

National Labour Institute

Oral History Project

Cassette No 16

Savitri Shelar is the wife of a mill worker, who had a paralytic stroke during the strike. She supports her family by stitching garments for a garment company.

What is your name?

Savitri Bhikaji Shelar.

Where did your husband start working in the mill and for how many years?

He started with Elphinstone mills as a badli kamgar and after 2 months he became permanent. On his records our son was also recruited, he was in the weaving dept.

Was he interested in the strikes and politics did he go to the sabhas, etc?

As there was a case filed he had to go, as such he did not go to meetings- he attended only a few.

How did you live during the strike ?

Now what can I tell you? I was here alone and the situation was such that my children were young in the school one was in 4th one was in 5th the other was in 8th I was in the house for almost a year. I had five children 3 boys and 2 girls. They got married after the strike. The boys then worked somewhere or the other to get their expenses of the school. My sister in Mumbai helped with the food and the loan. We did not have any help as he did not have any brother and the sisters were married of to other houses.

It was later that he had a paralytic stroke. He had not been to work for almost a year.

During the strike he did some work. When he got the fever, he used to get Rs 200-300.

We admitted him in hospital. My son was temporary in the Air India.

The fever came down but he got an attack in the hospital itself. He was in the Kamgar (ESI) hospital at Worli for 3 months we got him home later, he can't walk ever since.

You should see him now. Earlier he was okay, meaning he would go to the toilet all on his own later last year he got another stroke which affected his head. He can't even speak

now, we have to do everything for him. We have to feed him. Now two of my sons are working. The girls got educated till 10th, someone or other helped them. Two of them failed in 10th, one girl got married before, and the other studied till 8th.

Then what did you tell about the garment?

Now I get cloths for cutting at home some times there is no work for 2-3 days sometimes we get around 100 shirts. Somehow we survive- make do on dal rice, and get on with life this way we have lived for the last 15 years.

When did you come in Mumbai?

I came to Mumbai after my marriage. Before that, I lived in Ratnagiri. My in-laws stayed there. My husband's father was also in the mill. He did not have work then (when we got married). Then he was on 2.5 Rs daily and the monthly salary was around 200.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Pawus.

Did you study there?

I didn't go to school at all. I have not studied.

And you got married there? At what age?

I don't remember.

In what year?

My wedding card has it. My son has the wedding card. He will tell you.

How many years?

Many years since I got married. My daughters alone will be touching forty now. Forty two or something.

So did you come together to Mumbai or he came alone?

My in-laws were here. I came immediately after marriage.

Were you doing all right after your marriage?

Yes, yes we were fine till then. My father-in-law was also a mill-worker so we were doing well. He was in Tata mill- weaving department. For 2-3 years after marriage he worked in the mill, he continued working on badli, 4-5 badlis. 6yrs he spent in badli. Then he became permanent. Then after some years he fell ill. After the Datta Samant, he didn't return only due to illness.

Did you go to the mill later?

My son had also gone there. Our cases are filed. But the officials said our cases have only not concluded yet, then how will your work get done so soon? We have not received any salary or dues.

Any other memories of the strike, or mills?

We never step out of the house, what will we see? What memories will we have? We remember the strike, even before that there were strikes. It was not a new thing. But why should we go to see why they are striking and for what?

Did your husband tell you anything?

What will my mister tell me about anything outside?

You have been staying so long in Mumbai!

How many brothers and sisters you have?

Two brothers. But they are at the native place farming and minding their families. I have four sisters. One here in Mumbai, one in our village. One was married off in Karjat village, she died. Now we are three. Brothers are in the village. They don't work but somehow they manage.

How many children do you have?

Two sons and three daughters.

Of what age?

You see the horoscope. Around 30-40 years.

Are they settled in Mumbai?

Yes all of them are married and settled in Mumbai.

They are home or work somewhere?

No they are home minding their house. One is Byculla, her husband was also in a mill.

Which one?

Century mill. Second daughter's husband died recently, he was in government service. Another one is in Thane. She is working in a company. She stays also in Thane and her husband also works there.

And your sons?

Suhas and Deepak. They stay here. Both are married and these are their wives.