

Chandrabhaga Sakharam Ghagare, a woman worker in the Girni Kamgar Union

A short biographical note on Chandrabhaga Sakharam Ghagare, former worker and member of the Girni Kamgar union, interviewed in Bombay on July 30, 2004

Chandrabhaga Ghagare in her late eighties, does not know her age nor does she remember how old she was when she was married. She lived in Bombay with her parents before marriage and worked in a textile mill when she was hardly ten-year-old. Her father was also a textile worker. Chandrabhaga was working then in India United Mills number II.

Chandrabhaga was married to a small shop owner, Sakharam who did not allow her to work after marriage. But financial compulsions soon forced her to take up a job when she was barely fifteen and a mother.

In the beginning, Chandrabhaga could not get a job in any of the mills. She was forced to settle down on a "Badli" worker's job, which meant her services would be hired only when any permanent worker goes on leave. There were many like her waiting at the factory gate and she got her chance only when her number came. She had to work this way for fifteen years.

She was drawn in the movement by Usha Tai Dange, S A Dange and later their daughter Roza. She remembers when they were all on strike and picketed at the gates of Bitiya Mills. Dange was arrested. Ushatai had a thirteen-day-old Roza in her arms when she forcibly left the hospital and came at the mill gates. She placed the baby at the gate and asked the workers who were going inside to step on her before entering the factory premises. Workers were all moved to tears and refrained from joining their duties.

They were used to various types of agitations and all the women workers used to cook in the night and leave for the mill gate at dawn for stopping the workers. Chandrabhaga used to come back only late night and finish her domestic chores. All women workers

were used to lathi charge, tear gas etc. For rallies, usually women were kept at the front so that police could not resort to extreme brutalities.

Chandrabhaga remembers the torch rally they brought out at midnight and gharaoed the management.

Chandrabhaga belonged to a family where all the members belonged to red flag union. Now her children are following the suit. Her son is the secretary of the Bombay CPI unit.

Chandrabhaga remembers ruefully the strike launched by Datta Samant that was the end of the workers' movement. The unions were broken and the movement got disrupted.

Chandrabhaga Sakharam Ghagare, a woman worker in the Girni Kamgar Union

A short transcriptive note on Chandrabhaga Sakharam Ghagare, former worker and member of the Girni Kamgar union, interviewed in Bombay on July 30, 2004

I am perhaps my late eighties, do not know my age nor do I remember how old I was when I was married. I lived in Bombay with my parents before marriage and worked in a textile mill when I was hardly ten-year-old. My father was also a textile worker. I was working then in India United Mills number II.

I was married to a small shop owner, Sakharam who did not allow me to work after marriage. But financial compusions soon forced me to take up a job when I was barely fifteen and a mother.

In the beginning, I could not get a job in any of the mills. I was forced to settle down on a "Badli" worker's job, which meant my services would be hired only when any permanent worker goes on leave. There were many like me waiting at the factory gate and I got my chance only when my number came. I had to work this way for fifteen years.

I was drawn in the movement by Usha Tai Dange, S A Dange and later their daughter Roza. I remember when they were all on strike and picketed at the gates of Bitiya Mills. Dange was arrested. Ushatai had a thirteen-day-old Roza in her arms when she forcibly left the hospital and came at the mill gates. She placed the baby at the gate and asked the workers who were going inside to step on her before entering the factory premises. Workers were all moved to tears and refrained from joining their duties.

They were used to various types of agitations and all the women workers used to cook in the night and leave for the mill gate at dawn for stopping the workers. I used to come back only late night and finish my domestic chores. All women workers were used to lathi charge, tear gas etc. For rallies, usually women were kept at the front so that police could not resort to extreme brutalities.

I remember the torch rally they brought out at midnight and gharaoed the management.

I belong to a family where all the members belonged to red flag union. Now my children are following the suit. My son is the secretary of the Bombay CPI unit.

I feel hurt when I remember the strike launched by Datta Samant that was the end of the workers' movement. The unions were broken and the movement got disrupted.