

Amar Krishna Vyas, Jodhpur (Rajasthan) - Socialist Party-Lohia

A.K. Vyas is one of the earliest political and trade union (TU) figures of the erstwhile Jodhpur State, and later of unified Rajasthan. His experiences are unique in many ways. He was born on 23 Feb. 1923, in Nagaur. His family background is that of the middle class Purohits. His father was in the customs department, and an Arya Samaji.

Contact with politics: his family later shifted to Jodhpur. The 'Nan chowkia' - a confluence of nine mohallas, was the hub of politics, which was both anti-Raj (Princely State) and anti-British. A.K. Vyas became active in politics in the late 30s - early 40s. He went to jail in individual satyagraha in Ajmer. He participated in the 1942 movement, and was in jail for nearly 2 years. Many were tortured to get his name out. That was why, he himself surrendered at the Sojti Gate in Jodhpur, and that was how he was arrested. It was the 'Nanchowki politics' that was the main threat to the Raj. Maganraj Vyas, father of the famous Communist and AITUC leader H.K. Vyas, was the Jailer.

In the jail, Jainarayan Vyas, the famous leader of Lok Mandal (Praja Mandal or States People's Conf.) late CM of Rajasthan, trained him up in the details of politics. After release, A.K. Vyas went to Wardha Ashram. He later became an office secretary of the All India States' People's Conf, in Allahabad. Later, it was shifted to Jodhpur.

Entry into TU movement: Jai Narayan Vyas, the famous Praja (Lok) Mandal leader asked as to who would like to work among the Harijans. Most of those who were among the people were Brahmins. A.K. Vyas replied that he was ready to work among the sweepers. A railway union was already there. That helped organise other sections the sweepers and others, in terms of men, materials, resources and money.

A harijan union was formed in December 1946. It conducted 9 (nine) successful strikes at that time. A.K. Vyas organised the first strike of the class IV servants. The issues were grade, salary, D.A. etc. His Highness of Jodhpur formed a Grade Revision Advisory Committee. A.K. Vyas, Dwarkadas Purohit and others were on it. Justice Indra Nath Purohit was the H.H. (Royal) Representative.

A 9-day strike of the stone quarry workers took place in 1948. At that time, it was not easy to organise TUs and to get them registered. The PWD and electricity workers' unions were with the Communists, while Jodhpur Railway workers, Postal workers, municipal, stone quarries, etc. workers were with the Socialists and the Gandhians. Guruswamy, the leader of the Railway workers went there; J.P. (Jai Prakash Narayan) was also their leader.

A.K. Vyas organised the Postal employees in Jodhpur and other places in 1947. He was the General Secretary of the Postal Workers' Union of Rajasthan.

He began moving and organising in areas stretching from Jodhpur through Ahmedabad to Bombay. He was in contact with BN.M. Joshi, who was a friend and associate of Jai Narayan Vyas. In Bombay, A.K.Vyas was very impressed by D'Mello. Royists like Umrao Mal Purohit and Harish Joshi were also very active. A.K. Vyas was active in Stone Quarries Workers' Union, which was in HMP of George Fernandes.

A.K. Vyas came in contact with Ram Manohar Lohia in Anand Bhawan, Allahabad; also with Acharya Narendra Dev, Aruna Asaf Ali, and some other prominent personalities. He participated actively in Marwar Lok Parishad and Adivasi Movement. He also participated in Kisan satyagrahas before independence.

Movement for responsible govt. took place in March 1948 in Jodhpur State, and A.K. Vyas was in the thick of it.

Among other important contributions of A.K. Vyas was the formation of Gumashta Mandal i.e. the Union of Shop- assistants (1952). It included clerks and servants also. A notable and unique event was the formation Gharelu (Household) Karmachari Sangh, consisting of the employees to the Royal Household. A.K. Vyas was its Patron. They got several of their demands met. He also organised Rajasthan Non-Gazetted Police Karmachari Sangh in 1967. It was patterned on a similar organisation in Bihar. Ramanand Tiwari, a Socialist and later the Chief Minister of Bihar, was his friend. A.K. Vyas basically has been a Socialist but he has never been comfortable with the 'official' Socialists. He was in HMP, HMKP, HMS, etc. But he severely criticises the official leadership of the HMS. Some of them, he says, are anti- communist. In his opinion, the TU movement has been unnecessarily split into so many factions, purely on personal and narrow political bases. Though he was in HMS, he was not 'at home' in it. In his opinion, the workers have never really been represented in the Parliament.

At present he is busy organising Socialist Party (Lohia) and its Labour wing. On being asked why he was organising a separate labour wing, he replied it was simply not possible to function in the original and official organisation; it was too suffocating. Presently though not too active due to age, he is associated with organisations like Nirman Mazdoor Panchayat Sangam, and others TUs.