

## Oral History Project

Ref no. : \_\_

Cassette no.14

Name	Janardan Chandrakant Narkar
Gender	Male
Age	67
Education	SSC
Religion	Hindu
Caste	Vaishya Vani
Profession	Laundry Manager
Monthly Income	
Address	Bldg.no.1, Room No. 3,Raigad Nivas,D.L. Marg, Kala Chowki, Mumbai-33
Father's Profession	Laundry Manager
Mother's Profession	House Wife
Place of birth	Mumbai

### Siblings

Name	Age	Profession
Ramakant c. Narkar	55	Electrician

### Children

Name	Education	Profession
Sunil J Narkar	10 <sup>th</sup> Standard	Runs a newspapers stall
Jitendra J Narkar	8 <sup>th</sup> Standard	Kelivery boy

## INTERVIEW WITH CHANDRAKANT NARKAR

*Your name?*

Chandrakant Narkar

*What was the reason for the textile strike?*

Dr. Datta Samant's union had assured the workers of winning certain demands like wage rise etc. That is the reason why the workers went on strike.

*What were the demands?*

Wage rise and other allowances. He had even promised to get a better leave compensation.

*How was the situation in the beginning of the strike?*

In those days the situation of the workers was good. They had some money to spend. It was such a period that mill workers bought things even for their neighbors payday. All festivals used to be celebrated properly.

*Which other unions existed before the entry of Dr. Datta Samant? Which of them had the majority?*

-There was a union of the communist party. R.M.M.S. and George Fernandes union was there too. P.S.P. union existed at that time. There were also other unions at that time. But these main two three unions like R.M.M.S., the communists, and George Fernandes were progressive. Actually about 75 % of the workers belonged to the communist union at one time. There was a strike when the communist union as strong too. We were very young then. A communist gentleman by the name Sripad A mrut Dange, tried his best to settle the demands through strike at that time. His attempt was to benefit the workers without giving much trouble to the mill owners.

*When was this?*

- It was much before this strike. That time the mills were closed for more than a month. The communist union did very good work at that time.

*Is it true that some of the Sangh activists were beaten up during the 1982 strike?*

-Not in the beginning. But, later on as the strike situation became much volatile, that time some of these Sangh activists, opposing the strike, were beaten up by the Datta Samant's activists. That is true. A TV. set in Mr. Bhai Bhosle's (RMMS Secretary) house was broken too. It was reported in the press.

*What is your opinion about the stand taken by Dr. Datta Samant about the offer for a compromise solution made by the then Chief Minister Bhosle?*

- That offer was not acceptable to Dr. Datta Samant. Since the chief minister was from the camp of R.M.M.S., it was not possible for Datta Samant to compromise.

*How did the mill workers support themselves during the strike period?*

-As the strike as prolonged, things became difficult. Many people sold all their jewelry. Some of them sold even vessels in the house. Dr. Datta Samant's union took initiative in distributing food gains at the factory gate. But, it was not sufficient.

*Then how did the workers manage?*

-The workers were thrown out of heir mills. Some went to Bhivandi (powerloom town) for work on daily wages.

*Do you think that during this period, the incidence of alcoholism was on the rise?*

-About 80 to 90% of the workers are habitual drinkers. But as the mills closed some of them started drinking more due to the increased tension and some reduced their drinking simply because they could not afford it. It is not true that workers in general started drinking more during that period.

*What were the reactions of the children of the workers?*

They were not sympathetic to the strike. They wanted normalcy to return. They wanted a good outcome at the end. They wished for a good settlement.

*Do you distinctly remember any particular incident in that period?*

There was an incidence of death in one of the workers family. But the family had no money to perform the last rites. Finally the worker sold his wife's Mangalsutra to arrange the money. People were that desperate. Finally people reached such a stage that they were ready to reach any kind of individual settlement with the management

*Do you remember any good moments of the strike period?*

-There was unity among the workers. Almost 90% of the workers supported Dr. Datta Samant. People expected that Kamgar Aghadi would be able to successfully settle their demands. Kamgar Aghadi tried to do that. But they could not do that. They could not reach a compromise. They did not settle for a little less than what they expected from the management.

*Is it true that the bad economic conditions forced the women in the family to take up the kinds of jobs that are not considered proper?*

It was very difficult for the family to survive. Women then started taking up jobs as domestic servants- washing vessels, clothes etc.

*Is it true that many women turned to prostitution in that period?*

This is wrong! It is not true! This is just mischievous propaganda.

*What stand did you take about the strike?*

-My position was that the strike should come to an end. That there should be a positive outcome and the workers in the mills should get back their jobs and be able to lead a happy life.

*In what way was your business affected?*

-People used to give us clothes to wash but they were not able to make the payments on time. We had given concessions to customers for months together. Our business was reduced by about 40%.

*Whom do you hold responsible for the failure of the strike?*

-The union, which was responsible for the strike, is responsible for its failure.

*Do you in any way hold the mill owners and the government responsible?*

-There is always a clash of interest between the maalik and the union. But those who gave the strike call should have found a way out of such a situation.

*Where are these workers who lost their jobs, employed now?*

-Some are in Bhivandi. Some have shifted even to Ahmedabad.

*How many according to you have gone back to the villages?*

-Approximately 40percent have gone back to villages.

*What is the situation of the workers who collected their dues or VRS?*

-Some of them have gone out of Bombay, some have purchased agricultural land and some have simply blown up the money.

*What percentage of workers would have ended up wasting the money?*

-More or less 30% to 35% of the people have blown money like that.

*What is your opinion about the stand taken by Shiv Sena about the strike? What have they done for the textile workers?*

Shiv Sena union at that time was not very strong. They were just trying to get an entry into the textile mills and the other industrial sectors.

*What do you have to say about the strike?*

The strike should not have prolonged and there should have been at least some positive outcome at the end.

*What was the intention of Dr. Datta Samant in giving the strike call?*

Dr. Datta Samant had helped the workers in Companies like Premium, Voltas etc to secure good compensation and settlements. He wanted mill workers to benefit too. He therefore formulated proper demands. But the mill owners and the R.M.M.S. were not too happy about it. R.M.M.S. was very close to the mill owners. That is the reason why R.M.M.S. was not in favor of mill owners having a settlement with Dr. Datta Samant. They too came in the way of compromise. Dr. Datta Samant had good intentions. He wanted the textile workers to benefit like the workers in the other sectors under his leadership. But he could not deal with the mill owners effectively. Then the strike just fizzled out.

*He leaves the conversation at this point with a promise to meet again. However, the second meeting could never happened.*