

**(5) Manhar Shukla (Majoor Mahajan), Ahmadabad (Gujarat) :**

Manharlal Kuljashankar Shukla was born on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1915. He came in contact with TLA (Textile Labour Association) way back in 1933. Even as a 10-year old boy, he was patted lovingly by Mahatma Gandhi and asked to serve the common workers. Manharlal became a teacher in Gymnasium run by the TLA. That was the time when the national movement was rising all over the country. In that background, the workers in Ahmadabad were coming together to raise and agitate for their demands. The organisations of textile workers in particular, and of others too, were becoming more active. TLA was one of the most active and well-organised bodies.

The same year in 1933, there was a strike in one of the textile mills in Ahmadabad, with over 10000 workers participating. These workers helped Sardar Patel in his social work. In that phase, a lot of constructive work was done by Manhar Shukla and his organisation, e.g. organising library, gymnasium, hospital, stores, creche, etc. Gandhiji often used to act as an arbiter in the labour disputes at the request of the workers and with the agreement of the management.

Manhar Shukla was asked by Shri Banker to work as fulltime TU functionary because both Shukla and his father had worked in the Union or the association, and he was needed by the people. Therefore, Manhar Shukla began working as a full time functionary from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1943. He worked in the TLA, Congress, and in Secondary Teachers' Association of Ahmadabad as its vice-president.

Manhar Shukla joined the Union as a Complaint Incharge listening and registering workers' complaints and trying to sort them out. He also attended to their personal and locality problems. He ran special campaign to increase Union membership. He became very popular during the workers' campaign of 1946 to reduce working hours.

During the municipal elections at that time, 3 workers candidates including Shukla were elected. He was incharge of education, health, sports & recreation, etc.

He wrote a thesis on workers' children's health under the University in Baroda.

Shukla was variously connected with the different stages of formation of INTUC. Prior to independence, Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh was established by Sardar Patel. It led ultimately to the formation of INTUC. Several meetings were held e.g. in Delhi, Bombay, Jamshedpur, etc.

Besides, Shukla did a lot of social reform work e.g. enhancing the moral character of the ordinary workers, Helping non-educated and educated workers in their personal and social problems. He organised collection in "Sevapatra", 10 paise per head per day in seven localities, on the pattern demarcated by Vinoba Bhave. This work was carried on by the committees.

He actively worked and campaigned for the TLA candidates in 1956 and 1964 municipal elections. He became MLA in 1966.

Serious differences emerged within the INTUC during Indira Gandhi's rule. NLO (National Labour Organisation) came out of it. Later a National Labour Party was also formed, of which Manhar Shukla became the general secretary. Majoor Mahajan and NLO had an uneasy relationship with the INTUC and the Congress. Shukla visited various places in connection with NLP, e.g. Hyderabad, Bangalore, Calcutta, Bihar, etc. Manhar Shukla was the Director of workers' Education in Majoor Mahajan. He visited several places abroad in this capacity, e.g. Geneva, Germany, Sweden, Norway, etc. In 1955, he went to the USA under US AID Program. He then was in Harvard School of Economics for 3 months.

AFL-CIO of USA was impressed with the system of social work of the Mahoor Mahajan. George Meney and others of AFL-CIO visited Ahmadabad and studied the educational and Social work of Majoor Mahajan because such a work was not done in their organisation in the USA.

Manharlal Shukla has been on the various official and organisational committees e.g. Agrarian, ESIC, Child Labor, minimum wages, shop assistants', hotel, etc.

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Manhar Shukla (Majdoor Mahajan)

(Phase III)

Ahmedabad

My name is Manharlal Kuljashankar Shukla. My date of birth is January 6, 1915.

In the days of national movement and satyagraha, workers in Ahmedabad were coming together to raise their demands, particularly the textile workers. When I was a 10-year old, Mahatma Gandhi blessed me and asked whether I would serve the common workers. He had come to our house in Ahmedabad. I later became a teacher in the gymnasium of the Textile Labour Association (TLA). I did a lot of constructive work like organising library, hospital, gymnasium, stores etc. I was one of the witnesses, participants and organisers of the Textile Labour strike in Ahmedabad in 1933. Gandhiji often used to mediate in our disputes with the management.

I began working as full time functionary from January 1, 1943. I worked in the TLA and the Congress, as well as Secondary Teachers' Association in Ahmedabad as its vice president apart from other organisations and activities.

I joined the union as a Complaint Incharge, listening and registering workers' problems. I use to process them alongwith their personal and locality complaints. I became very popular during workers' struggle to reduce working hours in 1946.

I was elected as one of the three workers' candidate during the municipal elections those days and made in-charge of education, health, sports and recreation. I even wrote a these on workers' children's health and submitted in Baroda university.

I was connected with INTUC at its various stages of development. Prior to its formation a Hindustan Majdoor Sevak Sangh was formed by Sardar Patel. Besides I did a lot of social work also, that is enhancing the moral character of the ordinary workers. I used to help workers in their personal problems also. I organised "Sevapatra", collecting small amounts of money.

I became an MLA in 1966. I was one of the organisers of the National Labour organisations (NLO) which later came out of INTUC. Later National Labour Party was founded of which I was the general secretary. I was the Director of workers' education in the Majdoor Mahajan. AFL-CIO of USA was very impressed with the educational work conducted by the Majdoor Mahajan.

I have been in various official committees concerning labour and industrial problems I still regularly attend the Majdoor Mahajan office at this old ripe age.