

Com Darshan Singh (Transcription of the interview of Com Darshan Singh on July 5, 20001 at Faridabad)

"I was born in Santpura in Lahore district on August 15, 1930. My father was a numberdar in the village and I was the first born. I studied in Wagah, Attari and finally in Lahore college when partition interrupted my education. The family migrated to Amritsar and settled there while I came to Delhi and joined polytechnical institute.

After completion of engineering course, I joined a factory but soon got retrenched as I could never tolerate injustices and had objected to the manhandling of a worker.

Later I got a job with a power house owned by Larsen and Toubro company. I had realised by then that usually workers were always at the receiving end. This led me to organise the workers spontaneously. The factory owners did not like it and discharged me.

My next job was in Bhakhra Nangal dam project. They had provided me a quarter also. As part of my duties, I was given a project to build a short bridge. It was my nature to meet the target before the scheduled time. To complete the task I never hesitated to slog alongwith my workers, but the other engineers felt humiliated if they had to share the same. They hated me for crossing the barriers. Finally I had a scuffle with an American senior engineer who tried to shout at me for joining the workers while they were toiling. I protested vehemently and finally chased him with an iron bar in hand.

It was too much for the management to tolerate and I was arrested and fired though even then I refused to leave the workers' cause.

In 1952, a massive strike was launched in Bhakhra project joined by all 15000 workers and continued for two months. All 32 leaders including me were arrested and jailed for one and half years.

When I was released in 1954, Com Bhan Singh Sajjan contacted and asked me to join the CPI. I became party member same year.

The Communist party organised a 13-day hunger strike against the displacement of families to construct fertiliser factory on the land and I was actively involved in the agitation.

It would be interesting to note here that Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the exiled Punjab terrorist was also a Communist Party member in Nangal in this period.

It was in this period that the panel suggested by Com Harkishen Singh Surjit was accepted though allegations of factionalism were levelled against them in the district council of Hoshiarpur.

In 1957, I became joint secretary of the state AITUC. In 1961, there was general unrest against the "Betterment Levy" imposed by the government on farmers. CPI opposed it and launched massive protest demonstrations of farmers joined by other strata also. All the communists in the state were rounded up and jailed. I had got married the same year and was arrested a week later.

In 1963, I came to Faridabad and started organising unions and the party from the scratches. I was asked to help Com Karam Singh and Com Veeran who themselves got trapped in factional squabbles. From 1967 to '72, I was engaged in reconstructing the movement in Faridabad. It was in this period that I had the opportunity to

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Chandigarh Transcription  
Summary Phase

visit the Soviet Union as part of a TU delegation.

In 1974, strike was organised in Escorts factory with no worker joining the duty. First hunger strike was also launched at the gate. There was section 144 and I was staying in Delhi with my comrades. The factory gate was blocked by women comrades and even police could not enter. The strike continued for four months.

In 1978, 'Land Grabbing' movement was launched with massive popular support. I was arrested along with others.

In 1979, in the famous battle of the workers against the police, with several workers getting killed, I had to face several charges and I went underground for four months.

In 1975, the party resisted the demolition of jhuggis and I was one among the team leaders.

As far as the new situation is concerned. I do not find it favourable for the workers. In Faridabad alone, in last two years, at least 50000 workers have been retrenched. Lock outs are common and 12-hour-shifts have been revived again after one and half a century defying all the gains of trade union movement.

I think that thrust of the trade union movement should be shifted to unorganised sector comprising 95 percent of the working population.

I support the cause of trade union unity but want to emphasise that there should be one union in one industry and it must be free from the political parties, management, and also from the government."

(17) Com Darshan Singh (Interviewed on July 5, 2001 at Faridabad)

Com Darshan Singh was born in Santpura in Lahore district on August 15, 1930. His father was a numberdar in the village and Com Darshan Singh was the first born. He studied in Wagah, Attari and finally in Lahore college when partition interrupted his education. The family migrated to Amritsar and settled there while Com Darshan Singh came to Delhi and joined polytechnical institute.

After completion of engineering course, Com Darshan Singh joined Hindustan Housing factory but soon got retrenched as he could never tolerate injustices and rebelled.

Later he got a job with a power house owned by Larsen and Toubro company. He had spontaneously organised the workers there and got fired again. His next job was in Bhakhra Nangal dam project. Here also he had a scuffle with an American senior engineer while protesting against injustices. This time he was arrested and fired though Com Darshan Singh refused to leave the workers' cause.

In 1952, a massive strike was launched in Bhakhra project joined by all 15000 workers and continued for two months. All 32 leaders including Com Darshan Singh were arrested and jailed for one and half years.

When Com Darshan Singh was released in 1954, Com Bhan Singh Sajjan contacted and asked him to join the CPI. He became party member same year.

The Communist party organised a 13-day hunger strike against the displacement of families to construct fertiliser factory on the land and Com Darshan Singh was actively involved in the agitation.

It would be interesting to note here that Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the exiled Punjab terrorist was also a Communist Party member in Nangal in this period.

It was in this period that the panel suggested by Com Harkishen Singh Surjit was accepted though allegations of factionalism were levelled against them in the district council of Hoshiarpur.

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In 1963, he came to Faridabad and started organising unions and the party from the scratches. He was asked to help Com Karam Singh and Com Veeran who themselves got trapped in factional squabbles. From 1967 to '72, Com Darshan Singh was engaged in reconstructing the movement in Faridabad. He went to Russia also in this period as part of a TU delegation.

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In 1975, the CPI resisted the demolition of jhuggis under the leadership of Com Darshan Singh.

As far as the new situation is concerned. Com Darshan Singh does not find it favourable for the workers. In Faridabad alone, in last two years, at least 50000 workers have been retrenched. Lock outs are common and 12-hour-shifts have been revived again after one and half a century defying all the gains of trade union movement.

He also observed that thrust of the trade union movement should be shifted to unorganised sector comprising 95 percent of the working population.

He supported the cause of trade union unity but emphasised that there should be one union in one industry and it must be free from the political parties, management, and also from the government.