

BABU MOOL CHAND JAIN - A POLITICAL LEADER WITH A DIFFERENCE

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Late Babu Mool Chand Jain was a brilliant student, a principled legal practitioner, a brave Congress worker, a fearless freedom fighter, a great organizer, a champion for the cause of poor, a great parliamentarian, an able administrator, one of the creators of Haryana State, a vehement opponent of authoritarianism and a true Gandhian. Above all, he was a good human being.

Despite his birth in a lower middle class trading caste Jain family of modest means, he was able to do graduation from the prestigious SD College, Lahore and acquire LLB degree from Punjab University located at the same place because of the scholarships that he had won at the primary, middle and high school stages and during the course of higher studies. It was indeed a great feat for a boy born in a remote village of Gohana Tehsil of Rohtak District (now in Sonapat) as he hailed from a very backward region of Punjab having subsistence agriculture and which was socially, culturally, educationally and economically lagging far behind the rest of the province.

After completing his education, he started his career as a legal practitioner at Gohana in 1933, but subsequently shifted to Karnal in 1941. As an advocate, he remained a pleader for the poor. Instead of trying to make money. He was, indeed, a legal practitioner with a difference who always argued for the just causes and against injustice.

After his exposure to the ideals of the national movement in general and of Mahatma Gandhi in particular, he joined the Congress party in 1938. He proved himself to be a brave Congress Worker. Even the brutal attack on him by the workers of the Unionist party, popularly known as the Zamindara League, at Assudha in Rohtak district (now in Jhajjar) in 1939, could not break his spirit and he continued to serve the party with full dedication and without fear. It indeed required great courage as Rohtak was at that time a stronghold of the Unionists because the peasant leader of that party, Sir Chhotu Ram, belonged to this district.

Babuji was, undoubtedly, a fearless freedom fighter. He participated in Individual Satyagrah in 1941 and the Quit India Movement in 1942 and had to spend more than 13 months in Jail at Multan (now in Pakistani Punjab). As a matter of fact, he remained a brave freedom fighter from 1938 to 1947 and did not bother about his legal practice.

Mr Jain also proved himself to be a great organizer. He built the Congress organization in Karnal district from a scratch. It was indeed a daunting task. The Congressmen of the district were a badly divided lot due to factionalism in the groups of Gopi Chand Bhargav and Bhim Sen Sachar. Moreover, the landowning communities of the district were under the influence of the Zamindara Party that had

been formed by the old Unionists after the Independence. Furthermore, the entry of a powerful group of the old Unionists comprising of Ch. Randhir Singh a Jat leader of Ghogripur, Rao Narsingh Dass, a Gujjar leader of Keorak, Babu Anant Ram a Ror leader of Kaul (Pundri), Sardar Jasmair Singh a Sikh leader of Nariangarh (Shahbad) and Kanwar Randhir Singh a Rajput leader of Lukhi (Thanesar), had made it all the more daunting to him. They controlled the cooperative Institutions and District Board of the district. This group made all out efforts to get Babuji discredited in the eyes of the Congress High Command. They fraudulently got signed a circular asking the Non-Jats to get the help of the Congress as per directions of the High Command. It is a different matter that the then Superintendent of Police(Karnal), Mr. DR Mehta, was able to know the truth and report it to the Government. Not only this, Babuji had to face great opposition from the Punjabis in the urban areas because they were under the influence of the Jan Sangh which had been floated in 1951 as the political front of RSS. But he remained unnerved and contributed a great deal to the success of the Congress candidates from Karnal district for the Punjab Legislative Assembly and for the Karnal-Ambala Double Member Parliamentary Constituency in 1952 elections. This was no mean achievement, because of the Gopi Chand Bhargva from the Congress, on the eve of these elections had weakened the party in Karnal district.

Babu Mool Chand Jain was also committed to the cause of the downtrodden. He kept on fighting for the cause of the poor. Babuji not only defended them free of charge in the courts, but also raised their voice against atrocities on them. He not only led an agitation of the tenants against their ejection from the land but also got the surplus land distributed among them. His participation in Bhoodan Movement has to be understood in this perspective. Here it is pertinent to mention that he had been influenced both by the ideology of Gandhi and Socialism. Although he never expressed his liking for Marxism, his association with Indo Soviet Friendship Society indicates his soft corner for this ideology because of its commitment for the cause of the under dogs.

Babuji was also a great parliamentarian. This is clearly evident from the perusal of his speeches in Punjab Legislature Assembly from 1952-57, in Lok Sabha from 1957-62, and in Haryana Vidhan Sabha in 1967. His role in the Parliamentary Committees also lends support to it. This is also testified by his role as the Leader of the Opposition in Haryana Vidhan Sabha from 1980-82. He never abstained from their proceedings and always did his home work before taking part in the deliberations of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha. Moreover, he never used unparliamentary language but always put across his views through sound arguments.

Mr. Mool Chand Jain also distinguished himself as an administrator. He competently handled the charge of Excise & Taxation and PWD departments as a Cabinet Minister in the Punjab Ministry headed by Partap Singh Kairon in 1956-57 and as Finance & Excise and Taxation Minister in 1967 in the S.V.D. Govt. led by Rao Birender Singh. His qualities as an able administrator also came to light during his tenure as the Deputy Chairman, Planning Board, Haryana in 1987-89 and as Chairman of Morni Hills Development Committee and as the Chairman of the High Powered Committee for the Moral Education and other administrative assignments during that period.

Babuji also deserves to be recognized as one of the creators of Haryana State. He raised his voice against the discrimination against Haryana region in Punjab Lagislative Assembly from 1952-55 He

advocated for the demand of Haryana Prant from 1953-55 when the State Re-organization Commission had been set up. He also supported the Regional Formula that had been designed in 1956 for safeguarding the interest of the Hindi Region which also included Haryana in addition to the hilly areas of Punjab. He again pleaded for the formation of Haryana State when the Parliamentary Committee on Punjab Suba had been set up in 1965 for a fresh examination of the demand for the re-organization of Punjab on linguistic basis. Along with Prof. Sher Singh and Ch. Devi Lal, his role too deserves recognition for getting the Identity of Haryana safeguarded when it was under great threat.

Babu Mool Chand Jain remained a vehement opponent of authoritarianism throughout his life. He strongly opposed the despotic style of Partap Singh Kairon from 1962-64 Likewise he revolted against the authoritarian style of Bhagwat Dayal Sharma in 1967. His opposition to despotism is evident from his attitude towards Bansi Lal Government in Haryana from 1972-74. His struggle against the despotism of Indira Gandhi is clear from his participation in J P movement in 1974-75. His opposition to the Emergency that had been imposed in 1975, landed him in jail for a period of 19 months. Despite his proximity to Devi Lal, he did not hesitate to oppose the style of Om Parkash Chautala in 1989-90.

Babuji was also a true Gandhian. This is testified by the facts that he not only always wore Khadi but also led an ethical life. Even his opponents never leveled charges of misuse of office or corruption against him. Unlike many other political leaders, he did not amass wealth or property. His politics had always been value based. He never divorced morally from politics.

Above all, Babu Mool Chand Jain was a good human being. He never hit below the belt. He never hesitated to come to the aid of his friends whenever they needed his support. That is why he was respected by the leaders and workers of all the political parties as well as by all the people who knew him.

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