



Profile of

Chaudhary Charan Singh

Crusader against Injustice, Exploitation and Corruption

Prof. Sukhbir Singh Goyal

Profile of

Chaudhary Charan Singh

Crusader against Injustice, Exploitation and Corruption

Professor Sukhbir Singh Goyal

Ramjas College, Delhi University.

Published 23 December 1978

First Kisan Diwas

Charan Singh Archives



Copyright © Charan Singh Archives



Published August 2024 by
Charan Singh Archives

www.charansingh.org
info@charansingh.org

All rights reserved.

This publication may not be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted
without the prior permission of the publisher.

For permission, please write to info@charansingh.org

Typeset by Ram Das Lal



Mir Singh and Netra Kaur. 1950
Parents of Charan Singh,

Charan Singh, eldest of 5 children, was born in 1902 to this poor sharecropper family in Noorpur village, district Bulandshahr, United Provinces of Agra and Awadh. Illiterate, in the modern sense, Mir Singh and Netra Kaur belonged to an industrious peasant community with generations of intimate knowledge of farming with their own hands.

"[I was]... born in an ordinary peasant's home under a thatched roof supported by kachcha mud walls, with a kachcha well ... for drinking water and irrigation." Charan Singh, 1982

This infant born to poverty was to rise to become the most prominent political voice since Independence in 1947 of an indigenous social, economic and development worldview rooted in the culture of India – integrated villages of self-cultivating peasants, a multitude of artisanal hand-work for those without land, and a morally uplifted society free of the ills of caste, poverty, inequality, unemployment and corruption.

*Dedicated
To the suffering millions
of our motherland*

Introduction

This booklet gives some glimpses of the policies, programmes and measures brought forward by Shri Charan Singh in his struggle for the emancipation of the poor masses of the country. It is a miniature biography.

Shri Charan Singh has incessantly and successfully launched a crusade against injustice, exploitation and corruption. A missionary, a visionary, a revolutionary and a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi as he is, he has often been misunderstood by his opponents and the powers-that-be, who cannot tolerate his feeble voice to be heard by, and resonate with the cry of, the suffering millions of the country—the peasantry, the landless tillers and labourers, the working class and the Backward classes.

Shri Charan Singh has always reacted spontaneously whenever national prestige and public interest has stood damaged, surreptitiously or otherwise, at the hands of the rulers of the country without caring for the price he has had to pay. The zeal to save the nation from crisis and promote its dignity has always kindled in him even during his imprisonment during the emergency in the New Delhi Tihar Jail (where I have had the good fortune to come in contact with him and understand him in some depth).

Shri Charan Singh is a frank and fearless person and simplicity is his key-note. He believes in the motto: “Endurance and not surrender”, at the same time prompt in refusing to compromise on principles. He is known for his “recklessness” (as per the judgement of the protagonists of practical wisdom—the power hungry politicians) to stake his office, however exalted it may have been, to uphold human dignity and national interest—the office he has never endeared to himself but has held it as a means, an instrument of social transformation rather than an end in itself.

Today, he is the leading personality on the political map of the country, much talked of in all walks of life. Those, who have an innate love for him and have an unflinching faith in his leadership, and those, the remanent, who know him half way, or otherwise on mistaken notions and false propaganda need know his mind and approach towards the problems of Indian masses and their solution. Hence, the need for this booklet; its release on his seventy-seventh birthday – Kisan Diwas is a happy coincidence.

December 23, 1978

(Prof) Sukhbir Singh Goyal,
Delhi University.

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	vii
1. Early Public Life of Chaudhary Charan Singh	1
2. Architect of land and marketing reforms, and other initiatives for peasants	2
3. Impact as Minister in Uttar Pradesh	18
4. A Thinking Politician	27
5. Crusader against corruption in public life	32
6. Vanguard of national political movements	39

Early Public Life of Chaudhary Charan Singh

Shri Charan Singh was born in an ordinary peasant home in village Noorpur of district Meerut on December 23, 1902. He attained Bachelor of Science in 1923, A Master's in history in 1925 and one in Law in 1926. He started an independent legal practice in Ghaziabad in 1928 and shifted to Meerut in 1939.

In 1930, he was sent to jail for six months for contravention of Salt Laws. In August 1940, he was prosecuted on a false charge and subsequently acquitted by the court three months later, viz., in November, 1940, he was sentenced to one year imprisonment in the Individual Satyagraha Movement. In August, 1942, he was arrested under the Defence of India Act¹ and was released in November, 1943.

He was a member of the Ghaziabad Town Congress Committee from 1929 to 1939 and held some office or the other in the Committee for several years. He served either as President or General Secretary of the Meerut District Congress Committee continuously from 1939 to 1948. He had been a member of the A.I.C.C. since 1946 and also a member of the State Parliamentary Board since 1951 (except for a break of two years when disgusted with group bickerings, he did not seek even membership of the P.C.C.) He severed all relations with group politics in 1965. So, his name did not find a place on the State Parliamentary Board of the Congress in 1966, because instead of being elected, all its members were nominated by the Congress President on group basis instead. He was also General Secretary of the Congress Party in the State Legislature from 1948 to 1956.

¹ Effective declaration of martial law under the colonial state.

Architect of land and marketing reforms, and other initiatives for peasants

He was appointed as a Parliamentary Secretary in April, 1946, and had been a member of the U.P Cabinet since June, 1951 (except for two breaks in 1959-60 and 1963 amounting to 21 months or so). It was in 1939 that Shri Charan Singh introduced an Agriculture Produce Market Bill in the Assembly as a private member. He wrote an article entitled "Agricultural Marketing" which appeared in the issues of the Hindustan Times of Delhi dated March 31 and April 1, 1932. The Bill, intended to safeguard the interest of the peasant against the rapacity of the trader, was adopted by almost all the States – Punjab being the first to do it, viz., in 1950. But it was only in 1964 that it could be put on the Statute Book in the state of its origin. Shri Charan Singh was foiled in his attempt by representatives of vested interest who were entrenched in high places in Congress and the Government. It was argued that the farmers had now become rich and educated and could therefore hold their own against the traders and also that it was a measure of control, which the people did not appreciate. It was forgotten that such legislation had to be enacted even in economically advanced countries with universal literacy and that it did not any control on price or quantity of the commodity sold or purchased, but only malpractices indulged by the more clever of the two parties.

In June 1939, he wrote a pamphlet entitled "Peasant Proprietorship or Land to the Workers". In December of 1909 he wrote another pamphlet entitled "Prevention of Division of Holdings Below a Certain Minimum" 1939 and prepared a Bill entitled "Land Utilization Bill" which sought to transfer the Proprietary interest in agricultural holdings of U.P to such tenants or tillers, who chose to deposit ten times the annual rental in Government treasury to the account of the landlord. These were later to

form the seed of the land reforms that followed.

It was in April 1939, that Shri Charan Singh brought a resolution before the Executive of the Congress Legislature Party stating that, in the interest of good government it was essential that values of life and opinions of public servants should correspond with those of men whose affairs they were called upon to administer, a minimum of 50 percent public employments be reserved for sons and dependents of the agriculturists who form the mass of our people. But it was not considered. In March, 1947, he wrote a long, reasoned article in exposition of the above views and got it distributed among members of Congress as well as to other people interested in public issues. But these efforts did not yield any benefit. The influence of the non-agricultural sector in the public life of the country was complete and the atmosphere had become quite hostile. According to a survey conducted in 1961, out of a total of 1347 members of the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Administrative Service, only 155 or 11.5 percent people belonged to the peasant class. Shri Charan Singh took a major part in the presentation and finalization of the Debt Redemption Bill of 1936. This bill waived off the debts of the farmers. The suffering farmers got a lot of relief. In August, 1936, he wrote a pamphlet of 16 pages and an article (which was published in 'National Herald') in which he clarified the provisions of the bill and also addressed the arguments of its critics. During the debates in various committees, Shri Charan Singh and his colleagues were shocked to see that the big leaders of the Congress Socialist Party, who used to vow to protect the interests of farmers and workers in public meetings, adopted a strong pro-moneylenders stand in the committees.

In the field of land reform, Uttar Pradesh has performed the best in the whole country. In this state, the Zamindari system has been uprooted. The matter of land lease in Uttar Pradesh was very complex and at the same time the size of this state is also very large. Due to these reasons, the abolition of Zamindari in the state was a very difficult task. The entire credit for the success in this huge task goes to Shri Charan Singh. He is the originator of every concept included in the various laws related to land reform. To clarify the different aspects of this program, he wrote dozens of logical articles, broadcast talks on radio and delivered speeches on this subject for many hours in huge

public meetings in every area of this vast state. Every law related to land reform was formulated with such clarity and its drafts were so clear that unlike other states, the judiciary in Uttar Pradesh did not strike down any of these laws.

To give a complete description of all the achievements of Shri Charan Singh in this field, an entire treatise will be required. But some of these successes are as follows:

The Zamindari Abolition Act and all its concomitant reforms essentially transferred all the land to the hands of the government and erstwhile tenants were given bhumadari rights. They attained unrestricted access over the lands they were cultivating themselves and the wells and trees surrounding it. They were given full right to use the land for agricultural work, gardening and animal husbandry, but the right to transfer the land was not given to the sirdars. Sirdars who paid ten times their rent to the government were entitled to a 50 per cent reduction in rent and were promoted to the status of 'Bhumidhar'. The National Planning Experiment suggested other states to adopt this project which subsequently adopted almost nationally.

All zamindars or landowners were given compensation at a uniform rate in the form of bonds guaranteed by the government. Small landowners were also given rehabilitation grants, the rate of which was lower for landowners who had large lands and higher for those who had only a small amount of land. The rate of this grant was inversely proportional to the amount of rent paid by these people. A separate step was taken to save the agricultural sector from the clutches of money lenders, according to which the burden of loans was reduced pro rata.

Under the law, it was decided that the amount of rent to be paid by the Sirdars and landholders would remain unchanged for the next 40 years. In 1962, Shri Charan Singh played a leading role in opposing the proposal of the then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh to increase the rent by 50 per cent.

Throughout the country, irrespective of the type of tenant, landowners were given the right to reclaim a certain limit of land cultivated by tenants for personal cultivation. In Bombay and Punjab, this limit was fixed at 50 acres and in Hyderabad it was five times larger than the economic holding. The principle of reclamation was supported in the First Five Year Plan but it was also suggested that the

maximum limit of reclamation should be fixed equal to three times the family holding.

The result of implementing this suggestion was that farmers started being evicted from the land on a large scale. These included hereditary farmers who had permanent and ancestral rights on the land since British rule. Shri Charan Singh rejected the recommendations which led to large-scale ejection of tenants—even those enjoyed hereditary or permanent rights of occupancy since the days of the British. Shri Charan Singh, refused to accept the advice of the Planning Commission and did not allow a single tenant in U.P to be ejected. On the contrary, through an amendment of the law in 1954, which was stoutly opposed by some of the leading members of the Congress, permanent rights of Sirdari were conferred on all those who were entered as sub-tenants, tenants of Sir, and Khudkasht or even as trespassers in revenue papers, or were known as Adhivasis² under the ZALR Act. Their ejection already stood stayed under orders passed in 1947 or 1948. From this amendment Harijans stood to benefit greatly, for they constituted one-third of the total number of Adhivasis who numbered some 3 million in the state.

In the region of Kumaon, tenants-at-will who were known as siratans (and drew overwhelmingly from the Scheduled Classes), were promoted to the status of sirdar despite heavy opposition from prominent local leaders. A bill to this effect was introduced in 1958, and the report of the Select Committee was received before Shri Charan Singh resigned the following March.

As soon as the ZALR Act was endorsed, Government received complaints that a large number of persons falling within the class of Adhivasis had either not been recorded in the revenue papers or if recorded, were being ejected by force or by fraud. Two steps were taken to remedy this state of affairs. Firstly, by an order passed under Section 342 of the ZALR Act, the period of six months allowed by the Act for a

² Not to be confused with adivasi, Adhivasi is a colloquialism of the time which the U.P Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act defines as a “tenant of sir, sub-tenant or an occupant” under Section 20. More specifically, these were former sub-tenants who paid land revenue amounting to Rs. 250 or less. As noted above, these groups so defined were given occupancy rights for the first time under this act, and as an additional succour, they were also offered a reduction in rent of up to 50% upon assumption of bhumidari, which could not be subject to change for a period of 40 years. It has been noted that this act helped strengthen the adhivasi’s land security, improved their credit and enabled them to raise agricultural finance for land improvement. Land mortgage banks are also said to have mushroomed in the countryside as a consequence.

dispossessed Adhivasi to regain possession of his holdings was enhanced to one year. Second, a legislation known as the U.P Land Reforms (Supplementary) Act, 1952 was put on the Statute Book in November, 1952, which entitled a Sub-Divisional Officer or even a Tehsildar so authorised by Government to record the name of a person in revenue papers, if he was found in possession as a result of a summary enquiry conducted on the spot.

The erstwhile Zamindars already possessed these rights as an incident of ownership. Now all other residents of the village whether tenants, labours or artisans were declared owners of their houses and wells and of lands appurtenant thereto. They had to pay no price for bequeathal of this right. This provision, again, greatly benefited the Harijans in particular, who were formerly liable to ejection from their houses almost at the will of the Zamindars.

All lands in the village other than those which were in the exclusive possession or enjoyment of individuals as cultivatory holdings, groves, houses or wells, were taken over by the State and made over to the Village Community or the Gaon Panchayat for management. A Gaon Samaj Manual was brought out detailing rights and duties of Panchayats—which became a model for other states to follow.

All bonds of feudalism that tied one man to another were thus completely snapped. Exploitation was ended at one stroke, and nobody in the village remained dependant upon any other person for his land, home or hearth, wells or trees. There was no longer any zamindar or tenant, any lambardar or ryot left in the vast expanse of the country-side of Uttar Pradesh.

Ideas embodied in the Statute Book were thoroughly adopted to the field. Shri Charan Singh saw to it that detailed orders went out to the districts promptly and every important order discussed with him before its issuance. The entire machinery of the Revenue Department was set immediately in motion on reports of harassment or attempt at ejection of the meanest individual in the remotest corner of the state.

Conformity of security of tenure on the tenants of Sir and sub-tenants was the only economic agrarian demand made by the provincial Shoshit Sangh—a rapidly growing organisation of the extreme section of the backward classes and Harijans in the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh. An announcement made by Shri Charan Singh, in a public meeting

organised in the interior of Allahabad district, perhaps, in April 1950 that Congress Government proposed to grant the status of Sirdari to all the Adhivasis (including the so called trespassers) had an electric effect and resulted in virtual disbandment of the Shoshit Sangh. The workers of the Sangh had no grievance left; attracted by the revolutionary character of the land reforms, also joined the Congress in large numbers. Leading Congressmen coming from higher castes, particularly in the eastern districts, who controlled the organization throughout the state did not, welcome this development.

To resume the account: The ZALR Act went on to provide that in future, any Bhumidhar or Sirdar who had a sound body and a sound mind, will let out his holding foregoing the pain of forfeiture of his land, so that landlordism could not re-emerge.

In order to ensure that land did not again get concentrated into a few hands, Shri Charan Singh introduced a provision that nobody (along with his or her spouse and minor children) would be allowed to acquire land which would make his holdings more than 12.5 acres or 20 standard bighas. On the other hand, it was also provided that whenever in a suit for division, the Court found that the holding did not exceed 3.125 acres or 5 stand and bighas in area, the Court instead of dividing it shall direct its sale and distribution of the proceed amongst the share-holders.

Houses and buildings occupied by agriculturists were already exempted throughout the country under section 60 of the Code of Civil Procedure from attachment or sale in execution of a money decree. In Uttar Pradesh, they were now exempted from sale even in execution of a mortgage decree.

So far as compulsory acquisition of land for a factory, a school, a hospital or any other public purpose was concerned, Shri Charan Singh had a rule appended to the Land Acquisition manual of U.P in 1948 or 1949 to the effect that no cultivable land could be so acquired if uncultivable land was available within a radius of half a mile from the spot. A similar amendment to the Land Acquisition Act was added soon after.

In certain areas of the state, particularly towns, there existed a custom of Zar-i-Chahrum under which a landlord or a lessor of a building lease was entitled to realise a portion of the purchase price, usually one-fourth. This custom was abolished.

The law of pre-emption, under which a land-owner was entitled to pre-empt the sale of land by a co-sharer to an outsider was repealed. This law was a prolific source of litigation and corruption and its repeal resulted in immense relief to the peasantry.

Section 198 of the ZALR Act provided that, only excepting a recognised educational institution, landless persons in the village had the first right of admittance to all such lands the Land Management Committee (LMC) might want to let out for cultivation. Also, while all other applicants or allottees were liable to pay an amount equal to ten times the rent of the land calculated at the hereditary rates, no such amount was payable by a person belonging to any of the Scheduled Castes. Rules under this section also provided for preference being given to landless agricultural labourer in allotment of abadi.³

Abolition of Zamindari or landlord-tenant relations and introduction of uniform tenure throughout the state paved the way for consolidation of land holdings. Shri Charan Singh, therefore, got the necessary legislation enacted and the necessary staff trained without loss of time. The scheme was however, greatly resisted not only by members of the Socialist Party but some of Shri Charan Singh's own colleagues also, who alleged that it was unpopular and brought a bad name to the party and government. Within a week of Shri Charan Singh's resignation in 1959, the State Government headed by Dr. Sampurnanand accepted a proposal by Shri Charan Singh's successor in the Revenue Department (Thakur Hukum Singh) that operation of the scheme be suspended. However the decision had to be overturned within a month because of the outcry raised in the peasantry and insistence by the National Planning Committee to revive the scheme. This is only one out of many examples which can serve as a commentary on the understanding of Shri Charan Singh's colleagues of the problems of the masses, and their solicitude for them. Today, it is unanimously accepted that consolidation of holdings is a boon to the peasantry of the State.

Shri Charan Singh repealed the Agricultural Income Tax Act which had been enacted in 1948 with a view largely to tax the income of or

³ On abadi add the following footnote: Protected by Indian property laws, abadi is the land in the area in a village reserved for residences and other dwellings. The Land Revenue Act protects these areas and prevents dwellers from being removed from their premises by the Land Management Committee.

big landlords. After abolition of zamindari in 1952, the Act became ineffectual or superfluous so far as landlords were concerned and turned out to be a source of corruption and harassment to those who actually cultivated their lands. Shri Charan Singh replaced it by the Large Land-Holding Tax Act which proved a boon both to the cultivators, in as much as it protected them against corruption and harassment, and also to the State, in as much as a dishonest farmer could not conceal his income as calculated under this Act. As the Act imposed a graded tax whose rate went on rising with the size of the holding, it became an instrument of social justice. Now it was in the interest of a large holder to sell away a part and reduce the area of his farm. It was beneficial to long-term public interest in yet another way, viz., it exempted groves from taxation so that more and more land could have been put under trees.

After Shri Charan Singh resigned in 1959, the “Imposition of Ceilings Act” was enacted to replace the Large Land-Holdings Act, and enacted in such a way that the area of land, which could be available under this law for distribution to the landless, was considerably reduced. Then the Congress Government gave ample time to large holders to distribute the area amongst their relatives. By this callous attitude of the Government, not only was the state deprived of a sizeable amount of income but a considerable burden in the form of compensation was also laid on the exchequer.

While the ZALR Act had just been enforced and consequential processes were being put under way the patwaris, who numbered some 28,000 and constituted the vital link in the revenue administration were agitating for increased salaries and other facts, without waiting for a month or so as Shri Charan Singh had advised, they resigned en masse in January, 1953, believing that this step of theirs would bring revenue administration to a standstill and, as a consequence, bend the Government itself to its knees. Shri Charan Singh however, accepted their resignations straight away and created another institution of Lekhpals within no time—Lekhpals who enjoyed fewer and lesser powers than the Patwaris. He was met with much opposition in the higher echelons of the Congress Party but did not flinch. He told his colleagues and his leaders that if the Government did not waver, Government servants would not think of staging a strike or issuing threats to Government for the next ten years. His prophecy proved

true for 13 years, that is, till 1966, when non-gazetted employees of the State struck work in the days of Smt. Sucheta Kripalani in 1966-67, and succeeded in paralysing the administration for a period of nine weeks at a stretch. For political reasons, Shri Charan Singh's advice in this regard proved an isolated voice and was not accepted.

A cheap and effective machinery for assessment and payment of compensation and rehabilitation grant to millions of zamindars, small and big, which amounted to two hundred crores of rupees or so, was set up which completed its job within record time, as also a machinery for realization of land revenue which has worked smoothly and at a very small cost to the State without any complications ever since.

The land records manual was also over-hauled to meet the needs of the new set-up. It may also be mentioned here that some Tehsils were reorganised and enclaves in various districts existing for about a century past which consistently caused confusion in administration were abolished.

At the Nagpur Congress Session in January, 1959, Shri Charan Singh made out a very logical case against co-operative farming and state trading in foodgrains on which Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had set his heart. He pointed out that pooling of land and labour was not necessary for increased production, and both the schemes were impracticable and militated against our democratic way of life. The former would, on the contrary, lead to decrease in production and the latter, to wastage of public funds and corruption. This belief of his and its clear expression was one of the reasons behind Shri Charan Singh's resignation in 1959, but he would not prevaricate on it thinking only of the goodwill of the people at large. Since 1959, we have seen many Prime Ministers and Food & Agriculture Ministers at Delhi and have been making brave entreaties and speeches but even today the country is as far away from co-operative farming and state trading as ever it was.

Land reform legislation in the state stands today almost exactly where Shri Charan Singh had left it off in 1959. The small tarai and adjoining bhabhar area was the only part of Uttar Pradesh to which, owing to certain complications of tenure and want of time at Shri Charan Singh's disposal, the ZALR Act could not be extended and the Bhumidhari Scheme could not be applied. Neither the gentleman who held charge of the Revenue portfolio, nor any of the Chief Ministers, who presided

over the destinies of the State since 1959 had the vision or the desire to tackle the problem.

Yet another example: Shri Charan Singh had intended—and to that end initiated a file—to enact a law for conferment of rights of ownership on occupants of houses in the purwas of big towns. Although these tenants or occupants are owners of the building materials of the house they are liable to ejection or enhancement of rent at every conceivable pretext or opportunity at the hands of those who own the land on which the houses stand. But he resigned in 1959 and the Revenue Department never came back to him. So the matter stands where it did.

In proof of what has been said about the land reforms above, one may refer to a report entitled “A Study on Tenurial Conditions in Package Districts” submitted to the Planning Commission by Mr. Wolf Ladejinsky in 1963, an agrarian expert, who was deputed by the Ford Foundation Team to study the effect of land tenure on agricultural production in the so-called Package or IADP district in India. He had been responsible for introduction of land reforms in Japan, while it was under American occupation. He said:

“Looking back at the agrarian structure of Aligarh (Aligarh was the package district in Uttar Pradesh) after a decade and a half of reform legislation, we have no suggestion either for adding or revising any of it, except with regard to Sirdars, to which we have referred earlier. Many a good piece of agrarian reform legislation has arrived still born in India, but in Uttar Pradesh it went hand-in-hand with enforcement and important attainments. The lesson to be drawn from this is but one: It can be done when there is a will to do it. Millions of falsified record entries can be ferretted out, correct land titles can be recorded, and security of tenure rights can be brought about.....”

Mr. Ladejinsky refers to the scheme of consolidation of holdings as a “Vigorous and successful programme” and goes on to remark: “the impact of the programme was quite apparent to us in villages where consolidation had been completed a couple of years ago. Its most significant result can be observed in the number of new surface wells farmers are putting in on the consolidated land.” (p. 57).

While dealing with land reform legislation in various countries of South-East Asia in an article published in the Times of India of September 9 1964, Mr. Wolf Ladejinsky refers to the case of Uttar Pradesh in the following words:

“Administrative problems are a formidable obstacle to implementation of the reforms. On the other hand, judging by the experience of the largest and most populated State of India, Uttar Pradesh, this is not an insurmountable difficulty if there is the will to overcome it. More to the point is the faulty content in many legislative enactments”

The history of land reform legislation will, perhaps, nowhere offer another example so thorough-going and so far-reaching in character. But, as irony would have it, although Shri Charan Singh’s policies underlying the land reform measures served directly to fulfill the mission which Congress workers had, since the days of the British rule, so vociferously avowed—and, thus served to strengthen the Congress in the affections of the people—almost every major step in land reform, that he took, met with opposition at the hands of vested interests in Congress ranks. People who were at the helm of affairs, even those who posed as progressives or socialists, “better friends” of the under-dog than the ordinary Congressmen—were found wanting, rather arrayed against the under-dog, when it came to brass tacks and affected their own interest, or the interest of their class. Instead of receiving bouquets, he received stones from his colleagues.

Provisions regarding conferment of Sirdari rights on the Adhivasis and those against resumption of land from existing tenants and sub-letting in future were targets of unusually bitter criticism, especially by those belonging to eastern districts, the reason being that most of the political workers in these parts, who came from socially higher sections of the society, did not cultivate their own lands and were in the habit of letting them out to members of backward classes. In this respect, there was no difference between members of the Congress on one hand and those of the Socialist Party on the other.

Apart from fulfilling dictates of social justice, the land reforms in U.P. were going to serve as the greatest bulwark of democracy. This argument, however, had no appeal for the opponents of Shri Charan Singh’s policies. His land reforms however have vindicated him the most in history. Despite the political and administrative conditions in the state since the departure of Pant ji to Delhi, being what they are, communism has not been able to gain any foothold in the countryside as it has in several other sister states.

One must scurry still more to put on record that, refusing to learn any lessons from history, some of the leading Congress men even made

attempts a decade later to whittle down the land reforms. As early as 1965-66, two proposals were seriously brought up and discussed, viz, one, about the right of subletting being granted to all Sirdars and Bhumidhars, and the other, about lifting ceiling of 12.5 acres on future acquisitions, at least where groves and orchards were concerned. Shri Charan Singh vehemently opposed the proposals and the move was thus scotched.

Apart from abolition of landlordism and land consolidation, both of which undoubtedly served to increase agricultural production, Shri Charan Singh's contribution to development of agricultural production in the state was great to which, as in the case of land reforms, reference can be made only in part.

It was in 1954 that he put the Soil Conservation Act on the Statute Book. In doing so, he was perhaps the first in the country. He again gave a lead to the country in making soil conservation a subject for a two year post graduate course at the Government College of Agriculture, Kanpur. The scheme underlying the legislation of 1954 as amended by him in 1961 under the name of Soil & Water Conservation Act had been so well thought out and so efficiently executed that it drew appreciation of the entire peasantry, the political opposition, and in fact, all public workers alike. It will not be out of place to mention here that it took Shri Charan Singh's successor full four years to finalise the rules under the Soil Conservation Act, after the Department of Agriculture had been taken away from him by Dr. Sampurnanand on his assumption of office of the Chief Minister at the end of 1954.

The Soil Testing Scheme, which is operating in the State today, was also conceived and framed by Shri Charan Singh. Imaginately enough under this scheme, resources of private agricultural colleges were mobilised in order to supplement governmental efforts and resources.

Till 1963, agricultural supplies were available only to members of the co-operatives which, however, embraced only 40 percent of the total peasantry. Shri Charan Singh established an Agricultural Supplies Organisation to cover the remaining 60 percent, who had till then gone unserved. This organisation has fully justified the expectations of its founder.

Since 1958, Shri Charan Singh had been laying great emphasis on the simple obvious truth that there could be no economic development unless

our agricultural production was greatly increased—that prosperity of the non-agricultural sectors lay in that of the agricultural sector and not vice-versa. But nobody would listen. It was, he contended, a prosperous or developing agriculture alone that could-

- (a) provide raw materials to feed the wheels of industry
- (b) release workers to man the factories, commerce, transport and other services like Power and Education, and to construct roads, railways, harbours and factories
- (c) produce food to feed the workers engaged in various branches of the secondary and tertiary sectors above
- (d) provide market for non-agricultural goods and services in as much as increased production would put more and more purchasing power into their pockets and finally,
- (e) provide foreign exchange to finance necessary, or unavoidable imports of non-agricultural goods or machinery.

Besides increased agricultural production, there is another condition precedent to economic development of the country upon which Shri Charan Singh has been continuously laying stress through all these years, viz, improvement of the human factor. There could be no economic progress without physical resources: at the same time, there could be no economic progress if men of requisite quality were lacking. As the example of Japan would testify, the latter was more important of the two. Our country-men are fatalistic in their outlook and believe this world to be an illusion and were, therefore, not prepared to work hard. Nor, were we a people of integrity. Nobody was prepared to perform his duty of his own accord unless he is over seen or supervised by somebody. There was an emphasis on rights and demands, yet nobody thinks or talks of *duties*. Provision of steel, energy, capital, technical know how, etc., are going to be of no avail unless there was a change in the attitudes of our people—unless there was a psychological transformation. An educational campaign will have to be launched which may take one generation, if not two. Shri Charan Singh also wrote to the then Prime Minister several years ago that the Planning Commission should, in future, pay, at least, some attention to programmes about improvement of human capital. But this was to no avail. Nehru instead placed more trust in material means towards economic progress.

Since 1964 he has also been strongly advocating that while a procurement levy should be charged on big cultivators, the zonal system⁴ should be scrapped. Till the time our production has sufficiently gone up, we can succeed in containing the food problem with the aid of surplus grains procured within the country itself—supplemented by food imports only in the years when our production is particularly low, but the government at the Centre has been lacking in political courage to abolish the zones, and State Governments in political courage to ask the cultivators to yield their surpluses—despite the fact that in the last quarter of 1966, an Expert Committee appointed by the Government of India itself made these very recommendations. And food imports continue, not, so much or always because there is shortage in the country but because of the need of balancing the budget of the Union, year in and year out, by sale of foreign borrowed grains within the country. This policy inhibits our own production and would perhaps have been regarded as unpatriotic in any other country.

Sensing from press reports that Govt. of India had, a scheme for crop insurance under consideration; Shri Charan Singh wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri averring that this was impracticable. Yet it was adopted by the AICF in its session held at Bombay in May 1966 without any serious discussion—merely as a stunt to win the electoral battle that lay ahead in early 1967.

The main reason for so many false steps in the sphere of food and agriculture, or economic development in general, was not far to seek. Our economic planners, administrative cadres and political leaders had all been nurtured on foreign text books written under conditions far different from ours, and it was from these text books that our slogans and ideas had mostly been derived.

⁴ In order to combat lack of productivity in agriculture and to facilitate procurement of food grains at reasonable prices from surplus areas, the Indian government in the 50s had introduced the “zonal system” where deficit and surplus areas were pooled together within “zones” and transport of foodgrains in and out of them was prohibited except through special licenses. Private trade was regulated and a number of restrictions were put into place which were subject to change with successive governments. This was done to maintain an equilibrium between surplus and deficit areas in terms of food availability and to stabilise prices of staple items. The scheme eventually backfired, resulting in depressing prices in surplus areas like Punjab and regional price differences heightened once again. Surplus states started to argue for the opening of these zonal frontiers so grains could fetch higher prices. The system eventually was phased out in toto by 1993.

Because of his realization that it is agriculture which plays the key role in economic development and that it is the farmers who constitute the masses in India, Shri Charan Singh has identified himself with an organization of the farmers known as the 'Krishak Samaj' as its President since January, 1964. It is an all-India non-political body in which few elections are held. According to its constitution, officers of the Agriculture Department are ex-officio holders of certain offices in the organization. Its aim is to teach new techniques to the farmers, help them secure resource facilities, acquaint them with Government schemes and plans for their upliftment and take such other steps as may lead to their social and economic improvement. Before Shri Charan Singh's association with it, the Samaj was in a moribund condition. Now it is somewhat alive and kicking, although not quite the kind of active organisation that he and the farmers themselves would like it to be. One of the reasons lies in Shri Charan Singh's preoccupation with other activities, It is a sad commentary on the state of public affairs in Uttar Pradesh that when hardly one year and a half of its active stewardship by Shri Charan Singh had passed, Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani, instigated by his rivals who were afraid of his popularity and influence, issued an order withdrawing official cooperation from the Samaj—and this without even as much as consultation with or information to Shri Charan Singh although he was a senior member of the Cabinet.

His work in the field of Animal Husbandry also has not been insignificant. To state it briefly, he was responsible for amendment of the Cattle Trespass Act in 1954 preparation of the U.P Prevention of Cow Slaughter Bill which led to its enactment in 1955 and enactment of the U.P Goshala Act as also the U.P livestock Improvement Act, 1964. In the first quarter of 1965, he had secured the approval of the Cabinet Cattle Preservation Bill which sought to prohibit export of young cow, and buffaloes of good breed from U.P and to improve the provisions of the existing Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act, but the portfolio was taken away from him in May 1965, with the result that the Bill has not yet been put on the Statute Book.

In 1953-54, Shri Charan Singh had a bill prepared for regulation of cattle markets which were to be integrated. There was no legislation anywhere in the country which could serve as a model. It was approved

by the then Chief Minister and also by the Party. On Pant's departure to Delhi, however, the Animal Husbandry Department was made over to another Member of the Cabinet and, despite Shri Charan Singh's efforts the Bill never saw the light of the day.

Impact as Minister in Uttar Pradesh

The reforms, which he introduced in the transport department, are of no less importance. He put a stop to all irregularities and consequent corruption current in the operation of public carriers and stage buses for years past, by regularising the benami transactions and ensured that, entries of the permit and the registration conformed (except in cases of minors, widows and other disabled persons) with actual ownership of the State. People remember Shri Charan Singh with gratitude till today. He also decided that no one will get more than one permit henceforth.

Shri Charan Singh held charge of the Finance Department only for a brief period of seven months and a half in 1958. It was marked by various measures that he took to ensure avoidance of wasteful expenditure of public funds. He also took steps for the speedy solution of the problem of sales tax leviable on foodgrain dealers, which had been plaguing the Government for several years past. While the dealers were satisfied, the interest of public or exchequer remained unimpaired.

Shri Charan Singh held charge of Irrigation and Power in 1958-1959 hardly for four months. During this short period, he initiated disciplinary proceedings for corruption against several engineers. Consequent upon acceptance of his resignation in April, 1959, the 'National Herald' of Lucknow in its issue of April 23, was pleased to comment as follows in this connection:

“In his last tenure of office, he was doing a widely appreciated job in probing corruption in Power and Irrigation, two departments with accumulated ill-repute which are reportedly waiting to celebrate his resignation”

Some of the engineers and contractors did, in fact, celebrate the occasion. Ultimately, however, they were all let off by his successor, Shri Girdhari Lal.

The second major decision that he took related to construction of channels (for want of which tubewells costing tens of crores of rupees,) had been standing almost idle for years past. Members of the U.P. Legislature, as also the Govt. of India, had all along been pressing the state government for a solution of the problem, but the Irrigation Ministers concerned could think of none and continued giving evasive replies for years together. The decision taken by Shri Charan Singh required the would-be-beneficiaries to construct the channels according to alignment mapped out by the Irrigation Deptt, failing which Government would construct them and realise the cost from the cultivator. The decision, however, needed legal cover for implementation—which nobody in Government cared to provide and was forthcoming only after full four years had been wasted, i.e., in January 1963, and that, too, at the instance of Shri Charan Singh himself, although he was at the time saddled with no responsibility in regard to Irrigation. During this period, two Ministers, viz., Shri Girdhari Lal and Shri Ram Murti, had held this portfolio for two years each.

In the Power Department, he began with the Chief Engineer who had none too good a reputation, and asked him to retire. This displeased the Chief Minister. The only other fact worth mentioning in connection with this time was Shri Charan Singh's sharp manoeuvre which saved the government from a potential damage of Rs. 20 crore—which became one of the immediate reasons for his resignation from the Government in 1959. He took strong exception to the way the then Chief Minister, Dr. Sampurnand, wanted the state government to commit itself to supplying nearly half the electric energy generated from the Rihand Dam to the Birlas for running their Aluminium Factory—and to the price at which it was proposed to be supplied. Ultimately a decision was taken in his absence on March 14. The Audit Report for 1963-64 disclosed that according to the Union Govt.'s Irrigation and Power Team of Experts, the cost of generation per unit came to 3.16 paise while it had been sold to the Birlas at 2.00 paise per unit. The Team calculated that they suffered a loss of Rs. 50.35 lakhs every year. The rate could not be revised for 16 years; for the remaining nine years the revision would not exceed 10 per cent. It must be remembered that Sampurnand was a socialist of long standing.

In the sphere of Home Affairs too he established a record. He

conducted the affairs of this Department which he held only for a brief period of 15 months with such tact, firmness and judiciousness combined, that both the public and the Police Force (including high-placed officers, and low placed constables) had much admiration for him. The number of departmental punishments during his tenure was not higher than before, and yet the integrity and efficiency of the Police went up by leaps and bounds. It is for this unique achievement and a sense of security the common man had begun to feel that on the portfolio having been taken away from him in March, 1962, everyone in the state wanted him back in the Home Affairs almost nostalgically. Members of the Opposition had expressed this desire in almost every session of the Assembly whenever the question of law and order came up for discussion. A resumé of some of the steps which Shri Charan Singh took to raise the morale and efficiency of the Police Force is being given here which will also serve as an index of the efficiency with which he has administered, and the standards he has tried to maintain in every department that was entrusted to him.

As soon as he took charge, he asked for retirement of the I.G. of Police who was continuing in service in contravention of the rule that no Head of Department was to serve for more than five years and also whose record was none too impressive. At the same time, D.I.G. Shri Sarat Chandra Mishra, who was known for his integrity and had already accepted G.I.'s proposal for an appointment outside the state, was persuaded to stay and appointed as Additional I.G. (CID).

Shri Charan Singh assured the police force that he will not allow any political interference in performance of their duties. This restored initiative to them, which they had gradually lost under Congress dispensation since 1947. On the other hand, he enjoined upon them that they must act strictly according to the law—according to dictates of their conscience and make no distinction between man and man, irrespective of his station in life, his politics or other such affiliations.

It was in pursuance of the policy that he refused to withdraw cases pending in law courts, (a) against students of Allahabad University for staging a riot and burning down some property of the Mansarover Cinema during the days of Dr. Sampurnanand, (b) against students of an Intermediate College of Balrampur for rioting and (c) against an M.L.A. of Hamirpur for committing dacoity and asked the police to proceed

in accordance with law against a Congressite M.L.C. of Pratapgarh district whose complicity in a murder was under investigation and who was ultimately presecuted of it; and against a Congressite M.L.A. of Jhansi district for being instrumental in securing a subsidy from the Government to a friend of his for wells which were never constructed and all this despite suggestions of the Congress and the opposition to the contrary. Shri Charan Singh insisted that in a democracy rule of law must prevail.

To give yet another instance: traffic constables posted at the Hazaratganj crossing fined some four or five college students for passing on cycles against rules and against traffic signals and for manhandling one of the constables. Antecedents of one of them who had been selected by a Committee or a Commission for a gazetted post, were under verification. A colleague and an officer interceded with the Home Minister on their behalf, with the express excuse that the boy who had been selected for a gazetted job, was the only son of a widow and had been brought up by his maternal grandfather and his career would likely be jeopardized. They were refused. The old man and his daughter, i.e., the mother of the boy, then waited upon the Home Minister and advanced all kinds of pleas re-inforced by tears of the lady. Shri Charan Singh, however, relented only on the condition that all the boys went to the Police lines on the Faizabad Road, request the officer in charge for convening a meeting of all the constables and beg for their forgiveness. It was only in this event that he would be prepared to consider withdrawal of the case which the police had already *challanned*. This incident must have placed Shri Charan Singh high in the affections of the police constables. They came to realise that if they will do their duty, they could count upon the support of Government. Further, it gave them a status in society in their own eyes.

Shri Charan Singh submitted his resignation from Home Ministry on January 10, 1962, because the Chief Minister had ordered transfer of SSP of Meerut district who had sent up an offending Congressman for prosecution. The Congressman had been found guilty by the CID after a prolonged investigation. Shri Charan Singh thought he had no business to remain a Home Minister if he could not protect a police officer who had done his duty and acted in accordance with the policies laid down by him.

Shri Charan Singh never condemned the police force as a whole, or as an organisation. Several public declarations by the Home Minister put the policemen on the same level as the personnel of any other department including the judiciary. This gave policemen a much-needed psychological boost.

Shri Charan Singh made it clear that he will not listen to any recommendations in favour of erring policeman or for promotion and cancellation of transfers. Whomever of the police force made or manipulated approaches to Shri Charan Singh, was frowned upon and asked to explain. Soon an atmosphere was created in which nobody thought of influencing the Home Minister. Policemen came to realise that they will reap what they sow; follies would be strictly punished and good deeds requisitely rewarded.

He strictly mandated that selections take place on the basis of merit alone and rules scrupulously observed to the exclusion of all extraneous considerations, whatsoever, with the hope and expectation that the resourceful and the resourceless found themselves at par. The I.G.P. told Shri Charan Singh in February or March, 1952, that neither he nor his colleagues had received any recommendations that year in the matter of selection of sub-inspectors.

One of the policy declarations that Shri Charan Singh made went on thus inbrevitis: for the same kind of lapses higher ranked officers were to be punished more severely in comparison with lower places ones.

He laid emphasis on the correct reporting of crime, with the public assurance that the number of reports recorded in a Thana will have no relevance and will not reflect adversely upon the efficiency of the S.O. concerned. While this order served to bring the real position of crime to the notice of the government it helped the publicmen more who were now released from the stranglehold of unscrupulous officers.

Shri Charan Singh had also declared at a meeting of police officers convened on the occasion of the Police Week in December, 1961, his intention of issuing a directive that police men are not to “pad” evidence that leads to the courts henceforth.

Order went out to Superintendents of Police and D.I.G. that they will take the fullest care not to burden the Sub-Inspectors of Police Stations inspected with any expense, or part of expenses of their tour.

Police officers were prohibited from making unauthorised use of the

services of constables at their residence or employing them for their personal convenience beyond or in excess of, what the rules allowed.

Till 1960, in selecting candidates for the post of Sub-Inspector of Police, so far as physical efficiency was concerned, only a qualifying test was held so that if 40 marks were considered sufficient to qualify a candidate anyone who secured 40 or 41 marks stood on the same level as another, who secured 85 or 90. Shri Charan Singh decided that marks of physical efficiency also will be counted in making up the final total. This amendment of rules or instructions resulted in selection of a better type of S.I. than in previous years. (It may not be out of place to mention here that this order was abrogated by the Chief Minister next year; that is, as soon as Shri Charan Singh ceased to be the Home Minister).

A rule which required a deposit of Rs, 1,000/- by a cadet S.I. as a pre-condition to his training in the Police Training College at Moradabad, was abolished. On the other hand, a grant of monthly sum of Rs. 80/- to the trainees towards their expenses was ordered.

Decided within the first three months of assuming office and announced at the Budget Presentation in the March 1961, Charan Singh made sure that survivors of deceased of police men will receive the same amount of pay with increments and pension as they normally would have.

It was in Shri Charan Singh's time that radio-fitted mobile squads at important urban centres were inaugurated at Kanpur and Lucknow. A mobile or flying squad or two (the number depending on the population of the town) were to be on duty all 24 hours of the day and available to the smallest citizen at a moment's notice. While this inspired a great sense of security in the urban populace, it greatly increased the efficiency of the police force and gave them great satisfaction being able to perform their duties better.

Shri Charan Singh publicly declared more than once that the inefficiency of the police force derived from the difficulties and handicaps under which it had to work, for example, lack of adequate strength or numbers as compared with other countries and states, lack of necessary transport, particularly in the Thanas, lack of good or effective weapons, lack of more intensive or technical training, lack of scientific equipment and electricity in many a police station, lack of housing facilities for about 80 percent of the constabulary which led to so many problems,

poor emoluments and, above all, the judicial system which gave most rights to criminals and put all the onus, on the police.

Policemen came to entertain the belief—and rightly so, that their Home Minister wanted to remove all their grievances and handicaps that many of the recommendations of the Police Commission, for example, relating to increase in the strength of the force and their emoluments, had been accepted within no time, i.e., hardly within three months of the submission of the Report, whereas past experience of public servants had led them to believe that such reports were usually shelved and, if any of the recommendations were accepted, it took the Government years and years to do so.

The Home Minister was also known to have asked the I.G.P. to collect certain data with a view to reforming criminal law and relevant sections of the Evidence Act, and spoke with the then Prime Minister in this regard. He got the old Gambling Act repealed, enacted a new one in its place, and also certain amendments made in the Cr.P.C.

This solicitude of Shri Charan Singh for the interest and efficiency of the police force led them to believe that while the Home Minister was such a hard task-master, he was also a zealous guardian of their rights. Policemen therefore resolved to give their best.

In the Forest Deptt., over which he presided for about three years and a half, Shri Charan Singh solved several problems which had defied solution for the last 20 years. Some sixteen hundred square miles of forest, which was quickly deteriorating under the management of district revenue administration, were taken over by the Forest Department—a step which the state government had been hesitant in taking since the days of Pant ji for purportedly political reasons. A scheme for putting the ravines of the Jamuna and the Chambal under forestry was prepared and put into motion, leading to stoppage of further erosion of fertile lands and creation of incalculable wealth. At his initiative the responsibility of planting avenues on all government metalled roads in the state, instead of leaving it to the P.W.D. was taken over by the Forest Department in 1966. The intractable question of reservation of forests inherited from the Tehri State, pending solution for 15 years, was solved by an enactment. When he took over, the settlement of forests which had taken away from Zamindars in 1952 was proceeding at a snail's pace. Shri Charan Singh greatly quickened the pace.

Trespassers on forest land were evicted with an iron hand and law of ejectment was made easy, innumerable small areas of private forest land were handed back to their owners and only viable areas withheld for management by the department. Forest land was administered by Shri Charan Singh with the same love and prudence as one does with one's own property.

He also prepared a Wildlife Preservation Bill, which could not be put on the Statute-Book for want of time.

He was entrusted with the portfolio of L.S.G. (Local Self Government) in February 1966. Immediately, expectations were aroused in urban areas which did not take long to be fulfilled. He framed necessary rules and took other necessary decisions to centralise the Municipal Services within a short period of four months and thus a great step forward in municipal administration, which had been pending consideration for years and years past was swiftly taken.

This single step reduced factionalism among municipal members, established the rights of the chairmen of local committees and brought about considerable improvement in administration. The public and the municipal services themselves welcomed this very much.

A committee was formed to suggest measures for bringing economy in the functioning of local committees and for improving their financial management.

Scales of pay of the employees of local bodies were revised without appointment of a Pay Commission for which the employees had been clamouring for the last several years. Many a local body were upgraded, which should have been done years ago. This brought further relief to their employees in the form of enhanced scales. As a result, while government work in the headquarters and the local offices was disrupted for two months (from December 1966 to January 1967) due to the agitation of the state employees, work continued regularly in the local committees, like an island of peace and stability in a great commotion and indiscipline.

By the year 1967, Shri Charan Singh had gained experience in the administration of all the departments of the State Government except Education, Industry, Cooperation and PWD. Efficiency, originality and finding solutions to unsolved problems from beginning to end were the characteristics of his administration. It was Shri Charan Singh himself

who laid down policies in his departments and guided the officers, not vice-versa. And, perhaps, it is unnecessary to add that he is also a master of details. No officer, however able, could think of hood-winking or bypassing him.

Shri Charan Singh's solicitude for the poor and the downtrodden is well-known. A mention has already been made of the rights and preferences which he secured for the Harijans and other poor sections of our society as a Revenue Minister. In the 40s, as Parliamentary Secretary in the Government of Pantji, he succeeded in securing enhancement of allowance for constables, peons and other Class IV employees from annas 4 or 6 to annas 12 a day while travelling on government duty. While serving as Revenue Minister from November 1954 to March 1956, he issued several orders and circulars to various districts on behalf of the government and the Revenue Board to ensure that the proportion of Harijans in the posts of peons in the offices of district administrations, Lekhpals and Amins is at least 18 percent. But there was great resistance at the official level and despite many memorandums only partial success was achieved. In December 1953, Shri Charan Singh issued a government order so that all the vacant jobs of class IV in the departments under him like Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Forests should be given to Scheduled Caste candidates until their quota reaches 18 percent. But after a few months the Appointment Department said that this order is against the Constitution, so it was withdrawn. His recommendation that low-paid government employees should get more dearness allowance than higher-paid employees is a recent example. He was perhaps the first political leader in the country to have such an idea.

A Thinking Politician

He had presented many other ideas and schemes for improving administration and for the benefit of the country, but these were either not considered or were considered only after considerable loss to public interest. To mention some of them:

First: From the mid-fifties he had been stressing the utility of small irrigation works, particularly, for the eastern districts but nobody would listen. On the contrary, a smear campaign was started against him that he only wanted investments in the western parts of the state. At last, the Government veered round to his views, but as late as 1964. During this period tens of millions of rupees in the form of capital expenditure had been spent in unprofitable projects, thus converting the Irrigation Department into a liability for the State exchequer. In the days of the British, the Irrigation Deptt. yielded a net annual income of about Rs. 1.75 crores: in 1967, it showed a dead annual loss of Rs. 8.5 crores.

Second: Caste system is the greatest evil of the Hindu or Indian society. Shri Charan Singh brought a resolution before the Congress Legislature Party in April 1939, requiring that the caste of a Hindu candidate should not be enquired into while seeking admission into an educational institution or public service. The only enquiry, however that may be made should be whether the candidate belonged to the scheduled caste. It was at his insistence that a decision was taken by the Government in 1948 not to enter the caste of a tenure holder in the land records in future. Shri Charan Singh's views in regard to Government's duty in this connection is almost revolutionary. He wrote to Pt. Nehru in 1954 suggesting an amendment in the Constitution that that only those youths should be recruited in the gazetted services of the states who are ready to marry outside their caste (and in the central gazetted services those youths who are ready to marry outside their language group) but this did not yield any results. As a moderate measure, however, he had

been suggesting (and submitting notes) since the days of Pantji that, at least, the Government should take a decision not to make financial grants-in-aid to those educational institutions whose name is associated with a particular caste. For thereby our our sons and daughters studying in these institutions are gradually being influenced by the ideas of high and low based on the coincidence of birth. But nobody agreed despite impassionate declarations from the platform that Congressmen were working for a casteless society.

Third: He has been pleading since 1952 for shifting of SDO's headquarters from the district to the Tehsils, so that people's time is not wasted in going to the district headquarters for petty things, and development work proceeds with a faster pace. Everybody had agreed, but necessary financial provision could not be made.

Fourth: Shri Charan Singh was perhaps the first political leader of Uttar Pradesh to raise his voice for measures to check population growth. While addressing Congress workers in Basto district in 1956, he asked them to take up the task and appeal to the people to adopt the programme in their own interest. The State Government took an active interest in this matter much later in 1964.

Fifth: Black money, that is, money which has been earned by black marketeers and others against provisions of law, and constitutes, at least, one third of total currency of the land is admittedly one of the two main reasons, the other being low production, of undue rise in prices which has led to great misery for the masses, demand for more and more dearness allowance by government servants and organised labour, and problems of maintenance of discipline and law and order. In June 1966, Shri Charan Singh drafted a scheme for demonetization of black money, which he forwarded to the members of Government of India, wrote letters to them and saw them personally, but to no avail. He also warned them that Congress would lose heavily at the General Election which lay ahead in early 1967, if the prices were not brought down which could be done only by demonetization, but nobody listened. Perhaps the pull of persons with black money was too great. Instead, the rupee was devalued with the results that are known to all.

Sixth: The Nagas in Northeast India were in armed revolt since 1953 or so. A contingent of the army was duly assigned to the area, but as is reported with definite orders to shoot only in self defence. Almost

every quarterly, the Government of India has been issuing statements assuring the people that the situation was improving and would soon be normalised. But, in actual fact, with every day that passed, the situation has worsened. In 1964, we entered into a ceasefire agreement and have been extending it ever since. The Nagas observed it only in its breach, with the result that their army was, as in 1966 far better trained, far better equipped and far stronger than in 1964. There was no meeting-ground between the parties; the Nagas did not for a moment agree to remain a part of the Union. And yet the fraud of the peace mission was perpetuated and negotiations were held for years together with Padri Scott, as one of the members of the government to the mission. Shri Charan Singh has been writing members of the government of India since 1959 to take a realistic view of the situation to take courage in both their hands and crush the revolt as revolts have been crushed all over the world and throughout history. He has seen two Prime Ministers, one Home Minister and another distinguished leader in this regard and discussed the matter with them, but to no avail. He told them that nobody in the world was going to thank, or congratulate us for this generosity or forbearance, rather, we will be considered weak links unfit to administer our country or maintain its integrity or frontiers. In one of his letters to Delhi, Shri Charan Singh had foretold that Nagas were likely to collude with China and Pakistan to stab us in the back at an opportune moment. Failure to solve the Naga problem has led to the rebellion of Mizos and Kukis, and also accentuated the demand for a Hill State.

He has sent a comprehensive note to the then Home Minister of India in 1963 regarding activities of Pakistan and infiltrators and foreign missionaries in Assam and the adjoining territories. A copy was sent to Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri ji, but nobody had the necessary vision, or the necessary courage. The entire Northeast region of the country was virtually in flames. According to latest information, Chinese soldiers have infiltrated into Nagaland and one should not be surprised if this area is turned into another Vietnam. Our posterity will have to pay heavily for lack of foresight, clear thinking and determination on the part of Congress rulers of the country.

Also, it may be broadly mentioned here that Shri Charan Singh had forewarned the Prime Minister about the impending invasion of Kashmir valley by Pakistan in October 1947, but Pt. Nehru did not imagine it

could happen or, if it did, India could render any military help. He also warned the Deputy Prime Minister in November, 1950 about implications of the Chinese presence in Tibet whose frontiers coincided with ours. Sardar Patel, it transpired later, held the same opinion but was unable to do anything owing to Pt. Nehru's opposition borne out of unrealistic thinking.

The concrete and constructive services rendered by Shri Charan Singh to the state cannot be compared. Perhaps no more intelligence is required than to arrange for money in the budget and then to build a new road, a new school, a new hospital, a new tube-well, a new factory. Whereas to think of a new idea, to formulate a new programme, to make a new law, to establish a new system, to reform the old system, to solve problems affecting millions of people at the same time, and to create new values, requires not only intelligence but imagination, statesmanship and the discipline of both mind and body. Almost all of this work done in Uttar Pradesh is due to Shri Charan Singh. Had he been given more opportunities, the state would have been respected in the country instead of the present ridicule.

Besides innumerable articles and radio speeches, he has written two booklets and two major books, which is rare for a busy minister anywhere, but particularly so in our country.

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) Abolition of Zamindari— | (Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1947, page 263) |
| (2) How to Abolish Zamindari – Which Alternative System to Adopt— | (Superintendent Printing and Stationery, U.P India, 1958; Pages 68) |
| (3) Agrarian Revolution in Uttar Pradesh— | (Superintendent, Printing and Stationery, U.P India, 1958, Pages 65) |
| (4) India's Poverty and Its Solution | (Asia Publishing House. Bombay. 1964 Pages 650) |

Note—The last book is an enlarged edition of a previous book titled "Joint Farming X-Rayed", published by the Vidya Bhavan, Bombay in 1960.

Besides these, he wrote a book on model behaviour for children in Hindi titled, “Shishtachar” while confined in Jail in 1941, which still remains unpublished.

His popularity among the common people and the intelligentsia is undisputed. It stands confirmed by the voting figure of his election to the Assembly in February, 1967. He beat his closest rival by a lead of more than, 52009 votes highest of any Assembly candidate in any of the four General Elections held so far in the country, and all the three rival candidates lost their security. And this was despite the fact that he visited his constituency only for five or six days before filing his nomination papers on January 17, and owing to illness. It would not be out of context to say here that there was such intense bias and opposition against him among his political rivals in the state that the Meerut District Congress Committee, which had come into the hands of his rivals after 25 years in 1964, did not even send his name as a deputy Congress candidate from the district.

Shri Charan Singh received encomiums from the Opposition in almost every session of the Legislature, sometimes for this policy or achievement and sometimes for that—which, perhaps, no other Minister all over the country has received. Not only this, as is evident from the proceedings of the Vidhan Sabha, many a times when Shri Charan Singh was delivering a speech, the opposition demanded extension of the sitting time so that they could benefit from his knowledge and experience.

Crusader against corruption in public life

While he is an untiring crusader against corruption rampant in the administration, his own integrity in the widest sense of the term is beyond cavil. His private life is above reproach and an open book. Nor can he be charged with abuse of power in the interest of those who are near and dear to him. As somebody wrote to an American student of U.P politics, “Shri Charan Singh is not accommodating even to his own people to the extent he should be.”

He is under no obligation to any businessman, or industrialist. During elections, he gets financial support from his constituents without even as much asking for it.

There can be no greater tribute to his character than the fact that despite such a long period of political power, nobody at least, no disinterested person-can point an accusing finger against him.

His absorption in his duties will be apparent from the fact the he has not, till today, been able to find time for seeing even important places like Badrinath in his own state or Calcutta and next door Chandigarh in his country. He did not avail of an offer to visit the U.S.A. free of cost.

Shri Charan Singh has always insisted that ministers shun ostentations and live simply so that the gulf between them and the man in the street was narrowed down as far as possible. It was at his initiative that the salaries of the Ministers were brought down to the level of Rs 1000/- p.m., Ministers gave up the luxurious Chevrolets in favour of the small Ambassador, regular or continuous flunting of the national flag on Ministers' cars and houses was discontinued and the practice of P.A.C. accompanying the Ministers on train journeys was given up. When these proposals were discussed at an informal meeting of the Cabinet in June, 1955, he had a row with a senior colleague and had to walk out in protest at his remarks.

He had always regarded office as a means of public service rather

than an end in itself, and he always kept his resignation letter in his pocket. Since 1946, he actually resigned or offered to resign nine times, that is, whenever he felt his self-respect or public interest so demanded it, viz, in March, 1947, January 1948, August 1948 March 1950, January 1951, November, 1957, April 1959 and August 1963.

On acceptance of his resignation in 1959, the most important Congress organ in Uttar Pradesh, viz 'National Herald' of Lucknow paid a tribute to Shri Charan Singh in editorial columns of April 23, in the following terms:

"There is tragedy both personal and organizational, in Mr. Charan Singh's resignation. His exit is a loss to the U.P administration and Mr. Sampurnanand has also lost an able earnest minded and hard working colleague with a reputation for integrity when such reputations are rare. There were several occasions when he differed strongly from Mr. Charan Singh and criticised him severely, on matters of policy, but his sincerity of purpose, his knowledge of the subjects he had to deal with and his devotion to duty could not be questioned."

All these qualities are grudgingly conceded even by his political opponents, as would appear from a book "Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh" (Bombay: Oxford University Press, University of California, 1966) by Paul R. Brass, their only charge against him is that Shri Charan Singh is "proud by nature and uncompromising in his relations with others."

Extracts from this book given below, would perhaps, help understand some of his personality,

"...Chaudhary Charan Singh. currently Minister for Agriculture in the Uttar Pradesh Government, has dominated the district Congress and district politics (of Meerut) since the early forties and has successfully resisted numerous challenges to his leadership during his long rule. Chaudhary Saheb, as he is reverentially called by his followers, has been an unusually successful factional leader in Uttar Pradesh politics. Inspired less by a desire for power than by an invincible belief in the righteousness of his action and policies, Charan Singh seeks neither friend nor favour and gives no quarter to those who oppose him (p. 139)"

"Charan Singh is not exactly an intellectual in politics, but he is a well read man, with an incisive intelligence which he has devoted to a continuing study of agricultural: problems in Uttar Pradesh. Charan Singh is the leading ideologist in Uttar Pradesh of the peasant-proprietor.

As a prominent member of the U.P Zamindari Abolition Committee, he worked hard to ensure that the Zamindari Abolition Act would contain no loopholes, which would permit the continued dominance of the zamindars in the rural economy of the State and to make certain that landlordism may not raise its head again. (pp. 139-140)”

“Charan Singh has many of the qualities of the ideal Indian faction leader. He is known for his intellectual abilities and has a reputation for integrity. No one has ever charged him with a desire for material advantage for himself. The major criticism levelled against Charan Singh as a Party leader is that he is proud by nature and uncompromising in his relations with others” (p. 141)

“Most faction leaders are accommodating politicians, easily accessible and quick to come to the aid of their followers and constituents. However, there are variations in this pattern. In Meerut district, Charan Singh—a highly successful faction leader—has developed the reputation of being relatively unaccommodating and uncompromising. It is not that Charan Singh will not listen to grievances, or provide material benefits to his followers, but he requires that requests for his intervention be reasonable and just. Charan Singh can be relatively unaccommodating in this sense, because he is loyal to his followers and because he seeks nothing for himself which he would not share with those who depend upon him”. (p. 237)

The author has listed Shri Charan Singh’s ‘personal character’ as one of the elements of his power of unusual success as a political leader.

The irony of it all, however, is that the very standards of public conduct to which Shri Charan Singh so scrupulously adheres—of which Mr. Paul R. Brass speaks and which are so loudly professed by Congressmen themselves on the platform—were discussed in the circles that mattered or ought to have mattered. Colleagues of equal age and rank at Lucknow were torn by common human failings of jealousy and prejudice.

There was yet another factor which stood in the way of his recognition. He was not born in any of the politically influential castes of the State. As the editor of the ‘National Herald’ of Lucknow, was pleased to write in a leading article captioned “Game or Gamble”, dated December 25, 1966:

“Thus politics is an uncertain, dirty, deadly and futile game. It is natural that political life is unstable, which many have to suffer. There are many examples of this. Shri Charan Singh has many qualities, but no one

thinks of him because he does not have the caste power of the major political castes of the state, Brahmins, Baniyas, Kshatriyas or Scheduled Castes, behind him.”

Shri Charan Singh left the Congress in 1967 not because he wanted to become the Chief Minister as has been alleged in certain quarters but because of breach of faith committed by the Congress leadership. He did not join any of the opposition parties in existence at that time. He founded a party of his own with emphasis on clean administration and solution of our problems in accordance with the Gandhian approach.

This will be clear from the letter which he had addressed to Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister on 8-1-1977 in reply to an allegation that she had made against him in a public speech. In the said letter, Shri Charan Singh has very unambiguously stated that at the time of General Elections to the U.P Assembly in 1967, the Congress had gained only 198 seats as compared to 227 gained by the opposition parties put together. He was then urged by the opposition more than once to shoulder the responsibilities of the chief minister, since his support would have augmented the strength of opposition to 275 or so. He, however, refused to oblige them as he had then no intentions of leaving the Congress. He even withdrew from the contest of the election of Leader of the Congress Legislative Party in favour two members of Shri C. B. Gupta on the condition that some 26 members of the then State Cabinet who did not enjoy good reputation in his in his opinion be dropped and replaced by honest members of known undisputed integrity. When the agreement reached between Shri Charan Singh and the emissaries of Mrs. Gandhi was not honoured, Shri Charan Singh decided to leave the Congress, declaring it thus on 1st April on the floor of the House.

Shri Charan Singh was persuaded by the emissaries of Mrs. Indira Gandhi the same evening at his residence to stage a come back to the Congress as its Chief Minister, but in view of all that had happened, he declined to accept the offer. Shri Charan Singh had also explicitly stated that he would have clung to the office of the Chief Minister by all possible devices and would not have staked it so recklessly as he did had he thought highly of the post. Nor he would have offered to resign twice in August 1967 and December 1957 when he thought that the attitude of his colleagues militated against public interest.

Shri Charan Singh had provided clean administration to the biggest State of the Union of India with colleagues who represented some 7 different parties, Viz. Jan Sangh, SSP, PSP, Swatantara Party, Communist Party, Jan Congress (later known as BKD) and one or two others.

It was for the first time in his tenure as the Chief Minister that a member of the Scheduled Caste was appointed a member of the State Public Service Commission.

Another significant achievement of Shri Charan Singh is the induction in his Cabinet of four Ministers of the Cabinet rank and 2/3 Ministers of State drawn from the backward classes. For 30 years, i.e., since 1937 when the Congress first came to power, till 1967, there was not a single minister belonging to the Backward Classes which formed 55% of the population. A member of the Passi community was also inducted as a minister in his Cabinet. It may be noted that Passis is the single largest community amongst Scheduled Castes, next only to Chamars or Jatavs but never in the history of Congress Rule was a member of that community included in any Congress Ministry, the State or the Central.

Shri Charan Singh persuaded his colleagues to take a decision to the effect that no educational institution shall be given financial aid by the Government on the expiry of June next if it continued to bear its name after a caste. Not unexpectedly, all the institutions complied with it. Today, there is not a single educational institution named after a caste in the state of U.P.

The prices of foodgrains, which were soaring very high before Shri Charan Singh took over, came down steeply on his assumption of office. The hoarders were afraid of his stringent attitude and in exasperation, dehoarded their stocks.

The procurement price of wheat was fixed at Rs. 80/85 per quintal, perhaps the highest that was ever given to the cultivators. A scheme of procurement was formed which was then vehemently opposed by the State Congress Committee. Six years later, the same was, however, adopted by the Central Government which further made recommendations to all the State Governments.

Similarly, owing to certain natural circumstances and also certain policies adopted by the (U P.) State Government, the cultivators received the highest price for their sugarcane which they had not received before.

It is a common feature of our economic life that during the months of September-October, when it is the sowing season for Rabi crops, the price of wheat and other grains rocketed sky high, but in 1967, their prices were lower as compared to the price that the cultivators received in the months of May and June. The pure and simple reason was that nobody in the state had the audacity to hoard foodgrains.

There was not a single strike in any factories of the state or by any class of Government servants throughout the state as long as Shri Charan Singh was in office.

There are various stories of his dramatic appearance at crucial times in various parts of the district which kept the corrupt officers on their toes. The reason was that he was very strict with the corrupt and no approbation otherwise would do. At the same time, the number of officers punished was less than what it was in previous years. The only difference was that formerly personal recommendations hindered the disciplinary proceedings, whereas, in his time, they had no place. For the first time in the history of the country, a Publicmen's Enquiry Ordinance was promulgated. The publicmen, against whom enquiries could be made, included Members of the Legislature, Chairmen of First Class Municipal Committees, Mayors of Corporations and Presidents of District Cooperative Federations. What was significant was the fact that an independent investigation agency was established which was not answerable to the Government at all. This ordinance was copied by the Governments of Kerala and Orissa but, as soon as Shri Charan Singh resigned, it was repealed by the President of India.

In 1970, Shri Charan Singh declared through an ordinance that there shall be no compulsory student union in the educational institutions. All unions will be voluntary in nature. As a result, there were no strikes, there was no-mass copying, no eve-teasing of girls; and for the first time, the number of days on which the educational institutions functioned was the highest since independence. Innumerable telegrams and letters from heads of institutions were received by Shri Charan Singh which vaunted that the measure had been greatly appreciated students and teachers.

Similarly, he had a Gunda Control Act enacted. Even before the act was to be put on the statute book, the mere news that such a measure was being contemplated by the State Government served to control

the activities of anti-social elements who usually gathered on road-crossings with knives in their pockets. There were instances which note the erstwhile hesitation and anxiety of parents — especially those of women — to send their wards out was abated at the passing of this measure. Women could now freely return to their respective educational institutions.

Almost all the constituents of the Samyukt Vidhayak Dal other than the Jan Congress (BKD) were in favour of an increase being made in the salaries of the Government Servants. Shri Charan Singh relented in this regard in the month of June. Since the increase was granted, it cost some 10 crores to the State exchequer. Three months later, the SSP and the Communist Party came with some demands which were contradictory. The result was that a cabinet minister and a minister of state resigned, Shri Charan Singh averred that he would prefer to go out of office rather than waste public funds without which the state could make no economic progress.

There had been serious communal riots in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh but in Uttar Pradesh where the proportion of Muslims is the highest, not a single such incident took place during Mr. Charan Singh's tenure. In January 1968, during the time of SVD Government, the then Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi was scheduled to address a session of the Indian Science Congress in Varanasi. Shri Raj Narain and his colleagues of the then SSP decided to 'arrest' her because two colleagues of Shri Raj Narain had been arrested on the orders of Smt. Indira Gandhi under Section 144 in New Delhi. The Samyukta Vidhayak Dal had 45 members and if its support was withdrawn, the government would probably not have been able to function. Shri Charan Singh, however, decided that no harm shall be done to the Prime Minister, notwithstanding his differences with her, with a view to uphold and protect the dignity of the office of the Prime Minister. He told his SSP friends that he will not permit her to be so arrested. Subsequently, he had some SSP leaders jailed. Realizing that the SSP would create troubles in the party and the government, he resigned in February 1968 despite enjoying a majority in the house.

Vanguard of national political movements

Shri Charan Singh has always been in the vanguard of all national movements including the total revolution movement of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narain. He was imprisoned by Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Government on the night of 25th June, 1975 and confined in the Delhi Tihar Jail from where also he made ceaseless efforts towards the formation of one single opposition political party. Upon his release from jail in March 1976 he did not rest content but continued to raise his little fingers against the dictatorial reign of Mrs. Gandhi. His thunderous speech in this behalf made on 23 March 1976 in the U.P Vidhan Sabha as Leader of the opposition will be remembered forever by lovers of democracy.

Shri Charan Singh was the first to give his consent to the Lok Nayak for the formation of one single united opposition Party and its public declaration, the Janta Party.

With the return of democracy, as the result of mini revolution in March 1977 in which Shri Charan Singh played a key role, and the formation of the Janta Party Government, Shri Charan Singh became the Union Home Minister. Ideological differences with the Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai continually kept him in an uneasy mood; and when these appeared on the surface, the office of the Prime Minister—egoist as it has been—gave a fatal blow on to the Home Minister. Shri Charan Singh resigned his office on June 30, 1978 on the issuance of the majestic orders to him. The matter of fact is that it was not a resignation, but a 'humiliation;' expulsion from the Cabinet. Shri Charan Singh, in reply to the Prime Minister's letter asking him to resign in a strident language because of certain statements made by him about the trial of Mrs. Gandhi, stated that he will give his assessment of the actual reasons behind the PM's letter on the floor of the Parliament. The Prime Minister's allegation that he had committed a breach of the principle of collective responsibility was a mere feint, the actual reasons being altogether different.

Shri Charan Singh has never endeared an office, however exalted it might be. Any office held by him has been a means, an instrument to fight against injustice, exploitation and corruption and for social transformation—not a mere end in itself. And it is this spirit in him which keeps, the torch burning in his hands, marching ahead in the service of the common man—the poor, the downtrodden, the desolate and the forlorn in this land of Gandhi till he draws his last breath. This is the solemn pledge he is committed to.

This brief account of Chaudhary Charan Singh's public life was written by Professor Sukhbir Singh Goel of Delhi University and published on 23 December 1978, birth anniversary of Chaudhary Charan Singh. This was also the occasion of one of the largest gatherings of farmers and villagers in New Delhi, now celebrated nationally as Kisan Diwas.

Goel provides a passionate account of Chaudhary Charan Singh's political life, ideas and influence. He shares Singh's humble beginnings, his education, and his deep involvement in the movement to free India from British rule. Goyal highlights Singh's contribution to land and agricultural marketing law reforms in Uttar Pradesh and his influential role in several ministries such as revenue, home, finance and local self-government. This booklet provides an analysis of Singh's efforts to tackle poverty, discrimination and exploitation in society. By detailing specific initiatives, strategies adopted and obstacles overcome, the booklet highlights Singh's unwavering commitment to social justice.

Goyal also underlines Singh's relentless push for transparency and accountability within government institutions. He shares specific examples of corruption that Singh cited, the investigative measures he implemented, and the broader impact of his anti-corruption efforts on governance and society.



Charan Singh Archives
www.charansingh.org

