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PARVATI KRISHNAN, Coimbatore.

The interview with Parvati Krishnan yielded very interesting information as it dealt with various aspects of the politics of India both communist and even Congress as well as the trade union movement. Parvati narrated the fact that she was born in a very illustrious and socially progressive family where her father and mother were both active in the freedom movement with the Congress. Her father had been a minister in the pre-independence Congress ministries and even after independence in the Nehru cabinet. Parvati emphasized another aspect of her family life i.e. her father was a non-brahmin and her mother was a brahmin. It was an inter-caste marriage which itself was so revolutionary in those days. So from her childhood she grew up she said in an atmosphere where any kind of injustice was not tolerated and had to be fought. Parvati said her later growth into the communist party when she was studying in Oxford and her friends were the likes of Indira Gandhi, Jyoti Basu, Bhupesh Gupta, Inderjit Gupta and N.K.Krishnan was very much she felt due to her family influence. The rebel in her took her to the left. Then she narrated all her activities abroad as a communist and then how she started work as a trade union worker with N.K.Krishnan in Coimbatore in the textile mills workers of TN. Then she also worked among the plantation workers. These two sections remained her main area of TU work though as TN state level leader of AITUC and later as VP of national AITUC and as MP from Coimbatore and also Rajya Sabha MP she really worked for all workers in TN and also at the national level. There are many important historically relevant things she brought out in the interview about the TU movement in TN and the CPI.

### **PARVATI KRISHNAN:-**

Parvati Krishnan was born in 15<sup>th</sup> March 1919 in Ootty. Her father and mother were both leaders in the Congress and part of the freedom struggle. Her father was a non-Brahmin and mother a Brahmin and their marriage in those days was very much a revolutionary act by itself as it went against the prevailing norms. Parvati Krishnan's mother was a first in many sorts in those days. Her mother was the first to be elected to the Senate in Madras and first woman to the Parliament from Congress in 1938. Her father was also in the Congress and was Minister of Transport in the Union Cabinet in 1958-59 and also Ambassador to Indonesia. Then she went abroad to UK to do her school education and there she came into touch with Communism, literature about the Soviet Union and also the struggle against Gen. Franco of Spain. She also attended various Youth conferences and became part of the International Youth Brigades against Fascism. The other influences on her were her brother Mohan Kumaramangalam, and later when she was studying in Oxford her friend who later became her husband N.K.Krishnan. There at Oxford she came in touch with Jyothi Basu, Inderjit Gupta, Nikhil Chakravarty, Renu Chakravarty, PN.Haksar, Bhupesh Gupta, Indira Gandhi, and Romesh Chandra. Most of these people became communists in Oxford. Then she worked in the India League along with Krishna Menon and Feroz Gandhi. After coming back from UK in 1941 she started working in the student movement and little later started working for the CPI. Then P.C.Joshi and N.K.Krishnan asked her to start working in the TU movement. In that period Parvati Krishnan got married to N.K.Krishnan and little later had a girl child. She started her TU work in Bombay AITUC office. Then from March 1948 she along with all other CPI members had to go underground during which period she worked in various capacities. She was underground till 1952. In 1952 party was legalised and CPI participated in the elections. In Madras she started TU work under the famous A.S.K.Iyengar who she says was her guru as far as TU movement was concerned. Then she worked in Tamil Nadu with Press workers, Railway workers, and Municipal workers. Then along with her husband she moved to Coimbatore and started TU work with N.K.Krishnan in textiles and plantations. In 1954 she was put up by the party for the Rajya Sabha seat and so became a Rajya Sabha member. In the Rajya Sabha also did lot of TU work. In the Parliament she became a leading member of the Parliamentary Plantation Committee and also went to ILO in a parliamentary delegation and was one of the

first MPs in Parliament to start pushing for a Bill to be passed in Parliament of Equal Pay for Equal Work for women. Later due to Parvati Krishnan's efforts this got passed. Later in 1957 she was put up as MP. During the course of her TU work in 1956 she had to deal with the plantation workers and particularly the Valpara Plantation firing in 1956. She was the VP of the Plantation workers union. As an MP she also represented the case of the Mine disaster in MP. As a AITUC leader and MP she was the first to raise the slogan of 'Nationalize Textile Mills' in late 1950s when most of the private textile mills were in crisis and she demanded the formation of what later came to be formed as National Textile Corporation. She was the member of the first Tripartite Committee on Plantations. In 1960 one of the key organisers of the General Strike of Govt. Employees for Wage Revision which led to later wage revisions and improvement in pay scales of the PSU employees. In 1967 Parvati Krishnan again contested but withdrew in favor of the CPM candidate. In 1967 was elected VP of AITUC. In 1967 July organised a general strike of the textile workers to demand reopening of closed textile mills. In Dec. 1967 she moved to Delhi along with her husband N.K.Krishnan who had then become a member of the Central Secretariat of the CPI. Meanwhile her involvement with the textile mill workers strikes in Coimbatore went on. In Delhi in 1973 she started working with the Railway workers. In 1973 she was elected again as MP by a narrow margin. In 1974 she along with Dange and other AITUC leaders formed another TU affiliated to AITUC of the Railway workers. Then the railway strike of May 1974 was withdrawn as the strike fizzled out. After the Vizag conference of 1986 she was elected to the Gen. Council of WFTU and her first job in WFTU was that as the Chairman of the Resolution Committee. Was active in the WFTU in its woman front and later organized the Asian Regional Conference in Delhi. Was MP till 1980. In 1988 N.K.Krishnan decided that they both should retire from positions of responsibility and so they came back to Coimbatore and started working to develop the union and have been in Coimbatore since 1988. Her husband N.K.Krishnan died and since then she has been mainly active as an advisor to the Coimbatore Textile Mill Workers Union for which she along with others collected over 30 lakhs and built an office. As of now she is above 80 years and is active in an advisory capacity in Coimbatore for AITUC unions in textiles, plantations and others.