

SPEECH OF SHRI LA. GANESAN, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF BHAGAWAN BIRSA MUNDA ON 21ST NOVEMBER, 2021 AT RAJ BHAVAN, IMPHAL

Prof. N. Lokendro Singh ji, Vice-Chancellor, Manipur University,
Shri Chaoba Kamson ji, General Secretary,
TingkaoRaagwangChapriakPhom, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland,
Prof. N. Rajmuhon Singh ji, Vice-Chancellor, Dhanamanjuri University,
Distinguished Members of Kalyan Ashram, Manipur,
Friends from Electronic and Print Media,
Distinguished invitees,
Brothers and Sisters,

I feel, indeed, honoured to have an opportunity to be with you all on the auspicious occasion of Birth Anniversary of Bhagawan Birsa Munda, a revered tribal freedom fighter, popularly known as DhartiAaba, organized by the Kalyan Ashram, Manipur. As we all know, DhartiAaba did not live very long but he wrote a complete history for the country and gave direction to the future generations of India.

Bhagawan Birsa Munda fought against the ideology that wanted to erase the identity of the tribal society of India. He was always in favour of modern education, advocated for change and showed courage to speak against the shortcomings of his own society.

Bhagawan Birsa Munda demonstrated to the Nation the way tribals struggled to protect their forests, land rights, their culture and showed their valour and sacrifices, which is vital for nation-building.

The Prime Minister led the country in celebrations by inaugurating the museum in Ranchi in memory of Bhagawan Birsa Munda who is popularly known as Dharati Aaba. A 25 feet tall statue was inaugurated

at the Old Central Jail in Ranchi where Bhagawan Birsa breathed his last. In 1989 his portrait was unveiled in the Parliament. It says, “Birsa Munda occupies a distinguished position as a peerless protagonist of janajati rights, a great patriot and a martyr in the long succession of heroes of the Chota Nagpur plateau. A constructive genius, he made the Munda people unite for their political emancipation and infused in them the spirit of nationalism”. In 1998 the President inaugurated 14 feet tall statue of Bhagawan Birsa Munda outside the Parliament House building. On 15th November, 2000 Jharkhand State was formed out of Bihar. The Bihar Regiment of the Army that caught our admiration recently in Galwan clashes has the War Cry “Birsa Munda Ki Jay”. The significance of these initiatives with Bhagawan Birsa Munda at the core is crystal clear. We the people of India take inspiration from the legacy of Bhagawan Birsa Munda to design policies of welfare governance, to take the administration effectively to most common citizens, to secure the identity and life of people without compromising on the sovereignty of the country.

The Prime Minister said during inauguration of the Museum that DhartiAaba did not live very long but he wrote a complete history for the country and gave direction to the future generations of India. Birsa Munda was born on 15th November, 1875 and died in jail on 9th June, 1900. His life was of 25 years only. But godly personalities leave behind the legacy that is of enormous significance for generations.

Birsa Munda surely had a great impact on the events and policies that followed after his death. Birsa’s movement was hardly any match for the British army. Their weapons and regimented army were too

superior to the Jmundas to overcome. The movement that he led operated practically for 5 years from 1895 to 1900 over an area of 400 square miles of the hilly country, the scenes of occurrences were over 80 miles apart but the message travelled throughout the country and even to the center of British empire. The nature of administrative policies of the colonial imperial Government snatched away forest and land rights, disrupted the socio cultural ethos of the society, disrupted agrarian base of the village and ultimately intensified the tension between janajatis and non janajatis. The British colonial empire not only employed brutal force to do this but provided legal means to justify it. The agrarian and forest land was snatched away from janajatis by these enactments.

The major feature of the movement was the absence of any animus against the non janajati elements who were socially and economically integrated with Mundas. Birsa was influenced by the Vaishnavism. In Sri Chaitanya Charitamrit we find references of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu while travelling from Nilachal to Mathura went through the forests of Jharkhand blessing evolutionary reforms in the society.

Hence, we find insistence to live human life free from any addiction so as to keep the previous soul and body healthier for dedication to the almighty God; every house should be kept neat and clean and should have a Tulsi plant in its courtyard; every household should diligently care for cow; the mother earth should not be tilled on Thursday, and many such simple and universal principles.

It makes amply clear that the British rule and the eco-system that they brought along was always a foreign rule to be thrown out of the

country. These events though appear to be separated by date and distance, the core theme is common. The dreams and desires of the Nation were the same. The most glaring fact of these movements and struggles was that the British rule was never welcomed in any janajati of the country. The janajatis were never absolutely isolated from regions and people of the country. Social and historical studies will have to go deeper into traditional sources of information to bring out more analysis on how social fabric of our country was woven since thousands of years. We celebrate the diversity of our country. Every group, however, small it may be is celebrating their life style with flavour and feelings. That is the beauty of our country. The Parliament is creating conducive system for everyone to find their own space and to aspire to fulfil every dream. Our country has this great tradition of celebration of diversity. Let us pledge to restore the glory of our heritage and meet the challenges of modern world.

The efforts made by Kalyan Ashram, Manipur to organize such an important Birth Anniversary of legendary leader of Tribals is, indeed, commendable and praiseworthy. I am fully confident that such anniversary of a legendary leader should be observed on regular basis so that people of far-flung areas of our country should be well aware of it.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.