IMPORTANT TRADE UNION LEADERS

OF GUJARAT

FROM 1917 TO 1947
CHAPTER 6

IMPORTANT TRADE UNION LEADERS OF

GUJARAT FROM 1917 to 1947

It was only due to the contributions and efforts of the trade union leaders of Gujarat that the trade union movement became a success and the working class saw a new dawn in their lives and the beginning of a new era. They could now aspire for a decent standard of living.

Let us begin with Shrimati Anasuyabehn Sarabhai, the formidable leader of the struggle. Born on 11 November, 1885 at Ahmedabad, she was the doted child in the house. Her Father was known as Sarabhai and her mother’s name was Godavariba. Her parents doted on her. She was intelligent and was sent to London in the United Kingdom to study. In 1913, she returned to Ahmedabad, giving up her studies almost midway. Her Younger sister's death disturbed her very much.

Fabian socialism was existing in London when Anasuyabehn had gone there to study. The intellectual life of the city was led by Sydney and Beatrice Webb and Anasuyabehn attended some of their talks.
Anasuyabehn was a student at the London School of Economics. Anasuya's active interest in the labour movement and the welfare of industrial workers clearly stemmed from her exposure to Fabian ideas. Anasuyabehn noticed the feminist movement in Britain. The First World War gave a great fillip to the Ahmedabad textile industry mainly because foreign competition was reduced to the minimum. The Indian market was totally open to exploitation by the Indian textile industry. Large fortunes were thus quickly made.

Despite her upper class background, Anasuyabehn earnestly wanted to do something for the workers. Her brother, Ambalal gave her the moral support and assurance that she needed. Her childhood friend, Jashodaben also wanted to do some social work. Both of them started visiting the Mirjapur and Jubilee mills frequently. Anasuyabehn opened a school in Amarpura on 15 March 1914. She began to understand the terrible condition of the workers after working among them.

Anasuyabehn would bathe the children and comb their hair after applying oil. This school, in due course became the beginning of the Ahmedabad and the national labour movement. Anasuyabehn's love of humanity was the main reason of her efforts.

Anasuyabehn had suffered the injustice of an unwanted marriage at an early age and thus she decided to work for the rights of women, particularly for the women labourers whose condition was worse than that of the men. Anasuyabehn found that many worked in the mills.
under alternate names during different shifts. She was most upset to find babies asleep between the machines, breathing air full of dust and cotton fluff.

Anasuyabehn now started becoming a labour leader and a celebrity with the workers. There was dissatisfaction in the warpers' ranks when bonus was denied to the Muslims, Baniyas and Brahmins during an exodus of workers during a plague. The warpers wanted a pay rise of 15 pies. The millowners agreed for a rise of 14½ pies. Anasuyabehn got the warpers to agree to this condition. This strike which started on 4 December was celebrated in the years to come as Majoor Din or Labour Day. This was the first time in the labour movement of Ahmedabad that a regular demand was made and notice served on the millowners for higher wages. The workers' demand and the strike notice bore the signature of Anasuyabehn.

The success of the warpers' strike put a tremendous responsibility on Anasuyabehn's shoulders. She became a regular visitor to the Satyagraha ashram which Mahatma Gandhi set up at Sabarmati. There was a bond of brother and sister between Mahatma Gandhi and Anasuyabehn. According to Mahatma Gandhi, Anasuyabehn was straightforward, pure-minded, modest, firm, fearless, truthful and had a high character with a highly developed moral strength.

Anasuyabehn was a willing and devoted disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. She served the workers wholeheartedly.
and with a sense of detachment. From 1918 onwards, textile workers particularly from the Throstle Department started coming into close contact with Anasuyabehn. They were anxious to found a union. Anasuyabehn told them that she was not quite equipped to handle it. But when the workers persisted, Anasuyabehn thought of placing this matter before Mahatma Gandhi.

After attending the Amritsar session of the Congress, Mahatma Gandhi returned to Ahmedabad in January 1920. He agreed to the formation of a union. A large meeting was convened in the compound of the Mirjapur residence of Anasuya on February 25, 1920 at 5 p.m.² It was a landmark occasion and Mahatma Gandhi addressed the meeting from under a neem tree.

The union was called the Majoor Mahajan. Anasuyabehn was appointed President of the Majoor Mahajan on the very day of its inception. The workers would voluntarily lend a hand in collecting union subscriptions until alternate arrangements were made.

It was decided that the Mahajan would operate temporarily out of a garage adjacent to Anasuyabehn's bungalow admeasuring 20' by 20' and was lying vacant.

Bhai Keshavji assisted in the office work. A Bhavsar youth, Bhat Vithaldas was also employed.

All guidance for carrying out office work was provided by Anasuyabehn. Due to her, many complaints would quickly be settled. For expert advice, the services of Krishnalal Desai and Kalidas Jhaveri were available.
Seth Mangaldas, an enlightened millowner and employer was elected president of the Millowners' Association. When the workers were facing great difficulties in meeting their food bills due to a steep rise in the price of bajari (a kind of millet), Seth Mangaldas quickly sanctioned a suitable increase in their wages.

The Mahajan functioned in a democratic manner. Each mill elected its own representatives to the union's council. According to Anasuyabehn, all the activities of the Mahajan were based on the principles of truth and non-violence and Mahatma Gandhi laid down its foundation.

During the First World War (1914-1918) and for some time after, the Ahmedabad mills had made substantial profits. The workers were aware of this fact and some of them started demanding a bonus every month. When this came to the notice of Mahatma Gandhi, a meeting was called at Anasuyabehn's Mirjapur residence along with the workers' representatives. The representatives could not properly understand what the morality involved was.

The representatives left in a confused state. The result was that after a few days a delegation of Harivallabh Moolchand Mill representatives under the leadership of Kanji Popat called on Mahatma Gandhi and told him that they had erred in not appreciating the seriousness of the matter and were now willing to abide by whatever he said.

On the other hand, workers near Raikhad who were led by Kachara Bhagat and Balu Maharaj made fun...
of what they considered the weakness of the workers from the Khanpur area. Three months were to pass by before all the workers came to appreciate Mahatma Gandhi's stand and come round to accept it. Thus, the Throstle Workers Mahajan began functioning again under Anasuyabehn's Presidentship. Thereafter the question of Diwali bonus came up before the arbitrators and it was agreed that workers should get one month's salary as Diwali bonus.

Mahatma Gandhi said that the workers should realise that they could count on the services of Anasuyabehn only so long as their demands were just. During the strike of 1923, Anasuyabehn went to Pune where Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned. Anasuyabehn also had talks with Shankarlal Banker. The Board of representatives resolved that a mass meeting should be called with the proposal to call off the strike before them. Accordingly a meeting was held under the celebrated babul tree. Anasuyabehn was present on the occasion. As the seniormost and one held in the highest regard and affection spoke a few words supporting the call to end the strike. At that point, representatives of the workers approached Anasuyabehn and others and asked them to retire for some time as it was advisable and desirable that the workers should confer independently among themselves in their leaders' absence to come to a conclusion. They promised to convey their decision once their deliberations were over. Thus, the leaders withdrew.
Mahatma Gandhi, repeatedly in his many talks to workers would stress the imperative need for them to give up drinking. But there were other things that needed to be done and this is where Anasuyabehn and Shankarlal excelled. Shankarlal with the blessings of Anasuyabehn started a weekly called Majoor Sandesh starting with 5 January 1924.

Even though both the Government and the Mahajan laboured hard to put an end to child labour, the efforts were largely unsuccessful. Anasuyabehn thought of forming a Mandal for these child workers and a meeting was called in January 1927. The result was the establishment of a Majoor Kumar Mandal.

Social activism was now coming increasingly to the front.

Mahatma Gandhi felt that there was an urgent need to help girls from the untouchable class. He suggested that Shankarlal speak to Anasuyabehn. When Shankarlal spoke to Anasuyabehn, the latter thought it was a good idea. Shankarlal and Anasuyabehn spoke to several Harijan leaders. The First one to agree to send his two daughters to the proposed hostel for girls was one Bhai Keshavji. Then another Harijan, Bhai Viraji Bhagat, a resident of Raikhad locality agreed to send his daughter. The hostel, named Jamnadas Bhagwandas Kanya Chhatralaya, thus started with three inmates. The hostel was housed in one of the chawls owned by Ambalal, brother of Anasuyabehn, who generously donated it. Anasuyabehn became the supervisor.
Elections to the Municipality came round in 1927, but in the intervening two years, the atmosphere in Ahmedabad had changed considerably. The Congress felt that it was likely to face stiff opposition from others. In the circumstances, Vallabhbhai Patel felt that Anasuyabehn, as President of the Majoor Mahajan, should stand for election. The suggestion had the approval of the Mahajan but Anasuyabehn declined to oblige. She told Vallabhbhai that Mahatma Gandhi had specifically bade her to take labour work from the purest sense of service and she did not think it right to enter the political arena. Vallabhbhai had no other alternative but to respect her wishes. At the same time, Anasuyabehn kept Vallabhbhai informed about the needs of the workers, especially women and asked him to keep them in mind.

A Scavenger Mahajan was formed in 1927 with the blessings of Anasuyabehn and the assistance of the Majoor Mahajan. The very first Workers' Day was celebrated in Ahmedabad on 4 December 1936.

On 15 January 1940 a notice was served on the mills for payment of dearness allowance according to the relevant clause of the Industrial Disputes Act. After the decision to go on strike was taken, a meeting was held on 25 February, 1940 in the compound of the Majoor Mahajan office. Addressing the meeting, Anasuyabehn said that this struggle was for self-purification and that it may be a source of inspiration for years to come.
The strike was to start on 26 February 1940 but the millowners came round, discussions were resumed and an honourable settlement was arrived at. It bore the signature of Haridas Achratlal, President of the Millowners' Association and Anasuyabehn, President of the Majoor Mahajan.

After the death of her brother Ambalal, Anasuyabehn turned to Swami Ishwarananda for solace. She was very enthusiastic about spiritual growth and was very interested in wanting to know as much as possible in this regard.

Anasuyabehn taught the workers to make lunchmats, tea-cosies, tray cloth, napkins and cushions from Khadi. Her interest in social welfare activities was unbounded. She would get up at 4 a.m. to go to the workers' chawls to see for herself the life in the chawl as the men started to leave for the mills. She would inspect the food packets to see what they ate. She was also keen to know where each family members slept when it rained. She was interested in every small detail of life in a chawl.

Thus, Anasuyabehn was a mother of the working class who had sympathy for all the depressed and in distress. She was strong and determined in her principles.

After Mahatma Gandhi's assassination on 30 January 1948, Anasuyabehn became detached. She felt that she had to let others continue with the works which she, under Mahatma Gandhi's guidance had initiated.
Mahatma Gandhi had noted that Anasuyabehn's heart was pure and she was very kind to the poor. Mahatma Gandhi also noted that due to the influence of Anasuyabehn, there was hardly any bitterness in the struggle between the mill-owners and the workers.

Mahatma Gandhi, while addressing the mill-hands of Ahmedabad on the occasion of the second anniversary of the struggle that took place in 1918, between the mill-owners and the workers, said that Anasuyabehn had not dedicated her life to the workers merely for securing for them better wages. Her object in doing so was that they may get enough to make them happy, to make them truly religious, that they may observe the eternal law of ethics, that they may give up bad habits such as drinking, gambling, etc., that they may make good use of their earnings, that they may keep their houses clean and that they may educate their children.

Thus, Anasuyabehn tried to make the workers truly religious and clean. She also led the labourers' rank with a basket of sand on her head for filling the foundation of the Satyagrahahram Weaving School.

Anasuyabehn provided leadership to the Textile Labour Association for over five and a half decades. She also felt the need to educate women and children.

In 1943, Anasuyabehn thought that a maternity home for female workers would be very useful in ensuring healthy
Anasuyabehn believed that not all women would go for work at textile mills or in other factories. There could be self-employment too. The Anasuyabehn Smarak Trust is carrying out activities aiming at self-employment for women. Thus Anasuyabehn thought that the upliftment of women was essential for improving the quality of life of the workers. The work started by Anasuyabehn was expanded by Mrs. Ela Bhatt in a span of about 13 years.

Thus, Anasuyabehn dedicated herself to the noble cause of the upliftment of the working class of Ahmedabad. This inspired thousands of people all over the world.

Anasuyabehn mentally accepted Swami Vivekananda as her spiritual guide and studies all his writings and turned to them again and again. Though her formal studies had ceased, she pursued studies on her own and advanced on the path of knowledge without passing a formal examination. The visit of H.S.L. Polak, Attorney-at-Law in South Africa was an interesting event in the life of Anasuyabehn.

Thus, to conclude over discussion on Anasuyabehn, we can say that she was the very backbone of the trade union movement of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947. Her genuine sympathy for the working class became the primary reason for her success and popularity. She set an example before the world that love and tolerance were the ideals to be followed rather than violence and coercion.
Another important trade union leader of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947 was Shankarlal Banker. Born on 27 December 1889, he was junior to Anasuyabehn by about four years. His family members were Vaishnavites and his mother was a very devout lady. His Father worked in a major bank and his family circumstances were quite comfortable.

Shankarlal was influenced by an Arya Samajist. After passing his matriculation examination in 1904 he joined Bombay's Wilson College where Jivatram B. Kripalani (who was the Secretary of the Congress and for a term its President) was his contemporary.

At the age of 16, Shankarlal got involved in the politics of the day. He came under the influence of older students like Mangaldas Pakwasa who was later to become Governor of C.P. & Berar and Manu Subedar who went on to take a degree in Economics from London University. Then there was Manilal Parikh who influenced him enough to attend prayer meetings of the Prarthana Samaj. He enjoyed listening to preachers like Shivanath Shastri, Herambchand Mitra and Avinash Chandra Majumdar who belonged to the Brahmo Samaj. He was also influenced by the Unitarian Church and read its tracts.

Shankarlal also got interested in the upliftment of the backward classes, especially the untouchables. Despite his extra-curricular activities Shankarlal managed to pass his B.A. with a second class, much to his mother's satisfaction. Shankarlal joined St. Xavier's College and appeared for his M.A. in 1911. Having passed his M.A.
he joined the Institute of Science in Bangalore for the
study of applied chemistry but was soon to be disillu-
sioned over the lack of adequate facilities. At this
stage, he decided to go to London. It was the year 1914.
The First World War broke out. Shankarlal took to study-
ing Fabian Socialism. He returned to India in March 1915,

Shankarlal's stay in England made a major impact
on him. At Mahatma Gandhi's suggestion, the Home Rule
League had initiated Satyagraha. A branch of the League
was formed in Ahmedabad which took Shankarlal there. It
was here that he became better acquainted with Anasuyabehn's
labour activities. It was to Shankarlal that Mahatma Gandhi
was to turn when he wanted factual material on labour
conditions in Ahmedabad.

Shankarlal had a desire to work among labour
under the auspices of the Bombay Social Service League.
Shankarlal visited the Amarpura School in Ahmedabad.
Shankarlal along with Kalidas Jaskaran Jhaveri, Anubhai
Mehta and a few others got together to form the Majur
Mitra Mandal. The Mandal mooted the idea of adding other
activities to ones dealing strictly with education.

A substantial part of the wages of the workers
was going for meeting the interest on loans and on the
consumption of liquor. Anasuyabehn realised that some-
thing had to be done to remedy this situation. So a
Cooperative Credit Society was established.

About the time of the famous strike in which
Mahatma Gandhi was totally involved, Shankarlal made a
study of the situation taking the case of a two-loom
weaver (Muslim) in the Weaving Department of the mill. Shankarlal wrote that most of the workers were deep in debt and they had to pay heavy interest. Further, every worker should insure his life against accidents, in his own as well as his family’s interests. It should be made possible for him to pay the annual premium for his insurance. Workers should educate their children.

Shankarlal then calculated how much it would cost a 2-loom Muslim weaver who had to feed and take care of a family of six including himself. Shankarlal set down the principles and course of action that characterised the strike of 1917. He said that the struggle must be in furtherance of definite aims, the demand in respect of these aims must be clear, the demand must be approved by all the workers, it must be placed in writing, sufficient time must be given to the employers to consider the demand, if the demand is rejected complete peace must be maintained, in order that the strike may be peaceful all proper arrangements must be made by responsible leaders, the leaders who work in connection with the strike must obtain proper guidance from day to day, no worker should become a victim to threats and finally there must be provision for arriving at a settlement under proper terms and conditions.

Shankarlal had come to Ahmedabad and was staying as Anasuyabehn’s guest in her house in the compound and had made known his views which Ambalal, the brother of Anasuyabehn, found quite unacceptable. Mahatma Gandhi met
Mr. Chatfield, the Collector of Ahmedabad, the millowners and the workers. It was agreed to set up an Arbitration Board. Here, Shankarlal represented the workers. The Collector was to be the umpire.

Mahatma Gandhi took the advice of Shankarlal. Shankarlal daily visited the workers in their chawls, collected information about them, talked to them and sought to instil courage among them. Arrangements for medical treatment were made for the ill.

Once, Shankarlal who had never known physical labour, carried bricks and sand for three or four days in the heat of the sun, along with other workers in order to enthuse them. Even as Mahatma Gandhi was undergoing his fast, the sixteenth and last-leaflet was put in circulation. This was written by Shankarlal and it went under his name. The heavy responsibility by Mahatma Gandhi's fast on the workers and their oath to obtain a 35 per cent increase in the wages was the important point mentioned in the leaflet.

In his book, 'Gandhiji Ane Majoor Pravruti', Shankarlal devoted a chapter to "The way of a Just Struggle." He said that it was natural that differences between workers and employers arise in industrial matters. According to him the following principles and methods became self-evident in the course of the Weavers' Strike:—

1) Legitimate/reasonable demand.
2) Settlement through negotiations.
3) Solution through arbitration.
4) Arbitration beneficial for both parties.
5) A strike is inevitable if arbitration is not agreed to.
6) The demand should not be extravagant.
7) Ensure complete peace.
8) Workers should not remain idle.
9) Day-to-day contact with the workers during the strike period.
10) There should be mutual goodwill between both the parties.
11) There should be alternate employment for sustenance of the workers.
12) The aim of strike should be to bring about a change of heart in the opponent.
13) There should be readiness for settlement.
14) While effecting a settlement, one should stand firm on a principle but in other matters, according to circumstances, both parties should follow a policy of give-and-take.
15) There should be attempts at cordial relations.

Thus, the above-mentioned principles were the ones which Shankarlal mentioned. Shankarlal had become close to Anasuyabehn and Mahatma Gandhi. Shankarlal joined Mahatma Gandhi at an early stage and the former accepted the latter as his teacher. Shankarlal had begun with the Home Rule League but he was sucked into the Gandhi Vortex and was to do his leader's bidding.

When it was decided that Navjivan (Gujarati) that was originally published by Indulal Yajnik as a monthly should be edited by Mahatma Gandhi, along with Young India, it was Shankarlal who was deputed to meet the Collector.
Mr. Chatfield to discuss the matter, Shankarlal succeeded in doing this task very well. Even before Mahatma Gandhi could persuade Shankarlal to join him, the latter had succeeded in persuading the former to head the Home Rule League.

There were rumours about Mahatma Gandhi's arrest from 8 March 1922 soon after the Chauri Chaura incident on 5 February 1922 in which a mob killed some police constables. Mahatma Gandhi left for Ajmer on 8 March, 1922. Shankarlal went to Mehsana to see Mahatma Gandhi. Shankarlal returned to Ahmedabad along with Mahatma Gandhi on 10 March. That same evening, Shankarlal was arrested. Simultaneously, Mahatma Gandhi was also arrested. Mahatma Gandhi and Shankarlal were then taken to Sabarmati jail.

Mahatma Gandhi received a sentence of six years and Shankarlal received a sentence of one year in prison.

Shankarlal later wrote that in prison, Mahatma Gandhi took care of him just as the former's mother would. Mahatma Gandhi moulded the thinking of Shankarlal.

Shankarlal came out of jail and had an opportunity to meet the Muslim leader, M.A. Jinnah. In his memoirs, Shankarlal wrote that a movement or campaign of satyagraha can be only one of justice. A change of heart of the opponent has to be effected by undergoing suffering in the cause. Shankarlal told Jinnah that to know Mahatma Gandhi, one had to look deeper to discover his qualities.

After his release from jail, Shankarlal proceeded to Bombay. His mind now turned towards the villages and
their need. He emerged from the Yeravda prison a transformed person. He threw himself into Khadi work. In 1923, a Khadi Board was formed with Jamnalal Bajaj as its President and Shankarlal as its Secretary. The Board was subsequently converted into All India Spinners' Association in 1925 with Mahatma Gandhi as its President and Jawaharlal Nehru and Shankarlal as its Secretaries.

Shankarlal was a member of the Congress Working Committee. He resigned from it and from 1925 to 1939, he devoted himself more or less wholly, except for occasional forays into the activities of the Textile Labour Association to assist Anasuyabehn, to Khadi work and toured the length and breadth of India for organizing Khadi centres for production and distribution in the company of Mahatma Gandhi or on his own.

Shankarlal was a man of means and was not taking any salary or honorarium from the All India Spinners' Association. He bore his travelling and touring expenses himself. In 1939, he had a breakdown from which he never fully recovered. He settled down in Ahmedabad and besides serving in an advisory capacity on matters pertaining to Khadi, he participated in the work of the Textile Labour Association but again in an advisory capacity, till the end of his life.

During the Dandi March in 1930 Mahatma Gandhi utilised the services of Shankarlal. Though an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, Shankarlal preserved his independent identity. In the summer of 1935 Shankarlal was at Cotacamund (Ooty) and after he spent a few days there he started his
round of visits of Khadi centres. It was his practice to look into the affairs of such centres in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and then move on to Wardha to report to Mahatma Gandhi.

Shankarlal came into contact with Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai. After resigning from the All India Spinners' Association, Shankarlal continued to take interest in the labour movement.

During the strike of 1923, Shankarlal made arrangements to provide as many charkhas as possible to those workers who did not leave for their villages and who were willing to spin. That provided gainful employment to an unspecified number of mill-hands and their families.

With the active co-operation of Gulzarilal Nanda and Khandubhai Desai and the blessings of Anasuyabehn, Shankarlal started a weekly called Majoor Sandesh starting with 5 January 1924. The setting up of Kanyagriha - hostel came about as a result of a trust set up by the brother-in-law of Shankarlal, Mr. Jamnadas Bhagwandas, to the tune of a lakh of rupees for the purpose of encouraging the education of girls.

Shankarlal wanted to help Vanita Vishram, which was an organisation to assist upper caste girls. However, there was greater need for educating Harijan girls. Shankarlal spoke to several Harijan leaders. The first one to agree to send his two daughters to the proposed hostel was one Bhai Keshavji.
Shankarlal saw the sense of patient acceptance by workers of their living condition. During the years of change from 1929, arbitration started in right earnest. In the discussions, Seth Sakarlal, Seth Shantilal and Gordhanbhai Patel on behalf of the Millowners' Association and Shankarlal Banker, Gulzarilal Nanda and Khandubhai Desai on behalf of the Mahajan took an active part. There were wide divergences between the approaches of the Millowners' Association and the Mahajan.

At the beginning of 1935, the hours of work were reduced from 10 to 9 hours a day. Reacting to it, the millowners arbitrarily introduced a wage cut of 10 per cent. Shankarlal went to Delhi to see Mahatma Gandhi. Settlement of the dispute was facilitated by the introduction of a fifty-four hour week from the 1st January 1935. The agreement had been signed by Seth Chamanlal G. Parekh, President of the Millowners' Association and by Shankarlal G. Banker and Gulzarilal Nanda on behalf of the Textile Labour Association.

A meeting was held on 25 February 1940 in the compound of the Majoor Mahajan Office which was attended by over 65,000 workers when the decision to go on strike was taken. In his speech, Shankarlal said that it was still not too late for millowners to agree to arbitration and the Mahajan would not be averse to it. A full Bench of the Industrial Court delivered its judgement on 26 April 1940. By virtue of the award workers got dearness allowance neutralizing to the extent of 66 per cent the rise in prices. After this struggle, Shankarlal's health had begun to
deteriorate and he decided to detach himself from the day to day work of the Majoor Mahajan. However, he was always available for advice and consultation.

Thus, we see that Shankarlal was a permanent advisor and founder member of the Textile Labour Association. He believed that the principles taught by great men live for ever and influence the mortals. He started assisting Anasuyabehn in maintaining happy and healthy industrial relations, negotiate industrial grievances, settle them and in case of failure refer the matter to arbitration. As a close associate of Anasuyabehn, Shankarlal donated Rs. 1 lakh for the expansion of the girls' hostel started in 1926.

During the strike of Ahmedabad, textile workers of 1913, 17 leaflets were issued. The leaflet No. 16 was entitled "Shri Shankarlal Banker's Leaflet". In terms of the resolution passed at the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress, the Reception Committee of the Lucknow Congress with the help of Shankarlal Banker and J.C. Kumarappa organized an exhibition which was opened by Mahatma Gandhi. In its very constitution, therefore, it was a unique exhibition.

Shankarlal also participated in the anti-Rowlatt act agitation. Mahatma Gandhi was arrested and tried as the writer of three articles in Young India, which were regarded as seditious and he and Shankarlal, as the publisher, were charged with sedition.

To conclude our discussion on Shankarlal Banker, we can say that he was one of the most important trade union leaders of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947. He was involved
in strikes from his college days. His guide was Mahatma Gandhi. Alone in his old age, he lived on till January 7, 1985 and died peacefully. In a real sense, with him ended the golden era of non-violent but militant trade unionism. The last link with Mahatma Gandhi had snapped.10.

Another important trade union leader of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947 was Khandubhai Desai. He was born on the 17th of April, 1898. He graduated in arts from Gujarat Vidyapeeth. He started his career as an assistant secretary in the Textile Labour Association along with Gulzarilal Nanda. He was steeped in the Gandhian approach to labour relations. He was also steeped in the Majoor Mahajan tradition. Khandubhai Desai was a man with good academic credentials. He had joined the Majoor Mahajan staff. He now participated in the intra-union discussions of the Majoor Mahajan.

Khandubhai played a very important role in the strike of 1923. He had talks with Shankarlal Banker. The point of discussion was over a wage cut of 10 per cent. Khandubhai Desai considered the cut totally unjust and believed that it should be fought to the bitter end. The Board of representatives resolved that a mass meeting should be called and the proposal to call off the strike placed before them. Accordingly a meeting was held under the celebrated babul tree. Present on the occasion were Anasuya-behn, Shankarlal, Gulzarilal and Khandubhai.

Khandubhai and Gulzarilal went from mill to mill to exhort the workers to go back and report for duty. The strike had lasted from 1 April to 4 June. It was till then
the longest strike in Ahmedabad textile industry history. Through third persons, the two parties were brought together in direct negotiations. A compromise was arrived at with the wage cut pegged at a 15-5/8 per cent cut.

The 1923 strike certainly had given a big jolt to the Majoor Mahajan. There were few activists in the Mahajan office. Khandubhai was one of them and he was indefatigable in moving from mill to mill to explain to the workers the circumstances in which the strike had to be withdrawn and the necessity of unity among the workers. Khandubhai and others held meetings regularly to instil new hope and faith among the workers. Khandubhai Desai streamlined the working of the Complaints Section and drew up plans to classify complaints according to their nature and content. The complaints procedure was clearly laid out. First of all, complaints received were taken up by the representatives with the mill officials and those which were not sorted out were registered at the Mahajan's office. The activists of the Mahajan would discuss the complaints with mill officials and, if need be, with the millowners or even the Millowners' Association. If the complaints were not resolved then they would submit them to arbitration. Some millowners and officials were understanding and sympathetic towards labour and co-operation was forthcoming from them. The activists always took care that at no time were relations embittered between workers and employers. The objective, as Mahatma Gandhi had explained, was to establish a family bond between employer and employee. A monthly had at first been started for publicity and...
propaganda but that died a natural death. Later, Shankarlal Banker with the active co-operation of Khandubhai and Gulzarilal Nanda and the blessings of Anasuyabehn, started a weekly called Majoor Sandesh starting from 5 January 1924.

By 1929, mills had begun substantially to improve their financial situation. The question then arose whether or not the Mahajan should not ask for a wage increase. The Mahajan brought this to the attention of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi suggested that the Mahajan should submit its case to the arbitrators, namely himself and Sheth Mangaldas, which it did, through Khandubhai and Gulzarilal Nanda. But the arbitrators remained unconvinced of the soundness of the Mahajan's case.

This came as a shock to the Mahajan which expected Mahatma Gandhi to be on its side. Discussion between Mahatma Gandhi and the Mahajan followed. On Mahatma Gandhi's advice, a fresh demand for cancellation of the 1923 wage cut was placed before the arbitrators.

At the beginning of 1935, the hours of work were reduced from 10 to 9 hours a day. Reacting to it, the mill-owners arbitrarily introduced a wage cut of 10 per cent. Once again the Mahajan insisted that this should be referred to arbitration. Apprehending trouble, Seth Kasturbhai, Shankarlal and Gulzarilal Nanda went to Delhi to see Mahatma Gandhi. Khandubhai and Seth Chamanlal were summoned. Long negotiations took place and finally mutual understanding was arrived at.

The Ahmedabad labour functioned independently of labour elsewhere. It had its own sense of values, its own
approach to workers' problems. At a meeting of the workers held on 22 November, 1936 under the presidency of Khandubhai Desai, it was decided that 4 December should thenceforth be celebrated as Workers' Day. This decision was unanimous. Indeed, the very first Workers' Day was celebrated in Ahmedabad on 4 December 1936.

Elections had been held in the provinces under the Government of India Act, 1935. Under the Act registered trade unions were allotted two seats in the Bombay Legislative Assembly. The Majoor Mahajan had registered itself and it could therefore send two of its men, Khandubhai and Gulzarilal to the Bombay Legislative Assembly.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Central Board of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh presided over the meeting which was held on May 3 and 4, 1947 at Delhi when the Secretary of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh wrote to all nationalist-minded trade union leaders in the country pointing out the anti-national and anti-labour role the All India Trade Union Congress had played. The meeting was meant to promote the interests of the workers and the country. Khandubhai Desai was among the most prominent labour leaders present at the meeting.

Once, Khandubhai met Anasuyabehn at Matheran during the summer season and talked to her on important topics. In order to set up the Indian National Trade Union Congress, a provisional executive committee consisting of Suresh Chandra Bannerjee as the President and Khandubhai K. Desai as the General Secretary, was elected with powers to
Thus, Khandubhai K. Desai was elected the first General Secretary of the Indian National Trade Union Congress. Women heirs of deceased workers were paid from late Khandubhai Desai Workers' Family Assistance Scheme. Heirs of thousands of members received lakhs of rupees as assistance from the Textile Labour Association, when the scheme was initiated to commemorate the services of Khandubhai Desai, who served the Textile Labour Association for 52 years.

According to Khandubhai, in order to be happy, the society must work in an integrated way with understanding, co-ordination and harmony. Khandubhai K. Desai was appointed as a member of the Constituent Assembly. In 1955, Khandubhai who was the General Secretary of the Textile Labour Association, was offered the portfolio of labour in the Central Government by the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. This was a matter of great satisfaction and pride for the working class of India in general and Ahmedabad in particular.

The advisory committee of the Textile Labour Association consisted of Khandubhai Desai till his death. In 1968, Khandubhai K. Desai was appointed as Governor of Andhra Pradesh.

Thus, to conclude our discussion on Khandubhai K. Desai, we can say that he was a veteran labour leader for a span of over five decades and one of the architects of Gandhian trade union movement who had incessantly worked for cordial and harmonious labour-management relations.
for over five decades. He served as President of the Textile Labour Association. He expired on the 23rd of October, 1975. On his demise, the Representative Board of the Textile Labour Association resolved to constitute 'Khandubhai Desai Workers Family Welfare Scheme' in 1976.  

Another important trade union leader of Gujarat during 1917 to 1947 was Shri Gulzarilal Nanda. He was born on the 4th of July 1898 in an ordinary family of Punjab. He joined the non-cooperation movement in 1921. He had become Professor of Economics at the National College, Bombay and served as Secretary of the Textile Labour Association from 1922 onwards. He was steeped in the Gandhian approach to labour relations. In recognition of his expertise Nanda was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to Mr. B.G. Kher in charge of labour.

Thus, Gulzarilal was a man with good academic credentials and he had joined the Majoor Mahajan staff. He now participated in the intra-union discussions of the Majoor Mahajan. Shankarlal Banker had talks with the Mahajan leaders especially with Gulzarilal.

The strike which began on the 1st of April, 1923 was very significant. The question between the millowners and the workers was whether both sides should agree to a wage cut of 10 per cent or not. Gulzarilal considered the cut totally unjust and believed that it should be fought to the bitter end. Gulzarilal was also present in the meeting which was held under the celebrated babul tree.
The next day Gulzarilal and Khandubhai went from mill to mill to exhort the workers to go back and report for duty. It was only when both of them gave their signal that the mill-hands trooped back. The strike had lasted from 1 April to 4 June.

In the Mahajan office, Gulzarilal streamlined the working of the complaints section and drew up plans to classify complaints according to their nature and content. The complaints procedure was clearly laid out. First of all, complaints received were taken up by the representatives with the mill officials and those which were not sorted out were registered at the Mahajan's office. The activists of the Mahajan would discuss the complaints with mill officials and if need be, with the millowners or even the Millowners' Association. If the complaints were not resolved then they would submit them to arbitration.

Gulzarilal gave active cooperation to Shankarlal Banker for starting a weekly called Majoor Sandesh starting with 5 January 1924. Elections to the Ahmedabad Municipality came round in 1927. It was decided to ask Gulzarilal to stand from Saraspur alongside Kacharabhai. Gulzarilal was opposed by a candidate of the Millowners, one Seth Narasimhdas. Kachrabhai and Gulzarilal were elected, the latter getting the highest number of votes. The Congress Party itself was returned with a comfortable majority to the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation.

Gulzarilal and Pestonshaw Vakil were appointed Secretaries in the Independent Party in the Corporation.
The party formulated many progressive schemes for the welfare of workers which were duly implemented.

In 1929, due to substantial profits made by the mills, the question arose whether there should be a wage increase or not. The Mahajan submitted its case to the arbitrators through Gulzarilal and Khandubhai Desai. But the arbitrators remained unconvinced of the soundness of the Mahajan's case.

Mahatma Gandhi insisted that workers should get a minimum wage. Gulzarilal, as the Mahajan Spokesman said at one stage that he would have to consult experts. However, Mahatma Gandhi told him that he should speak on the strength of his own understanding and not on some one else's advice.

Gulzarilal wanted to give facilities to workers for eating, drinking and housing. Arbitration started in right earnest and Manu Subedar was appointed as arbitrator. In discussions, Seth Shankarlal, Seth Shantilal and Gordhanbhai Patel on behalf of the Millowners' Association and Shankarlal Banker, Gulzarilal and Khandubhai Desai took part. There were wide divergences between the approaches of the Millowners' Association and the Mahajan. Gulzarilal said that workers would accept a wage cut only if they knew that there was no possible succour available and they had to bow to the inevitable.

Gulzarilal was asked that would the workers have demanded a rise in wages had not the millowners pre-empted them by suggesting a wage-cut. Gulzarilal replied that they cannot ask for an increase unless profits went up
beyond a certain limit. That is what would restrain them. However, Gulzarilal insisted, a certain minimum wage scale should be conceded to workers in the interests of both workers and millowners.

At the beginning of 1935 the hours of work were reduced from 10 to 9 hours a day. Reacting to it, the millowners arbitrarily introduced a wage cut of 10 percent. Once again the Mahajan insisted that this should be referred to arbitration. Apprehending trouble, Gulzarilal, Seth Kasturbhai and Shankarlal Banker went to Delhi to see Mahatma Gandhi. Long negotiations took place under Mahatma Gandhi's aegis and finally mutual understanding was arrived at.

The Second World War broke out in September 1939. The cost of living began to soar. The Mahajan was willing to accept a smaller wage increase on condition that in addition to the 22 items to be supplied at pre-war prices, ghee and cloth were also added to the list. But the millowners were unwilling to oblige. A strike now seemed inevitable. Gulzarilal sought Mahatma Gandhi's advice and went to Wardha for that purpose. Mahatma Gandhi sent a message to the Ahmedabad Workers. He wrote that if they do not get justice through arbitration or any other method, they had the only remedy of a strike.

Gulzarilal became the Secretary of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh. In 1937, the Congress party formally took over the administration of Bombay for the first time. Gulzarilal became Parliamentary Secretary to Chief Minister (then Premier) Bal Gangadhar Khar.
General elections were held in 1946. In Bombay, Gulzarilal now a Labour Minister amended the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act of 1938 in the light of experience gained in its working. The result was the Bombay Industrial Relations Act of 1946. According to this act, for the first time, there was compulsion on employers to recognise trade unions by this legislation.

On 18 April 1947, the Secretary of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh proposed to all the nationalist-minded trade union leaders in the country that a meeting be held on May 3 and 4, 1947 at Delhi for taking the necessary steps to protect and promote the interests of both the workers and the country then on the threshold of freedom. Gulzarilal was among the prominent labour leaders present there.

Attention was drawn to the role of the Communists by Gulzarilal on behalf of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh. He said that the bulk of the working class was opposed to the political philosophy of the communists and therefore the urgent need of the moment was to provide machinery for coordinating the scattered forces of those who were in fundamental opposition to the communists in their approach to labour matters.

Gulzarilal further said that the way the All India Trade Union Congress was constituted and run, militated against the growth of healthy and strong trade unionism.

In order to set up the new organization called the Indian National Trade Union Congress, a provisional
executive committee consisting of Gulzarilal as one of its members was elected with powers to coopt additional members.

Gulzarilal met Anasuyaben in Matheran in one summer season. It was here that he came to know more about her. When Mahatma Gandhi suspended the mass civil disobedience, it was generally believed that he may be arrested. On 8 March, 1922 he left for Ajmer. Gulzarilal went to Mehsana to see him.

Elections to the Ahmedabad Municipality came round in 1927. As for a candidate, the decision had been taken to ask Gulzarilal to stand from Saraspur alongside Kacharabhai. Gulzarilal was opposed by a candidate of the Millowners, one Seth Narasimhdas. Kacharabhai and Gulzarilal were elected, the latter getting the highest number of votes. The Congress party itself was returned with a comfortable majority to the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation.

Gulzarilal was appointed as the Secretary of the Independent Party in the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. The party formulated many progressive schemes for the welfare of workers which were duly implemented.

Thus, Gulzarilal steadily yet constructively built up the labour movement in Ahmedabad on Gandhian ideology. Not only that, but its seeds were sown in other parts of the country which culminated into a strong central national labour organisation entitled as the Indian National Trade Union Congress.

Gulzarilal was an architect of the Textile Labour Association. In 1927, many workers along with Gulzarilal...
who was the Secretary of the Textile Labour Association, contested the civic election and were duly elected. Thus the attention of the civic body was particularly drawn to the civic needs of the workers of the city.

The Textile Labour Association being a registered trade union, its two representatives, Gulzarilal and Khandubhai were duly elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly as Congress nominees from the constituency. Gulzarilal was then taken up as the Parliamentary Secretary by the then Chief Minister B.G. Kher of the erstwhile Bombay State.

During the Quit India movement of 1942, Gulzarilal who was the Secretary of the Textile Labour Association, courted imprisonment. In the Provincial Assembly election of 1946, Gulzarilal was elected to the two labour seats for the workers of Ahmedabad. He became the Labour Minister in the Congress Ministry of the then Bombay Province. He tried to implement the labour policy of the Congress in the state by initiating the progressive measures of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act and providing houses for the workers under the post-war Reconstruction Scheme.

As Secretary of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh, Gulzarilal convened a meeting of nationalist-minded trade unionists on the 3rd of May, 1947 at New Delhi, under the Chairmanship of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh. Trade unions covering nearly all the trades, occupations and services were represented in the founding session by their foremost
leaders. At this Conference, it was decided to form the Indian National Trade Union Congress.

Gulzarilal served as the General Secretary of the Textile Labour Association. He was later appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of India. Gulzarilal was also one of the members of the former Advisory Committee of the Textile Labour Association.

To conclude our discussion on Gulzarilal, we can say that he rose to great heights and even became the Prime Minister of India. His Father was a teacher. His mother Ishwaridevi put in religious feelings in him since childhood. His academic career was brilliant and he did his M.A. and also graduated in law. He was deeply interested in the general lifestyle of the workers. He believed that the Majoor Mahajan Sangh was not merely meant to listen to the complaints of the workers but it was also meant for the development of the workers.

Gulzarilal tried to bring about facilities for the citizens staying in the workers' localities. He made efforts to end the consumption of liquor. He helped in the establishment of a committee for investigating into the conditions of the spinning mills and he secured an increase in the wages of the workers. The workers were conducting strikes because there was no satisfactory mechanism for settling the industrial disputes. Gulzarilal showed the way for organised rules and for the first time in India, industrial courts were established.

According to Gandhian ideology, Majoor Mandals were established all over the country and Gulzarilal had
great interest in this work. For this purpose, he collected funds from the workers of Ahmedabad and established the Hindustan Sevak Sangh. Through this organisation, arrangements were made to impart training to the workers.

Gulzarilal also helped in the education of the children of the workers in the various industrial training courses. Thus, in short, Gulzarilal helped in the firm footing of the trade union movement. He was imprisoned in 1942 when the slogan of 'Do or Die' was started. Between 1942 and 1945, there was disruption in the work of Gulzarilal. In the 1946 elections, he became the Labour minister of Bombay Province.

Gulzarilal is a person with a strong determination. He is a true patriot and with a strong urge to serve humanity. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India was greatly influenced by Gulzarilal.

In 1952, Gulzarilal stood from the Sabarkantha constituency in the elections and he became the Planning Minister of India. In 1957, he became the Labour Minister of India. He also became the Home Minister of India but later on resigned from his office over the question of cow slaughter. After the death of Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was the Prime Minister of India, Gulzarilal became the Prime Minister of India.

After retiring from active politics, Gulzarilal stayed in Delhi and he took part in the Manav Dharma Mission, Bharat Sadhu Samaj, Bharat Sevak Samaj, Sadachar Samiti, etc. In 1976, Gulzarilal started an anti-liquor
drinking campaign in the Kurukshetra region and he found reasonable success in this.

There were several problems in Kurukshetra. There was the problem of water and the people who came for visiting Kurukshetra, had to face many problems. In order to remove these difficulties, Gulzarilal contributed in the formation of the Kurukshetra Vikas Board and became its Chairman. The Chief Minister of Haryana was its Vice-Chairman. Rupees ten crore were fixed to be spent on the various works to be done in this region. Gulzarilal helped make Kurukshetra attractive.

Gulzarilal is a very learned man and has a lot of knowledge of Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Punjabi and English. He has a deep faith in the Punjabi religious scriptures, Gurbani and other religious scriptures. He takes interest in the company of saints. He leads a religious and God-fearing life today at Ahmedabad.

Another significant trade union leader of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947 was Indulal Yajnik. He was a different type of a labour leader. Though he was personally a popular figure in Ahmedabad but he was against the Textile Labour Association.

Indulal wrote a book, entitled 'Gandhi as I knew Him'. Here, he wrote that the Textile Labour Association kept down the militant spirit of the workers rather than to inspire them to fight for their rights. According to him, the Textile Labour Association had proved most reactionary from the standpoint of class warfare. It had
refused to associate in any way with the All India Trade Union Congress and with other international organisations. According to Indulal, Mahatma Gandhi and his associates turned Ahmedabad labour into their own special preserve over which they dominated to further their own power and glory.

However, Indulal was impressed by the powerful personality of Anasuyabehn. During the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation, Mahatma Gandhi wanted to offer civil disobedience. He convened a small meeting of some 20 people at the Sabarmati Ashram. Indulal was among those who responded. A form of pledge was drawn up and all present subscribed to it. But it was all in vain and the bill became law.

For the Swaraj Fund, Gujarat had been asked to contribute 3 lakh rupees and to recruit 3,000 volunteers. Indulal took charge of the work with great keenness and moved about from village to village. He was anxious to see that the entire number of volunteers were recruited. However, the Government arrested him because of a speech he had made. He was tried and sentenced to a year’s imprisonment. Nevertheless, Gujarat was able to collect 3.25 lakh rupees for the Swaraj Fund. However, Gujarat was able to recruit only 800 volunteers. After Indulal was imprisoned, the workers of Gujarat became impatient.

Thus, we see that though Indulal Yajnik was against the Textile Labour Association, he was an important labour leader of Gujarat. He had his own independent style of thinking and he influenced the trade union movement of Gujarat to a great extent.
Another important trade union leader of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947 was Somnath P. Dave. He was born on the 18th of October, 1906. He was junior to Anasuyabehn, Gulzarilal Nanda and Khandubhai Desai.

Somnath P. Dave had undergone imprisonment during the course of the trade union movement of Gujarat. He was an important builder of the Textile Labour Association. In the first General Elections, under the Constitution of India, 1950, the workers of Ahmedabad elected Somnath P. Dave with overwhelming majority as their representative to the Legislative Assembly of the Bombay Province. Somnath P. Dave expired on the 5th of January, 1959.

Another important trade union leader of Gujarat during 1917 to 1947 was Shri Shyamprasad R. Vasavada. He was one of the secretaries of the Textile Labour Association. He was in charge of the training of the labour workers. A rapid course of instruction was provided to quickly meet the demand for trained workers in several organisations. The Textile Labour Association remained the prime source of teaching and study.

A meeting was held on May 3 and 4, 1947 at Delhi in which the Delhi branch of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh acted as the Reception Committee. It was meant to protect and promote the interests of both the workers and the country then on the threshold of freedom. S.R. Vasavada was the prominent labour leader of Gujarat present on the occasion.

In order to set up the new organization, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), a provisional executive
committee consisting of S.R. Vasavada from Ahmedabad and several others from other states was elected with powers to co-opt additional members. Its President was Suresh Chandra Bannerjee and its general Secretary was Mr. Khandubhai K. Desai.

S.R. Vasavada joined the Majoor Mahajan in 1929 and his services proved very useful. He was an important builder of the Textile Labour Association. During the Quit India movement of 1942, S.R. Vasavada courted imprisonment. He was also appointed as a Member of Committee of the Cotton Textile Working Party. In the first General Elections, under the Constitution of India, 1950, the workers of Ahmedabad elected him with overwhelming majority as their representative to the Legislative Assembly of the Bombay Province.

In an important award given by the Labour Appellate Tribunal in 1949, it stated that loss-making mills should be exempted from payment of bonus. This led to the agitation to get a just and equitable formula for the calculation of bonus. Fortunately the whole matter was referred to the voluntary arbitration accepted by both parties and a compromise was ultimately arrived at. It was then decided that the loss-making mills will also give minimum of 4% as bonus to their workers. Later on, an agreement was reached by both the parties - Ahmedabad Millowners' Association and the Textile Labour Association - providing for payment of bonus for a period of five years with 'set-on' and 'set-off' formula which was then known
As 'Madanmohan-Vasavada Bonus Pact'. A demand was made at the Surat Session of the Indian National Trade Union Congress for appointment of the Central Wage Board for cotton textile industry which was acceded to by the Government and S.R. Vasavada the then Secretary of the Textile Labour Association, was appointed as workers' representative on the said Board. Shri Vasavada also worked as a member on the Textile Labour Enquiry Committee appointed by the Central Government.

There was severe discontent over the issue of Bonus which agitated the minds of the workers. Ultimately, it resulted in the appointment of the Bonus Commission on which S.R. Vasavada was also appointed as one of its members.

The question of running the sick mills was a problem in the country when the Central Government deemed it proper to set up the National Textile Corporation under the mature and able guidance of S.R. Vasavada as its Chairman. His untiring efforts gave birth to the Corporation in the state of Gujarat also. The State Textile Corporation was constituted by the end of the year 1968 which undertook running of some of the sick mills in the state thereby assuring continued employment to hundreds of textile workers and also maintained production of textile goods. In the same year, S.R. Vasavada was elected as Member of the Rajya Sabha where he played his part for the cause of labour, in particular and for the nation in general.

The workers ignored the call of a token strike.
given by a section of Government employees and the railwaymen and remained aloof at the instance of the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen and they exerted to keep the wheels running. The National Federation of Indian Railwaymen was run on the Gandhian lines with S.R. Vasavada as its President.

Again in 1969, S.R. Vasavada was nominated as one of the members on the National Commission on labour. His views were given due weight. The Commission's report is a well-studied document consisting of several proposals aiming at social betterment of the working classes.

S.R. Vasavada passed away on the 20th November 1972 which was a severe blow to the labour movement. His was a lifelong career as a veteran trade unionist whose untiring efforts have resulted in organising workers in several industries all over the country under the banner of the Indian National Trade Union Congress and the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen.

The Advisory Committee of the Textile Labour Association consisted of Shri S.R. Vasavada till his death. In 1938, the Government of Bombay appointed a Textile Labour Inquiry Committee with Shri S.R. Vasavada as one of its members. The role of labour in the national Quit India movement of 1942 was Do or Die. S.R. Vasavada who was the Secretary of the Textile Labour Association, was imprisoned in 1943. In 1949, he was nominated as a member in the Cotton Textile Working Party. In the first General Election under the Constitution, S.R. Vasavada,
S.P. Dave and K.R. Vaghela were elected to Bombay State Legislative Assembly with thumping majority. In 1949, the Textile Labour Association's award ordered exemption to loss-making mills from payment of bonus. This dispute resulted into a compromise leading to the Madanmohan-Vasavada Bonus Pact for 5 years. In 1957, the demand of the Indian National Trade Union Congress was made at the Surat Session for Wage Board. This was acceded to by the Government. S.R. Vasavada was nominated as one of its members. In 1957, he was appointed as member of the Textile Labour Inquiry Committee. Again in 1957, the appointment of a Bonus Commission took place with S.R. Vasavada as one of its members. In 1968, the National Textile Corporation was constituted by the Government of India. S.R. Vasavada was appointed by the Government as its Chairman. In 1968, S.R. Vasavada, who was then the General Secretary of the Textile Labour Association, was awarded the Padma Bhusan by the President of India.

On 31 August 1968, S.R. Vasavada was elected as member of the Rajya Sabha. He was re-elected to the Rajya Sabha on the 28th of March, 1970.

S.R. Vasavada passed away on the 20th of November, 1972 at the age of 70 years.\textsuperscript{15}

Another significant trade union leader of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947 was Noor Mahmad Shaikh.\textsuperscript{16} He was born on the 21st of January, 1904. He was an important builder of the Textile Labour Association. He expired on the 19th of December, 1969.
Another important trade union leader of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947 was Keshavji Vaghela. He was born on the 20th of February, 1899. He was an important builder of the Textile Labour Association. He expired on the 22nd of November, 1954.

Another important trade union leader of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947 was Chimanlal Shah. He was born on the 20th of February, 1904. He was an important builder of the Textile Labour Association.

There were several leaders from other regions of Gujarat who contributed towards the growth of a healthy trade union movement. Notable among them are the Nadiad leaders Mangoobhai Patel, Mangal Das Pandya, Rambhai Patel and Mansingh Desai, who ultimately joined the Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad.

Shri Maganlal Purohit and Dadubhai Desai were other notable trade union leaders. Those who were inspired by the leftist ideology included Yusuf from Ahmedabad.

Vajubhai Shukla was a Communist leader from Rajkot. Dhebar Bhai from Rajkot was an important Gandhian leader. Vajubhai Shah from Bhavnagar was also an important Gandhian leader.

Before we conclude this chapter, it shall not be out of place to mention the significant contribution of India's two greatest leaders both of whom belonged to Gujarat, namely Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Mahatma Gandhi was born at Porbandar in Kathiawad on 2nd October, 1869. He played a historic role in India. He was against the class war. He advocated a healthy collaboration between the workers and the employers so that both could benefit. He diverted the movement from
uncreative efforts to creative results. Persuasion and conversion formed consistent strategy of his warfare. His basic ideas were truth, non-violence, Sarvodaya or the good of all and economic and political emancipation of mankind. Thus, in a nutshell, Mahatma Gandhi's ideology gave shape and direction to the trade union movement of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947. For economic equality, he believed in the theory of trusteeship. By the theory of trusteeship, he meant the voluntary abdication of one's riches and sharing them for the common good. He visualised an economic order based on decentralised form of production through small and village industries to be run in the cottages. Trade would be confined to surplus production and for the benefit of all. In regard to primary necessities there would be local self-sufficiency. However, Mahatma Gandhi realised that there would be need for centralised production and control in the case of key industries and those related to public utilities.

Thus, Mahatma Gandhi paid attention to the problems and welfare of the labour engaged in large scale centralised industries and realised the need for the organisation of labour on proper lines. He was, therefore prompted to intervene in the Ahmedabad textile mills labour trouble in 1918. He worked for class harmony. He did not condemn a whole class as evil.

Mahatma Gandhi recognised the existence of conflict of interests but he insisted that class conflicts, whether based on economic inequality or the political and
social injustice, should be resolved through peaceful means and not through violence, hatred, revolution or war. He advised the capitalists to recognise their obligations and to note that they should not try to take undue advantage of their position and they should try to look after the needs of the workers properly.

Mahatma Gandhi also tried to make the labour aware of their responsibility. He expected of the labour that they should become self-reliant and be self-conscious of their inherent strength. According to him, if the capitalists were expected not to seek their gain at the cost of the labour, the labour also were expected that they should not be tempted to further their selfish interest at the expense of the consumer.

Mahatma Gandhi said that if instead of insisting on rights, everyone did his duty, there would immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. He called upon both the capital and the labour to realise their own limitations and recognise their duties and responsibilities to the other before they think of their rights. Further, if the labour were organised on proper lines, Mahatma Gandhi hoped that labour unions could channelise capital also on proper lines. He believed in co-operation between capital and labour. But that could happen only when labour was intelligent enough to co-operate with itself and then offer co-operation with capital on terms of honourable equality.

Mahatma Gandhi thus realised the need of labour unions. While inaugurating the Ahmedabad Textile Labour
Association on the 26th February, 1920, Mahatma Gandhi explained the advantages of forming a union. He said that with the coming into existence of the unions, negotiations could be carried on with the union officers and settlement arrived at more easily. This was in the interest of both the parties.

Mahatma Gandhi wanted that in the unions, all the constituents should be inter-connected and inter-dependent and supplementary to one another. Further, the relationships between the capital and labour should be based on trust and love. Thus, capital and labour should live in unity and harmony. Capital should have an obligation of looking after the welfare of the labour in all aspects of life. But such relationships are possible of realisation when both the parties accept non-violence as their basic ideal and one does his duty to the other. To be able to assert their strength the members of the labour unions should be enlightened, honest and co-operative. This means that while acting according to non-violence the labour unions should reform themselves from within. The labour unions should attempt to remove ignorance.

Mahatma Gandhi held that the workers had an inherent right to go on a strike for getting redress of their grievances. He prescribed certain conditions for a strike to be successful. They were:

1) The cause of the strike must be just.
2) There should be practical unanimity among the strikers.
3) There should be no violence used against non-strikers.
4) Strikers should be able to maintain themselves during the strike period without falling back upon funds and should, therefore, occupy themselves in some useful and productive temporary occupation.

5) A strike is no remedy when there is enough other labour to replace strikers. In that case, in the event of unjust treatment or inadequate wages or the like, resignation is the remedy.

6) Successful strikes have taken place even when the above conditions have not been fulfilled, but that merely proves that the employers were weak and had a guilty conscience.18

Thus, according to Mahatma Gandhi, the worker must understand the cause for which they are struggling, must believe in its righteousness and be prepared to suffer any amount of hardship that the strike may bring upon them. He also suggested learning supplementary occupation by the labour for the development of his personality and self-confidence. The average worker in the modern factory does not get the requisite training, time and inclination to look after his interest. It was, therefore, necessary that he should learn alternative vocations so that he could broaden his outlook and develop his self-confidence.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "No labour can prolong a strike indefinitely so long as labour depends upon the sources of its unions and no strike can absolutely succeed which cannot be indefinitely prolonged. In all
the strikes that I have ever conducted I have laid down one indispensable rule that labourers must find their own support. And therein lies the secret of success and therein consists your education."\textsuperscript{19}

However, Mahatma Gandhi did not favour strikes in all cases. While discouraging strikes in essential public utility services he advised the people to look into the grievances of such workers. Regarding who was to judge the justifiability of a strike or lock-out, Mahatma Gandhi suggested, "Interested men cannot judge the merits of their case. Hence there must be an arbitration accepted by the parties or a judicial adjudication."\textsuperscript{20}

Mahatma Gandhi further said that though strikes were an inherent right of the workers for securing justice, they must be considered a crime immediately the capitalists accept the principle of arbitration. Thus, he had been advocating the principle of voluntary arbitration from the very beginning. He believed that the acceptance of the principle of arbitration would outdate the strikes and the violence leashed out during many of the strikes. He did not favour resort to law courts for the settlement of disputes, as there the settlement would depend on legal procedures and upon proving it right or wrong and not usually on the factual facts. Thus, the law courts usually lead to dividing the parties rather than uniting them.

Mahatma Gandhi told the mill-workers that their economic condition had improved but that there was yet
more scope for improvement. That improvement, he said, could come about in two ways: by consultation with the millowners or by using undue pressure. It was his opinion that consultation with the millowners was the only true remedy.

Mahatma Gandhi said that he did not propose to examine the duty of the capitalists. If the worker alone was to understand his rights and responsibilities and confined himself to the purest means, both would gain. But added Mahatma Gandhi, two needs had to be met, both the demands and the means adopted to enforce them had to be just and clear. It was an unlawful demand which sought merely to take advantage of the capitalists' position. But it was an altogether lawful demand when the labourer asked for enough wages to enable him to maintain himself and to educate his children decently. To seek justice without resorting to violence and by an appeal to the sense of the capitalists by arbitration was lawful means. Thus, Mahatma Gandhi said that in order to achieve the end, there must be unions.

Mahatma Gandhi said that there was a need for reducing the hours of labour, otherwise there was no time left for mental or moral betterment. He said that when the hours of work were reduced, the workmen would put in better and almost the same amount of work as they put in greater number of hours. When mill-workers learnt to identify themselves with the interests of the
millowners they would rise and with them would rise the country's industries.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, it was a sign of national degradation when little children were removed from schools and were employed in earning wages. He dwelt on the importance of workers developing their religious faith. He said that the world did not quarrel with those who had a true faith in God and who understood the true nature of religion. However, if it did, such men turned away the wrath of their adversaries by their gentleness.

Thus, we can say that Mahatma Gandhi was the guiding spirit behind the trade union movement of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947. He was largely responsible for making the movement successful. He framed the Constitution of the Majoor Mahajan. He mixed about among the Ahmedabad labourers in a free manner. He showed how disputes could be settled by arbitration. He asserted that the avoidance of class war had been successfully tried in the Ahmedabad Labour Union. He also asserted that his identification with labour did not conflict with his friendship with capital. He wanted that labour should have the same status as capital.

Further, Mahatma Gandhi asserted that under true economic conditions, all interests would be identical and interdependent. He believed that class conflict was not inevitable. He said that if people
failed to act as trustees, they may be dispossessed through the state with the minimum violence. He desired that capital and labour living peacefully should help India to give a message of peace to the outside world. He also desired that the trusteeship theory should become a gift from India to the World. He disapproved of labourers maintaining themselves during strikes out of public funds. He did not believe in inherited riches. He said that profits of big concerns must bear relation to the wages of workers.

Mahatma Gandhi stated that relations between the Ahmedabad Labour Union and the Ahmedabad Mill-owners' Association were better than anywhere in India. He said that he would regulate all the labour organizations of India after the Ahmedabad model.

Thus, to conclude our discussion on Mahatma Gandhi, we can say that he was indeed the main cause of the success of the trade union movement of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947. He established the Textile Labour Association in 1917. He himself acted as an arbitrator. According to him, strike was another weapon to be used as a part of satyagraha to fight oppression, injustice or evil. Like fasting, strike should not be resorted to very often. It should be the last resort. When the workers are convinced that their cause is absolutely just and truthful and that there is no other alternative, then they should go on strike. The workers should never tolerate injustice, but they must fight it only by means
which are ethically right. Their cause must be right and just. The decision to go on strike must be made voluntarily and consciously, knowing the risks involved. Strike should be voluntary and there should be no coercion against those who do not participate in it. There should be no violence and no ill will against the employer. Since the workers will find difficult to support themselves during the strike period without their salaries, they must try to find alternative source of work during the strike period.

Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948. His contribution in the trade union movement of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947 was indeed great. Lastly, let us discuss the contribution of Vallabhbhai Patel who was another great leader of Gujarat as well as the entire country. He was born on the 31st of October, 1875 at Nadiad town in Kheda district of Gujarat.

He made the Ahmedabad Municipality efficient in administration. He made the Ahmedabad Municipality reject the Government grant to Municipal schools and Government control over the Municipal education. He resigned from the Ahmedabad Municipality as a President. He started a movement against forced labour in the villages. He had a great regard and admiration for the Majoor Mahajan.

The Bombay Industrial Disputes Act had been passed by the then Congress Government for the promotion
of peaceful and amicable settlement of industrial disputes by conciliation and arbitration. This idea was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. The man who introduced the Industrial Disputes Bill in the Bombay Legislature was Mr. B. G. Kher, the Chief Minister who was in charge of labour. The Bill was introduced on 2nd September 1938. Vallabhbhai Patel was interested in the Bill. He told a meeting "By virtue of this law, some people will have to sacrifice their leadership. Labour will be released from the clutches of irresponsible leaders, economic loss to labour and tax payers will be lessened and peace in industry and the province will be safeguarded."  

On 4 November, 1950, the 'Harijan' quoted Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as saying:

"The trade unions which are formed today are of a different nature. In past decades, our unions were just like domestic unions. The modern pattern of trade unions has come from foreign countries. The relationship between the employer and the employee which prevails in other countries does not fit in here. We should not slavishly imitate foreign practices but adopt only those which are suitable to our culture, tradition and surroundings."  

With the intention of organising the labour movement on Gandhian lines in the whole country, the Gandhi Seva Sangh appointed a committee at the beginning of 1938 with Vallabhbhai as one of its members. On 18th April, 1947, the Secretary of the Hindustan Mazdoor
Sevak Sangh wrote to all the nationalist-minded trade union leaders in the country pointing out the anti-national and anti-labour role the All India Trade Union Congress had played and proposed that a meeting be held on May 3 and 4, 1947 at Delhi for a frank appraisal of the existing situation and for taking the necessary steps to protect and promote the interests of both the workers and the country then on the threshold of freedom. The Conference held a two-day session. Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Central Board of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh presided.

To conclude our discussion on Vallabhbhai Patel, we can say that he was a man of action, of practicality and one who got things done. His greatness consisted in tackling uncommon problems with common remedies. At the end of this historic struggle, India discovered an able strategist in Vallabhbhai Patel.

In 1928, the brave men and women of the Bardoli county gave a non-violent fight to the mighty British empire. This fight drew the attention of the whole world. That Gandhian satyagraha can be organized at a collective level was proved by the movement which made Bardoli known in the entire world. This movement brought great glory to Vallabhbhai. He proved through his handling of the movement that in order to be a successful captain one should also be a successful soldier. On the one hand, as the captain of the battle against the British empire, he could ask Mahatma Gandhi not to visit...
Bardoli without his permission and on the other hand, as a soldier he could see to it that Gandhian commandments were followed. The Bardoli movement proved that discipline was as much needed in a non-violent struggle as in a war and that non-violence was not a weapon of the coward.

The effective words of Vallabhbhai Patel had a magic spell on the people. He asked the people to fight and make sacrifices. He asked the formers not to be afraid of anybody.

Thus, in brief we can note the following points on Vallabhbhai. He started his political life in 1916 and he suffered imprisonment several times for political activities. He became the Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India during 1946-1950. His greatest achievement was the integration of princely states with the Indian Union. He is described as the Iron man of India. His ideas played a very important role in the trade union movement of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947. He expired in 1950.

Thus, the sincere devotion and hard work on the part of the trade union leaders of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947 played the most significant role in making the trade union movement successful. Though there were differences in the ideology and mode of thinking of the various leaders, the common cause of them all was the amelioration of the working class and in this each leader played his own vital role.

In the next Chapter, we shall conclude this thesis and make some general observations of various important trade union leaders of Gujarat and thereby make some important derivations on the trade union movement of Gujarat from 1917 to 1947.

...
FOOT NOTES

2. Ibid p.197.
3. Ibid p.201.
5. Ibid p.12.
15. Vasavada S.R., Majoor Charvar (Gujarati) 
Ahmedabad 1968.

16. Shukla, Shiv Shankar (Ed) Noor Mohammed Shaikh - 
SWARGASTH NE SRADHANJALI (Gujarati) Ahmedabad 
1971.

17. Shukla, Shiv Shankar (Ed) CHIMANLAL SHAH 

18. Dayal, Parmeshwari, Gandhian approach to Social 

19. Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, 


22. Ibid p.340