

ACHARYA NARENDRA DEVA

Qurban Ali

ACHARYA NARENDRA DEVA, Father of the Indian Socialist Movement, was a scholar, an Educationist and an ardent Nationalist. Son of Shri Baldeo Prasad and Jawahar Devi, Born on October 31, 1889, at Sitapur in U.P. He was married to Shrimati Prema Devi, and had two sons and three daughters. He was educated at Muir Central College Allahabad and Queens College Banaras. Did M.A, L.L.B. was one of the leading theorists of the Congress Socialist Party in India. His democratic socialism renounced violent means as a matter of principle, and embraced the Satyagraha as a revolutionary tactic.

Acharya Narendra Deva was first drawn to Nationalism around 1915, under the influence of B G Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh. Started political life as a follower of Tilak. During Non-cooperation movement, 1920-21, he quit from law practice. He joined Kashi Vidyapeeth as a teacher and later he became its Principal, 1926-36. He was deeply interested in ancient Indian history and culture. In order to study Buddhist literature, he learnt French, German and Pali. During his incarceration in Ahmednagar Fort Prison (1942-45) he translated Abhidharmakosha from French into Hindi.

In 1928, he was Secretary Independence of India League. Acharyaji was Founder of Congress socialist Party and presided over the first Congress Socialist Conference, at Patna on 17th May 1934, and thereafter he devoted his life to the cause of Socialism. In 1936, he became Member of the Congress Working Committee and Member United Province Legislative Assembly, in 1937-46.

As a teacher he became interested in Marxism and Buddhism. He was also active in the Hindi language movement. He was imprisoned several times during the freedom struggle. Acharyaji consistently stood for moral and ethical values in politics. He was a member of the Uttar Pradesh legislative assembly in 1948, and resigned from Assembly membership when he left Congress. After Independence he served as vice-chancellor of Lucknow University and Benaras Hindu University and as Member of Rajya Sabha respectively.

Acharya Narendra Deva advocated the abolition of poverty and exploitation not just through his belief in the Marxist materialist dialectic, but especially on moral and humanistic grounds. Furthermore, he insisted that "without political democracy social democracy was a sham".

Acharya Narendra Deva was active in the peasant movement and served as president of the All-India Kisan Congress. He was also an atheist, rejecting the glorification of God which, he argued, by implication-denigrated humankind. He remained associated with the Socialist Party and its successor, the Praja Socialist Party, until his death in 1956.

On his death Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru paid rich tribute to him. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on 20th February, 1956 he said:

"The death of Acharya Narendra Deva is something much bigger for many of us and, I think, for the country than just the passing away of an important person. He was a man of rare distinction--distinction in many fields--rare in spirit, rare in mind and intellect, rare in integrity of mind and otherwise. Only his body failed him. I do not know if there is any person present here in this House who was associated with him for a longer period than I was. Over 40 years ago we came together and we shared innumerable experiences together

in the dust and heat of the struggle for independence and in the long silence of prison life where we spent--I forget now--four or five years together at various places, and inevitably got to know each other intimately; and so, for many of us, it is a grievous loss and a grievous blow, even as it is a grievous loss for our country. There is the public sense of loss and there is the private sense of loss and a feeling that somebody of rare distinction has gone and it will be very difficult to find his like again”.

During his centenary celebrations in 1989, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi while paying his tribute to Acharya ji said, "Acharya Narendra Dev was one of the greatest sons of India and the nation owes a great debt to him." Acharya Ji died on 19th February, 1956 at Pendurai (Madras).

He was Vice-Chancellor, (i) Lucknow University, 1947-51 and (ii) Banaras Hindu University, 1951-54. President, U.P.C.C., 1936-37. Chairman (i) Socialist Party, 1950-52 and (ii) P.S.P., 1954-56. President Kisan Sabha, 1952. Member, Rajya Sabha, 3-4-1952 to 2-4-1954 and 3-4-1954 to 20-2-1956.

He was founder of weekly 'Sangharsh' and author a number of books on Socialism and Buddhism.

(This profile of Acharya ji's was first published in Janata, October-November, 2009, on the occasion of the seventy five years of Socialism in India, or 75th anniversary of CSP).

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of Dr Hari Dev Sharma. The contribution made by From Prem Bhasin, Madhu Limaye, Vinod Prasad Singh, Ravinder Manchanda, Kamal Morarka, Yashwant Sinha and others.

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(Please note that the content of this book primarily consists of articles available from Wikipedia or other free sources online. Acharya Narendra Deva (1889-1956) was one of the leading theorists of the Congress Socialist Party in India. His democratic socialism renounced violent means as a matter of principle, and embraced the satyagraha as a revolutionary tactic. Deva was first drawn to nationalism around 1915 under the influence of B G Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh. As a teacher he became interested in Marxism and Buddhism. He was also active in the Hindi language movement. He was a key leader of Congress Socialist Party from its founding in 1934, and was imprisoned several times during the freedom struggle. He was at various times a member of the Uttar Pradesh legislative assembly, and after 1948 served as vice-chancellor of Lucknow University).

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