting his resources, the jobber usually introduced his workers to the other money-lenders, like mill officers, grain-dealers or Marwari merchants and stood security for them.

As the jobber was in a key position in the labour recruitment and other labour activities, the worker had generally approached him for the security of the job as well as for a transfer to a better position. Moreover, jobber obtained money to secure a job in the mills and it was a common practice of the workers of the Madura Mills, Madurai and Papanasam, the other two mill centres of the erstwhile Madras Presidency that they had to work in the houses of their jobbers after the mill hours and to do all kinds of domestic work to them. Again, during the harvest seasons they had to work in the fields during the nights. The women

38. RCL - Report, p.23.
40. RCL - Report, p.23.
workers had also to do such work as pounding rice and assisting in cooking in the houses of jobbers. In general, the workers of the mill centres including Coimbatore had to go to the jobber's home and perform all kinds of chores to please him. The early mill entrepreneurs also wanted to maintain the jobber system in order to maintain peace in their industries. Supporting this, B. Shiva Rao argued that to weaken a union, to break its power in normal times, to smash a strike through the recruitment of black-legs the entrepreneurs depended on maistries. But, the workers were always trying to keep the jobbers to their side and in some cases a cordial relationship was maintained between the labourers and jobbers. Take for an example, in 1918, the weavers of the Carnatic Mills, Madras threw shuttles at an European Spinning master. Since the jobber refused to name the culprits, the management dismissed him. However, jobbers continued to exercise their power in the textile centres even after the growth of trade unions.

* Black-Leg is a term normally used for those who were temporarily recruited to serve the factory when the workers are on strike. The black-legs were also used to break the lawful strikes.
Women

Compared to other mill centres of the Madras Presidency, a large number of women workers were working in the cotton mills of Coimbatore. Most of them were working in the reeling section. Coupled with the development of mill industries, the recruitment of women labourers in the mills also increased. Average number of daily women workers who were working in the mills of Coimbatore in 1907, 1929, 1937 and 1947 were 237, 1,692, 6,050 and 8,000 respectively.45 According to the mill-owners of Coimbatore, the women were recruited more on the basis of philanthropic and charitable point of view than from any real purpose of getting work from them. But, the condition of women in the mills were precarious. The wage paid to them was comparatively lesser to what was paid to men. Further, they were even refused to get the maternity benefit. As per the Maternity Benefit Act of 1934 every woman worker was entitled to the payment of maternity benefit at the rate of eight annas per day for the actual days of her absence during the period immediately preceding her confinement and for the four weeks immediately following her confinement. Again, the act said that the women should work nine months in the particular mill immediately preceding the data of notice. But the

mill-owners wrongfully interpreted the provision that the applicant should work consecutively for 270 days. They again argued that she was eligible for the benefit if she was absent in any length within the 270 days with leave. But if she was absent even a day during the 270 days without obtaining leave she would forfeit her right of getting benefit.  

The unsatisfied women workers reported the matter to the Chief Inspector of Factories. He ordered that just as leave with absence not deprive women from the benefit so also fourteen days absence without leave would not deprive them from the benefit. The mill-owners accepted it and began to implement the order of the Inspector of Factories. But the women were again objected to get the benefit due to the lack of clear-cut attendance system. So, during the visit of Court of Enquiry in 1938, the women workers complained them that they gave notice of their pregnancy and yet were not paid the legal benefit as per the Act. So, the Court discussed the matter with the mill-owners and found more than fourteen days absence in the attendance register. Moreover, with a view to avoid the mal-practice in the making of attendance and to avoid the suspicion among the workers, the

46. M. Venkataramayya, Court of Enquiry, p. 100.
Court recommended the 'card system'. 47 Again the Court argued that the period of nine months might be made of broken period, just as broken periods' service was counted for increment in certain classes of service. Further, for the betterment of women workers, the court recommended that individually or collectively the mills could start a maternity ward in the headquarters hospital or in any other hospital nearer to the mill by using the amount called 'mahimai' 48 collections and the unpaid wages. Likewise, the Industrial Tribunal of 1947 recommended that separate hospitals for women should be constructed, one at Coimbatore and another at Singanallur. It also recommended that women welfare officers in every mill which employed more than 300 women workers should be appointed.

Child Labour

The mill-owners of Coimbatore tried their level best to extract more work for less wage. In order to achieve this, they did not leave even children. Though, the Royal

47. As per the 'Card System' each worker would be given a card bearing his or her name and number and having columns showing the dates in the month. The workers would keep the card in hand while entering the mill for work and their attendance would be marked there on by the mill time keeper. Again, it would be given back to the workers to take home while they leave the mill at the end of the day's work. At the end of each month the card must be given back to the worker to keep it permanently.

48. 'Mahimai' refers, the amount which was set apart every year by the mills for some charitable purpose from the purchase of cotton and other transactions.
Commission on Labour, 1931 expressed that the number of children employed in mills would go down and ultimately no child would be employed in a factory, the capitalists of Coimbatore were employing children at their mills and particularly the boys and girls of less than 13 years old.\textsuperscript{49}

From the beginning of mill floatation, the Coimbatore mills accommodated a large number of children in their mills.\textsuperscript{50} Though all mills of Coimbatore recruited child labour during the visit of Court of Enquiry in 1938, they found out that a large number of young boys and girls in the Radhakrishna, Rangavilas and Somasundaram Mills and they were working for the less wage of Rs. 3/- per month.

Not satisfied with the activities of the mill-owners, the Labour Commissioner of Madras interfered in the affairs and directed the mill-owners not to recruit the children below fourteen. So, it was required that the children should submit their age certificate at the mill during the time of recruitment. The Government of Madras also agreed to pay 4 annas for each certificate to certifying surgeon. Although the Government was very particular on not to have child labour, due to poverty and ignorance the children were ready to work in the mills for very less wage. So, in some cases, the elder brother or sister of the boy or girl obtained a

\textsuperscript{49} M. Venkataramayya, Court of Enquiry, p. 13.
certificate and used by these children. In some other cases, a boy or girl who obtained a certificate gave it to another or even sold it and again appeared before the certifying surgeon and got in almost all cases a fresh certificate. Again, it was a common practice among the parents to push their children into work at a premature age. Yet, as per the agreement, the Government of Madras disbursed in Coimbatore Rs. 5,862.50 as fees for the certifying surgeons for the three years from 1935 to 1937.  

Wage

The wage was being fixed according to the rates prevailed in agricultural industry and according to their finances. Further, the wage varied from one mill to another. Take for an example, while a Grinder of a particular mill was earning Rs. 16 per month, in an another mill Rs. 6.50 per month was being paid to the same work.  

Again, compared to other mill centres of the Presidency the wage was much lower in the textile mills of Coimbatore. While the highest wage to the grinder in Coimbatore was Rs. 16, the highest pay to the grinder in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills of Madras was Rs. 31 per month. The reason for the low wage in Coimbatore was that as it is already discussed, the labour force was recruited from villages who were mostly agricultural labourers and the least wage earners in the

52. Ibid., p. 39.
Indian economy. Since such was the condition, the mill-owners wanted to maintain them at a meagre wage which of course was more that was paid to the agricultural labourers. Moreover, in the 1930s a large number of agricultural labourers and handloom weavers were ready to work in the mill industry for less wage. Yet in 1933, the mill-owners of Coimbatore imposed a general wage cut from seven to forty per cent.\textsuperscript{52a} It is interesting to note here that some of the mills imposed the wage cut in the name of trade depression. Further, finding the agricultural workers were earning very less wage and the availability of unemployed man power, some of the other mills cut the wage.\textsuperscript{53} The wage cut was continued even while the Court of enquiry visited Coimbatore. The workers represented the matter to the Court. So, the Court recommended for the minimum basic pay of Rs. 13 and the regular attendance bonus of Rs. 2 to the skilled labourer, Rs. 11 and Re. 1 to the unskilled labourer. The Court also recommended for the increase of the wage at the range of 5 to 25\% from the existing wages. Thus, the fixation of minimum basic pay could reduce the children from further recruitment. Further, the Court recommended for the standardization of wages. So, on 2 July 1938, the Government of Madras directed D.M. Strathie, the Labour

\textsuperscript{52a} Letter, 2488-L (Ms), PWL (confid1), 15 Nov. 1934.  
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
Commissioner, Madras to enquire into the question of standardization of wages.  

After a thorough enquiry, the Commissioner submitted his report and some of his recommendations were accepted by the Government. As a result, the Government directed the mill-owners to provide better conditions of service particularly wages. The Government also prepared a wage schedule on the basis of the recommendations of both the Court of Enquiry and the Labour Commissioner to all well defined classes of workers and also to a large number of smaller classes of workers which were common to all the mills. It also recommended for the flat rate of Re. 1 per worker to the night shift. Moreover, the Government directed the mills to put into practice the wage schedule from 1 June 1938. Thus, under the new wage schedule nearly 80 per cent of the workers were brought under the wages between Rs. 11 and Rs. 15 per month.

Housing

For a quite long period after the establishment of mills in Coimbatore, the mill-owners did not accept the responsibility of the accommodation of a large wage earning workers, one of the most important factor of production. Though the capital an another important factors of production...
was well accommodated, workers were left to their own choice to select a suitable accommodation. On the visit of the Court of Enquiry in 1938, a few mills provided houses on rent within the mill premises or nearer to the mills to certain officers, clerks and maistries. In Peelamedu and Uppilipaliyam which became the two sub-urban mill centres of 1920s and 1930s respectively, the managing agents constructed tenements to their labourers on rent. This was an investment with a view to the return expected by the way of rent. Except these, the remaining workers had to prefer their own choice. Some of the workers lived adjacent to the mills in the highly rented houses and some others lived in huts or cottages in their respective villages. In some cases the workers had to walk three to four miles from their residence to the mills. The remaining workers had to prefer either waste land of the patta holders or the unauthorized land near by the mills. This type of housing accommodation ultimately developed cheri* system which is considered to be the least form of housing accommodation. The workers who erected huts on the lands of the patta holders had to pay ground rent as well as free labour to the owner of the land. Regarding the development of cheries and the condition of the workers in the cheries of Coimbatore, the

* Cheri is like a colony where a cluster of huts could be found.
56. Copy of letters, M. Venkataramayya to the Commissioner, Coimbatore and to the Tahsildar, Coimbatore, 3 March 1938, M. Venkataramayya, Court of Enquiry, p. 129.
Royal Commission on Labour observed that many of the poorer classes, seeking in vain for accommodation, squatted on private lands and built flimsy shelters to serve as homes. When the land-owners' demand for ground rent became excessive, these people moved to other sites equally unsuitable and precarious. Eventually scattered cheries sprang up where overcrowding and bad sanitation produce their usual deleterious effects. For the most part, these colonies received little attention from the authorities. More often, the primary necessities of life were altogether inadequate. Even where piped water supplies are available, the nearest taps might be far distant, so that water was obtained from unprotected surface wells. The lacks of roads gave municipal cleaning staff an excuse for their neglect of conservancy. For want of drainage and in the absence of latrines streams of sewage filtered over the pathways. It was not surprising that epidemic disease frequently manifested itself in these plague-spots and that both the sickness and mortality rates of their inmates reached high levels. The same condition was prevailing when the Court of Enquiry visited Coimbatore. The administrative authorities of Coimbatore also equally responsible for the development of cheries and left the poor workers on the pretext that Government land was not available to provide them.

57. RCL-Report, p. 275.
59. Copy of the letter, Tahsildar, Coimbatore to the Court of Enquiry, Coimbatore, 26 March 1938, M. Venkataramayya, Court of Enquiry, p. 129.
However, a scheme was then in Coimbatore called Co-operative scheme for housing accommodation to the mill workers and other factory workers of Coimbatore Municipality and taluk. The scheme was to be in the hands of Co-operative Society registered under Madras Co-operative Societies Act, 1932. This scheme was inaugurated in 1938 by V.V. Giri, then Minister for Industries and Labour, Madras.\textsuperscript{60} This scheme was expected to solve the housing problem to some extent. Moreover, the Court of Enquiry suggested that with the assistance of Government, the mill-owners should provide housing facilities to all their workers. However, by 1944, nine mills provided housing facilities for 16 per cent of their workers on rented basis which varied from Re. 1 to Rs. 7.50\% per month on the basis of the housing facilities.\textsuperscript{61} The Industrial Tribunal of 1947 suggested that it would be desirable that before any one was permitted to start a mill it would be a condition attached to the licensing of the mill that due provision was also made for housing.

**Working Condition**

The working condition of the workers in the mills was deplorable. It differed from mill to mill. Again, there was no uniform working hours either in the mills of Coimbatore or in other centres of India.\textsuperscript{62} Though many textile mills of

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\item \textsuperscript{60} M. Venkataramayya, *Court of Enquiry*, p. 11.
\item \textsuperscript{61} S.R. Deshpande, *Report on an Enquiry into condition of Labour*, p. 61.
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India were working from 13 to 15 hours a day during the year 1907, from the beginning, the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills was working from 6 a.m to 7 p.m. with an interval of an hour at mid-day for rest. In 1911, a Factories Act was passed by which the hours of work for male workers were limited to 12 hours a day, for women 11 hours a day and for children 6 hours a day. Further, in 1922, by the amendment of the Factories Act of 1911, the working hours was reduced to 11 and the working hours of 60 per week was introduced. The Factories Act of 1934 restricted the working hours into 9 a day and 54 a week for men and women and five hours a day for children. Yet, by 1937, some of the mills of Coimbatore were maintaining 10 hours per day, the week work of 58 hours and the one mill was maintaining 64 hours including 4 hours on Sundays. Some other mills followed the 'multiple shift system' of 9 hours per day of 54 hours a week.

Further, there was no systematic leave system in Coimbatore. So, the Court of Enquiry of 1938 suggested for

64. RCL - Report, p. 37.
65. Ibid.
66. B. Shiva Rao, The Industrial Worker, p. 212.
* As per 'multiple shift system', a group of labourers were made to wait for a long number of hours after one half of their period of work and before the beginning of other half.
68. M. Venkataramayya, Court of Enquiry, 1938, p. 20.
six days casual leave and nine days sick leave with full pay in a year. But, the mill-owners began to provide six days casual leave and seven days sick leave. Again it was reduced after the amendment of the Factories Act of 1934 in 1945. As per the amendment of the Act the workers who completed one year service in a particular factory were eligible for ten days leave both casual and sick leave in a year. Based upon the amendment, the mill-owners reduced the leave from 13 days to 10 days. But in reality these leaves were not given properly. In some mills, leaves were not granted when the workers needed. In case of any necessity and unavoidable causes the worker applies leave or was obliged to absent himself for a day or two, he was dismissed and he was not even heard or permitted to represent his case before the manager.

Regarding the holidays, some of the mills observed Sunday as holiday in addition to the festival holidays from the date of the starting of the mills. In some mills work was partially extracted on Sundays. In some other mills festival holidays were granted if the workers agreed to work on Sundays to compensate the festival holidays. However, by 1947, in almost all the mills not less than seven days were given as festival holidays with full pay. Moreover, there were no regular bonus payment in the mills. So, the Court

69. M. Venkataramayya, Award of the Industrial Tribunal, p. 28.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid, p. 29.
of Enquiry suggested for the setting up of at least 5 per cent of the net profit each year for the workers. Further, regarding Provident Fund, the Court recommended for a margin of saving in their pay which could be allowed to accumulate with the addition of equal amount by the employers.

Moreover, there were no systematic medical facilities to the workers. However, by 1944 one mill had a well constructed and well equipped hospital with ten beds. At the same time other mills had a small dispensary or first-aid box in charge of part-time doctors. Moreover, the canteen facility was not satisfactory in the mills. However, after the beginning of the Second World War all the mills began to start canteen because of the scarcity of rice and etc. In some cases the night shift workers were provided tea at free of cost while the day shift workers got it at a nominal cost. The Court of Enquiry further recommended for the erection of creches in all the mills those having over 250 women workers. It also recommended for cycle shelters.

Early Attempts of the Mill-Hands

The early phase of the labour movement in the Coimbatore mills was more for the increase of wages, better working conditions and for the recognition of the union. From the early years of the industrialization, the workers felt that the ways and means to fulfill their grievances were

strikes. Though the early attempts of the workers were failed in most of the cases, it laid the foundation to make to realize the capitalists in long run that like other factors of production, the labour force also had to be protected. The first recorded strike in the Coimbatore Mills was on 10 May 1891 when about 300 out of 350 workers of the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills struck work. The reason for the strike was that a worker was assaulted by a supervisor and however, the workers unconditionally returned to work on 12 May 1891. Afterwards, the lack of organisational framework among the labourers made them to keep away from the struggles for a quite long period.

During the First World War, the price of the commodities including textile goods was increased. As a result, the mill-owners earned a good profit and maintained a high rate of dividend. But the wages of the workers were not increased. This resulted in labour strikes at various mill centres of India. Yet, the records available to the labour unrest in Coimbatore immediately after the First World War is scanty. However, with the inspiration of Indian National Congress session which was held in 1919 at Amritsar and owing to the grave economic difficulties of industrial labour, a local lawyer N.S. Ramaswamy Ayyangar started the Coimbatore Labour

73. G.O. 1243, Jud., 6 July 1892.
Union on 1 April 1920 for the mill-hands of Coimbatore. After the participation in the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress in 1920, Ramaswamy Ayyangar actively involved in the union activities and urged the workers to take active part in Nationalist politics. Further, the union arranged regular meetings and formulated demands such as the reduction of working hours from 12 to 10 per day, increase of 25 per cent wages to the monthly paid workers, increase of 35 per cent wages to the piece rate workers and for the better working conditions. The union also criticized the colonial Government of Madras for ignoring the problems of labour, the mill-owners for their harsh treatment on their workers and the educated of Coimbatore for not assisting the mill-hands.

V.O. Chidambaram Pillai was one of the early leaders of the working class movement. Born in the Tirunelveli district, Chidambaram Pillai had organised strikes in Tuticorin and other places, before coming to Coimbatore.

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74. Report on Non Co-operation in Coimbatore District, 1920-22, DMC to Chief Sec., GoM, Under Secretary (Secret) Safe File, 407, 6 May 1923; Letter, 3346 (Ms), PWL, 18 Nov. 1929; RCL-Report, p. 317; Eamon Murphy, Unions in Conflict, p. 72.
76. The Hindu, 4 May 1920.
77. New India, 7 July 1920; The Hindu, 20 July and 17 Aug. 1920.
78. The Hindu, 28 July 1920.
Chidambaram Pillai belonged to the 'extremist' wing of the Congress under Tilak and hence he believed in direct action. He gave his moral support to the strikers of Coimbatore mills in 1920 and 1921. Further, he himself engineered a strike at the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills in March 1922.

As a reaction, the mill-owners wanted to undermine the influence of the union. Therefore, they dismissed the workers who were active participants in the union activities. Further, in 1921, Ramaswamy Ayyangar was charged with sedition for his article in The Hindu. Since he apologised, the prosecution was cancelled. In his apology, he assured that he would never engage himself in political agitations against the Government and undertook to abstain from any agitation which was likely to embarrass the Government for a period of one year. Moreover, the union was much criticized by R.K. Shanmukham Chetty in the Central Legislative Assembly because of the outside involvement.


However, on 17 September 1923, 230 workers of the Kaleeswarar Mills struck work against the withdrawal of the regular attendance allowance which was being given to their workers since 1920. They returned to work on 20 September 1923 only after receiving the orders to continue the allowance. Yet, the management victimized some of the workers who actively participated in the strike and in their place new workers were recruited.\textsuperscript{83}

Again, due to glut in the cloth market, in January 1925, the management of the Mall Mills proposed to reduce the wage of their weavers from 1 February 1925. So, they protested against it. As a result, the wage cut was postponed to another one month and the management allowed the weavers to work on two looms in order to get the double wage. This new arrangement aimed to reduce the strength of the workers. So, the workers did not accept it. To register their protest, the workers organized a procession on 2 April under the leadership of N.S. Ramaswamy Ayyangar. To strengthen their protest the weavers who were supposed to receive their wage on 11 April for the month of March did not receive it till 17 April and demanded the full wage without reduction.\textsuperscript{84} Since the management did not accept the demands of the weavers, on 25 April 1925, 200 workers of the Mall Mills, whose wages

\textsuperscript{83} Statement showing the principal strikes and lock-outs during the year 1923-24, G.O. 3348, Law (Gen.), 27 Nov. 1924.
\textsuperscript{84} Letter, DMC to LCM, 14 May 1925, letter 1719(0), Law (Gen), 25 May 1925.
were cut and 300 sympathizers of the "B" mills of the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills Company whose wages were not cut, struck work after their mid-day meals and sat down on the floor besides the looms. The management with the assistance of police force attempted to evacuate the workers from the mills. But their efforts became futile. Since the management remained stubborn in their attitudes, the workers responded that they were prepared to starve and even to die if necessary, rather than accepting the reduced wages.

At about 7 p.m. on the same day, Earnest Kirk, a theosophist, then Secretary of the Coimbatore Labour Union arrived and tried to settle the matter. But the strikers did not oblige him and expected the arrival of the Union President N.S. Ramaswamy Ayyangar. Since he was out of station, he could come to the mill on the next day morning. But he was not allowed to meet the strikers in the mills since he was an outsider. However, the District Magistrate met the strikers in both mills, selected four persons from each mills and the matter was discussed among the Management, the District Magistrate, Coimbatore, the eight representatives of the strikers and N.S. Ramaswamy Ayyangar. After a thorough discussion an agreement was reached at about 3.30 p.m. As per the agreement the strikers had to vacate

85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
the mill premises. The wages at the old rate had to be paid for March and the reduced rate for April. The wages from 1 May onwards had to be fixed by a conference consisting of workers and managements. In case, they did not come to an agreement, the District Magistrate had to decide the question. By accepting the agreement, the strikers called off their 'Satyagraha'. As per the agreement a conference was held on 28 May 1925 to fix the wages of the weavers. Since no amicable decision was arrived at, the District Magistrate, Coimbatore decided that instead of 20 per cent reduction notified by the management, a reduction of 15 per cent for weaver working in double looms and the reduction of 12½ per cent to the weavers working in single loom. The decision was announced to the workers by N.S. Ramasamy Ayyangar and advised them to accept it for 3 months.

Again, in July 1926, on the alleged ground of trade depression and foreign competition, the management of the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills made a cut of four to fifty per cent of the wages of their workers. The workers accepted the wage cut because, the management promised to

87. Ibid.
88. Copy of the Notes, DMC to LCM, 1 June 1925, Letter 1719 (0), Law (Gen), 25 May 1925.
89. Report for the first half of June 1925, GoM to GoI, 17 June 1925, FNR, 1925.
90. Statement showing the changes made in the rates of wages in individual mills in Madras Presidency, Letter, 2488-L (Ms), PWL (Confidl), 15 Nov. 1934.
reconsider the matter after three months.\textsuperscript{91} It was the common practice in those days in Coimbatore Mills that the workers were given holidays to the public festivals in addition to sundays. But, the Kaleeswarar mills broke this customary festival in 1927. On 29 July 1927, the management directed their workers to work on Sunday, the 31 July in lieu of 2 August (18th Adi) a holiday on account of Tamil festival. Not satisfied with this, on the forenoon of 30 July, seven of the workers left their work and went around the other workers to stop the work with a view to meet the manager to demand Sunday the 31 July as holiday and to demand the annual bonus due on 1 August to be paid at once. So, the management dismissed the seven workers who incited the workers to stop work. So, after the lunch break 268 workers struck work, assembled outside the mill and tried to prevent other workers who were returning to the mills for work. On 31 July about 266 strikers assembled outside the factory and addressed by Karuppan, one of the dismissed workers, P.R. Ramaswami Ayyangar, then the Secretary of the Coimbatore Labour Union and V. Mahalinga Ayyar, a local vakil.\textsuperscript{92}

In the meeting, the strikers were asked not to resume work till the management revoke the dismissal of the workers. But the management took revenge by recruiting new hands in the place of strikers.\textsuperscript{93} On the evening of

\textsuperscript{92} Copy of the Report, DNC to LCM, 20 Aug. 1927, G.O. 2035-L (Ms), PWL, 16 Sept. 1927.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
1 August, N.S. Ramaswamy Ayyangar, the President of the union addressed the strikers, asked the mill authorities to settle the matter amicably and threatened that if a settlement was not arrived he would get the remaining workers of the mill to join the strike and extend it even to other mills. So, on 2 August, a discussion was held between the management and Ramaswamy Ayyangar and reached the following agreement:

1. The six leaders of the strike were to be dismissed and to be forfeited their bonus.
2. The other strikers were to be re-arranged as vacancies permitted.
3. The 50 new hands engaged by the management during the course of the strike being retained and
4. All the strikers except the six were to get their annual bonus.

By accepting the agreement, on 3 August, the strikers returned to work under the impression that the management would reinstate all but the six leaders of the strike. From the provisions of the agreement it is clear that the agreement itself was virtually dictated by the management. But, 49 of them were not taken since 50 new hands were working. So, after the lunch interval, 800 workers of the four sections sat down beside their machines, refused to work

94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., The Hindu, 15 Aug. 1927.
and demanded the reinstatement of all the strikers including the six leaders. However, after a prolonged negotiation the management agreed to reinstate all the strikers including the six leaders. Accordingly, the strikers resumed the work just an hour before the mill was closed.

On 11 August 1927, the police arrested three labourers in the weaving section of the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills for having assaulted Howard, an European weaving master on 14 July 1927. The management also suspended these three weavers on 11 August. The management also asked the other weavers to look after the looms of the suspended weavers. As the other weavers refused to work in the looms of the suspended men, 3 weavers from the Mall Mills were brought to work in those looms; but they were intimidated and prevented from working by other workers. In retaliation, the 3 leaders of the intimidaters were suspended by the management on 16 August 1927. So, on 17 August 1927 morning the workers in the weaving section struck work and sat down near their looms. By 9 a.m. all the workers in the mills 2,400 in numbers struck work and declared that unless the three suspended workers were immediately readmitted they would neither resume the work not quit the premises.

Supporting the cause of the strikers all the workers of the

97. Ibid.
Mall Mills and the Kaleeswarar Mills struck work in the same day. Thus, the first time the workers of the three different mills of the town united and showed their protest against the capital. Seeing the situation getting worse, the District Superintendent of Police, District Magistrate, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate and the managements tried their level best to persuade the strikers to resume work, but in vain.

However, sided with the capitalists and without yielding the demands of the poor wage earners, the police force forcibly ejected them from Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving and Kaleeswarar Mills. These ejection took place from 6.30 to 11.30 p.m. and after hearing the news of ejection in the two mills the strikers of the Mall Mills left the premises without police compulsion.

N.S. Ramaswamy Ayyangar, the President of the union, approved the action of the strikers and criticized the attitude of the police and the managements in the meeting of the strikers which was held between 11.30 and 12 at midnight. Further, he assured that he would stand by the side of the strikers in the hours of crisis. So the strikers resolved to continue the strike until the managements accepted their demands like reinstatement of the suspended

99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
workers, reduction of working hours, improving sanitary condition in the working places, free from heavy fines, free from prosecution by maistries, want of sympathetic treatment by the superior staff and suspension of wage cuts.\textsuperscript{101}

Not responding their demands, the managements closed the mills and also refused to negotiate with the workers through Ramaswamy Ayyangar.\textsuperscript{102} So, on 18 August a strike committee was constituted to do further activities.\textsuperscript{103} To strengthen the strike and to get the public sympathy, daily meetings and processions were arranged under the leadership of Ramaswamy Ayyangar and the workers resolved to continue the strike until the management had been brought to their side.\textsuperscript{104}

The scavengers, cartmen, railway workers, ryots and other leading members of the Gounders of Coimbatore also expressed their assistance to the strikers.\textsuperscript{105} Likewise, the workers of the Radhakrishna and Rangavilas Mills, the indigenous capital owned mills which were in the outskirts of the town and those were the then existing mills other than the town mills, also agreed to strike work if required.\textsuperscript{106}

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103. Ibid.
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On the other hand, the mill-owners condemned the strike as illegal on the ground that the workers did not give strike notice to their concerned managements. Moreover, the managements put up a notice stating that they had every right to appoint or dismiss any worker without assigning any reason. Again, on 18 August, the mill-owners of Coimbatore district and Calicut met together to take united action against the strike. It is interesting to note here that both the foreign and indigenous capitalists sat together to revenge the labour force.

Towards a Showdown

On 21 August 1927 morning a procession of the strikers and their sympathizers were organised by Ramaswamy Ayyangar in the town. He distributed kaddar caps to the processionists, special red belts to three accused of assaulting the weaving master and he wore a red cap. In the meantime, the Kaleeswarar Mills tried to restart the mills by bringing the workers from Calicut where the management was having another mill. This attempt was prevented by the strikers. Again, the same management attempted to restart the mills by recruiting new hands from Coimbatore. This attempt was also prevented by the strikers.

* Khadar cap was the symbol of nationalist struggle. It was made of white handloom cloth.
by persuading the railway workers and cartmen. Ramaswamy Ayyangar also distributed pamphlet which contains the grievances of the strikers and accused the mill authorities, the District Magistrate and the police, the agencies of the colonial Government and appealed the public to help the strikers.  

Since the colonial Government was following the Laissez-Faire policy and much worried about the law and order situation, the labour problem was left to the choice of the capitalists and the District Magistrate. It is evidenced that while the workers requested the Government to appoint a committee to investigate and to settle the dispute, it turned down the request. Again, by charging of inciting the public to violence, Ramaswamy Ayyangar was arrested on 23 August 1927 evening.

In the meantime, backed by the mill-owners and some of the leading citizens of the town, Some of the strikers wanted to replace the president and secretary of the union. In this situation the news about the arrest of Ramaswamy Ayyangar was sent to N.M. Joshi and requested him to send a representative of the All-India Trade Union Congress to assist the workers. Joshi requested Shiva Rao, then

109. Ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. The Hindu, 3 Sept. 1927.
114. The Hindu, 30 Aug 1927; Telegram, Coimbatore Labour Union to N.M.Joshi, G.O. 2035-L (Ms), PWL, 16 Sept.1927.
president of the Provincial Committee of the All-India Trade Union Congress and Ernest Kirk, the former secretary of the Coimbatore Labour Union to bring about an amicable settlement. On 27 August Shiva Rao visited Coimbatore and the strike committee, addressed 10,000 people on the same day, criticized the partial attitude of the Government and assured the workers that he would approach the Government to appoint an enquiry committee. But his efforts to get the Government to appoint an enquiry committee failed.115

However, on 1 September 1927 evening, negotiations were started among Shiva Rao, Kirk, Samburthi Aiyar, a vakil of Coimbatore, labour representatives, and the mill-owners of the affected three mills. But the mill-owners were not inclined towards the labourers' demands.116 In the negotiation, the workers put forward and listed out fifteen grievances like the recognition of the union, abolition of wage cuts, suspension of arbitrary dismissal of workers, reduction of working hours into nine, holidays to all the principal festivals, giving maternity benefits and improvement in the working conditions etc.117 After a long discussion, some of these demands were partially accepted by the managements.118 Further, the management insisted to

115. The Hindu, 29 Aug. 1927.
117. G.Os. 2277-L and 2278-L (Ms), PWL, 7 Oct. 1927.
118. Ibid.
the strikers to sign a new contract of service before they were taken back to service. As per the contract, workers should obey all orders of their supervisors, they should not do any other business other than their work in the mill, they should not join any part or even thinking of strike, etc. If any breach of contract, the management had the power to forfeit all the wages earned and any property possessed by the workers.

The provisions of the contract seemed to be a real slavery and in a public meeting Shiva Rao declared that he could not ask the workers to go to work and thereby establish a slavery in Coimbatore when it was being abolished in every part of the World. The Labour Commissioner, Madras also considered that this contract was unnecessary and ill-advised. Moreover, the managements were very adamant not to take back twenty workers who were the active participants of the labour strike. Though Shiva Rao did not accept the terms and conditions of the settlements, however he advised the workers to call off the strike. Accordingly, on 3 September the managements announced to reopen the mills on 8 September. Despite this, a good number of workers rejected the terms and conditions and demanded the reinstatement of

120. The Hindu, 5 Sept. 1927.
121. The Hindu, 2 and 3 Sept. 1927.
123. The Hindu, 7 Sept. 1927.
the twenty workers. However, as decided earlier, the managements reopened the mills on 8 September. But, a good number of workers who were the union activists refused to sign the contract and left the mill work. Thus about 500 workers who left the mill work left Coimbatore for Bombay, Madras, Pondicherry, Ceylon, Singapore and other places.

Another strike occurred on 2 April 1929 in the Mall Mills when the management reduced the wages of the workers. Supporting their cause, the weavers of the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills also struck work on 6 April. However, with the involvement of the Labour Commissioner, Madras, the strikers and the management came to an agreement. Accordingly, the workers of the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills returned to work on 23 April and the workers of the Mall Mills returned to work on 24 April.

In September 1933, the management of the Kaleeswarar Mills decided to impose a cut of 25% in the wages of their workers. But the cut was reduced to 15% with an understanding between the management and the labourers under the condition that it would be removed after three months.

124. The Hindu, 8 and 10 Sept. 1927.
127. Ibid., Letter, 3346-L (Ns), PWL, 18 Nov. 1929.
As the management did not keep its promise, the women of the reeling section numbering 210 struck work on 15 February 1934 morning. In the same afternoon 230 men of the spinning section struck work in sympathy with the women. On 16 February the Managing Agent put up a notice that the cut to 12½% for men in the reeling and spinning section alone. A section of the strikers accepted it and went for the work. But, the remaining strikers continued the strike. Though the strikers did not involve in violence, they organised meetings everyday. However, the strikers resumed the work from 24 February under the settlement that the piece rate workers who were paid Rs. 10-8-0 per month prior to strike would be given an increase of one rupee, the women reelers who were given wages at rate of Rs. 0-11-3 per 100 lb of yarn reeled prior to the strike would be given an increase of 9 paise per 100 lb.130

In the meantime, on 20 February 1934, a deputation consisting of 4 labourers of the Kaleeswarar Mills and three labourers of the Mall Mills131 tried to meet the Managing Agent. But he refused to meet them as the deputation included the men not concerned with strike.132 Besides, at a

129. Ibid.
130. Letter, LCM to Sec., DIL, GoI, 14 April 1934, G.O. 1602-L (Ms), PWL, 15 July 1935.
131. Mall Mills was bought by the Managing Agent of the Kaleeswarar Mills in 1933.
meeting of the Board of Directors, it was decided that the cut in the weaving section could not be restored as it was working at a loss and that they were prepared to close it altogether rather than restore the cut. However, by another deputation, the strikers submitted fourteen grievances like the abolition of wage cut and giving other working facilities in the mill. By responding the grievances of their workers, the Managing Agent replied that no striker would be dismissed while resume work. He also promised that the question of the grant of night work allowance would be considered, that the wage cut would not be resorted to and that the other grievances would be placed before the Southern India Mill-Owners' Association. The Managing Agents also added that if the workers did not return to work forthwith, the lock-out would be made. On the other hand, the strikers replied that unless the cut was restored they would not resume work. However, the strike ended on 24 February 1934 and the workers were given slight increase in their wages.

Likewise, by demanding the restoration of 12½% wage cut which was enforced from September 1933, the workers of the Vasantha Mills, struck work at midnight of 19 February 1934. But, the strike was ended on 21 February 1934,

133. Ibid.
though the workers did not get any advantage. 136

Again, by demanding higher rates for the reeling of yarn counts between 20 to 32, on 15 July 1935, in the Pankaja Mills, 240 women workers of the total strength of 1000 struck work and they resumed work in the following day with the acceptance of the increased wage. 137 On 27 October 1935, another strike broke out in the same mill against the introduction of a new scheme of five shifts in a day in the place of three shifts. Accordingly, the machinery was at work continuously for 22 hours instead of 18 hours in a day as before. Though the working hours of a worker was same as before, the workers had the grievances that they got the continuous night work for two weeks and so they wanted to revert to the old three shift scheme. However, after a discussion with the labour representatives, the management assured that they would see that none get continuous night work for two weeks. After accepting this, the workers resumed work on 29 October 1935. 138

On the night of 30 December 1935, 1,000 workers of the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills struck work by demanding the cancellation of the system of work involving 10 hours work a day proposed to be introduced in the mill