

Bajnath Rai, Chairman of the steering Committee of Bengal State BMS

Name	Bajnath Rai, Chairman of the steering Committee of Bengal State BMS and one of its secretaries
Date of Interview	February 11, 2003
Place	Calcutta
Context	Bajnath Rai is a school teacher as well as a trade union leader. Basically he is involved in Jute workers' movement. Interview took place at BMS office where he came after finishing his school.
Interviewers	Krishna Jha

Biographical Sketches

I was born on January 2, 1946 in a working class family at Hajinagar in the district of 24 Pargana. I studied in Calcutta university upto post-graduation.

My father came from Azamgarh district in UP to Bengal and worked in India Paper Mills as paper cutter. We were five siblings and our mother Poona Devi wanted to educate us all. My mother is more popular than me in the area we live. She taught us to be social and religious.

In college I could not get along with SFI students and therefore formed Students' Parishad with all streams of thought though apolitical. In Bangawasi college, we even won elections in 1961-62.

It ws at this time that Vidyarthi Parishad was formed on the basis of anti-SFI feelings and Subroto Mukherjee, Priyaranjan Dash Munshi were along with us.

After graduation, I went to Gorakhpur to study law but soon left studies and came back. By this time jute workers had launched their agitation and were violently attacking the management. I did not like the violence and tried to find a third path, away from the Communists and the Congress.

It was at this moment that Deen Dayal Upadhyaya came to Calcutta. He talked about integral humanism and we liked it. We discussed with Deen Dayal about possibility of forming BMS and soon organised a unit in Halishahar Municipality with its employees in 1967-68. Same year at Titagarh, another union was formed in the municipality. Within a year, agitation was launched. Datto Pant Thengdi was invited. Daroga Singh, Mahatma Mishra were with us.

At the student front, there was a rift and Subroto and Priyaranjan left Vidyarthi Parishad to join Congress.

In 1968, BMS was first organised in Bengal at state level in which Mahatma Mishra was president and Naresh Chandra Ganguly was general secretary. Daroga Singh was expelled. Ramjidas came from Lucknow and became organising secretary. By 1970, Bharatiya Jute

Mazdoor Sangh was formed and I was general secretary of the union while Naresh became president. However the BMS state unit remained unrecognised. BMS activists wanted to launch joint actions with left trade unions but were avoided by them.

After Left Front came to power, CITU adopted a dominating attitude. In 1984, historic agreement took place with jute mill owners but not implemented. Again in 1992 and then in 1997, agreements were made but without implementation. In January, 2002, an agreement was finalised that one third of the wage would be linked with production and BMS was not even consulted. The wages were reduced for Badli workers from Rs 250 to Rs 70. For negotiations government nominates only five trade unions out of 18.

I was BMS secretary for two terms. I have also organised least 30 to 36000 hawkers in Howrah alone.

Transcript Summary

Context| Baijnath Rai is a school teacher as well as a trade union leader. Basically he is involved in Jute workers' movement. Interview took place at BMS office where he came after finishing his school.

Baijnath Rai was born on January 2, 1946 at Hajinagar in the district of 24 Pargana. He did his post graduation from Calcutta university.

Basically Baijnath Rai's father belonged to Azamgarh district in UP. He migrated to Bengal and worked in India Paper Mills as paper cutter. They were five siblings and mother wanted to educate them all. Baijnath imbibed the qualities of socialisation and religiosity from his mother.

In college he could not get along with SFI students and therefore formed Students' Parishad with all streams of thought though apolitical. In Bangawasi college, they contested elections and won in 1961-62.

It at this time that Vidyarthi Parishad was formed on the basis of anti-SFI feelings and Subroto Mukherjee, Priyaranjan Dash Munshi were along with them.

After graduation, Baijnath went to Gorakhpur to study law but soon left studies and came back. By this time jute workers had launched their agitation and were violently attacking the management. Baijnath did not like the violence and tried to find a third path, away from the Communists and the Congress.

It was at this moment that Deen Dayal Upadhyaya came to Calcutta. He talked about integral humanism and he liked it. He discussed with Deen Dayal about forming BMS and soon formed a unit in Haliashahar Municipality with its employees in 1967-68. Same year at Titagarh, another union was formed in the municipality. Within a year, agitation was launched. Datto Pant Thengdi was invited. Daroga Singh, Mahatma Mishra were with Baijnath.

At the student front, there was a rift and Subroto and Priyaranjan left Vidyarthi Parishad to join Congress.

In 1968, BMS was first organised in Bengal at state level in which Mahatma Mishra was president and Naresh Chandra Ganguly was general secretary. Daroga Singh was expelled. Ramjidas came from Lucknow and became organising secretary. By 1970, Bharatiya Jute Mazdoor Sangh was formed and Baijnath was general secretary of the union while Naresh became president. However the BMS state unit remained unrecognised. BMS activists wanted to launch joint actions with left trade unions but were avoided by them.

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