

Sri Ramulu

A short biographical note on Sri Ramulu (INTUC) interviewed on September 29, 2004 in Bangalore

Shri Ramulu was born on November 20, 1918 in Bangalore. His father was a textile mill worker. Ramulu could not get any education till he went to jail where he appeared in the school final examination.

Ramulu started working in the textile mill from the age of twelve with half wage as he used to attend school for the rest of the day. He was deeply influenced by Congress leaders like Hardikar and K T Bhashyam. In 1932, he was a member of the sewa dal. Later he started picketing at wine shops and going to Harijan bastis, he was cleaning and teaching them to stay clean.

In 1941, there was a strike in the textile mill, and Ramulu was arrested and jailed for more than two years. He studied Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, English and Hindi in jail and passed his school final.

After release, Ramulu went to join Mysore textile mills which is now declared sick. The president of the union was Bhashyam who was a senior advocate practising in Bangalore. In 1941, the union was registered by Ramulu where 5000 workers were employed and in Minerva Mills, 3000. The name of the union was Mysore Mill Labour Association and was affiliated to INTUC. Ramulu was elected president of the union in 1951.

The work in the textile mills was done manually with three workers in one row, while now eight to nine rows are manned by a single worker.

Ramulu was active for the welfare of the workers, He collected Rs 10 from the workers and got houses constructed for them and also provided for the court cases and police actions.

Ramulu and his union raised demands like bonus, leave and wage hike. In 1947, they raised the call of "Chalo Mysore" against the strictures imposed by the Maharaja and for the merger of Mysore in the Indian union.

Ramulu launched agitation against one mill and one union supported by Mysore Labour Act. In the leadership, there were three ladies and four men. They suffered police atrocities and lathi charge, but never stepped back. The building constructed by Ramulu for his union office and now given to the AITUC has on its foundation stone the names of all these seven leaders engraved.

In this period, Italian prisoners of war were brought by the British to Bangalore and the workers erected wooden huts for them for which they were paid Rs three compared to the three anna paid in the textile mills. Later the area was taken over by HMT.

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I started working in the textile mill from the age of twelve with half wages as I used to attend school for the rest of the day. I was deeply influenced by Congress leaders like Hardikar and K T Bhashyam. In 1932, I was a member of the sewa dal. Later I started picketing at wine shops. I was also going to Harijan bastis, was cleaning and teaching them to stay clean.

In 1941, there was strike in the textile mill, and I was arrested and jailed for more than two years. I studied Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, English and Hindi in jail and passed my school final.

After release, I joined Mysore textile mills which is now declared sick. The president of the union was Bhashyam who was a senior advocate practising in Bangalore. In 1941, the union was registered by me where 5000 workers were employed and in Minerva Mills, 3000. The name of the union was Mysore Mill Labour Association and was affiliated to INTUC. I was elected president of the union in 1951.

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In this period, Italian prisoners of war were brought by the British to Bangalore and the workers erected wooden huts for them for which they were paid Rs three compared to the three anna paid in the textile mills. The workers from the textile mills started pouring in. Later the area was taken over by HMT.