

Contribution of Babu Jagjivan Ram in nation building

**RAKESH KUMAR RAM S/O MAKHAN RAM,
RESEARCH SCHOLAR,
PG DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, LNMU DARBHANGA, BIHAR**

Babu Jagjivan Ram was born on 05 April, 1908 on Sunday at about 4 am in Chandwa village of Arrah in Bihar. His father Shobhi Ram mother Basanti Devi, elder brother Sant Lal and sisters Bal Keshi, Ram Keshi and Ram Dashi. Shobhi Ram had chosen the name of his children himself his father Shobhi Ram by the Profession a farmer was by caste in 'Asprishya' or 'untouchable'. Jag Jivan was, thus, born to centuries old prejudices, social taboos and customs which made his world different from the world familiar to caste 'Chamar' in Hindus. As the name Jagjivan means 'Life of the Universe'. He was born in untouchable caste. He lived on the fringe of the Hindu village mostly engaged in his traditional occupation. The Chamars, the community to which belonged Shobhi Ram, were ordained to remove dead animals, slay their hides, and prepare shoes and other leather goods for the caste Hindu.

STIGMA OF UNTOUCHABILITY

It is difficult at times to understand the attitude of willingness, as it were, of this section to remain reconciled without creating a revolt it needs, to the oppression licensed by Society for centuries in blatant outrage of basic human dignity. The Jews timely submitted in hundreds of thousands to Gas Chamber in Hitler's Germany. History takes its own revenge when injustice and oppression are mutely witnessed by society. The very same tribe of Jews who allowed themselves to be choked to death by lakhs, without as much as a protest shown by dumb cattle at the abattoir have now become so militant that to-day they are menacingly threatening the world peace. It will be sheer hypocrisy to consider that this gave stigma of untouchability has been taken care of. One wonders for how long, despite all the pious

pretension to the country, this oppressed section of our country shall continue to be meted a treatment worse than the Gas Chambers installed by Hitler. They are treated as sheer dirt, and the attitude shown to them is worse than the one shown to the dead, though they are alive! And all this topper for the unpardonable sin of supposed humble ancestor as though another of superior pedigree have all the privileges as a matter of their choice! It is the struggle for this section in Babuji's public life I wish to deal with and highlight.

AS LABOUR MINISTER

When the Congress Ministry was formed for the first time in Bihar, Jagjivan Babu held the post of Parliamentary Secretary from 1937-39. He was called by Jawaharlal Nehru to take charge of the portfolio of Labour in the interim Central Government in 1947. He piloted several labour laws in the legislature. He was leader of the Indian Delegation to ILO Conference in 1951. He continued to be the Labour Minister till the year 1952 when he joined as Minister for Railways.

While priding over the Tripartite Indian Labour Conference, Jagjivan Babu stated that a wave of industrial unrest had been sweeping through the country. This was not an isolated Indian phenomenon, but a part of the general and industrial unrest that follows the end of every year. He suggested that the labour had legitimate causes. They have been subjected to considerable strain during the war period which had now been accentuated by the continued scarcities, shortage of houses and fear of unemployment, resulting from the contraction of wartime activities. The labour was thus entitled to reasonable condition of work and reasonable wages. Jagjivan Babu had said on many occasions that an industry had the right to exist if it cannot provide decent living standard to the workers. At the same time, he did emphasize too strongly the need for increased production. But, however, he emphasized that we should improve the condition for work which will increase productivity.

The industrial Disputes Act of 1947 was practically our first effective venture in the field of labour-management relations, particularly, compulsory arbitration. The experience that we have gained by working of the Act has encouraged us to believe that a more systematic, if somewhat elaborate, approach to the problems of labour-management relations, will pay good dividends. He dealt briefly with the Bill:

As Defence Minister

Babu Jagjivan Ram has been a valiant soldier of our freedom struggle and as a prudent statement after attainment in independence. He has become one of the distinguished sons of India. His in-ostensible way of living, demeanor and simplicity have made him one of the most popular leaders of the country.

But it was during the last Indo-Pakistan War that our people came to recognize his mettle, his dynamism, his courage, his capacity for quick and firm decisions. His brave words inspired the Jawans to give their best in the war and struck terror into the hearts of the enemy, nay; they entirely emasculated them and destroyed their military. He, thus, emerged powerful and shining like gold from fire and flames of the war.

The historic victory in the recent war is known to one and all into which the Pak-Military Junta wantonly compelled our Forces to enter by provocative acts of cruelty and aggression and whose termination has been regarded as a triumph for the Indian nation and the people of India under the inspiration, dynamic leadership and superior strategy of our Defense Minister Babu Jagjivan Ram. It is a victory not only for the nation and the people and for the great leadership, but for the precious ideals and principles of democracy like humanitarianism, universalism, so dear to our heart. The emergency of a new nation, Bangladesh is an eloquent and spontaneous testimony to the power and strength of 'DHARAM' which India has always stood for and upheld against rising tribes of 'ADHRAM'. Thus, since Babuji's assumption of the defense to Portfolio India's Armed Forces have gone from strength to strength.

As food and agriculture Minister

Food and Agriculture has been a number one problem in the country. Time and again, various Ministers came as Food and Agriculture Minister, but despite a long period of 27 years, after independence, this vital problem could hardly be solved. As a result, there had been sufferings to the millions of the masses in this country and despite shortages of foreign exchange, the heaviest import bill has been towards the purchase of grains, particularly, wheat, from various other countries of the world.

When Babu Jagjivan Ram became Food and Agriculture Minister, he made a real dent into this ferocious problem and during his tenure of office as such, the production in general

went up and miseries of the people were greatly minimized; although agriculture is subject to serious hurdles of nature beyond the control of human beings or the Govt. as the case may be.

Man of Constructive Approach and Originality

If I remember all right, I came into Shri Jagjivan Ram's contact first in 1942. I had seen Deshratna Dr. Rajendra Prasad at Sadaquat Ashram (Patna), in connection with my joining the Congress as a whole-time worker, in January 1942; and, after a few months, I began living as a inmate of the Ashram. During those days Shri Jagjivan Ram was General Secretary to the B.P.C.C with Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the President. Although much time has elapsed since then I can even now clearly visualize a mental picture of Shri Jagjivan Ram going to Sadaquat Ashram on a rickshaw, for his party work, and coming back on the same to his Kadam Kaun (Patna) house. During those days even Dr. Rajendra Prasad could be seen moving about on a tandem; for ordinary volunteers like us even a bicycle-ride was a luxury.

Crusader for the Oppressed

"it is not wealth nor ancestry but the nobility of the cause and the sincerity with which it is served by them that makes men truly Great"....

Babuji's deduction of the noble cause he has espoused all his life- the cause of the weak, the oppressed, the accursed being the victims of gross injustice of the Indian Society, of years which treated them as untouchables as well as his relentless 'Jehad' for their emancipation, are well known. His title is clear to be one amongst the greatest few beings, some of whom thought no more yet immortal, have striven at the cost of their lives to wean the Society away from false values of sheer barbarism, entrenched in more absurd and irrational nations nursed by prejudices of years, superstitions of centuries and pernicious traditions of generations. What really can be more monstrous than to refer to such a section of our fellow beings, our brethren, our kith and kin, as untouchables to treat them as such?

Down the long avenue of history of India's grim fight for freedom or, to put it bluntly, efforts to shake off the shackles of the British imperialism or struggle of a safe place in the World community, there is a galaxy of many men and many minds. Ours is a critical age which is described as confronting a crisis of having arrived at the hour of decision or standing at the

crossroads. In this age, men who have dedicated their lives to the cause of the country in the political and social platform Shri Jagjivan Ram merits prominence.

After the successful conclusion of his brilliant academic career, Shri Ram joined politics under the banner of Indian National Congress. He is one of the chief architects of modern India. He rightly felt that any development, worth the name, of Indian polity must depend on the emancipation of the poor and the suppressed from the fetters of poverty and social segregation. Every one of them should have a high place in the society and live with the dignity of men.

UNIQUE RECORD

His record as a Parliamentarian, I think, is unique in the annals of Parliament. I do not recall a single occasion when in his long Parliamentary career at the Center he has ever come into conflict with House. Of course, he had one advantage in that only an accomplished political but skilful parliamentarian. The impression that I have of Shri Jagjivan Ram is from the very beginning uniform. He knew that the key to success in Parliament is counters to the House. How often have Ministers under the House. As soon as he entered the House to participate in a debate or to pilot a Bill, he would instinctively sense the political currents pulsating in the House and form his own impression of the tone and tenor of the debate, initially he would on a number of occasion entrust the responsibility to his junior minister. He never suppressed them. He always give them a chance to show their worth. Even when a junior minister was in difficulty he would allow him to proceed for a while and intervene only with the House requested him to do so or he felt that it was necessary for him to retrieve the political situations and carry the Houses with him. He would hear all accounts about the feelings in the House, reports from the whips, but ultimately from his own judgment which was instinctive and I think correct. This is a very important parliamentary quality, because to the extent that you lack this quality you have to face the storms in the House. Shri Jagjivan Ram would move the House and ride the storm, as it were, without losing control of the situation.

A Nation Builder

The year 1936 is a landmark in the history of India's freedom struggle. In Lucknow that year was heard two great voices. One was the Jawaharlal Nehru proclaiming socialism as the only way to end poverty, misery and unemployment in the country. The other was that of young

Jagjivan Ram focusing the attention of the nation of the plight of untouchables and calling upon them to rise as a united force. Both the voices exhorted the people to look upon national independence as the precondition for realizing the higher goal of a classless and casteless society. While the former had the ring of authentic human sympathy, the latter had a fell of articulated personal experience. Jawaharlal Nehru had presided over the 49th session of the Indian National Congress held from April 12 to 14 and Jagjivan Ram was the President of All India Depressed Classes League Conference held on April 14 to 15.

Social Reformer:

Indian society has been a dividend society for centuries and social stratification has taken a settled form the worst aspect of which is the practice of untouchability. Only a person who has suffered the humiliation and indignity that it brings upon its victims can realize the importance of breaking it. Jagjivan Ram, in his inimitable style, set out the integral relationship between social, political and economic revolutions when he said “We want democracy and socialism. We dream of establishing a socialist society in the country but we forget that caste and democracy cannot exist together: caste will exist or democracy will exist, both cannot exist together. So long as caste continues, any talk of socialism is empty talk. Caste and socialism are in-compatible and so long as socialism and democracy are not established it is very difficult to establish human values in society.”

the past and none will over-helm him in future.

Torchbearer of Democracy

Babu Jagjivan Ram is a great believer in democracy. He has always fought for it. He has kept the flame of democracy burning in this country. Once again he has stood firm for democracy and the democratic values cherished by him all his life. In his statement issued to the press on February 2, 1977 at the time of his resignation from Mrs. Gandhi's Cabinet and from the Congress Party, he said, that “the Motherland calls once again to roared and preserve democracy, to protect human values so that India and India alone become strong and prosperous”. Indian democracy owes a debt to Babu Jagjivan Ram.

Contribution to Democracy:

During the nineteen months of Emergency the people this country had to undergo untold sufferings under an authoritarian rule. After the declaration of emergency on June 25, 1975, endless numbers of innocent persons were put behind the bars. The Constitutions was mutilated to meet certain personal objectives. The judiciary was mauled. A reign of terror was unleashed. Common man was breathing under suffocation condition of emergency. The basic tenets of democracy and socialism had disappeared. At such a critical juncture Babu Jagjivan Ram came forward to make an effective contribution to the cause of liberation and emancipation. His dissociation from the unholy authoritarian forces of the day, and a direct and challenging confrontation with them came as a big morale booster to the millions whose voice had been gagged. It was welcome by all those in India and abroad who had dedicated themselves to a democratic way of life. Babuji's decision was hailed by world press. In the political circles it was considered as, 'yet another expression of the strength of democratic sentiments in the country'.

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