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BABU JAGJIVAN RAM

John Quincy Adams said; that if your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader. Even though many people grow towards success, very few give something substantial to the world. One such person was Babu Jagjivan Ram, who paved the way for those who are from the depressed class. He not only inspired people from the depressed class but also gave them lasting souvenirs post-independence. He is a true National leader, seasoned parliamentarian, Union Minister, and Champion of the depressed strata words are not enough to describe the personality of Babuji.



Born on 5th April 1908 in a deprived village of Bihar, Babuji's father, Shobhi Ram, served in the British army and was posted in Peshwar. Shobhi Ram resigned soon due to his ideological differences with the British and turned towards spirituality and agriculture. Later his spiritual interest led him to become a Mahant of the Shiv Narayani Sect, where he wrote many books. Unfortunately, he passed away, leaving a young Jagjivan Ram, six years old at that time, and his wife, Vasanti Devi. But Jagjivan Ram was an exceptional student who grew up under the care and mentorship of his mother and village school headmaster Pandit Kapil Muni Tiwari.

Babuji was offered a scholarship for Harijans during his middle school in 1920 in Arrah. But he refused any special treatment and chose to compete fairly in the general category, which he

eventually bagged due to his hard work and intelligence. He loved reading so much that he would spend an hour in the library every day reading books on different subjects. Every morning he would walk three kilometers to Arrah railway station to read 'The Statesman' newspaper. He was fluent in many languages like Bhojpuri, Hindi, English, Bengali, and Sanskrit. But even with his talent, he was not void of facing discrimination.

The first time he faced discrimination was in 1922, at Arrah Town school, where there were separate pitchers for Hindu and Muslim students. Another pitcher was installed for those who are from scheduled castes, which Jagjivan Ram believed was injustice and a clear insult. He broke the pitcher twice before his revolt was taken in by the principal, who then ordered a common pitcher for everyone. However, this wasn't the end of the discriminatory behavior he faced. When Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya invited him in 1925 to study at Banaras Hindu University, there were many instances. The servants won't serve him; the barber won't trim his hair but the respect and charm he had in the students; the entire student body stands with him. Later they found a solution saying that each student does their work to support Jagjivan Ram. To avoid inconvenience to other students, Babuji left the hostel.

Against all odds, he cleared his Inter Science Examination and completed his B.Sc. with distinction from Calcutta University. During his education in Calcutta, he organized a mazdoor rally of 3500 people. Due to his huge success, he was bought into the limelight and to the notice of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He acquainted many other eminent freedom fighters like Chandrashekhar Azad and Manmath Nath Gupt. This skilled and accomplished young man who always wanted to become a Scientist could not think of only himself. This led him to sacrifice his ambition and work towards the progress of his Motherland and people from depressed classes.

A student with extraordinary capacity who organized several successful Ravidas seminars founded Akhil Bharatiya Ravidas Mahasabha in 1934, Calcutta. The purpose of this organization was to unite the depressed castes and involve them in the freedom struggle and social reformation. In 1934 an earthquake shook Bihar, where Jagjivan Ram worked tirelessly to provide food, shelter, medical aid, and clothing to the victims where he first met Mahatma Gandhi. The following year, on 1 June 1935, he married Indrani Devi, a freedom fighter and an educationist. She was Dr. Birbal's daughter, a renowned medical practitioner. The couple had Son Suresh and a daughter, Meira.

His political career started at 28 when he became a nominated member of the Bihar Legislative council in 1936. Since he never turned back, his career flourished more in 1942 when all the prominent Congress Leaders were under arrest for launching Quit India Movement. He organized a mass movement against the British in Bihar, leaving an impactful mark on everyone's heart. This caused his arrest from Patna on 19th August 1942. He launched Mission Shimla, defending the unity of India and leaving the British on edge. He introduced many policies and laws for Labor and their welfare. Some acts are still prevalent- The Minimum Wages Act, 1946; The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947; The Indian Trade Union (Amendment) Act; The Payment of Bonus Act etc.

He laid down the foundation of social security by enacting two essential acts, The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948; The Provident Fund Act, 1952. He believed that in the country's progress lies our progress; in its salvation lies our salvation, and in its emancipation lies our emancipation.

In the years to come, he looked after numerous ministries with one thought in his heart, the love for Motherland.

1. As a Minister of Communication (1952-1956), he Nationalized private airlines and spread postal facilities to the remotest villages.
2. As a railway minister (1956-1962), he Modernized railways giving new momentum to the expansion of railways in the country.
3. As a Food and Agriculture Minister (1967-1970), he pulled the country out of the clutches of severe drought, heralded the Green Revolution, and made India self-sufficient in food for the first time.
4. Holding the Defense Ministry (1970-1974), He changed the political map of the world, he created history by liberating Bangladesh, and the then Pakistan Army surrendered flatly. He kept his word to the people of India that war would not be fought on a single inch of Indian soil.
5. As a Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation (1974), He took charge of PDS and ensured that ration was available to the masses at a reasonable price.
6. Along with the Deputy Prime Minister (24 January 1979), he also took charge of the Defense Ministry.

Babuji was a commendable politician, a seasoned person who inspired many. He also made lives better for the depressed classes through the laws he passed, giving them what was rightfully theirs. He once appealed to the depressed classes:

“To struggle for a ‘socially interdependent society’ which would be so revolutionized that they could participate in it on terms of equality of rights and obligations.”

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