

A TRIBUTE TO Pt. BUDH RAM JI

(Tribute to Shri Budh Ram, speech at the unveiling the statue of Pt. Budh Ram Ji on 24th May 2003 at Faridabad)

This is a unique occasion. I am here to unveil the statue, not of a Prime Minister, Chief Minister or other political dignitaries, not a scholar, saint or sage, not of popular artist, musician, dancer, painter not of a wealthy person who had made munificent donation to a great cause, but of a simple modest farmer who endeared himself to the poor, illiterate people of villages by service to the cause of education and of alleviating distress of the poor by social service.

I shall tell you a story:

One simple farmer while he was asleep suddenly saw a bright light. He woke up and he saw an angel writing something at the other end of the room. The farmer asked the angel what she was writing. The angel said I am writing the names of those who are dear to God by offering to God, bear good conduct, sinless etc. The farmer said I help poor people to get education, perform social service to poor people. Will my name be in the list? The angel said it would consult God and tell the farmer. Next day the angel returned and showed the farmer, the list of those dear to God. In that list, the farmer is at the top, higher than those who perform rituals, shower offering to God etc. The name of the farmer in the story was Pt. Budh Ram Ji.

This shows that service to people is greater than services to God. He was dearer to God than all those who showered offering money or rituals and religious rites.

Budh Ram Ji was born on an auspicious day, Ram Navami; this itself indicated that he was endowed with all the qualities of Rama - his courage, benevolence, justice, fairness, nobility, kindness and compassion.

Budh Ram Ji born in a poor family had go through severe struggle. His father Bidha Ram ji, a farmer of small means died when Budh Ram was very young. The burden of bringing up young Budh Ram fell on his mother. The credit for shaping Budh Ram as a selfless person committed to serve the weaker sections of society must go to her.

After his mother's death Budh Ram Ji honoured her by starting a girl's school in her memory. The girls of Bhagola and neighboring villages took to education. This sowed the seeds of further expansion of education and awareness in the neighborhood.

This brings to my mind similar situation in Tamil Nadu. Shri K Kamaraj, who became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and later the President of All India Congress Committee and leader with international reputation also lost his father when he was very young. He had to do child labour to maintain his mother. He could not go to school. Having been deprived of education himself he wanted to see all the children got education. As Chief Minister, he gave free education up to school final to all children, rich or poor and introduced mid-day meals to poor children.

Pandit Budh Ram Ji's interest spread wide. He wanted our people to study Sanskrit and learn about our ancient heritage. He was the Honorary Chairman of the Nalanda School at Faridabad. He engaged himself in social work, helping the poor, weak and the needy. He earned respect and affection of the people and soon he was affectionally called Baba by all the people.

I understand that his children are all following his footsteps carrying on his tradition service to the people.

People think that raising statues to selfless man of sacrifice and service is to honour them. On the contrary it is intended to inspire the example of the leader and fellow his example in their lives also. It is duty of the high and low to render ever so small a service to the society as he or she can. The capacity to do service rests in mind and in money. Baba Budh Ram Ji had no money and yet he rendered service that has made so many people gather together to honour his services.

Indian ethos enjoins on every person to do some kind of service to his brethren. Let us not forget it in this mad world of material civilization where selfishness is the prime motivating factor.

I have great pleasure in unveiling the statue of a humble, dedicated, selfless soul that served the people as a duty and not for kudos.