

## **Raja Kulkarni (INTUC), Bombay**

A short biographical note on Raja Kulkarni (INTUC), interviewed on July 30, 2004 in Bombay

Raja Kulkarni was born in Jalgaon district on August 20, 1917. His thoughts were moulded and influenced deeply by great social reformer and political thinker Sane Guruji who was his teacher at the Pratap high school from where Raja passed his matriculation examinations.

Raja came to Pune to join college accompanied by Sane Guruji and got admission in SP college. Raja got involved in labour activities when the Quit India movement was launched in 1942. He was arrested and was in jail for 18 months. It was in jail that Sane Guruji selected a girl for Raja who was also in prison. Raja got married after he was released. Raja got his degree of masters in Economics in 1946 and responded to the call given by Sane Guruji to the educated youth of the country. He devoted his life to the service of the nation.

Raja has been working on the trade union front for last fifty five years. In the beginning he worked in the textile mills of Jalgaon but was soon sent to Bombay alongwith Ambekar. By 1946, he got away from the Congress party and joined the Socialist party formed by Jaya Prakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Deo. He joined the Socialist Party led trade union and became the General Secretary of Mill Mazdoor Sabha in 1949 and remained till 1959.

In 1959 he launched a 72-day-strike of two lakh textile workers in Bombay for the demands of bonus and against Bombay Industrial Relations Act (BIRA). Raja was in Jail for six months after that.

Soon Raja realised that textile mills had no future as it was not to contribute towards the development of the country. He considered it a dying initiative. He left for working among Petroleum and Chemical workers. He laboured hard to build up the union from local to national level.

In 1971, Raja Kulkarni was offered Congress ticket for Rajya Sabha membership by Mrs Indira Gandhi in recognition of his services. He won the elections from north east constituency of Bombay defeating the tall leader Major General Cariappa. He was in parliament from 1971 to 1977.

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