

“I am very pleased to be here with you to release the biography of Late Sri Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna authored by his daughter Prof. Rita Bahuguna Joshi alongwith Dr Ram Naresh Tripathi.

The Hindi version of this book titled '*Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna: Bhartiya Chetna KeSamwahak*' was first released in 1997. I am glad to note that in this English edition and revised Hindi edition, there has been much value addition to the original script providing the readers interesting insights into the life and philosophy of one of the stalwarts of our times, Shri Bahuguna.

Shri Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna was a renowned freedom fighter, a principled politician and astute administrator who dedicated his entire life to the service of the nation. Born in a remote village in Pauri Garhwal area of present-day Uttarakhand in 1921, he rose from very humble beginnings to create his own space on the political map of the country.

When we go through his biography, at the first glance it appears that he was a rebel, but as we read on, it becomes clear that to him the Nation came first. He was deeply wedded to the concept of liberty that drew him into the freedom movement at the young age of 17. His father, who was a patwari, wanted him to become an ICS officer, but for Shri Bahuguna, love for his motherland came first. As the President of the Allahabad University Student Union, he defied prohibitory orders in 1942 and led student protests for the country's freedom. During these protests, many of Shri Bahuguna's colleagues fell to police bullets and he himself was arrested and tortured by the British authorities. He was imprisoned for life in Naini and Sultanpur jails in Uttar Pradesh. However, due to fast deteriorating health, he was released after about four years.

When the country attained freedom, the Government of India offered land to freedom fighters for their livelihood. Setting an example of selfless love for one's motherland, Shri Bahuguna returned the land assigned to him with a request that it may be allotted to some other needy freedom fighter.

Dear friends,

The history of our freedom struggle is replete with innumerable stories of sacrifice and selfless devotion to the motherland. But sadly, many of these heroes did not get the recognition and respect they deserved, in our history books. We should make every effort to make our younger generation aware of the sacrifices of such great men and women. This would inspire them to walk in the footsteps of these great personalities and work for nation building.

Shri Bahuguna believed in Gandhian philosophy and worked for the downtrodden and the marginalized throughout his life. A man of principles, he had the courage to oppose the imposition of Emergency and refused to compromise the dignity of his office for selfish gains.

Shri Bahuguna's sensitivity and caring nature could be noticed since his childhood. As a student, he took up the cause of poor children at school in Pauri and tried to help them in various ways including arranging books for them.

He was a very bright student and always passed every class with distinction. As a Class 10 student in Government Inter College Allahabad, he organized a day-long students mock Parliament where the problems and challenges of India were discussed.

During those days, whenever he went home, he would collect pots and conduct cleanliness drives in the village. Water was scarce and women had to walk long distances to fetch it. Shri Bahuguna would collect pots from homes, tie cloth on the mouth of each pot, and along with other boys fill the pitchers for village women folk.

I am glad that the Government has taken these issues of the common man on priority. Close to 11 crore toilets have been built in rural India under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin). On a parallel footing, Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 is being implemented to sustain the progress made in sanitation and solid waste management, and to build a “Garbage Free” Urban India. I would urge every citizen to become an active partner in the implementation of these programs and work for making India neat, clean and green.

Sisters and brothers,

Shri Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna chose to work for the weaker sections of society especially for the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities. As Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the state stood first in India in land distribution to the SC/ST community. Impressed by his contribution Sri Vinoba Bhave gave him the title of ‘Mitti Nandan’.

Shri Bahuguna had famously said – “Till the time wealth is at the top and sweat at the bottom, the message of Swaraj will not go far and wide. We have to rule not just for the sake of ruling, but for bringing about transformative changes.”

These are the ideals that inspire our vision of Antyodaya and Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sab Ka Vishwas and motivate us to work for the uplift of the poor and marginalized.

Imbued with the spirit of the freedom movement, Shri Bahuguna never deviated from the ideology and principles dear to him. He led a life of struggle and his impatience was not for power but for a positive change in the system.

Hailing from a small village, Shri Bahuguna’s sojourn in politics during the decades of 1970’s and 1980’s is interesting and engaging. He was extremely committed to the betterment of the working classes. Bahuguna ji may have changed political parties but he never deviated from nationalist, socialist and secular ideology. As a young man he had a vision for the Nation.

Walking in the footsteps of Acharya Narendra Dev, Shri Bahuguna set a high benchmark in political life when in 1980, he resigned from the Congress Party and simultaneously from the Parliament as well, even though, there was no anti-defection law at that time mandating his resignation. Such principled and high moral standards are a shining light for our parliamentarians today to emulate.

On reading this biography, one comes across Shri Bahuguna as a man who served the nation with deep commitment, who was bold, fearless and incorruptible. Above all, we see him as a leader who did not ever compromise when it came to his self-respect.

I compliment the authors for coming up with this well-researched and insightful book on one of the foremost figures of Indian politics and freedom struggle. I am sure Shri Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna’s exemplary life, as recorded in this biography, would send an inspirational message to the youth of this country and will motivate them to follow the path of patriotism and service to the needy.

My best wishes.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.”