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## **Genesis and Growth of the Trade Union Movement in Kanniyakumari District**

**Dr. T. Anitha**

*Asst. Prof. Dept. of History, Sree Ayyappa College for Women, Chunkankadai, Nagercoil-3,  
Kanniyakumari, Tamil Nadu, India*

### **Abstract**

*Trade unionism is a by-product of industrialization in both developed and developing countries. Over a period, trade unions have grown to the stage of being considered as formal organisations wielding considerable influence on the socio-economic and political life of the nation. Trade unions were born at a time when the Industrial Revolution started in England. At present, the trade unions play a vital role in developing countries. In India also trade unionism has reached a vital position. "Trade Unions in India are the products of modern industrialism based on capitalist relations of production". The trade union movement in Kanyakumari is not of recent origin. The District was carved out from erstwhile Travancore–Cochin and given to Tamilnadu in the year 1956 based on the policy of formation of linguistic states. Before 1956 Kanyakumari was part of Travancore region. Trade union movement started well before the formation of the state and even before securing independence to India. The history of trade union movement started in the year 1942 in Kanyakumari district. In Travancore also the origin and development of trade union movement start among the working class people. The movement began with the coir factory workers in Alapuzha on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1922. It was the first trade union in Travancore. After 1946 labour union movement had strongly rooted in Kanyakumari district. The estate labour union was the first and foremost union in the erstwhile South Travancore, present Kanyakumari district.*

***Key Words: Labour, bourgeoisie, muddled, intensified recruitment.***

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Trade Unions have gained recognition as legitimate social and political organisations all over the world. They have become an integral part of the contemporary business and industry. However, the beginning was not rosy when both employers and government viewed any combine of labourers with scorn. Organising itself was unlawful and punishable. Trade Unions have since emerged as formidable socio – economic force with political clout.

Trade unionism is a by-product of industrialization in both developed and developing countries. Over a period, trade unions have grown to the stage of being considered as formal

organisations wielding considerable influence on the socio-economic and political life of the nation. Trade unions were born at a time when the Industrial Revolution started in England. At present, the trade unions play a vital role in developing countries. In India also trade unionism has reached a vital position. "Trade Unions in India are the products of modern industrialism based on capitalist relations of production"<sup>1</sup>. The early pioneers of trade unions in India conceived it as an inevitable reaction against industrial system of free market competition and of capitalist control.

**Formation of Trade Unions:** Trade Union is the offspring of the factory system, which was ushered in by the Industrial revolution. Employees of various trades joined to present a collective front in negotiations with employers and provide a measure of security for their respective members. As Frederic Engels has stated "Trade Unions were formed with the outspoken intention to protecting the single working man against the tyranny and neglect of the bourgeoisie, in all branch industries. Their objects were to fix wages and to deal with employer's enmasse, as a power, to regulate the rate of wages according to the profit of the latter, to rise when opportunity offered and keep it uniform each trade throughout the country"<sup>2</sup>. Intellectuals, social theorists and political activists have defined Trade Union variously. The first person to write about trade unions was Karl Marx who conceived labour organisations as the instruments of working class struggle against capitalist oppression. According to him, the birth of trade unions was possible due to the emergence of the working class or 'Proletariat'<sup>3</sup>. Then he said 'trade unionism thus represents a prime instrument of the class struggle between proletarian workers and capitalist businessmen'<sup>4</sup>.

Based on experience, Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb jointly developed their theory of trade unionism. Webb defined trade union as "a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives"<sup>5</sup>.

Mahatma Gandhi has been called the 'First labour leader of India' and has further been given the credit of being the founder of the modern trade union movement in India<sup>6</sup>. According to him the trade union is "to cover all aspect of worker's life both inside the factory and at home", and "aim to raise the moral and intellectual height of labour and thus

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1. G.K. Sharma, *Labour Movement in India*, Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1982, P.183
  2. Frederic Engels, *The conditions of the working class in England*, Moscow, 1873, p.252
  3. Pramod Varma and Suriya Mookerjee, *Trade Unions in India*, oxford SIBH publishing co, New Delhi, 1982, p.4
  4. Bhagoliwal, T.N., *Economics of labour and Industrial relations*, Sahitya Bhavan Agra, 1990, p.187.
  5. Pramod Varma & Surya Mookerjee, *op. cit.*, P.5.
  6. *Ibid.*, p.42

by sheer merit make labourer master of the means of production instead of being slave that it is”<sup>7</sup>.

Under the Trade Union Act, No XVI of 1926 a trade union means any combination, whether temporary or permanent formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relation between workmen and workmen, or between employers and employers, or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business, and includes any federation of two or more Trade Unions”<sup>8</sup>. The object of Trade union is to protect and advance the terms and conditions of its workers. An important feature that is common to all these definitions is that they confine the trade union to work alone.

Generally speaking, all persons who perform personal service for compensation are labourers and their services, labour, irrespective of the fact that the term labourer included manual worker differing widely from each other in economic and social position<sup>9</sup>. Trade Unions have grown to the stage of being considered as formal organisations yielding considerable influence on the socio-economic and political life of the nation.

**Trade Unionism in India:** The history of Trade Unionism in India is interspersed with many economic and political events, which muddled its growth pattern and contributed to its present strengths and weakness. The development of trade unionism in India has had a chequered history. The advent of the trade unionism in India could be traced to the early days of industrialization, beginning in the 1850s with the establishment of the Cotton and Jute mills in Bombay and Calcutta<sup>10</sup>. The first trade union, Bombay Mill Hands Association was established in 1890 with immediate aim of agitating for a revision of the first Indian Factories Act of 1881. The colonial oppressions and the gradual growth of capitalism, the long gap between the decline of the old system of production and the rise of new industrial system gave the Indian working class movement a slow origin. The birth of the Trade Union Movement in India as understood now may be traced back to the first quarter of the 20th century, although some form of trade union organizations came into existence after the establishment of factories in India in the 1880s<sup>11</sup>. From the beginning, workers were recruited through a special class of men called “Jobbers”. The jobbers were empowered to keep discipline, in the factory and give elementary training required by the workers. They were usually skilled workers; they acted as protector and spokespersons of the workers. The workers were helpless victims in the hands of jobbers<sup>12</sup>. The workers were made to work for

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7. *Ibid.*, p.43

8. Trade Union Act, 1926, Act No.16 of 1926, 25 March 1926, Section 2 (L)

9. V. Shiva Ram, *State in Relation to India*, Delhi, 1936, p.6

10. Pramod Varma, Surya Mookerjee, *Trade Unions in India*, Oxford & IBH publishing Co, New Delhi, 1982, p.10

11. T.N. Bhagoliwal, “*Economics of labour and Industrial Relations*” Sahitya Bhavan, Agra, 1990, p.187

12. Disk Kooiman, “*Labour Legislation and working class movement*”, Bombay Labour office, 1934-37, *Economic and political weekly*, Nov 1981, p.1808

long and undefined hours and thus they were exploited as an instrument of capitalist production. The setting up of modern factories created many a stress for the labourers. Apart from insecurity of employment and inhuman treatment by European supervisors, excessively long working hours sans break mauled them. Absence of safety devices at the work place, employment of women and children, dearth of suitable accommodation and the remoteness of their homes from the factories strained them. Above all the wages below the subsistence level were commonly evident all over India. In 1875, a few social reformers under the leadership of Sorabjee Shapurjee Bengalee started an agitation in Bombay to draw the attention of the Government to the appalling conditions of workers in factories, especially those of women and children and to appeal to the authorities, to introduce legislation for the amelioration of their working conditions<sup>13</sup>. In 1908 when Balgangadhara Tilak was sentenced for 6 years imprisonment, the workers struck work for a day for every year of sentence in which the entire city of Bombay participated.<sup>14</sup> Tilak was arrested at Bombay on 24 Jan 1908 in connection with the Swadeshi Movement and boycott of foreign goods. Through the struggle against excessive exploitation, against both the British and native capitalists, the workers realised that the imperialist rule was the root cause of exploitation. This stimulated them to take part in the national liberation movement. The method used by the Bombay workers was the historically tested working class modes of general strike and confrontation with the armed police of the oppressors<sup>15</sup>.

In India the movement was initially in the form of demands for reform in the field of labour industrial relationship. The leaders of public opinion sympathized with the cause of labourers on humanitarian grounds. The political parties in turn forcefully pleaded the cause of labour which resulted in enactment of legislation to regulate industrial relationship on a sound footing. Labour Movement in India can be said to have started in 1875. When a delegation of British Cotton Mill owners met the Secretary of State for India and on his advice the Government of Bombay appointed the Bombay Factories Commission for the investigation of the factory conditions on 25 March 1875. Lord Rippon was responsible for the first Factory Act of 1881. This was to regulate and improve the conditions of labour in Indian factories<sup>16</sup>. Narayan Meghji Lokhanday, a factory worker is said to be the founder of the organised Labour Movement in India. He organised an agitation and called for a conference of workers in Bombay to make representations. As a result, in the year 1884 another Factory Commission was appointed. The year, according to V.B. Karnik, may be said to make the beginning of Trade Unionism in India<sup>17</sup>. As no redress was given by the Government, Lokhanday convened a mass meeting of labour attended by 10,000 workers in Bombay on April 21, 1890. The year 1884 can legitimately be regarded as the beginning of

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13. V.V. Giri, "*Labour problems in Indian Industry*" Asia publishing House, Bombay, 1959, p.1

14. Sukmol Sen, *Working Class of India*, Calcutta, 1977, p.108

15. *Ibid.*, pp.109-111

16. V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, New Delhi, 1993, p.213

17. Bhagoliwal, T.N, *op. cit.*, p.218.

the labour movement in India for all practical purposes.<sup>18</sup> Initially workers organization in India had a very slow growth. The first union to be formed in India was the Bombay Mill Hand Association established in 1890<sup>19</sup>. This was the first union in India which earned for its founder the title of being the “first trade unionist” of the country<sup>20</sup>. He also succeeded in getting a weekly holiday for the workers. Its newspaper ‘Deenabandu’ also came into existence through his efforts. After 1890 several other organizations were started in the country, such as the Amalgamated Society of Railways Servants of India started in 1897, the Printers Union Calcutta in 1905, the Bombay Postal Union in 1907, the Kamagar Hit Varddak Sabah in 1909 and The Social Service League in 1910.<sup>21</sup> However these were social welfare organizations and could not be termed as trade unions in the strict sense of the term as we understand it today. They were set up by philanthropists to ameliorate the miserable position of workers. Labour organizations of those times were of an ad-hoc nature. Their agitations were of sporadic, irregular, and isolated character.

Trade unions in India were organized on modern lines after World War I. After the war trade unionism became a part of life of an ordinary worker in India. The war gave India an opportunity to industrialize and the rise in cost of living and the political conditions gave a spurt to the growth of organized labour in India<sup>22</sup>. This state continued till 1918, when the Madras Labour Union was formed under the leadership of B.P. Wadia<sup>23</sup>. The Madras Labour Union has been accepted as the first genuine, properly organized ‘trade union in India’.

Trade Unions, after 1919, spread to other centres, especially to the Province of Bombay. Besides textile labour they covered labour in the railways and iron and steel industry. Between 1919 and 1923, scores of unions came into existence.

The confidence of workers further increased with the establishment of the International Labour Organisation, where they could be represented by their leaders on a par with the employer’s representatives. It was established with a monthly membership of one ‘Ana’ and workers joined the union with enthusiasm and it was the first time that somebody was talking to them about their rights and showing them the way of securing attention to their grievance through an organization. The workers were severely exploited and in 1920 there arose an open conflict between the employers and the union led by V.P. Wadia.

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18. *Ibid.*

19. Dr. P.P. Arya, ‘*Trade Unions in India Growth and Recognition*’, Deep & Deep Publishers, New Delhi, 1985, p.12

20. Matoria, C.B and Memoria S. *op. cit.*, p.100

21. Bhagoliwal, T.N., *op. Cit*, p.218

22. G.K. Sharma, *Labour Movement in India* sterling publishers, New Delhi, 1972, p.185

23. Pradmod Varma & Suriya Mookerjee, *Trade unions in India*, Oxford and IBH publisher, New Delhi, 1982 p.12.

The year 1920 was of crucial importance in the history of the Indian Trade Union Movement. The number of unions affiliated with the All India Trade Union Congress steadily increased from 1926 to 1929<sup>24</sup>. It claimed 64 affiliated unions at the time of its inception with a membership of 1, 40,854. Out of this membership, 91,427 represented railway employees and 19,800 were from the shipping industry under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Roy. State wise, Punjab accounted for a membership of 70,000, while Bombay of 47,000 and U.P of 15,000. All the other provinces including Bengal and Madras could account for a membership of only 8,000<sup>25</sup>.

The inaugural meeting of the AITUC was attended, among others, by such eminent national leaders as Motilal Nehru, Annie Besant and M.A. Jinnah. Lala Lajpat Ray, who presided over the special session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta in the previous month, also presided over the inaugural conference of the AITUC. Col. T.C. Wedgwood of the British Trade Union Congress was present as a fraternal delegate<sup>26</sup>.

In 1922, All Indian Railways Men's Federation was formed, under the president ship of C.F. Andrews. In 1928 the Bombay Girni Kangen Union emerged. These events and the capture of important leadership positions in the AITUC by the communists, ultimately led to a split in the AITUC giving rise to two major trade unions. A section of communists led by S.V. Dashpande and B.T. Ranadive formed All India Red Trade Union Congress in July 1931<sup>27</sup>.

The notable phenomenon in the 1930s was the world wide "great depression" and its consequences for industrial workers. In their attempt to combat the economic crisis the employers resorted to large scale retrenchment and wages cuts. Workers resisted this move by going on strike. Bombay witnessed the maximum industrial unrest<sup>28</sup>. By the middle of the decade a significant change had taken place in the political sphere which had a favourable impact on trade unionism. In 1937, popular ministries were formed in seven provinces by the Indian National Congress following the election held under the Government of India Act, 1935<sup>29</sup>. The Congress manifesto, promised to secure for workers a decent standard of living, hours to work and conditions of labour in conformity with the international standards, a suitable dispute settlement machinery, and the right to strike and form unions<sup>30</sup>.

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24. K. Sharma, *op. cit.*, P.188

25. Ramanujam, G, *Indian Labour Movement*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1990, p.11

26. *Ibid.*

27. Bhagoliwal, T.N., *op. cit.*, p.220.

28. Pramod Varma & Suriya Mookerjee, *op. cit.*, p.16.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Charles A. Myers and Subbiah Kannappan, *Industrial Relations in India*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1970, p.141.

In order to fulfil their election promises and prevent the future outbreak of strikes, the Provincial Governments in Madras, Bihar and Bombay appointed Labour Enquiry Committees to investigate the actual conditions of labour. Several enactments were also made in favour of workers, viz. the Bombay Disputes Act, 1938, the Bombay Shop Assistants Act, 1939, the Bengal Maternity Act, 1939, and the CP Maternity Act, 1939<sup>31</sup>.

The World War II brought in its wake several problems. While one section in the AITUC was in favour of all out support to the war effort, the other was opposed to it. In November 1941, the former group established their own central organization called the Indian Federation of Labour (IFL). Jamnadas Mehta and M.N. Roy became its President and General Secretary respectively. A further split took place in June 1947<sup>32</sup>.

The economic hardship of workers led to widespread strikes in different parts of India. They demanded dearness allowance and bonus to compensate for the unprecedented rise in prices. But the Government invoked Rule 81-A of the Defence of India Rules and banned all strikes and lockouts<sup>33</sup>. N.M. Joshi the president of the AITUC emphasised that the government was doing great harm by prohibiting the right to strike. Guruswamy and Maniben Kara, the other Labour representatives in the Assembly, expressed similar views<sup>34</sup>. War brought no relief to the workers. The independence struggle was getting intensified. Inflation was rampant. Discontent among workers persisted and the number of strikes was on the increase. Disunity in the trade union rank was still very high.

In such a calamitous situation Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), an affiliate of Congress Party, was formed in 1947<sup>35</sup>. After the setting up of INTUC, the communist dominated AITUC suffered considerably both in prestige and membership. Meanwhile, there came another split when the socialists separated and formed the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) in 1948. The Indian Federation of Labour formed in 1941 merged with this body. Some of the radicals, under the leadership of K.T. Shah and Mrinal Kanti Bose formed another organization in 1949, known as the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC)<sup>36</sup>. Thus by 1949, the trade union movement was split again with the Indian National Trade Union Congress,(INTUC), the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), and the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) representing the four rival groups and a few federations and unions remaining unaffiliated with any of them. The close relationship of the INTUC with Congress Party, of the HMS with the Socialist Party, the AITUC with the Communist Party and the UTUC with the

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31. Pramod Varma Surya Mookerjee, *op. cit.*, p.17.

32. Bhagoliwal, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

33. Pramod Varma & Surya Mookharjee, *op. cit.*, p.19.

34. Summaries of News Paper reports at the I.L.O. Branch office, New Delhi, 1956, p.262

35. Dr. P.P.Arya, "*Trade Unions in India, Growth and Recognition*", Deep & Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1985, p.....

36. Ramanujahan.G. *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Revolutionary Socialist Party and other splinter parties of the left ever since is indicative of the continuing political involvement of the trade union movement<sup>37</sup>.

The other central trade union organization which emerged over the course of time were Bharatia Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) an affiliate of Bharatia Janata Party, Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU) an affiliate of CPI(M), National Labour Organisation (NLO) an affiliate of Congress (INTUC), National Federation of Independent Trade Unions and United Trade Union Congress an affiliate of Forward Block. Even several regional parties such as DMK had also got their labour wings<sup>38</sup>.

There are some other federations also functioning. All India Federations, e.g., All India Bar Employees Association, National Federation of Post and Telegraph Workers, National Federation of Indian Railway Men, etc. A number of trade unions as well as their federations prefer to operate as separate units, though at times they may collaborate with on organizations or the other<sup>39</sup>.

**History of trade union movement in Travancore:** In Travancore also the origin and development of trade union movement start among the working class people. The movement began with the coir factory workers in Alapuzha on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1922. It was the first trade union in Travancore<sup>40</sup>. In July 1922 the labour union was renamed Travancore Labour Association<sup>41</sup>. P.K Bawa was the secretary for quite some time. The main activities of the association were (1) to collect funds for the welfare of the labourers (2) to give medical assistance to the labourers (3) to establish a library and reading room (4) to fight for compulsory primary education for all and (5) to fight against untouchability and other unjust practices<sup>42</sup>. In 1926 the association established a newspaper titled 'Thozhilai'. During the period between 1937 and 1939 the labour movement in Travancore was completely under the control of radical-forces.

The All Kerala Labour Conference held at Kozhicode was part of the first convention of the Congress Socialist Party. Sixteen trade unions participated in it. Maniben Kare, a leading trade unionist of Bombay presided<sup>43</sup>. A.K Gopalan, P. Krishna Pillai represented various trade unions and R. Sugathan represented the TLA<sup>44</sup>. In this meeting .G.S. Mani from South Travancore (Kanyakumari) also participated.

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37. Mamoria C. B and Mamoria S, *op. cit.*, p.113.

38. Dr.P.P. Arya, *op. cit.*, p.19

39. Bhagoliwal T.N., *op. cit.*, p.222

40. P.K.V. Kaimal, 'Revolt of the oppressed' Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Trivandrum, 1994 p.86

41. Report on the Administration of Travancore-Cochin, 1950-51, Government Central Press Trivandrum, 1952, p.80.

42. *Ibid.*, p 87

43. K. Ramachandran Nair, *op. cit.*,p.64

44. *Ibid.*, p.65



**Trade Union Movement in Kanyakumari District:** The trade union movement in Kanyakumari is not of recent origin. The District was carved out from erstwhile Travancore – Cochin and given to Tamilnadu in the year 1956 based on the policy of formation of linguistic states. Before 1956 Kanyakumari was part of Travancore region. Trade union movement started well before the formation of the state and even before securing independence to India. The history of trade union movement started in the year 1942 in Kanyakumari district.<sup>45</sup> There are number of great leaders who worked for the labourers and the most important among them were the Com. Jeevanantham, undisputed master of the working class. Thiyagi C.P. Illango gave voice for the national freedom as well as for the welfare of the labourers and G.S. Mani dedicated his life for the welfare of the working class.<sup>46</sup> All these Leaders belong to the Kanyakumari District.

**Plantation Workers union in Kanyakumari district:** The Travancore Plantations estates were established in 1860 in the Veli hills under the guidance and direction of Visakam Thirunal Maharaja and his Dewan Madhava Rao<sup>47</sup>. The natural rubber was the important products of these plantations. Kanyakumari district have more plantation estates like Mukkampala and Velimalai estates in Thuckalai, New Ambadi, Vaikundam and Palazhi estates in Kuleskharam<sup>48</sup>.

Plantation has been the most important industry in Kanyakumari District. Plantation Labourers were recruited mostly in family units. The employers consider the industry as seasonal in character and recruitment was done for a period of 9 to 10 months<sup>49</sup>. The recruits were disbanded after this period. Recruitment was done by ‘*Kanganis*’ on contract basis and the conditions of contract were governed by customs rather than by rules. In practice the workers who were previously employed were free to leave without completing the term of contract. But they will lose certain benefits which accrue only on completion of the period of contract. The working conditions had been improved considerably during the period under report. The wages in plantation were on a daily basis subject to a minimum quantity of work to be turned out per day<sup>50</sup>. During this time G.S. Mani went to Alapuzha and attended the Kerala Labour Conference. R. Sugathan and other members of that conference understood his talent and they advised him to start a trade union in the region.

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45. Kumari Mavatta Thozhilalor Sanga Varalaru Dina Malar, 01-05-2005, p.7.

46. *Ibid.*

47. K. Ramachandran Nair, *History of Trade Union Movement in Kerala*, KILE, Trivandrum, 2006, p.507

48. Administration Report of Labour Department for the year 1950-51; Government Press Ernakulam, 1952; Appendix VIII; p.110-111

49. Report on the Administration of Travancore - Cochin 1950-51, Govt. Central Press, TVM, 1952, p. 80.

50. Report on the Administration of Travancore, *op. cit.*, p.80.

The very idea struck G.S. Mani and on his return he organized the estate labourers into a union in the year 1942<sup>51</sup>.

Thousands of men and women, who worked in the rubber estates, were treated as slaves. Their plight will read like horror tale in the present as those who came late for the work were beaten by the 'Kanganigal' who come rounds by horses<sup>52</sup>. G.S. Mani appeared in this scenario charged up to organise the labourers<sup>53</sup>. G.S Mani and his followers met every night at one of the hill stations of the district, Triparappu<sup>54</sup>. Around this time a union was started in Punalur in Kerala by the name All Travancore Labourers Sangom<sup>55</sup>. Aruvikkara Neelakandan and Nanu were important members of that Labour Sangom. Nanu send Raghavan, an estate employee in Kulashekarm from Travancore region to Alapuzha and met B.A.Soloman, a labour leader from Kottarakkara and invited him to Triparappu. In Thiruparappu labourers meetings were organized and this resulted in formation of "All Travancore Estate Labourers Sangam. G.S. Mani was selected as the leader of that union<sup>56</sup>. In 1943 the office of the Estate workers Sangam was transferred from Punalur to Kulashekarm<sup>57</sup>. When the labour union activities spread, the Travancore Government began to oppress them. G.S. Mani, M. Krishnan, C.P. Illango and B.A Solomon were arrested for raising the slogan "Inquilab Zindhabadh" (Hail Revolution). The Government imposed so many cases against these labour leaders .All of them were sent to Padmanabhapuram Sub Jail. Within a matter of days Communist Party and sixty estate labour unions were banned by the Travancore Government. However, G.S. Mani, Krishna Pillai and other labour union leaders secretly made attempts to save the labour union movement in Kanyakumari<sup>58</sup>. The estate labour union was the first and foremost union in the erstwhile South Travancore, present Kanyakumari district.

The next stage was the organic growth of the movement in Nagercoil area where there was no weekly holiday and workers were not allowed to organize labour unions. In 1946 "Commercial workers union" was started in Nagercoil by comrade P. Jeevanantham, the shining star of the weaker section of the society. Chithranjan Das was appointed as secretary<sup>59</sup>.

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51. Interview with Valsa Kumar, All India Working Committee Member in Kulashekarm 4-10-2009.

52. Kumari Mavatta Thozilalar Sanga Varalaru, *Dina Malar*, 01-05-2005.p.7.

53. *Ibid.*,

54. Interview with Mr. Valsa Kumar, All India Working Committee Member in Kulashekarm 4-10-2009

55. *Dinamalar, op. cit.*,

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*

59. Kumari Mavatta Thozilalar Varalaru, *Dinamalar*, 01-05-2005, p.7.

After 1946 labour union movement had strongly rooted in Kanyakumari district. In 1946 another union was started known as Salt Pan Workers Union. In 1953 T.S. Ramaswamy Pillai became the president and K.L.S.Santhanam<sup>60</sup> the secretary of this union. T.S. Ramaswamy Pillai and P. Jeevanantham were comrades in arms during this period. He drove with the trade unions of tea estates, shops and commercial establishments including Pioneer Bus Transport, Municipality as well as mineral company in Manavalakuruchi<sup>61</sup>. While working with the Sanitary Workers Union, T.S. Ramaswamy found the prevailing corrupt practices among officials who were collecting Re.1 from each worker from their monthly salary of Rs.7 for providing job. With the support of Muthukaruppa Pillai and G. Ramachandran, T.S. Ramaswamy ended this corrupt practice and forced the officials to return the amounts to scavenging workers. T.S. Ramaswamy rose to become a hero among the scavenging workers<sup>62</sup>.

Another union was started in 1946 as Travancore State Transport Workers Union. Here also T.S. Ramaswamy Pillai took the initiative to with Muthukaruppa Pillai. The latter was its president<sup>63</sup> and K.L.S.Santhanam was the secretary<sup>64</sup>.

In 1958 the Kanyakumari District Thottam Thozhilar Sangam was started in Thadikarankoanm rubber estate. After 1965 many unions were started in Kanyakumari district like Coir Factory Workers Union, Cashew Factory Workers Union, and etc<sup>65</sup>.

Thamarakkulam Somu started salt pan, rice, oil, and saw mill unions in Kanyakumari district. One of the important trade unions in that period was Nagarasuddhi Thozhilalar Union. Chithranjan was the president of the Nagarasuddhi Thozhilalar union<sup>66</sup>. M.M. Ali

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60. Interview with K.L.S. Santhanam, dated 30-07-2010

61. K. Ramachandran Nair, *op cit.*, p.465.

62. *Ibid.*,

63. *Ibid.*, p.461

64. Interview with K.L.S. Santhanam, dated 30-07-2010

65. Interview with Valsa Kumar, 22-10-2009

66. *Ibid.*

started transport workers union in South Travancore. The history of trade union movement started in the year 1942 in Kanyakumari district. There are number of great leaders who worked for the labourers and the most important among them were the Com. Jeevanantham, undisputed master of the working class. Thiyagi C.P. Illango gave voice for the national freedom as well as for the welfare of the labourers and G.S. Mani dedicated his life for the welfare of the working class. All these Leaders belong to the Kanyakumari District. The estate labour union was the first and foremost union in the erstwhile South Travancore, present Kanyakumari district.

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