

## **Sreecharan Baral (Independent left trade unionist), Bhubaneswar, Orissa**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sreecharan Baral (Independent left trade unionist), Bhubaneswar</b>
<b>Date of Interview</b>	January 30, 2003
<b>Place</b>	at Bhubaneswar, Orissa
<b>Context</b>	Sreecharan Baral is still active in trade union movement independently though in close association with AITUC and CITU. He lives in Bhubaneswar with his family.
<b>Interviewers</b>	Krishna Jha

### **Biographical Sketches**

I was born on October 2, 1930 at Gambhira village in Khurda. I am an informal trade union activist. I did my graduation with honours from Ravenshaw college and topped the merit list in 1952. Then I went to Calcutta for post graduation. I got Biju Patnaik Foundation fellowship as I was first class first in my graduation examination but I refused to accept it. I got another fellowship from Utkal University and I accepted it. I passed my MA and LLB from Calcutta university in 1955.

From student days I had decided not to go for competitive examinations. I started to earn my living by writing in newspapers when “Kesari”, an Oriya newspaper offered me an editor’s job. In 1959, I wrote an editorial on how Communist Chief Minister of Kerala EMS Namboodiripad set an example by taking only Rs 500 as salary. My suggestion was that Congress leaders too should opt for such measures. However it was a time when Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru reduced his own salary by Rs 250 and the then President of India too reduced his salary by 10 percent.

The owner of the paper was unhappy about my writings and finally I resigned. I started my own newspaper called “Pratinidhi” in Oriya. Alongwith the newspaper I used to organise Oriya workers in different areas on every Saturday. I was a Marxist since I was in school. I was active in Student Federation without becoming its member. However soon I was made Communist Party Secretary of the area. Those days, Muzaffar Ahmed was alive. Dhiren Roy was Bengal trade union secretary.

I was made Communist Party member and was soon promoted to its state executive council in Orissa. However after the party got split in 1964, I lost initiative and started working independently. It was at this time that I organised hotel, jute, domestic and few other workers from Orissa though independently.

Finally I am back in my state.

## **Transcript Summary**

Sreecharan Baral was born on October 2, 1930 at Gambhira village in Khurda. He considers himself an informal trade union activist. He passed his BA with honours from Ravenshaw college and topped the merit list in 1952. When he went for further studies to Calcutta, he was entitled to two scholarships. One was allotted to him from Biju Patnaik foundation which he rejected outrightly. The other was from Utkal University and he accepted it. He passed his MA and LLB from Calcutta university in 1955.

From student days he had decided not to go for government jobs. After finishing his studies, he started to earn his living by writing in newspapers when the offer came to edit “Kesari”, an Oriya newspaper. In 1959, when in Kerala, Communists came to power, EMS Namboodiripad as Chief Minister set an example by taking only Rs 500 as salary. Sreecharan wrote an editorial in his paper that the Congress leaders too should opt for such measures. However it was a time when Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru reduced his own salary by Rs 250 and the then President of India too reduced his salary by 10 percent.

The owner of the paper was unhappy about his writings and finally he had to resign. He started his own newspaper called “Pratinidhi” in Oriya. Alongwith the newspaper he used to organise Oriya workers in different areas on every Saturday.

Sreecharan was a Marxist since he was in school. He was active in Student Federation without becoming its member. However soon he was made Communist Party Secretary of the area. Those days, Muzaffar Ahmed was alive. Dhiren Roy was Bengal trade union secretary.

There was a general feeling that because of Oriya and Bihari workers the revolutionary process was getting interrupted. To counter the charge, Sreecharan alongwith few others formed Oriya Citizen’s Council and took a vow that within a year they would make one lakh communist party members. He was invited everywhere to speak and organise and at none of the places, did he quote from Marx, Engels or Lenin. He was always referring to Oriya Bhagawat with which all the Oriya workers were familiar.

He was a Communist Party member in Orissa and was in the state executive council. After 1964 split, He started revising his views, though attended 1968 CPI congress at Patna. Gradually he lost his conviction in the ideology though by this time he was organising large number of Oriya workers from hotel industry, jute factories, domestic workers and other sectors and making them join the umbrella organisation of CITU. However soon he lost the drive and started working independently and returned to Bhubaneswar.