

Malini Tulpule (AITUC)

A short **Biographical Note** on Malini Tulpule Interviewed in Pune by Krishna Jha on June 28, 2003

Malini Tulpule was born on 10 October, 1921 at Mehsana in Gujarat. She was brought up in Baroda estate where her father was in municipal services. Malini was sent to school in Baroda where education for women was free and continues to be so including medical and engineering. Baroda estate was staunchly anti-British and great personalities like Aurobindo were offered shelter here when they faced the wrath of the British rulers. Dr Ambedkar was sent to United States by Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, ruler of Baroda. Malini's uncle wrote the democratic constitution of the estate as early as in 19th century.

By the time Malini was sixteen, she had already studied Gujarati, Marathi, English and Hindi books in the local library which included "Red Star over China" by Edgar Snow, "An intelligent woman's guide to socialism" by George Bernard Shaw, Lenin's biography. She had also tried to turn the pages from "The Capital" by Karl Marx.

Malini grew up in a deeply nationalist atmosphere. Mahatma Gandhi lived at Sabarmati, only 40 miles from her village. Congress had a strong influence in the estate. She became active in the party and became the district secretary of the All India Women's Conference.

In 1944, Malini was married to Vasant Rao Tulpule, who was already active in the AITUC and was a member of the Communist Party. His father was a known Congress leader in Pune and had a legal practice. Achyut Patwardhan was his nephew. He wanted Vasant Rao to leave the trade union work and join law but Vasant refused. However, when the entire country was one in responding to the call of Gandhiji to launch the "Quit India Movement" in 1942, Vasant Rao too supported the move inviting expulsion from the Communist Party which had described the World War as People's war. He also had to pay a fine of Rs 50 every month as part of the punishment. To pay the fine, he took up a job in a bank with a salary of Rs 60 and kept only Rs 10 for himself.

All this time Malini was working in the AIWC in Pune. Later she went to Ahmednagar where Vasant Rao was working among workers and peasants and Malini had her first experience of trade union. She was active in Khopergaon, a sugar belt in Ahmednagar. The workers in the sugar mills were made to stay inside the factory premises where they were tortured for trivial reasons. Malini used to visit their huts inside the factories and organised their women.

Malini was also active among bidi workers where 80 percent were women in Ahmednagar. She had organised a district level conference of women bidi workers and 600 women had taken part. She was also active in Akola district populated mainly by tribals.

In 1948, Malini alongwith her husband launched a peasant movement against the tax system in the rural areas of Ahmednagar. The peasants were forced to surrender the entire crop of finer grain cultivated by them and were given only coarse grain in return which was usually not enough even for their own consumption.

Though the peasants had snatched away the guns from the constables, the movement was peaceful. However the Government came out with extreme repressive measures and killed six peasants. The Communist Party leaders were in jail but Socialists like Nana Pati, Shankar Rao More, Jaidev and many others joined the movement. Later Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) was formed by them. Malini went back to Pune and became office secretary of the PWP which had strong influence from Vidarbha to Kokan. Later Yashwant Rao Chavan and Datta Deshmukh also joined the party which had a red flag and manifesto based on Marxist principles. Soon there was a split and Lal Nishan came out. In 1952 elections, three members for Parliament and fifteen for Legislative Assembly were elected from this party. According to Malini the party was still composed of an amorphous mob though persons like Tridib Chaudhary, Sharat Bose and several others were also there.

Malini was also active in Sanyukta Maharashtra Movement and Goa Liberation struggle and was in jail for several months.

Malini organised several industrial unit workers in Pune and even now she is the only lady trade unionist in the city. She is the senior most trade union leader who still attends conciliations, negotiations and court cases for the workers and that too without any charges.

Malini left CPI in 1982 and joined UCPI but did not disaffiliate her unions from the AITUC.

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I was brought up in Baroda estate in Gujarat where my father was in municipal services though I was born at Mehsana on 10 October, 1921. I was sent to school in Baroda where education for women was free.

Before I was sixteen, I had already studied Gujarati, Marathi, English and Hindi books in the local library which included "Red Star over China" by Edgar Snow, "An intelligent woman's guide to socialism" by George Bernard Shaw, Lenin's biography. She had also tried to turn the pages from "The Capital" by Karl Marx.

There was a deeply nationalist atmosphere in Baroda estate because of Sayaji Rao Gaekwad's anti-British stance. Mahatma Gandhi lived at Sabarmati, only 40 miles from my village. Congress had a strong influence in the estate. I was active in the party and became the district secretary of the All India Women's Conference.

In 1944, I was married to Vasant Rao Tulpule, who was already active in the AITUC and was a member of the Communist Party. His father was a prominent advocate and Congress leader in Pune. Achyut Patwardhan was his nephew. He wanted Vasant Rao to leave the trade union work and join law but Vasant refused. However, when the entire country was one in responding to the call of Gandhiji to launch the "Quit India Movement" in 1942, Vasant Rao too supported the move inviting expulsion from the Communist Party which had described the World War as People's war. He also had to pay a fine of Rs 50 every month as part of the punishment. To pay the fine, he took up a job in a bank with a salary of Rs 60 and kept only Rs 10 for himself.

All this time I was working in the AIWC in Pune. Later I went to Ahmednagar where Vasant Rao was working among workers and peasants. Here I had my first experience of trade union. I was active in Khopergaon, a sugar belt in Ahmednagar. The workers in the sugar mills were made to stay inside the factory premises where they were tortured for trivial reasons. I used to visit their huts inside the factories and organise their women.

I was also active among bidi workers where 80 percent were women in Ahmednagar. I had organised a district level conference of women bidi workers and 600 women had taken part. I was also active in Akola district populated mainly by tribals.

In 1948, we launched an agitation against the tax system in the rural areas of Ahmednagar. The peasants were forced to surrender the entire crop of finer grain cultivated by them and were given only coarse grain in return which was usually not enough even for their own consumption.

Though the peasants had snatched away the guns from the constables, the movement was peaceful. However the Government came out with extreme repressive measures and killed six peasants. The Communist Party leaders were in jail but Socialists like Nana Pati, Shankar Rao More, Jaidev and many others joined the movement. Later Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) was formed by them.

I went back to Pune and became office secretary of the PWP which had strong influence from Vidarbha to Kokan. Later Yashwant Rao Chavan and Datta Deshmukh also joined the party which had a red flag and manifesto based on Marxist principles. Soon there was a split and Lal Nishan came out. In 1952 elections, three members for Parliament and fifteen for Legislative Assembly were elected from this party, though it was still an amorphous mob despite the fact that persons like Tridib Chaudhary, Sharat Bose and several others were also there.

I had taken part in Sanyukta Maharashtra Movement and Goa Liberation struggle and was in jail for several months.

I have organised several unions of industrial workers in Pune and even now I am the only woman in the trade union movement in the city who still attends conciliations and negotiations for the workers.

I left the CPI in 1982 and joined the UCPI but did not disaffiliate my unions from the AITUC.