

Narayan Palekar, Goa

Narayan Palekar was born on 23 July 1927 near Karwar. He was brought into politics by the old and veteran freedom fighter of Goa, Shyam Rao Madkaikar. Palekar was at first in contact with the Royists. He was in the Radical Humanist Party of the M.N. Roy. Yashwant Rao Chavan was also a prominent Royist and leader of the group at that time. Palekar and his young group used to conduct revolutionary underground revolutionary activities and in making of bombs. Ram Manohar Lohia came to Goa in 1946 and addressed huge public meetings, and Palekar was one of the active cadres. Later he joined Goan People's Party.

Work in TU movement

There was a large number of Goan emigrants in Bombay during the Portuguese rule. They had their own organisations, rules, systems, and methods to help the Goans. There were Goan clubs who arranged stay, food, etc. for those seeking employment of for those unemployed. It is among these people that the Trade Unions came up and Palekar worked actively among them. Palekar was one of the frontline leaders and organisers of the Goa liberation movement.

In Bombay he participated in the strike of BEST (electric supply and bus transport). Each of the leader activists used to look after at least two families. Once Palekar even had to starve for 14 days, sleeping in "Swashan" (burning ghats), parks, etc.

Palekar then began Trade Union work in Belgaun: bank, floor mills, etc. He organised a Satyagraha participated in by 13,000 people, 3500 of them women. Besides, there were foundries, handlooms, power-looms, etc. In Hubh there was brass works. There were water canal workers. In the Karnataka – Dandeli industrial area, some big strikes took place on the question of wages for strike, and ultimately they were successful. Palekar was among them. There were movements of paper, plywood, Ferro-magnetic plant, etc. There was a historic strike in the ferro-magnetic plant when 3 workers were removed.

Palekar mobilised and convinced the shopkeepers to contribute food etc. for the workers, so that when successful, workers would sustain them. There were hunger strikes. Workers cut off water supply to the plant and houses of the owners. Ultimately, the authorities and the owners were forced to give in.

Palekar was the vice-president of the Taxi Drivers' union. He was also in the ore and mining workers' movement. In 1964 there was taxi drivers' strike, organised by Palekar. The goldsmiths were also organised after the 1963 Gold control order. It remained a powerful union for many years. The goldsmiths were organised into coops producing various articles. Various other unions were formed in the mean time: coordination committee of ciba, fishermen, fertilizers, electricity, etc. The Zuari Factory remained on strike for 15 days.

A Goa Trade and Commercial Workers Union has been formed to which 200 different unions are affiliated. Palekar is the president of Goa TUC. They have got a Union in Kadamba Transport also. Besides, sugar factory workers, navigation, marine, hotels, etc. are also part of the TUC. The TUC is a powerful force in Goa with an organised support of more than 30,000 workers in a small place like Goa.

The workers' and the organisations of Portugal and Brazil have close links with those in Goa, and Palekar has wide contacts in these countries.