

Madanlal Didi, Chandigarh, Panjub

Was born in 1924 in Punjab and currently is 77 years old. He was because of been born in the era of British colonialism was attracted to Subash and even Hitler as in school itself he wanted to see the end of British rule. He graduated from Govt. college Ludhiana in Maths. But in the student days itself was attracted to politics and in the college was attracted to the RSS but later got disillusioned due their communal and pro-British stands. In his student life thus he got attracted to Communist and his inspirations were the likes of Fazal Elahi Qurban, Sahir Ludhianivi and others. Like that he came into the left movement.

TU Life:-

Once he joined the communist party it was obvious that he would work first among the working class as that was the obvious constituency of the communists. So the first movement he got associated with was the struggle of the safai karamcharies. He led the safai karamchri union for some years are tried to redress their problems which according to him had their own unique biradari element in it. He led several strikes of the safai karamcharies in Ludhiana and had to go jail for these struggles. According to Madanlal Didi for a Brahmin youth to organise struggles on behalf of the low caste safai karamcharies was a tremendous learning experience and all his religious and caste prejudices ended in the process. The other major struggles and unions he built up were the – Hosiery workers struggle where he managed to get them via strikes better piece rates for the socks they produced. The hosiery workers struggle was a victorious struggle. Then there was the Textile workers struggle which involved mobilizing the handloom workers, powerloom workers and silk producing workers. Madanlal Didi and Baba Kartar Singh were the first to use Punjabi in their speeches as prior to this everybody used Urdu. This usage of the mother tongue really endeared them to the workers. The other major struggles were in the Pearl Hosiery Mill where for the first time in a struggle he had to face loss. They had to withdraw the struggle. In the next phase of struggle organised the workers of Punjab Roadways, HMT workers, Kharar Textile Mill workersm Surajpur workers, PWD workers. In all these struggle mostly Madanlal Didi did manage to see victory. Then he organised the All India Cement Workers Strike at the national level. It was also a success. Then there were strikes in JCT Mills Phaghwara. In that strike Madanlal Didi escaped bid on his life when a parcel bomb exploded and killing some other secretary and workers. Finally they lost the JCT Mills strike. Then he organised the strike in Abohar Textile Mills and managed to pull out a good agreement. Then organised the Punjab Roadways strike. Then Punjab Electricity Board strike during which one big INTUC leader Mr. Moonlal Langottiwala form the INTUC into the AITUC. It was a big boost to the working class. Madanlal Didi stood by Baba Kartar Singh when he was made the President of PTUC. Later Madanlal

Didi himself became the Gen-Sec and later President of PTUC. Also he became National Council member and finally as one of the Vice Presidents of the AITUC at the national level.

Madanlal Didi was of the view that several historical events really hit the Punjab TU movement very badly. For example the partition, the break-up of the state of PEPSU, then the split the CPI, and finally the Khalistan movement hit the TU movement very badly. Nowadays there is the question of immigrant labour, politicisation of working class, the minimum wage problem. He also said a lot about the underground period. Overall Madanlal Didi comes across as a TU leader whose clarity of understanding of working class situations particularly in Punjab is really deep and who sacrificed a lot personally though his background was good and perhaps he needn't have got involved in such a hard life of a TU activist. Nevertheless he and his wonderful wife who also like him worked full time for women and the working class and still does though now she is a professional advocate.