

Satpal Dang, Cheharta (Amritsar)

Mr. Satpal Dang was born in Ramnagar, a small village in Gujranwala district, which is now in Pakistan. His father was a land owning peasant. He studied till 8th class in his village and Matric & Intermediate from Layallpur. For graduation he was sent to Govt. College Lahore. He was a leader from his school days. In Lahore he was elected as the General Secretary of the Lahore Students' Union with I.K. Gujral as its President. Later he became the G. Sec. of the Punjab Students' Federation, which was a part of AISF. In 1945 he was elected as the General Secretary of the All India Students' Federation and shifted to Bombay. During the time of independence he was in Prague sent by AISF to attend the 1st World Festival of Youth and Students. He continued to work in the students front till 1952. After that he chose to work in the working class center of Cheharta now in Amritsar, it had a separate municipal committee till 1970. It was a small industrial town with working class in majority. He started his career as a trade unionists there with Praduman Singh, Uttam Singh and others. The industries there were mainly textiles art silk and woolen. In 1955 he led major strike, it was a general strike which lasted for a number of days. In fact after the partition there was a vacuum in the working class movement which was in fact revived by the mid-1950s by the hard work of AITUC affiliated TUs. Many issues for the workers was won for e.g. gratuity was for the first time made available for the industrial workers in the textile workers in Cheharta and then this formula got accepted in the whole of Punjab and later all over India in Banks and all industries be it public or private. This was a unique achievement. Com. Satpal Dang was elected as MLA from Amritsar West and he represented the area for 12 years, he was also once Minister in the Gurnam Singh (CM) Government in Punjab.

One of the historical role played by Satpal Dang in the 1980s during the period of the Khalistan movement. The greatest success of the union and the overall working class movement during the terrorism period was that terrorists failed to divide the working class on Hindu-Sikh lines. example of how working class unity was maintained was the day after the DIG of Amritsar one Mr. Atwal was shot dead after his visit to the Golden Temple. The whole of Amritsar and Punjab was engulfed by a wave of terror and fear of the terrorists. In Amritsar a wave of panic spread everywhere. Nobody had the guts to raise a voice of protest or opposition to this kind of terrorism. All the people were really sullen. In such a situation the Textile Mazdoor Ekta Union and the CPI organized a procession to the Golden Temple where in front of it they raised slogans against terrorism and against dividing people on Hindu-Sikh lines. Due to these activities Com. Dang was on the top of the hit list of the terrorists.

After the 80s and even today Com. Dang is still engaged in the fight for the rights of the working class in Amritsar though he does not hold any formal post. He is a prolific writer

and his articles keep coming in the journals and newspapers. He continues to be a symbol of inspiration for the working class, peasantry, students, youth, and all progressive in general as a man who fought the most 'dangerous decades' in independent India's life and came out victorious with his message of socialism and communal amity.