

## **P Anjaneyulu**

A short transcriptive note on P Anjaneyulu interviewed on September 24, 2004 in Vijayawada

I was born on 10 October, 1927 in Adlapadu village in Guntur district. My father was a farmer and we were Brahmins, the highest caste in the village and hence, I was made to study Vedas too alongwith the general school education.

In the beginning, I was impressed by Congress politics and took part in their activities in the "Quit India" movement. I tried to set afire Chirala railway station when I was arrested in 1942. Since I was a minor, police only warned me and released after seven days.

As I was studying in matric class I came in touch with the communists. I was nineteen and was politically anti-imperialist. I joined Communist Party in 1945. When the party took up arms against Nizam's rule, I too became active and went in hiding in the forest. In 1948, Communist Party launched a movement against the Congress government under BT Ranadive. I was arrested among other 100 comrades and detained for two years.

I came to Vijayawada in 1953 and joined trade union. I started organising rikshaw pullers who were living in inhumane conditions. In the years of Second World War, rikshaws pulled by men had been introduced, and since then it became a source of livelihood for many.

Soon, rikshaws pulled by the hapless poor drivers were replaced cycle rikshaws in 1951. Each rikshaw was priced at Rs 300. Small industrialists introduced these rikshaws first in Nagpur that became soon very popular.

In 1957, all rikshaw pullers in Vijayawada went on a strike that continued for 55 days. The rikshaws usually were taken on a rent of Re 1.25 per day by the pullers. The demand was to make it one rupee because even after pulling rikshaw from six am to seven pm. they could not earn enough. The demand had a popular support as people came out of their way to help them offering them food. All small industrialists helped these pullers. The rikshaw pullers were mainly from the other parts of the district, but none of them left the city.

The main struggle of the rikshaw pullers was against the licence system under Hackney carriage Act under which physical fitness card was imperative. They were all to be given licence according to an act that was formulated in 1853. The pullers coming from rural areas wanted to earn their livelihood by pulling rikshaw but without licence they were not allowed to do so. Even the rikshaw owners were poor and often pulled rikshaw. At the end of the struggle, the licence system was withdrawn.

As the union became stronger after the victory, I proposed to form a society by the rikshaw pullers. By then several of them came to the party like Sri Ramulu, Gore Kondarao and Pottaraju who was their leader. I am general secretary and treasurer of the society. The rikshaws are bought and given on rent at the rate of 75 paise per day as against the usual rent of Re 1. The society is run without profit and also without loss.

In Vijayawada, there are 10,000 rikshaw pullers and 5000 of them are with the AITUC. At least thousand of them became party members.

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