

## **Homi Daji (AITUC)**

A **short biographical note** on Homi Daji interviewed on May 24, 2003, at Indore (Madhya Pradesh) by Krishna Jha

I was born on September 5, 1926 in Bombay. Soon after the family shifted to Indore where after completing postgraduation, I graduated in law.

During my student days I was an active member of All India Students Federation (AISF). Till 1942, I took part in the agitations launched by the Indian National Congress. Thereafter, I joined the Communist Party of India. I was actively involved in the strikes launched against the arrest of the national leaders, and also in support of the rebellion of the sailors of the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) in which more than 350 workers were killed on the Bombay streets alone.

In 1946, the Praja Mandal of Indore held a massive demonstration for its demand of a responsible government. It was brutally crushed by the police. On behalf of the Mazdoor Sabha, I called for workers' strike against the police action. It was one of the biggest political strikes of workers in Indore. There were warrants issued against the labour leaders and I went underground.

It was only after two months that police could manage to arrest me along with several other trade union leaders of Indore. After I was released, I had to take the responsibility of the workers' movement as other senior leaders were still in jail. Soon Indore witnessed a series of workers' agitations on diverse issues ranging from demand for wage increase to the release of INA prisoners.

I was very active among textile workers of not only Indore but also of Ratlam, Ujjain, Bhopal and some parts of Rajasthan.

In 1957, I got elected to Assembly. In 1962, I became a member of Parliament.

In Parliament, I was along with the front-ranking leaders who proved instrumental in forcing the government to opt for the nationalisation of insurance companies between 1962 and 1964.

In the mean time I led a series of workers' struggles including those for the payment of wages during the lay off, securing casual leave and improving the working conditions. Time to time I also organised strikes demanding increments in the workers' wages. In these efforts, Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) often tried to oppose and sabotage the initiatives of the AITUC but I always managed to outmanoeuvre the INTUC leadership. We at Indore as also at Nagda and Amlai, succeeded in forcing through the workers' demands despite the opposition of the INTUC. Most of the time when there was a strike, along with other trade union leaders, we sought to mobilise support from other sections of the society so as to turn the agitation into mass movement.

I am still in saddle though I am paralysed and have suffered heart attacks. For me, "Communists never retire."

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Under Com Daji at Indore as also at Nagda and Amlai, the AITUC succeeded in forcing through the workers' demands despite the opposition of the INTUC. Most of the time when there was a strike, Com Daji and other trade union leaders also sought to mobilise support from other sections of the society so as to turn the agitation into mass movement.

Homi Daji is still in saddle though he is paralysed and has suffered heart attacks. According to him, "Communists never retire."