

CHAPTER - IVPOLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE MILL WORKERSMILL WORKERS IN SOLAPUR :

The working class in Solapur emerged in the 19th century. The early working class of Solapur was mainly coming from the stock of peasants. These workers came from the rural areas near by Solapur. The working class in Solapur is mostly backward as they are not educated. Their wages are not sufficient and the facilities were not satisfactory. Their houses are not good. Many workers live in slum area. There are Hospitals and medical facilities for these workers. But they claim that medical facilities are not sufficient. (1) There is some political awareness in workers as they always fight for their demands under the leftist banners; but at time of election they gave votes to the congress party. Taking into consideration the above situation of the workers, it can be said that the conditions of the workers ^{have} are not improved to an appreciable extent. My personal observation shows that the conditions of the workers are not changed, much during last 20 years as their living standard is more or less the same, though some changes ~~did~~ ^{have} take place. Mill workers are a numerically large group in

Solapur and they play a vital role in its politics as their votes normally decide who will win in the corporation, assembly, and parliamentary elections.

THE POLITICS OF SOLAPUR CITY : The working class is ^a large class in Solapur. This class always played an important role in city politics. Taking into consideration the politics of this city we clearly find that there is a great influence of the congress party on this city. This city is also known as stronghold of the congress party. In freedom movement the Congress played very important role, hence it became very popular among the masses. After independence, the masses mostly support the congress party in the elections. In 1952 parliamentary elections, the alliance of the PWP and the scheduled caste federation won both the seats as its candidates Mr. Shankarrao More and Mr. P.N. Rajbhej defeated the congress. In the election of, 1957 the congress was defeated by PWP again in this city. After that the congress always won the elections. Even in 1977, when all over India the congress was defeated but in Solapur the congress won the elections. In Solapur the workers participated in the elections. One of the important workers unions—the G.K.U. always supported the opposition parties but majority of the workers voted for the congress. Normally one can see that



Solapur politics was not different from national trend as the latter cannot be severed from the former. We can see this by studying results of parliamentary and assembly elections in this city.

PARLIMENTARY ELECTIONS : In 1952, the first parliamentary election was held. In this election Mr. Shankarrao More was elected from Solapur city. At that time he was General Secretary of the P.W.P. In this election the worker's union (opposition) supported to Mr. Shankarrao More. The congress candidate Mr. K.B. Antrolikar was defeated. In this election Mr. More got 20,9617 votes and Mr. Antrolikar got 14,7011 votes. (2) Mr. Vaishanpagara (socialist) Mr. Dehukar (Ramrajya parishad) were also defeated in this election. In same election Mr. Rajbhoj was elected from Pandharpur. Thus we can say that in the first general elections the congress was defeated in Solapur. At that time there was one workers union, of P.W.P. Later it merged in the Girani Kamagar Union. In this election the workers played an important role in the success of the P.W.P. candidate. This is the opinion of Mr. Vitthalrao Sangar, the general secretary of G.K.U. (3)

The congress party was also defeated in the election of 1957. During this period the Sanyukta Maharashtra movement had gathered momentum and the Solapur workers played an important part in the movement. Hence in this election, Mr. Balasaheb

More (Sanyukta Maharashtra Sameetee, the PWP) was elected. The congress leader Mr. Tulashidas Jadhav was defeated by him. Mr. Balashaheb More (samiti) secured 185115 votes, Mr. Tulashidas Jadhav (Congress) secured 178105 and Mr. K.B. Joshi (Ramrajya parishad) 29348 votes.⁽⁴⁾ The workers supported the Sanyukta Maharashtra Samitee. In this election Mr. T.A. Sonawane of the congress was elected from Pandharpur.

After this election, the congress consolidated its position and established its hold over city politics because after this election all the subsequent elections were won by the congress party.

The congress party leader Mr. Malappa Bandeppa Kadadi was elected in 1962. Mr. V.R. Patil, Mr. Abasaheb Killedar, Mr. Mirajkar were defeated in this election. Mr. Kadadi got 135011 votes, Mr. V.^R. Patil of Hindu Maha Sabha got 61725 votes, Mr. Killedar got 34406 votes and Mr. Mirajkar got 22016 votes.⁽⁵⁾ In some election Mr. Tayappa Sonwane of the congress was elected from Pandharpur. Thus, for the first time after independence, the opposition parties were defeated in the parliamentary election.

Mr. Damani was elected in 1967 election. He was the member of congress party. Mr. Shankarappa Dhanshetti (a candidate of Sampoorna Maharashtra Samitee), Shri Chandele,

Shri. Jamadar were defeated in this election. Mr. Damani secured 116644 votes, Mr. Dhanshetti secured 92924 votes, Mr. Chandele got 19520 votes and Mr. Jamadar got 34844 votes.⁽⁶⁾ In this election the G.KU. leaders supported Mr. Dhanshetti against Damani who was a prominent industrialist. In this, election Mr. Tayappa Sonawane again got elected from Pandharpur.

Mr. Surajratan Damani again got elected in the mid-term elections of 1971. Mr. Ranga Vadya was defeated in this election. Mr. Damani secured 188577 votes and Mr. Vaidya secured 98148 votes.⁽⁷⁾ In this election R.G.K.U. supported Mr. Damani and the G.KU. supported Ranga Vaidya who was a candidate of the combine opposition parties. Mr. Damani won the election. Mr. N.S. Kamble, the congress candidate was elected from Pandharpur.

Mr. Surajratan Damani was reelected from Solapur for the third time in 1977. The Janata Party leader Mr. M.B. Kadadi was defeated by him. Mr. Damani secured 183424 votes and Mr. Kadadi secured 149381 votes.⁽⁸⁾ In this election the congress party was defeated all over India and in Solapur all opposition parties came together and supported Mr. Kadadi. The G.K.U. leaders Mr. Bhimarao Rone, Com. Adam, Mr. Sangar worked hard for Mr. Kadadi but he was defeated.⁽⁹⁾ In this election the congress leader Mr. Sandipan Thorat was elected from Pandharpur.

In the election of 1980 Mr. Gangadharpant Kuchan (the congress) was elected form Solapur. Mr. Pannalal Surana (the Janata) was defeated by him. Mr. Kuchan secured 204027 votes and Mr. Pannalal Surana s ecurd 99421 votes.⁽¹⁰⁾ In this election Mr. S. Thorat (the congress) got elected from Pandharpur.

In this election of 1985 Mr. Gangadharpant Kuchan again got elected from Solapur. Mr. Racheti (B.J.P.) was defeated by him. Mr. Kuchan secured 258050 votes and Mr. Racheti secured 67,418 votes.⁽¹¹⁾ In this election Mr. Sandipan Thorat got elected for the third time from Pandharpur.

In all the parlimentary elections the trade unions in Solapur took part and the INTUC affiliated the R.G.K.U. always supported the congress candidates. Thus barring first two elections the congress continued to win elections in Solapur city and the party could not have won the elections if it was not supported by the large sections of the workers.

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF WORKERS IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS:

In the parlimentary election , the trade union leaders gave their support to political parties but in the assembly elections. They contestd elections as candidates.

Both the R.G.K.U. and G.K.U. leaders did participate in the assembly elections since 1952 and some prominent trade union leaders like Abasaheb Killedar, Bhimarao Rone Com, Adam, Com, Madur were elected as M.L.A.s some time they were defeated.

In the election of 1967 Mr. V.R. Patil (Hindu Maha Sabha) supported by Sampurna Maharashtra Samiti and Mr. Ramkrishna Bet (the congress) were elected from Solapur city.

In the election of 1972, Mr. Ramkrishna Bet (the congress) and Mrs. Nirmalatai Thokal (the congress) were elected from Solapur city. In this election the prominent trade union leader Mr. Abasaheb Killedar (the congress) was elected from North Solapur. North Solapur is a rural area and not urban area. Even then Mr. Killedar was elected from North Solapur.⁽¹²⁾

The elections 1978 all important from the point of view of workers as both of their militant leaders Mr. Bhimarao Rone (the Janata) and com. Adam. (the C.P.I.) were elected from Solapur city. Mr. Bhimrao Rone was elected from South Solapur city. The congress leader Mr. Rajaram Kuchan was defeated by him. Mr. Bhimrao Rone secured 22,085 votes and Mr. Kuchan secured 21,731 votes, There were of and other candidates in the pray who were defeated in this election. In this election the other prominent trade union leader Com. Adam Narsayya (the C.P.M.) was elected from North Solapur city.

Mr. Vitthalrao Dikonda (the congress) was defeated by him. Six other candidates were contesting this election. Com. Adam secured 20,372 votes and Mr. Dikonda secured 17,123 votes. Thus, Adam won by more than 3000 votes.⁽¹³⁾ Both elected candidates were the militant leaders of G.K.U. so the workers were very happy as first time they saw their two representatives in the assembly.

In the 1980 assembly election both the G.K.U. trade union leaders were defeated by the congress candidates as Indira wave was sweeping the city. In this election Mr. Dinanath Kamale (Congerss I) was elected from South Solapur city. Mr. Unnus Shaikh (Congress U) and Mr. Bhimrao Rone were defeated by him. In this election Mr. Kamale secured 28,635 votes, Mr. Unnus Shaikh secured 18,431 votes and Mr. Rone secured 5,738 votes. In the same election Mr. Baburao Chakote (Congress U) was elected from North Solapur city. Mr. Dikonda (congress I) Com. Adam (C.P.M.) and five other candidates were defeated by him, Mr. Baburao Chakote secured 25,870 votes, Mr. Dikonda secured 25,769 votes and Com. Adam secured 3,647 votes.⁽¹⁴⁾

In 1985 assembly elections Mr. Prakash Yalgulwar (Congress I) was ^{elected} from South Solapur city. Mr. Unnus Shaikh (Congress S) and Com. Adam (C.P.M.) were defeated by him. In this election Mr. Baburao Chakote (Congress I) again elected from North Solapur city. Mr. Raleraskar (B.J.P.)

was defeated by him. Mr. Baburao Chakote secured 38,370 votes and Mr. Raleraskar secured 23,302 votes.⁽¹⁵⁾

The trade union leaders also tried to win the election of Municipal Corporation. Mr. Abasaheb Killedar (Congress), Mr. Bhimrao Rone (Janata) Com. Madur, Mr. Dinanath Yaram (Congress) were elected as corporator in the Municipal Corporation. The mill workers also participated largely in Municipal corporation elections as in assembly and parliamentary elections.

Mr. Abasaheb Killedar was elected as a corporator in 1949, at the first time. He was one of the most prominent trade union leaders. He is one the first trade union leaders who got elected as a councillor. In 1950m Mr, Abasaheb Killedar was elected as President of the city Muncipal Council. He was the first trade union leader who was elected as President of the city. In 1952, he was again elected as the President of the city.⁽¹⁶⁾

The G.K.U. leaders Mr. Bhimrao Rone Com. Adam, Com. Madur, Com. Ganachari etc. were also elected as corporators. Mr. Madur elected many times as a corportar. Mr. Bhimrao Rone has been the member of corporation since 1957.⁽¹⁷⁾

Thus in all elections the workers and their leaders were involved in the politics. By taking part in these elections they wanted to show their political consciounes

and with the help of political power they wanted to show their problems, It is felt that whenever representatives of the workers are active in state legislative assembly, their problems can be raised and partly solved. For example in 1979 there was an increase of Rs. 45/- in the salary of mill workers of Solapur and it could be done because of efforts of their representatives in Vidhansabha.⁽¹⁸⁾

INVOLVEMENT OF THE MILL WORKERS IN LOCAL ,SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MOVEMENT :

The trade union leaders and the workers always got involved in the local, social, politica and cultural movements. They also organised some associations, cultural activities, meetings, seminars for workers. Both unions organised a conference every y~~e~~ar for the workers. In this way they try to create awareness among the workers. They also participated in political movements.

In 1962 there was a great strike organised by the opposition parties. All G.K.U. leaders were involved in this strike. This strike was organised to oppose contineous price rise. Mr. Bhimrao Rone was arrested in this strike.⁽¹⁹⁾

In 1971, the police opened fire on peasants in Vairag (Barshi). At that time the G.K.U. leaders appealed to the citizens in Solapur to protest against this atrocity and the people responded by observing Hartal.⁽²⁰⁾

Another important involvement of the mill workers was regarding a strike of Railway workers for the transfer of Solapur division from South Central Railway to Central Railway. At that time, the G.K.U. leaders were involved in this strike and supported striking Railway employees.⁽²¹⁾

The workers also supported the struggle of the Solapur people for asking government to take over the 'Medical College'. The workers and the union leaders supported the strike which was successful.⁽²²⁾

The workers also were involved in the struggle of the Solapur students and people starting 'the sub-centre' of Shivaji University, Kolhapur in Solapur city. They supported this demand which was granted.⁽²³⁾

The trade union leaders also fought against the corruption cases in the governments. Mr. Bhimrao Rene always struggled for the clean administration in Municipal Corporation. He attracted the attention of the people to many corruption cases in the corporation. For example 'The Turati Case', 'The Black water case' is most famous case which were exposed by Mr. Bhimrao Rene.⁽²⁴⁾

The trade union leaders are also trying to build a bridges between the different casts, religions and language. Every time when there are riots between Hindus and Muslims, Hindus and Dalits the union leaders tried to establish peace and order in the society.

The trade union leaders were also involved in the cultural activities. They participated in the "Ganpati Ustav," "Devi Ustav," "Id" and in the festivals. The trade union leaders also organised seminars. They got involved in social activities. The trade union leaders also involved in sports. Mr. Abasaheb Killedar, Mr. Bhimrao Rane were very famous Kabbaddi players in Maharashtra state. Still now they guide the young Kabbaddi players. They formed the 'Bhaiyya Krida Mandal ! (25)

Thus the mill workers and the trade union leaders are involved in political activities, in order to solve the problems of the workers. The division of workers between two rival unions applied to two different parties increases the participation of workers.

: R E F E R E N C E S :

- 1) See Appendix I.
- 2) From, District Information and Publicity office, Records, Solapur.
- 3) Sangar Vitthalrao, His unpublished diary.
- 4) From, District Information and Publicity office Records, Solapur.
- 5) Ibid.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Sangar Vitthalrao, His unpublished diary.
- 10) From, District Information and Publicity office Records, Solapur.
- 11) Ibid.
- 12) Kshrsagar Digambar - ⁱAs Kartabgar Va Kruthartha, Jiwan - Abasaheb Killedar. Sanchar . 9.10.83.
- 13) From, District Information and Publicity office Records, Solapur.
- 14) Ibid.
- 15) Daily Maharashtra Times, Dated.

- 16) Kshirsagar Digamber : Ak Kartabgar Va Krutharth
Jiwan - Abasaheb Killedar. Sanchar . 9.10.83.
- 17) From an interview of Mr. Bhimarao Rane ., G.K.U.
leader.
- 18) Sangar Vitthalrao - His unpublished diary.
- 19) From an interview of Mr. Bhimarao Rane, G.K.U. leader.
- 20) Sangar Vitthalrao - His unpublished diary.
- 21) Form an interview of Mr. Bhimarao Rane -
G.K.U. leader.
- 22) Ibid.
- 23) Ibid.
- 24) Ibid.
- 25) Ibid.