

Gayatri Singh Interview

Interviewer: Sriram Mohan

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0:01 – 4:50

Interviewer: Thank you, Gayatri, thank you for agreeing to speak to us. We're trying to get a sense of your involvement with the mill struggles, you know, and your participation in the Sangharsh Samiti, what you would consider as milestones or key contributions vis-à-vis your role with the respect to the mill struggles in Mumbai. Some lessons, reflections. We'd like to hear about that.

GS: Well, I was working with Indira Jaisingh as a... I did my law, and just before I finished, I was working with her, and I was associated with a number of unions, I was working - taking up their legal cases, even though I was not a lawyer at that point of time. And I was also working with various unions. We were also taking up a number of cases of woollen textile mills, which were in the process of closing down, and each unit involved at least two to five thousand workers. Basically, many of the mills, the woollen mills, closed down without paying the dues of the workers, so I had taken up a number of cases, and some of the cases, we succeeded in terms of ensuring that the dues were paid, but in the process, since the owners were adamant in paying the dues properly, there was also a committee that was formed, in which people like Meena Menon was also involved. And as a result of a number of issues that were pending, there were a lot of struggles, which got a lot of publicity, in terms of people got to know that this was the situation of woollen mill workers. And at that point of time, the textile mill workers were also facing the same problems, at a higher level, in terms of the number of workers.

Many of the mills had closed down and the dues of the workers had not been paid. So there had been a committee formed, called the Bandh Girni Kamgar Sangharsh Samiti which included people like Datta Iswalkar and various other workers from closed mills, and they had been basically raising the issue related to illegal closure of mills, so this was during the period 1989-1990, and at that point of time, a large number of mills like after the textile strike, remained closed. They did not re-start. And basically in the city of Bombay, it involved lakhs of workers, involved in the closure of the mills.

So mills like say, for example, New Great Eastern Mill, which was closed for a number of years, workers were not paid their dues, many workers died, the gratuity was not paid, and thousands of workers were literally starving in the city of Bombay. So workers decided to - I mean, they had been raising these issues, nobody was listening to them, the government was not doing anything, they decided to raise it in terms of taking up more militant struggles. Many of the workers of the New Great Eastern Mill decided to take over the mill, because the mill owner had just disappeared. They scaled the walls, took over the mill, and remained inside the mill for days together. And then, when there was absolutely no response, they decided to run the mill, started cleaning the machines. So, when the mill owner came to know about it and realised that now it's getting serious, he basically lodged complaints, police complaints, workers were arrested, and it became a major issue, people got to know about the situation of workers, and lot of people came in support - many of the Opposition parties also came out in support of the issues raised by the workers.

So at that point of time, the mill owners decided that - I mean many of these mills had

just closed down even though they involved hundreds and thousands of workers because under the Industrial Disputes Act, basically a company cannot be closed unless you get permission from the government. So if you have more than 100 workers and you want to close down a factory because of financial reasons, you must make an application to the government, give reasons why you want to close it down, and then make the payment to the workers and close down the company if the authority says that it is a legal closure. In these cases, in a large number, involving at least fifteen to twenty mills, none of them had followed the law, and yet they were refusing to pay the dues of the workers.

4:50 – 6:49

So when they realised that now workers were getting agitated, and it was going to become a major issue in the city of Bombay, they decided to take up this issue before the BIFR, which is the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction, which basically seeks to revive sick companies by ensuring that various parties, creditors, including workers, banks, make sacrifices, and then they prepare a scheme and the company gets revived. So many of the owners of these mills went to BIFR, and we were also then forced to take up this issue because ultimately if a scheme is passed or sanctioned by the BIFR, it would have implications for the workers. So we were forced to attend the hearings before the BIFR, which was in Delhi. Now before the BIFR, because we did not represent a recognised union, and we were basically outside that framework, the BIFR refused to hear us. So in many of the cases, we were actually literally told to get out of the BIFR hearing. We had to put up a fight and say that we represent large number of workers which basically meant that we had to go back and take signatures of workers, and in most of the cases, we did represent majority of the workers. So we had to take signatures, which involved days of work, getting forms filed up, which was really digressing from the main issue. But that was done, and then we had to finally go back to BIFR, again, the BIFR would raise objections on various technical grounds to take us out. So in many of these cases, we had to basically go back to the High Court, get orders from the High Court that we should be allowed, and then we were allowed.

6:49 – 8:20

So ultimately, we were allowed to represent. But without going into details, basically what happened was that in many of the cases, like for example in Shree Ram – Shree Ram Mill is a huge mill at that point of time employing more than 5000 workers, but over a period of time it started closing down various departments, and when they closed down the departments, they said that we are just - not closing down the factory, we are just reorganising and reducing the workforce, and that we will pay the dues of the workers. But what ultimately happened was that when they went to the BIFR, they said that even the profitable unit, like for example the spinning unit, and the weaving section, which had been recently modernised, they said that they wanted to close it down. And they prepared a scheme, which basically got the sanction of the recognised union, which involved virtually the entire - mill was to be closed down. So when that came up, we objected to it, of course, the BIFR didn't consider our objections, and finally we went to the High Court. The High Court - this was a classic case which was because the High Court stayed the scheme, saying that this is absolutely, sort of, in the sense of a revival scheme, it's not a revival scheme, because it virtually amounts to the closure of the mill, it's basically - it's just a farce, you just have a shell and there's nothing inside the shell.

8:20 – 10:29

So the High Court stayed the scheme. That was a big victory for us, because basically it meant that now the company would have to re-work the entire scheme. But, well, this was a really good experience for us because on the one hand we succeeded because of the struggle and the legal work; but when the management realised that this was getting serious, and it would have great financial repercussions for them, they called all the committee. Because we did not do it in the name of any union, basically we went with the local committee. So if a committee had been formed, we would take the committee to confidence and whatever they wanted, accordingly we would represent their case before the various authorities. So here they took the committee into confidence, they had series of meetings overnight, kept them locked inside a room, and offered them - according to us it wasn't great, but according to them it was great because it was much more than what they would otherwise get. They offered them an X amount of money which was over and above the legal dues, and they were very happy and workers said we don't want to go proceed with the matter, and overnight, without informing us, they agreed to the settlement. So that was a major setback for us. We realised - it's not the fault of the workers, it was the situation in which they were, that despite the success, that they felt that at least let us get whatever little we can get. And so that was one stage where we felt that the power of the employers was so great that workers could not really figure out how we could fight such a... not only the employers but also the government, because the government was not really doing anything in terms of taking action against the employers for the illegal closure.

10:29 – 13:00

So that was one phase of our struggle. The other part as far as New Great was concerned - New Great [Eastern Spinning and Weaving Mills] was also a company, which was closed which went before the BIFR. That was also in a sense very successful because it was - both in terms of the struggle, the workers really went inside, they stayed inside, they tried to run the company, people really thought that now the workers would take over - it became an issue where there was a feeling in the city that yes, workers can do something. And ultimately even the BIFR, after all these obstacles, the BIFR finally said that these issues should be reconsidered. But since the BIFR was about to sanction a scheme which was really - which again amounted to closure of the entire company, a small little part would be functioning, we had to go to the High Court, and the High Court passed an order which was also quite a, like sort of an uncommon order in the sense that they said that the mills should be restarted immediately and all the workers should be taken back on duty and whoever has retired, they should be paid their dues. That was like a real victory and we had lot of celebrations outside the mill and it was really - it was very moving and we were, after so many years of struggle, that they were again being taken without any reduction of the workforce.

But the problem was that what the employer did was, they would - when the workers were supposed to report for work, they identified those workers who were with the Sangh and those workers who were with us, and those workers who were with us were kept out, and the Sangh workers who said that okay, now we are with the Rashtriya Mill Majdoor Sangh, we are no longer with them, they were taken in duty. But majority of the workers, I mean, though it was very moving, the fact remained that they did suffer, because of the stand that the workers took, that they were with us, and they were prevented from entering. So a large number of workers were kept out, and we had to keep going back to the court, getting orders.. But the court said, to what extent can we supervise this whole procedure; there's a limit to what we can do. Ultimately, the employer is required to take them on duty. And the employer did not just refuse, he had some reasons, he gave various reasons why certain workers

would not be taken back on duty.

13:00 – 15:38

Anyway, the long and short of the story was that finally, ultimately, workers were not taken back, and then finally the management – of course there was another part to the order of the High Court, which was that the entire running of the mill, that is, all the various departments, would be supervised by the monitoring authority, and they were required to submit their regular reports to the BIFR - which, of course, they didn't. So we had to spend a lot of time going back and forth between BIFR and the High Court. Ultimately, the workers decided that they would accept whatever extra dues that were being paid. So they were paid extra dues and the amount was settled. So in a number of cases like this, basically what happened was that because of the struggle, because of the success in the cases, the management came and compromised, settled with the workers, and were able to give something extra which according to us it was nothing great. So this basically led to the issue of closure, because ultimately the workers, many of the mills, many of the departments where the workers realised are not going to restart, they said it would be better to settle. So those departments ultimately got closed.

Once they were closed, basically it was the owners wanted - and at that point of time, prices had gone up, land prices had gone up, so they wanted - the owners wanted to profit on the sale of the land. So the entire manner in which they conducted the BIFR proceedings and the way in which they got rid of workers was basically to get hold of that land and then to sell it and profit from it. So ultimately, in the case - of course, in New Great they could not do it, because we had a stay on the sale of land. They could not sell the land. Shree Ram because they settled with the workers, they could sell the land. It was at that point of time that we realised that we should try to get our share of the land, even though the workers have settled, because, in terms of the housing issue... So at that time, the struggles were basically to say that 'we want our share in the land', and that's how the 1991 rule came into being, which basically said that one-third of that land should be for workers' housing.

15:38 – 18:29

So that was one part of the struggle. The other part was the existing mills, which were really not closed, but they sought a modernisation of the mills. So they basically went before the BIFR, saying, now we want to modernise, so give us more benefits, more concessions. And ultimately those - so there was lot of struggle on those issues also where we fought back against the closure of the mills. But because the situation of the workers was such that they could not withstand a long drawn-out struggle, that ultimately VRS [Voluntary Retirement Schemes] were put up by the employers and they were paid extra dues and the workers left. So basically, the struggle in terms of... I wouldn't say it was a success, but according to the workers it was something that we helped them get some dues, which otherwise they would not have got.

But the major success of the struggle was with regard to the share in the land, in terms of getting part of that, which even now today, for many of the companies, which are closing down - not the textile mills, but the other industrial companies that are closing down - workers are not even being given a share in that land. Because of the struggle here, the workers of closed companies are now raising this issue, that we should also get a share as far as housing is concerned, in that land. The rationale for asking for the share in the land is really because most of these mills were situated on lands which were leased to the owners. So they were basically given free land to run a company, and the purpose of the lease deed was to run a company and to provide cheap cloth, textile cloth, and to provide employment to a large number of

workers, which was being done till the 80s, though the excuse of the closure of the mills is, I mean, the excuse that is given is that because of Datta Samant, the mills closed, which is not really correct, because it was closed because the entire textile production was diverted to power looms and small scale units so that these units could close, and as and when the prices of the land went up, they were able to sell it. So our focus was basically on the issue that the land does not belong to the employer. It must be resumed by the government. The land should be taken back by the government, and used for public purpose.

18:29 – 21:10

So then finally, as a conclusion of this whole thing, the struggle was on a case of BEAG -Bombay Environment Action Group - which challenged the spaces. What happened was that the DC rule, though the DC rule was passed in 1991, which said one-third open spaces, one-third for housing, and one-third for the employer, the government kept issuing guidelines or clarifications to this DC, basically to benefit the employers, and basically trying to take away whatever little share was given to the city. So in a circular where they say, clarified the issue, they said, the government said, that an open plot of land is that plot of land, which is open at the time when the mill was there, and is not created by demolishing the structures. And that was basically to help those companies, which had really demolished, without following the law, demolished structures and had started constructing huge towers on those plots of land. One example was of Raghuvanshi and of Phoenix Mill. What Phoenix Mill did was, they closed down various departments and then they said, because you could not construct – I don't want to go into the legalities of it, but you could not construct in an existing mill structure. If you wanted to completely alter the use of the land, then you had to demolish it and basically after demolishing you could get only that share of the land, which was already vacant. So what Phoenix Mill did was, they closed down various departments and they wanted to construct the bowling alley. That bowling alley was on a plot of land where there was already an existing department, a running department. So what Phoenix Mill did was, the employer, he made an application to BMC saying that we need to have a gymnasium for the workers, because the workers have absolutely no source of entertainment, and they need one, and they have made a demand to the management that we want a gymnasium, so we want to construct a sort of a gymnasium for the workers.

21:10 – 24:06

Now, on the basis of that application, they demolished the structures and they constructed the bowling alley. At that point of time, we didn't know that this had happened, and when we filed the petition in the High Court, the High Court asked for some documents, on what basis have you... And that's when we found out that this application had been made. So the employer knew very well that he could not use it for any other purpose, it had to be mill-related, therefore he made this application and the BMC also allowed it, and in front of their eyes, BMC officials, this huge structure came up, on the basis of this application. So even though the constructions were totally illegal, the state government did not take any action against the employer. And Phoenix Mill, we would have again won the case, because it was clearly illegal, but again here also the management settled with the workers, and we had to withdraw the case, because it was based on the applications made by the workers.

So what I was saying was that at that ultimately the government then tried to cover up the illegal construction by issuing this clarification. So this clarificatory note was challenged by BEAG, and when they challenged it, because it was restricted only to

the issue of open spaces - they were not concerned with the workers' issue – we intervened, the Girni Kamgar Sangharsh Samiti intervened in the matter, and various other unions also intervened, and we brought out all the illegal work that was going on inside the companies, totally unrelated to the issue of non-payment of wages, but illegal constructions going on inside the company, and the illegal use of the employers who did not even own that plot of land. So the High Court stayed that clarificatory note, saying that this is totally illegal, and contrary to the provisions of the DC rule, and the issue of lease land which had come up during the arguments, in the cases of some of the mills, where there was evidence to show that this was lease land, the court said that this was totally illegal, it did not belong to them, and that it had been leased. But unfortunately, of course, in those hearings, there was all this battery of lawyers opposing it, and finally, they did challenge it, all the mill owners. were represented in this case. They challenged it before the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court overruled the High Court judgement. So basically the final outcome of this whole case was that vacant land is that land which is vacant at the time when the mill is in existence.

24:06 – 26:14

During any period of time, if a structure is demolished, and a vacant land is created, that is not a vacant land. That was the – so it was totally, I mean, it was like totally changing the whole DC rule. Ultimately, the result was that - even if you look at vacant land in any of the existing mills, it's very very less, because you have structures which were all spread out on the plot of land, and the vacant land was very, very... So ultimately the workers got a very small proportion of that vacant land. So finally in the coming years, I mean, we've been taking up cases of the mill workers of Bombay Dyeing, where again this issue came up, that again the employer tried to further reduce the area which was to be handed over to the workers, saying that the workers - we are not bound to hand over that land till we complete the construction. So, at the time when the plan is prepared, you are supposed to demarcate the areas. The mill owner said, we are not bound to hand over. And that's the understanding. And everybody, from MHADA to the government, everyone supported this stance. So again, we... The Bombay Dyeing went to the High Court, because BMC stayed their construction work, we intervened in the matter and the court said that no, the construction - at the time when the plans are submitted, you must demarcate the area, and not after you have completed the... So, in Bombay Dyeing, the workers have now got that land demarcated.

So, really, the problem was that at each stage, the workers were opposed, from all sides - from the BMC, from the MHADA, to the government, and of course the employers who had the support of the government.

26:14 – 28:29

If one looks back at the entire struggle, what really is encouraging is the fact that despite all odds, the workers were really willing to fight back against everyone, I mean, the employer, the goons – for example, in Khatau Mill, we had to face the Gawli gang - and I remember the time when we were trying to get signatures of the workers because as, I said, in BIFR or anywhere else, in any legal proceedings, people basically wanted to see whether we had the support of the workers, and we had to call a meeting at outside Khatau Mill and we were told that this is very dangerous because we can be attacked, and workers were not at all scared, and they came out in huge... hundreds of workers, and the goons were standing all over the place, had surrounded us, and yet they stood there and made sure that we were protected and nothing happened to us. They were not really bothered because even

though they stayed in that area, they could be attacked at any time. And that was really heartening, to see that here are workers who have not been paid their dues, they are starving, there are starvation deaths in the city of Bombay, you talk of malnutrition, and workers were dying of starvation. And then they were being physically attacked also, there were a number of workers who were physically attacked in Matulya Mill, we had got an order, for example, Khatau is a very good example. Matulya Mill we had got an order restraining them from removing the machinery, because the union had signed, the recognised union had signed an agreement to close down the department, and the workers were opposing that. And despite an order of the court, that you could not remove, they started removing it, and we decided to go and see, which was really foolish on our part, because we didn't take any support from - we didn't inform the police or take support from outsiders.

28:29 – 31:02

So we came in, and we saw this huge, about hundreds of all these goons standing over there, and we were just about ten, fifteen of us. And the workers were just not scared, and they came and - I was there, and one other person, and literally, the workers, though there were ten - fifteen of them, they surrounded us and, to see that we were protected. They were not bothered about what happened to them. And we were attacked, really attacked from... they came after us, and then we had to just leave. This fact was brought to the notice of the High Court, and the High Court was very very supportive and they issued condemn notices against them. So in a sense, I mean, though many of the proceedings, we were like thrown out, in other proceedings before the High Court - very supportive of the whole struggle. And not only that, I mean, it was more also people from different sections of society came out supporting the workers. So that sort of built up a lot of strength amongst workers, and they were really willing to take all kinds of risks to bring out the problems that they were facing. So that was one aspect. In the High Court, I mean, it was like really, I mean, such ridiculous arguments being made, that you know, basically the first opposition, the one and only opposition that they would make against us was that we are not a recognised union. And the law says that a recognised union only can be - the management can negotiate only with a recognised union. So that was like, one weapon in their hand, the management hands. So it was always - if you saw the lawyers, the lawyers were all very well paid, senior lawyers representing the mill owners and the recognised union would also have senior advocates, of course, they were being paid, I mean, I wouldn't make - I have no proof to say that, but ultimately they were all - in their arguments, they would support each other. So whatever argument the company made, the recognised union lawyer would also make. And basically, it would be - even though they knew that what they were doing was illegal, the argument was that take them out of the picture so that we don't come in.

31:02 – 34:12

So in many cases, because the law is such, the courts would say that yes, only a recognised union should represent them, and we had no locus standi to represent the workers. So it was in a sense, I mean, the court would have to go into all these issues of locus instead of really going into the merits of the case, to see that majority of the employers were actually violating the law. You've closed down a company, you've closed down a company without following the law, following the procedure here which is supposed to be mandatory, and you don't pay the dues of the workers, you don't pay the wages, and then you say that you have no right to represent the workers. So many of the judges saw through that and passed orders. So we had very good orders for Khatau and Matulya, which said that you must pay wages, because

the law is that if you want to challenge any action of the employer saying that it is illegal, then you have to go to the industrial court, you can't come directly to the High Court in a writ.

But in such cases, our writs were entertained, and when we said that there are thousands of workers who have not been paid their wages, company is not legally closed, and in the case of Matulya and Khatau, the courts passed an order that they must be paid wages. So the order had such an impact that the employers got scared, because they would have had to, if they continued adopting all these dilatory tactics of opposing us on locus, this matter would have gone on and on for years, and they would have had to pay crores of rupees by way of back wages. So ultimately they came around and settled. And the irony of the situation was that the very people with whom they refused to negotiate, they were forced to talk to us. Which, of course, we didn't like because ultimately we had to go by whatever the workers wanted, so even if we felt that no, this is a strong case, we should fight it out, workers as I said, workers were a little hesitant to go out because they basically wanted their money in hand. So it was sort of a win and lose situation in a sense. We got very good orders and we ultimately had to settle with the management for a lesser amount. So basically, it was a situation where we were able to break the hold of the recognised union. And that had its impact in other industries also. So ultimately, the funniest part was that you had to go there, take signatures of the workers, sit with them, and basically spend days getting the signatures and then finally those signatures would not even be looked at by the BIFR or by the High Court, because ultimately everybody knew that the workers were with us.

34:12 – 35:06

So, this is basically the overall... in terms of what happened. And now, as I said, the situation is sort of grim, because today most of these mill owners have said that, I mean, it's presumed that the land belongs to them. So now, we've taken up an issue of some two-three mills where the lease deed has expired, in the case of Shakti Mill. Shakti Mill has gone in winding up and their lease deed has expired. They have made an application to the government to extend the lease deed even though the company is closed. So we are intervening in that, some two-three unions are intervening in that application, saying that the lease deed should not be renewed, and that the land should be resumed by the government and it should be used for affordable housing.

35:06 – 38:06

The total mill land - it's a big scam, which everybody talked about, but nothing really happened. The scam was that you had this huge area of 600... I think, how much the total - 600 acres of land, which was - did not belong to the mill owners, and in fact Charles Correa had been appointed by the government to plan out the entire setup, infrastructure, how the land can be used for various purposes, so basically open spaces, and so forth. And for the NTC, that is, the National Textile Corporation, the land was to be used in a particular manner. So it was to be used for open spaces and workers' housing, etc. What has happened is that none of those proposals were adopted, and ultimately the entire, sort of, the Girangaon has totally changed, because you have - everything is, earlier what happened was there were shops, you had - till night, you could go in, you could go to any dhaba, you could go to any restaurant which was open, people were - business was going on, you know, people were living there as well as carrying out their own businesses. So once the textile mills closed, even the small businesses closed down. And those people who were given housing, workers who were provided housing, in that area, majority of the workers were forced to leave. So the argument that is put forward by many people,

by intellectuals and various other people who are supportive of workers also, they say that why should housing – why should workers be provided with housing in the middle of the city, when ultimately they are going to leave, and go far away. So, so workers are selling their houses and basically profiting from the houses, which were supposed to be meant for them.

But the reason why workers are selling is because one, the maintenance is high; you have a huge 23-storeyed building with an elevator, etc. So you find, in most of these areas, where the housing has been provided, the maintenance is so high that workers are not able to pay for that. So they sell those flats and move off somewhere, which is closer to their jobs. There are no jobs available in the city where they were working, and either they work as watchmen, or as contractors. So basically, from a skilled worker, from an organised sector, you become an unorganised worker, with totally - you're not sure where your income and salary is going to come from, and even that salary is not sufficient to support you, forget your family.

38:06 – 40:50

So, so, you have casual workers, temporary workers, watchmen working in those areas. So you find in all these buildings, it's basically textile workers, who are working as security officers or watchmen. In fact, in Phoenix, half of those officers are all Raghuvanshi or Phoenix workers. So, so, you've done away with organised workers, you've decasualised the workers, and you've also taken away whatever source of income was there so that you are - it's impossible for workers to live here, so you're bound to leave. So there's – so there's basically gentrification of the entire process, where you - all the entire poor and the workers are thrown out of the city, and you have these big malls and buildings coming up. So you have this mall culture where you have all upper middle-class people using those facilities, and in addition to that, you have no infrastructure, so basically, even for those buildings, you have no open spaces, hardly any open spaces for people living in those areas. So ultimately, even the town planning, or the planning that should go into building a city is not there. So when you talk about Singapore, because at that point of time when we were fighting for workers to be retained in those areas, we were told that this is, we are, it's going to become, Bombay should become like Singapore, or Hong Kong. So you really don't see the difference between Singapore and Bombay. Where Bombay is an, was an industrial city, Singapore is a nation-state. Very different from what Bombay is. So ultimately, if you transport something, some ideas from some other country without seeing the peculiarities of your own country, it's not going to work out. So in that sense, the entire DC regulations have not really worked, because you've really narrowed down whatever was there for the workers, and for the open spaces, you've narrowed it down to a very small area of land. So ultimately, these structures that are coming up, towers that are coming up, are going to create a deep gap between the poor and the rich. And this is what's happening.

40:50 – 42:20

So even in cases where we've said that the workers should be provided with housing in that area, people have said that no, this cannot happen. And now, in fact, now the new government has said that we want in the SRA schemes, the SRA component should not be at the same site; it should be located somewhere else. So the builders will be given FSI, and they will be entitled to build houses for the poor outside, far away, away from the city. So, and that is the long-term plan of the government. So even now, I mean today, forget the textile workers, even for the SRA schemes, for the slum dwellers, it is not going to be in-situ, at the place where they are residing, but far away from where they are residing. So you take away their source of

livelihood, and also take away the place where they are living. So even the places, forget these lease lands, which were not theirs, but even for slum dwellers, where they've cleaned up the area, they've started residing in those areas, now you say this land doesn't belong to you, and therefore you should be shifted out. So is this what, I mean, what we would want for a city, I mean, even if we look at it from the point of view of housing, or open spaces, there is no such plan that is being implemented today.

42:20 - 44:45

Bombay was an industrial city, and there was what is known as zoning. So you had pockets of areas which were industrial, commercial and residential. So you still have a zoning pattern in our town planning acts and regulations. That zoning is now just given a total go-by, so you today - first you have an industrial complex, where you have industries or commercial industries. Then in the middle, somewhere, some building comes up in between, in the middle of the industrial hub, and then you say that now it's - the pollution is affecting those people, so you have to shift them out. And then, so slowly, that whole thing goes, and because it's more profitable to sell the land and have buildings coming up than to run an industry. So, as in the case in Thane, for example, the same pattern that happened in Bombay happened in Thane much before - much after, sorry, much after the textile mills were removed from here. The industrial zone of Ciba Geigy, various other industrial - pharmaceutical companies, had - there were plots reserved for those industries' chemical units. Slowly over a period of time, residential complexes came bang next to those pharmaceutical companies, and they filed cases in the High Court, saying that we are being - there's a lot of pollution, these companies should be closed down. And so, ultimately, over a period of time, those companies closed down and they sold the land for... So, there is no planning. Land which the government took over from, say, farmers, to build industrial units, those industrial units are either closing down or they are lying vacant, and then slowly they are being converted for residential purposes. So slowly, over a period of time, all industrial units are closing down, I mean, Bombay it happened at a larger level, and it's been now happening in Thane area, Thane Belapur area, that entire industrial complex is now slowly closing down.

44:45 - 46:49

So all industries are going, where are they going? And what happens to the workers? So basically, as I was saying, the organised sector, no longer exists, I mean, if you look at the entire figure for India, it is hardly about two percent workers in the organised sector, which basically includes service sector, or say, for example, government employees, public sector employees, these are the organised sector. Large numbers are in the informal sector. So even if you look at the DP today, the DP plan that was given, I mean, where are the hawking zones? Even if you look at the informal sector, where are the hawking zones? The hawking zones were supposed to be carved out in the DP. That's not done, they're being slowly thrown out, even though there's a Supreme Court order which says they must be provided with zoning. Today people are saying, no, they should not come in our areas. There's a lot of protest against the hawkers. So even - so forget the organised sector, even the informal sector is being attacked, in a big way. Besides government employees, and say now the ITs, there is no organised sector. And that will be the doomsday for, it's not only Bombay, but Maharashtra, which was an industrial state. It's now maybe number 10 in that entire list; after Gujarat, it was one of the top most industrial states. So, as far as industry is concerned, it no longer exists in Bombay, and similarly, in Maharashtra. So in the context of zoning, and in the context of a rational, overall planning for the city, there is no such thing. It's all very haphazard, so you decide at a particular point of time that you want a huge mall to come up, the mall is constructed,

without any planning. So in that sense, the working class is slowly being shunted out from not only the city of Bombay, but industrial cities in Maharashtra.