

## **Babu Jagjivan Ram**

(Interview to DD News about Babu Jagjivan Ram on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005)

Babuji as Jagjivan Ram was affectionately called by the entire nation was one of the great sons of India. He was an intrepid freedom fighter, an authentic Gandhian, an ardent advocate of samata – an equalitarian Society. Babu Jagjivan Ram was an intrepid fighter. He fought against the social oppression prevalent in those days. Later he fought against the colonialism of the British. He fought against Pakistan as defense Minister and he succeeded in every one of them. Babuji was noted for his concern for the masses particularly the socially oppressed, economically exploited labour and politically oppressed colonial people of the world. Whatever position he held and he held many, he was always deeply affected by the misery of the poor, the weak and the downtrodden.

When the Interim Government under Jawaharlal Nehru was set up in 1946, Babuji was in it by virtue of service and sacrifice for the people and the nation. From then and he never looked back. He was sought by every government that came later. Babuji was an able administrator. During the British days thousands of workers in the plantation were denied right to establish a Trade Union for themselves in the specious plea that plantation were agricultural operation and outside the purview of Trade Union Act.

When this was brought to the notice of Babuji he ruled that plantations are eligible for registration under Trade Union Act. In 1948 there was a national Tripartite Conference of plant workers and State and Central Governments. The President of Tea plantation workers Union in the Madras presidency I represented the workers group. Suffice it to say Babuji managed to bring about a wage settlement in the conference.

During his time a number of ameliorative measures for work condition were adopted by him. As Defence Minister he earned the admiration of the nation. The credit for the managing Bangladesh war largely goes to him. He was respected and admired by the officers and ranks. Babuji was within an inch of becoming the President of India. In the controversy between the Prime Minister and Congress high command, regarding the choice of the President Jagjivan Ram was considered as a consensus candidate for President. Had it come to pass, history of India may have been different and disastrous split in the Congress might have been prevented. These are many “ifs” in history.