

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE:- PHASE III (May 16th - July 31st, 2000) LIST. (20 TOTAL)

(1) Kameshwar Pandit, Shimla

He was born on 3rd Sept. 1923. His was an ordinary Kisan family. His father was educated as Shastri. Kameshwar Pandit got his education in Lahore and other places in Punjab. He also got his education in music. He ultimately became a lecturer, before becoming full time party and TU activist.

Entry into politics:

He came in contact with student politics while studying in Lahore. He became general secretary of Lahore Students Union (LSU). A book critical of communist manifesto made him sympathetic to the Manifesto. In 1946, he was doing monitoring service, recording, typing, etc and sending official broadcasts to Moscow.

Into TU movement

He used to go to Mughalsarai and other places to sing for railway, etc. workers. Ajoy Ghosh used to take his classes. His contacts with the workers increased and he ultimately began devoting lot of time to the workers movement.

Himachal areas earlier were dominated by small and big princely states with very little industrial development. Kameshwar Pandit came in contact with the agitation of Kasauli Breweries, whose workers were on strike. Many were put the princely states jail in Nalagarh. At around this time, Pandit came in contact with the famous leader of the region, Prakash Kapatia. He began to work regularly with Pandit in the T.Us in Himachal Transport union, municipal workers union, Hotel workers union, etc. He was equally active in the PE&SU and Shimla Hills PWD workers union, transport, etc. This was in 1953.

He also worked for and organized a paper called "Himjyoti", jointly run along with Congressmen. He was dismissed from his post of lecturer for his involvement in political and hospital/ sanatorium workers, produced a lot of cadres and leaders.

He was twice attacked physically with clear aim to kill, but he just managed to escape. His associate Kapatia was murdered in 1964. Pandit had personal surveillance trailing him for several years. Kameshwar Pandit was the main founder of the Punjab Subordinate Services Association in 1951-52. It was a powerful organization, and the subsequently formed Himachal Pradesh too had a strong Association. He also formed electricity and transport workers unions.

Himachal Pradesh was created on 1st Nov. 1966 as a result of the states' reorganization of Punjab and others. Pandit immediately got about organizing the working class of the newly formed state. He led the Kangra govt. employees, Kangra electricity workers, the teachers, etc. The teachers wanted Punjab pay scales.

In 1973, a big movement of the govt. employees took with his guidance and participation. The 1975 emergency days were harsh as many of his comrades jailed. He led and organized several struggles during that period despite adverse conditions. In 1978 was formed the Shimla TU and Employees' Council. Banks' and lot of govt employees participated under Kameshwar Pandits guidance.

In 1980 he concentrated on PWD workers. In 1985 there was a token strike of govt. employees and others in Shimla and other places. Police barriers came up all around Shimla. Even then a rally of about 10 thousand was brought out.

Veerbhadra Singh govt. falls in 1987 mainly due to this movement. But it conceded the demand of wage-rise with retrospective effect before it went out of office. The case for other categories went up to the Supreme Court (1991-92). It agreed for rise in minimum wages with effect from 1987, provided twenty years' of Service were completed. There were other memorable movements of the govt. employees under the leadership of Pandit.

(5)

Late Kameshwar Pandit (Himachal Pradesh)

(Phase III)

My date of birth is July 3, 1923 in I was born in an ordinary Kisan family. My father was educated as Shastri. I got my education in Lahore and other places in Punjab. I was also taught classical Indian music.

I came in contact with politics when I was a student in Lahore. I became the general secretary of Lahore Students' Union (LSU). I joined the British Government's Radio Monitoring Service, which involved recording, typing and sending broadcasts even to Moscow. I came in contact with the trade union movement basically in Mughalsarai. That was when I used to accompany the cultural squads there and sing for the railway workers. I came in touch with veteran trade union leaders and attended their classes.

Later I came in contact with the agitating Kasauli Breweries workers. They had gone on a strike. Those days, these areas of Himachal were dominated by princely states. Many of the agitating workers were put in the jail of princely state of Nalagarh. Kasauli became an important centre of trade union movement.

I began to work also among municipal, hotel and transport workers. I was equally active in Pepsu and Shimla Hills PWD workers' union among others in 1950s. I faced murderous attacks at least twice. Both attacks were serious but I survived. My associate Prakash Kapatia was murdered in 1964.

I also worked in a paper called Himjyoti. I was the main founder of the Punjab Subordinate Services Association in 1951-52. It was a strong organisation. I also worked among electricity and transport workers' union. After the formation of Himachal Pradesh as new state on November 1, 1966 I began to tackle problems related with the trade union movement in the new conditions. I organised the Kangra Government employees, Kangra electricity workers, teachers, and other categories of employees. The teachers wanted Punjab pay scales.

I want to add here that I had been a lecturer also and was removed because of my active involvement in the labour and political movement. A big movement of government employees was initiated under my guidance and participation in 1973. The emergency days of 1975 were very harsh and many of us were detained. I led many solidarity and release movements, apart from other struggles despite adverse conditions prevailing those days. I was also actively involved in the formation and activities of Shimla trade union and employees council. In 1980. I concentrated on PWD workers. In 1985, there was token strike of government employees and others. Police barriers came up all around Shimla. Even then a big rally of workers was brought out. We got huge gains out of the movement. Not only the government had to leave office but before leaving, it had to concede to our demand of wage rise and that too with retrospective effect.

I was involved with hydel-power workers movement also in Suringani, Kinnaur Sanjay Jheel project among others. The Bairasole workers were regularised after ten years of service, perhaps as nowhere else in the country.

I have been actively involved in holding positions at national level trade union organisations including AITUC.