

ADDRESSES* AT THE UNVEILING OF THE STATUE OF SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM

On 25 August 1995, a statue of the former Deputy Prime Minister of India and eminent parliamentarian, Babu Jagjivan Ram was unveiled at the Entrance Hall of the Lok Sabha Lobby in Parliament House by the President of India, Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma. The statue has been sculpted by the renowned artist, Shri Ram Sutar.

The ceremony was followed by a meeting in the Central Hall which was attended by a distinguished gathering. President, Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma, the Vice-President and Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Shri K.R. Narayanan, the Prime Minister, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, the Speaker, Lok Sabha, Shri Shivraj V. Patil and the daughter of Shri Jagjivan Ram, Smt. Meira Kumar addressed the gathering on the occasion.

The texts of the Addresses delivered on the occasion are reproduced below.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, DR. SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA**

Shri K.R. Narayanan, Honourable Vice-President of India, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister of India, Shri Shivraj V. Patil, Honourable Speaker, Respected Smt. Indrani Ramji, Honourable Members of the Union Council of Ministers, Leaders of the Opposition, Honourable Members of Parliament, Respected Freedom Fighters, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have gathered here today to pay our respects to Babu Jagjivan Ram, a champion of human rights and dignity and one of the great social reformers of our time. As a representative of the masses, a member of our Constituent Assembly and of successive Parliaments and Governments, Jagjivan Ramji had a profound influence in shaping contemporary India. The vast majority of our countrymen will remember him as an indomitable fighter who struggled to eliminate the oppression of the millions. For those till then resigned to remaining backward and neglected, he was their emancipator, their saviour

* *The Journal of Parliamentary Information*, Volume XL, 9 No. 4, December 1995, pp. 353-364.

**At a function in the Central Hall of Parliament after unveiling the statue of Jagjivan Ram on 28 August 1995.

and the symbol of their hopes. In honouring him today, we affirm our national commitment to human rights and social justice.

Jagjivan Ramji was the product of our national struggle. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom movement acquired a new meaning and shook the very foundations of our society as it mobilized the masses. It awakened and inspired millions and unleashed new social and economic forces. It was in this context that Jagjivan Ramji came in contact with the tallest of our leaders: Mahatma Gandhi, Panditji, Rajendra Babu, Netaji and others.

If the leaders of our Independence movement recognized Jagjivan Ramji's potential, it was the great events of our times that allowed it to flower in full. Associated with the 1928 Calcutta Congress, Babuji witnessed the declaration of Purna Swaraj by Panditji at Lahore in 1929. Drawn into the underground movement, he used his organisational abilities to spread the message of freedom and liberty. He was imprisoned as an individual satyagrahi in 1940, and once again, when he was in the front ranks of the Quit India Movement. These years of struggle were the defining experience for Babuji and imbued in him a deep sense of service to the masses.

The national movement led to considerable introspection as to why a nation, as great as India, became so enfeebled that it fell prey to foreign rule. Widely recognized among the causes of stagnation was the caste system, with its inequities and its injustice. Mahatma Gandhi spoke thus of its effect on our society: "Soil erosion eats up good soil. It is bad enough. Caste erosion is worse; it eats up men and divides men from men." Fighting casteism became intrinsic to our national revival and Jagjivan Ramji helped to give it a concrete shape.

It is not easy to appreciate today what effort it must have required to have overcome the hierarchical barriers of a caste-ridden society. It took a fighter like Babuji to break out of the shackles which had enslaved so many of our brethren. At the Benaras Hindu University, he organized a protest against social discrimination and chose to leave its hostel rather than bow to its caste pressures. This assertion by him of the basic principle of human dignity was a watershed in a life devoted to securing human rights and justice for all. Jagjivan Ramji soon established himself as the authentic spokesman for the suffering and the oppressed. He participated in Bapu's anti-untouchability movement, became Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and organized the All India Depressed Classes League. Even the colonial power acknowledged Babuji's position as an outstanding representative of the weaker sections.

The faith of the poor, the needy and the oppressed in the Congress party was, to my mind, in no small measure, due to Babuji's rise as a leader of

national stature. His position may be gauged from a note of Mahatma Gandhi written on 2 September 1946. It states: "Since after the prayer, I have been thinking only about you people. Abolish salt tax, remember Dandi March, bring together Hindus and Muslism, remove untouchability, adopt Khadi." The note was addressed to Jagjivan Ramji, Sardar Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

The securing of Independence in 1947 paved the way for national reconstruction. Jagjivan Ramji made a historic contribution to this end, one guided by a vision of India where growth would be accompanied by social justice. "The freedom that we have today cannot be called real freedom", he noted, "because it is only political freedom. It has no meaning for the masses. It has no use for them, unless their standard of living is raised, their problems of poverty, proper food, clothing, housing are solved; exploitation, injustice and oppression in every shape and form become a thing of the past and they get all necessary opportunities for their all-round development."

During his long and distinguished career as a public servant, Jagjivan Ramji held numerous responsibilities. But in each of them, he sought to improve the lot of the weakest and the most vulnerable in our society. As the first Labour Minister of free India, he was responsible for legislation which went a long way in ensuring better working conditions for our toiling masses. His contribution to the Minimum Wages Act, the Employees' State Insurance Act and the Industrial Disputes Act will be long remembered. He took up the issue of bonded labour, working conditions in mines and securing welfare benefits for the working class with extraordinary commitment. In his words, "Real Swaraj lies in reinstalling the worker in the field and factory to his rightful place in society."

The same concern for the working masses is manifest in the policies which Babuji directed in later years. As Minister of Railways and Transport he did much for employment generation. As the Food and Agriculture Minister, he oversaw the Green Revolution which laid to rest for ever the spectre of famine. As Defence Minister, we all remember his direction of the victorious defence of our motherland. His contribution included improvements in the service conditions of our jawans.

Jagjivan Ramji represents the full participation of the people in their governance. He never forgot his humble origins and indeed was proud of them. I still remember that speaking in 1971 in a public meeting, he said: "It is because of democracy that today," the words he used were, "Today, the son of a *chamar* is the Defence Minister of the country". Give a serious thought to these words, which are so meaningful. So proudly did he say that he was the son of *chamar*. What he meant was that there was nothing to be worried

about, whatever be your station of birth. He was of the firm belief that in a democracy anyone could reach great heights. He wanted every Indian to have self-confidence so that the foundations of democracy became stronger. His words have left such an impact on me that they keep echoing in my mind time and again.

Through his achievements, this pride was transmitted to countless others, strengthening their awareness of their rights. He was a powerful voice against the indignities which a fifth of India has to face in their daily life. As a true nationalist, he was conscious that a country is as strong as its weakest sections. He spared no effort in formulating programmes which would rid them of the disabilities and discrimination, for long a part of our tradition. An advocate of reservation, he emphasized that this will generate a belief in the backward communities, who constitute the majority of population in this country, that opportunities for self-advancement even during the period of transition and creation, are not being denied to them. Then they will cooperate wholeheartedly and willingly in the creation of the new life and the new order.

Jagjivan Ramji signifies our commitment to a vision of a just and humane society, where the dignity of each individual would be equally respected. His achievements are the story of the change which has taken place in our society in this century, one which is still taking place and which, it is our duty to carry forward.

Fifteen years ago, Jagjivan Ramji wrote his book *Caste Challenge in India*, where he noted:

“The liberation struggle of the Scheduled Castes has begun. There are many hurdles and impediments in the way. The fight is unequal. But struggle we must without any respite and without a pause. We must liberate ourselves for in our liberation lies the emancipation of mankind.”

Let us all pledge to realize these words and this vision of Babuji and all the freedom fighters. Thank you.

Jai Hind.

**ADDRESS BY THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF INDIA AND
CHAIRMAN, RAJYA SABHA, SHRI K.R. NARAYANAN**

*Respected Rashtrapatiji, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament and Friends:*

Today Babu Jagjivan Ram has joined the immortals of modern Indian history in the precincts of the Parliament of India. An exceptional personality who sprang from the common soil of this land, Babuji carved out a niche for

himself in our history through sheer merit, hard struggle and dedicated service to the nation. Plunging himself into the nationalist movement when a young man, he remained in the thick of the freedom struggle and national politics to the very end of his life. Describing him as a priceless jewel Mahatma Gandhi once said of him: "My heart goes out in respectful admiration to Jagjivan Ram for his having emerged as the purest gold out of fire."

Jagjivan Ram's nationalism was the product of his ardent desire to serve the suppressed and oppressed masses of India. His political work revolved around his mission as a social reformer bent upon abolishing untouchability and the graded inequalities of the caste system. During the freedom struggle he was a rallying point for the rights and aspirations of the depressed classes and he conceived the reform of the social order as an integral aspect of the country's struggle for Independence. He believed in the validity of the Gandhian way of moral revolution in our society and in the Nehruvian method of social and economic change to usher in a socialistic pattern of society. He believed that the salvation of India lay in a combination of these two methods of approach to the problem of transforming and modernizing Indian society.

Babu Jagjivan Ram had the unique privilege of participating in the heroic saga of the freedom struggle and in the hard and intensely practical task of developing and modernizing India after Independence. In the latter capacity also he emerged as "the purest gold out of fire", to use Gandhiji's phrase. He emerged as an outstanding administrator who is acknowledged as one of the builders of modern India. For nearly three decades he functioned as a Cabinet Minister in independent India holding important portfolios of the Ministries of Labour, Communications and Transport, Railways, Food and Agriculture and Defence. It has been said that nobody is a hero to his valet. There are few Ministers who have had the privilege of being heroes to their civil servants and being genuinely respected and adored by them for their versatile ability and sincere dedication to the task before them. In the Labour Ministry he was a symbol of social change and he laid the foundations of social security legislation in India. He was the moving force behind the Minimum Wages Act, the Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund and the Employees' State Insurance Corporations. These progressive legislations emanated from his abiding concern for social justice and social change. As the Minister for Communications and as the Minister of Railways he spread the network of post offices and rail lines throughout the country, bringing the people closer together as citizens of one nation. It was during his tenure as the Minister of Food and Agriculture that for the first time India achieved victory in the battle against hunger. Jagjivan Ram led the nation through the Green Revolution demonstrating the possibility of self-reliance in foodgrains in a country as big as India with an exploding population growth. Jagjivan Ram's finest hour as a Minister was when he was in charge of the Defence portfolio

during the Bangladesh crisis. He was a co-architect of the military and political victory in that crisis.

Jagjivan Ram's political and social philosophy is as noteworthy as his achievements as freedom fighter, politician and statesman. We find the philosophy expounded succinctly in his Presidential address to the 73rd Session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay in December 1969. Indulging in a bit of self-criticism, he said: "It has been our bitter experience that abridgment or denial of internal democracy has inevitably resulted in the emergence of 'bossism". Analysing the political crisis, he said that the seeds of it "which were there in the social order has been accentuated by greater politicisation of the people and the desire of each segment to maintain or secure the benefits of political power a necessary concomitant of implanting of democratic institutions on social framework permeated by cultural backwardness". He added with his fervent faith in democracy and I quote: "The way out is not the restriction of democracy but its expansion, and if I may say so, culturalisation".

On the political and social predicament of India, he observed and I quote:

"Many of our erstwhile colleagues are afraid of the spectre of Communism. The spectre of casteism is perhaps more dangerous, because it is a widely prevalent malady, inherent in our social order, in our attitudes, beliefs, behaviour. Inter-caste, inter-regional, inter-religious tensions are fundamentally of the same genre."

He pleaded for a cultural transformation of Indian society and the opening of a section in the AICC which will be wholly non-political, "which will create a forum for social scientists to meet and plan a campaign for the much needed mental revolution. Revolutions, even social ones after all, begin in the minds of men". And he added: "I have always maintained that the problems of the Scheduled Castes and Tribals cannot be fully appreciated much less solved except in the framework of radical reorganisation of the socio-economic order".

There is much in this statement of Jagjivan Ram for us to ponder over today.

It has been recounted how Babu Jagjivan Ram when a High School student in Bihar in 1922 faced different pitchers of drinking water kept in school for Hindus, Muslims and untouchables, and how he broke the pitcher meant for untouchables and insisted upon drinking water out of the other pitcher, and how the Headmaster yielded to his insistence. Is it not an irony of tragic dimensions, that today, in a school in India, a Dalit girl student was beaten up and blinded by the teacher because she directly took water from the pitcher and drank it to quench her thirst. Nearly 80 years ago Jagjivan Ram

got away with his rebellion against caste discrimination in his school in contrast to what happened to the Dalit girl in the school today. While installing the statue of Jagjivan Ram in the Parliament House all of us will have to do some soul-searching in regard to this state of affairs, despite the social and economic progress the country has made and is making today.

Thank you.

**ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO**

Revered Rashtrapatiji, Respected 'Upa-Rashtrapatiji, Mr. Speaker, Meiraji, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is a special and significant day for our Parliament. The unveiling of the statue of Babu Jagjivan Ram in Parliament by the Rashtrapatiji, is our humble tribute to a great builder and illustrious son of modern India. Babu Jagjivan Ram's life and work symbolised the hopes, aspirations and achievements of the people, especially those belonging to the weaker sections. His statue will be a continuous source of inspiration to strengthen our democracy, build a casteless society and work for the uplift of the downtrodden poor.

Babuji dedicated his life in the service of the nation and stood out as a staunch freedom fighter, committed labour leader, competent parliamentarian, mature administrator but above all a very humane and popular leader.

Babuji was one of those distinguished sons of India who rose from humble beginnings to occupy some of the most important positions at critical junctures. It was remarkable that at each of those junctures his contribution was of a lasting nature. However, he never allowed his position to come in the way of his close contact with the people. All through he continued to remain a smiling picture of humility, yet behind that humility was a towering personality of grit, determination and conviction. He, therefore, could give a decisive push to all the tasks entrusted to him.

Babu Jagjivan Ram was born in the small village of Chandwa in the undivided district of Shahabud in Bihar in 1908. As he grew up, the freedom movement was gaining momentum. He was a bright student and passed the Matriculation examination in the first division with hundred per cent marks in Mathematics. He went to study at the Benaras Hindu University and took his B.Sc. degree from the Calcutta University. It was a triumphant achievement for a student with his background in those days of social stratification. He had shown that with his hard work and determination he could overcome the social disabilities and become an inspiring example for the whole nation.

Young Jagjivanji was profoundly influenced by Gandhian philosophy. After completing his studies he took up the challenge of working for the poor and the downtrodden. He got close guidance from Rajendra Babu. He soon became a strong champion of the working class. Even at that young age, he made a lasting impression as a sagacious leader and exponent of the problems of the depressed classes.

His devotion and commitment was soon recognised. He was nominated a member of the Bihar Legislative Council. He was elected to Bihar Legislative Assembly in 1936 and was appointed Parliamentary Secretary in Dr. Shri Krishna Sinha's Ministry. Everyone was impressed by his confidence and maturity at such a young age. He was now fully in the vortex of the freedom movement. He was arrested in 1940 and in 1942 for participation in the Quit India Movement.

By this time his qualities of leadership and commitment to the cause of the poor were recognised at the national level. Babu Jagjivan Ram joined the Interim Government as Labour Minister in September 1946 and continued to hold the portfolio till 1952 under the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. His familiarity with the problems of the working class helped him in formulating a number of welfare measures and laws in their interest.

His administrative ability left a lasting impression on the Labour Ministry. Pandit Nehru recognised his administrative acumen and entrusted to him Ministries which would provide basic infrastructure for the development of the country. Thus he held vital portfolios of Transport and Communications during 1952-56 and then became Railway Minister. Whenever Pandit Nehru felt the need for improvement he entrusted that task to Babuji.

His most outstanding achievement was as Agriculture Minister and then Defence Minister under the Prime Ministership of Mrs. Gandhi. He ushered the country into the Green Revolution laying the foundations of self-sufficiency in food. He used his pragmatic approach to increase the agricultural production and gave remunerative prices to the farmers. As Defence Ministry he provided excellent leadership in the 1971 conflict and was a major source of support to the dynamic leadership of Mrs. Gandhi.

It is a remarkable feature of Babuji's life that in each and every position held by him, he made a notable contribution and left a mark which is remembered till today.

I have been told by some officers in several Ministries that the notings of Babuji were a classic example to follow for Ministers in the Government of India—so crisp, so correct and so sane. His advice and guidance gave a new fillip and direction to the administrative policies in the interest of the people and the nation.

Babuji was a man of few words. But what he spoke reflected his in-depth understanding of the issues and a very considered, mature view. He was always listened to with rapt attention and with respect in the House. His arguments were cogent and concise.

Babuji was a mass leader. He had the support of the people from different sections of the community. He had effectively broken the caste barrier. Thus he provided a unique leadership for the uplift of the downtrodden and the cause of social justice.

Today we have come a long way. However, I believe that we must continue to work for building a secular and casteless society. The task will not be accomplished till we remove the last traces and vestiges of casteism and narrow sectarianism and ensure equal opportunities to all without any disabilities. This will be a real tribute to Babu Jagjivan Ram.

It is a matter of joy that his statue will now adorn the Parliament and inspire all of us to build a progressive and prosperous nation.

Thank you.

**ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER, LOK SABHA,
SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL**

We are grateful to the respected Rashtrapatiji for unveiling the statue of Shri Jagjivan Ram and for agreeing to address this distinguished gathering. We are beholden to respected Upa-Rashtrapatiji and respected Pradhan Mantriji for gracing this occasion and agreeing to address this audience. We are thankful to the Honourable Ministers, Governors, Leaders of the Opposition, Leaders of different parties, members of Parliament, members of the Diplomatic Corps and the members of the media for their presence here on this memorable occasion.

The statue of Babu Jagjivan Ram has been presented to the Parliament by the Jagjivan Ashram Trust. For this gesture, we thank the Trust. We are thankful to Shri Ram Sutar, the sculptor, for this fine work of art. We extend a very cordial welcome to all ladies and gentlemen to this function.

Today, we have installed in the precincts of this historic Parliament House, the statue of one more illustrious son of India, Late Babu Jagjivan Ram, who was a rare combination in himself of a loved leader, astute statesman, skilled parliamentarian and an able administrator. Babuji, as he was affectionately called, attained eminence and esteem by his hard work and dedicated service to the people over the decades.

Babuji was born and brought up in humble backgrounds. This, however, did not deter him from pursuing his education. Soon, he was drawn into the

freedom struggle. Greatly inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, he too plunged into the liberation movement. Troubled by the thought that the backward classes were the victims of various prejudices and social disabilities, Babuji devoted himself wholeheartedly to the amelioration of their conditions from the days of his youth. With utmost dedication to the Gandhian philosophy and the cause of the downtrodden, he became a leading figure in the State politics and soon emerged on the national scene. What had distinguished Babuji's leadership was the humility and the greatness personified in him. His indomitable spirit and ceaseless efforts in the service of the nation, commendable organisational capacity and sincerity of purpose earned him a pride of place in the first Cabinet of independent India.

In his long and eventful parliamentary career spanning over the most momentous phase of Indian history, as a front-rank national leader Babuji commanded the loyalty and respect of the vast majority of the people in all walks of life. Fearlessness and dedicated championship of the people's causes dominated his distinguished career. His greatest asset had been his capacity to carry the House with him which, indeed, speaks volumes of his personal qualities.

Jagjivan Ramji had almost an unbroken ministerial career over three decades. He held a succession of major portfolios, including Labour, Communications, Railways, Food and Agriculture and Defence. Some of the landmarks of his ministerial career include the vast agricultural output and food production, the Green Revolution, the nationalization of air transport and Bangladesh victory, not to forget the legislative measures in labour welfare and other fields for a better social order.

By his administrative acumen, pragmatic approach and deep insight into the national life, Babuji brought resounding success to each one of the portfolios he held. A legend has grown that whichever Ministry Babuji had taken up, he brought good luck to it.

In his long public life, Babuji served his country in varied positions with utmost dedication and staunch commitment. Babuji's is a shining example of a life dedicated to the country and the cause of social and economic justice.

Today India needs men and women of his vision and calibre to be able to translate the dreams into reality. On this occasion, we pay tributes to his memory from the core of our hearts. His valued services to the nation will always be remembered. The statue of Babu Jagjivan Ram in the Parliament House Complex would inspire us all to rededicate ourselves to the noble ideals deeply cherished by this great son of India.

Thank you.

ADDRESS BY SMT. MEIRA KUMAR

Honourable President, Vice-President, Prime Minister, Speaker, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament and Friends:

It is a great honour for me to be present here on behalf of the Jagjivan Ashram Trust which has presented Babuji's statue for installation in the Parliament and which respected President has just unveiled.

"Babuji", as he was affectionately and respectfully called by the entire country, sat the longest in this august House which guides the destiny of 900 million people.

He first came here on 2 September 1946 to join the Interim Government as Labour Minister. There were 12 Ministers in the Interim Cabinet with Wavell as the Viceroy. He was the youngest in the Cabinet. Following the Cabinet Mission plan, Wavell had earlier invited Babuji on 16 June 1946 to join the Interim Cabinet which he had refused on the ground of Wavell's failure to include a nationalist Muslim like Maulana Azad in the Cabinet and for inadequate representation to the untouchables.

Babuji's parliamentary career began way back in mid-1936 as member of the Bihar Legislative Council. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, when elections were held for the first time, he won unopposed to the Bihar Legislative Assembly in December 1936. He was candidate of his own organisation, the Indian Depressed Classes League. He also fielded 14 more candidates of the Depressed Classes League and made sure that they too won unopposed to the Assembly. Thereafter on the invitation of the Congress Party, Babuji with his 14 MLAs joined the Congress. He was then only 28 years old.

The next elections were held in 1946 which again Babuji won unopposed. On both the occasions, his constituency was East-Central Shahabad which was later reconstituted as Sasaram. After Independence, Babuji won all the eight elections of 1952, 1957-when he won unopposed for the third time-1962, 1967, 1971, 1977, 1980 and 1984. He never changed his constituency of Sasaram. From 1936, till his death in 1986, his uninterrupted parliamentary career spans over half a century which is unparalleled anywhere in the world. Of the 12 leaders who joined the Interim Government in 1946, he was the only one who continued to dominate the national scene for 40 years. Other leaders either came later or left earlier.

He was one of the Founding Fathers of the Constitution. Being on all the important Committees of the Constituent Assembly, he made invaluable contribution towards liberal and progressive provisions of the Constitution.

He was in the Cabinet for thirty years as Minister and later as Deputy Prime Minister. As Labour Minister he laid the very foundation of the Labour Policy. As Communications Minister he carried out the first ever nationalisation and established Air India and Indian Airlines. As Railway Minister he presented all six budgets without the slightest raise in the passenger fare. He took over as Food Minister amidst the worst drought of the century. Not only did he make India self-sufficient in food for the first time but also ushered in the Green Revolution. In 1971, when the dark clouds of war gathered on the Indian horizon, with his expert handling of the defence forces, in a matter of two weeks, he created history as well as changed the geography. That was the only war India has ever won and Bangladesh was born.

These are a few of his many spectacular achievements which are no longer limited to the confines of history but have passed on to the realm of legend. As a daughter I should be very proud of them. But believe me when I say that these achievements pale into insignificance in comparison to his one single decision made at a very young age. And that was to plunge into the freedom struggle led by the Mahatma.

Those days, under their policy of divide and rule, the British left no stone unturned to win over the few educated and promising young men from among the untouchables who in turn would convince the downtrodden to support the British. Seeing his tremendous potential and influence, they made the best of offers to Babuji. But, he preferred to be in the British Jails rather than sit in the Viceroy's Council. And I am proud of that choice. For me nothing could have been a greater shame than to have a father who joined the British and nothing is a greater honour than to be a freedom fighter's daughter.

On the strength of his grit, intellectual vigour and commitment to quintessential human values he forged ahead. But social prejudices and obscurantist forces always operated against him, denying him what he rightfully deserved. As a result, those who used to swear by social justice stood exposed. Those teeming millions of the disinherited who used to dream of their share in the real ultimate power felt betrayed. He was not only an individual, he was the symbol of social change, when the doors were shut at him, the doors were actually shut at social change. All along he fought to bring light into the lives of those born like him in poverty and incapacitating humiliation. If today there is some semblance of awakening and courage in the meek and the feeble, behind it are years of his untiring crusade for the cause.

He was a man of action and he was a dreamer of dreams. He dreamt of establishing a casteless, classless society. Just as there can be Parliament only in a democracy, there can be true democracy only in a casteless society. Caste

system and democracy are incompatible. Today, when Babuji's statue has been unveiled in the Parliament, I hope and pray that a strong wind of social change will sweep through our country and force open all those doors which have hitherto remained shut.

On behalf of the Jagjivan Ashram Trust, my mother and myself, I express our deep appreciation and gratitude to Honourable Speaker Shri Shivraj Patil for his thoughtful decision to install Babuji's statue. We are indebted to the Honourable President for agreeing to unveil the statue. We are grateful to the Honourable Vice-President and respected Prime Minister for gracing this occasion. We are thankful to the sculptor Shri Ram Sutar for making the statue. I extend greetings and good wishes to all present here.

Thank you.

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