

Name: Yeshwant Chavan

Native Place: - Kolhapur - Satara

History: He came to Mumbai from Kolhapur, as a student, to participate in the freedom struggle. He then became involved in the working class movement with the CPI. He was one of the founder members of Navjivan Sanghatna, formed in 1943, which later went on to become the Lal Nishan Gat.

Yeshwant Chavan:

' Textile workers were resentful of the fact that unlike workers in other industries in the organised sector, they could not hope for an increment. The basic wage was insignificant. Their wages were mainly composed of the Dearness allowance (D.A) which they had fought for so many years ago. Now in other industries workers were getting both the differential D.A but they were also getting increments in the basic wage. Another issue was that in other industries, there was a categorisation based on skilled, unskilled, etc. In the mills there was no great difference between the wages of skilled and unskilled workers. Textile workers got no casual leave. Benefits that were being given to workers in other industries were denied to textile workers. All the textile unions were united in the demand that these demands should be addressed. They were the oldest workers and they were being discriminated against. Workers wanted to fight. The strike was not an adventurous act on the part of Datta Samant. It was supported by everyone. Now I think he made a mistake in not taking into account the fact that powerlooms had come up all over the state, and the weaving was being done there by the mill owners. That is why he should have called off the strike. Even when starting the strike he should have taken note of this as the market did not suffer due to lack of cloth. The powerlooms were taking care of the demand. Here Datta Samant's adventurism was responsible. Many unions in many factories have been crushed because of this adventurism on Datta Samant's part. **Many people** had suggested that he should withdraw the strike.

The strike was total. I had not seen such a total strike even in the 1940's. Nobody went to the mills. No strike breakers would get any support, so they did not even try. Before this strike, the Shiv Sena had called for a one day strike. We were surprised that the workers responded. But later, Bal Thackeray withdrew his threat of indefinite strike, Workers were very angry. That was the way workers were taking their own decisions. Then they approached Datta Samant. His union was built in a day. It spread like wildfire. Workers called him to the gate, and when he addressed meetings, and people came from all the other mills.

At that time we had a union called Kapad Kamgar Union. We saw what was happening, and we decided to dissolve our union which had been reduced to a propaganda platform in the face of this wave. We realized that this had become the real union which had the support of all the workers and would take real action. After that we have not formed any other union in the textiles.

After the failure of the strike, the Bombay textile industry had gone down, The production of cloth has increased but the composite mills have gone.

The post war workers were mainly from the districts of Kolhapur Satara and Pune. They had roots in the area. We thought that since this is going to be a long drawn strike, so we should get **support from the peasantry**. We thought of this as a politically necessary action. Also economically. So suggested to Samant that he should take meetings in the rural areas. We had meetings everywhere. One group in our party was in charge of taking him to the villages. We held meetings in all the villages where textile workers were there, After that trucks of grain started to arrive from the villages for the striking workers in Bombay.

The failure of the strike did not result in the workers rejecting or isolating Samant. Their attitude was – all right we fought, we lost, he didn't betray us.