

## PREM BHASIN BY QURBAN ALI

Qurban Ali

Veteran freedom fighter and a great socialist leader, Prem Bhasin was born at Rawalpindi on 27th December 1917. He was educated at Rawalpindi and Lahore. He attended Karachi Congress (AICC) in 1931. Prem Bhasin joined the freedom struggle actively in 1939, after he secured his Master's Degree in Political Science and started to work as a full-timer of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP).

He came from a family of freedom fighters and took to revolutionary work under the direction of the Party. He was arrested in 1941 and was released in 1946. During the jail term he and other socialists went on a hunger strike in sympathy with the hunger strikers detained in the Deoli camp jail in Rajasthan under the leadership of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan. After release from jail, Prem Bhasin continued to work as party organiser in the Punjab and was elected to its National Executive Committee in the 5<sup>th</sup> Kanpur National Conference 1947. In the Nasik Conference of the Socialist Party in 1948, he was appointed as one of the Joint Secretaries, a post he held till 1953 and later from 1954 to 1963, when he was elected as General Secretary. In 1952, the Party took the name of Praja Socialist Party (PSP) as a result of unification with the KMPP and the Forward Bloc. He gave up that office in 1971 after the unification of the PSP with the SSP (In between he was Joint Secretary of SSP in 1964-65, briefly when S M Joshi was the President and Raj Narain was General Secretary). Thereafter, he was Chairman of the Parliamentary Board of the Party for a couple of years. He suffered incarceration on several occasions during 1947-1970.

Although he remained as a centre of contacts for workers during the internal Emergency imposed in 1975, he was not put behind the bars. In the 1977 parliamentary general election, he campaigned for Janata Party candidates in Assam and Orissa. He was offered Ambassadorship and Governorship in 1977, but he refused to accept the offer. He also turned down similar offers in 1990. Prem Bhasin was an ardent defender of civil liberties. He always supported the PUCL. As Editor of the Janata, English weekly for several years, he raised his powerful voice against the suppression of the democratic rights of the people.

Once, Prof. Madhu Dandavate described Prem Bhasin as a living encyclopedia of Socialism. Prem Bhasin retired from active politics in 1977. He passed away on 5 February, 2003. He penned the following books.

- 1) Socialism in India
- 2) Politics: National and International
- 3) Riding the Wave
- 4) Democratic Socialism; Profiles in Courage