

Hard Work never goes Unrewarded

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The boy born during second spell/charan of MulaNkhtra on July 03, 1955, having lived with his parents just for a year after birth and next 13-14 years of age in the Gurudwara at Prangoli village of Kathua district of J&K, found himself pushed to terribly torturous situation, particularly with the arrival of a caretaker, viz., late Shri Munshi Ram, Brother-in-law/Saddu of late Shri CharanDass in Gurudwara Prangoli. Virtually Mr. Ramji Dass, the author of this paper, fell into a peculiar trap of rural cattle business raised by the caretaker in the temple in the name of improving the fortune of this religious institution itself as offerings therein were too limited to meet its, the then growing daily expenditure on account of routine upkeeps, rural visitors, cattle rearing, maintenance of traditional culture, and langar etc. Moreover, agriculture produce from the Gurudwara fields at various locations in nearby villages under the occupation of various tenants since long too continuously declined after the demise of last Mahant of the Temple Shri Sunder Dass. Mr. Ramji Dass had to stop his studies in 1965-66 after 5th class in the Pathshala within Gurudwara premises due to lack of time and financial support. Seeing his own classmates having gone into nearby schools for higher studies, not having adequate clothing, not getting any supports from parents and relations to take him out of such a pathetic situation in Gurudwara, Mr. Ramji Dass found himself too helpless and frightened in the hands of caretaker appointed by the village community. Thus, virtually finding himself between wall in the front and well in the back while staying in the temple during days of late Shri Munshi Ram working as caretaker, Mr. Ramji Dass one day while returning from a marriage ceremony of a son of a follower of the Gurudwara in Madeen village near Chadwal left side on Pathankot→Jammu National Highway kept his bicycle in the shop premises of late Shri Nentu Mahajan of Sedda village at Dayalackeck and boarded a bus towards Jammu instead of coming back to Gurudwara at Parangoli. In fact, during his last visit to the parents when he stayed with them for about 10-12 days, Ramji Dass had shared his problems with them to explore the way out including some kind of job available anywhere nearby so that he could get rid of the terrible situation he faced there from time to time after the demise of Shri Sunder Dass. He contacted some of the people of that area doing labour work of loading and unloading the trucks (palayaddari) associated with various bigger commercial establishments in different major towns viz., Jammu, Amritsar and Ludhiana etc. In such discussion he had met his elder uncle/Mamu of Solah village at Sohal who told him

that he (Mr. Ramji Dass) could do the job of cooking for the group of the people associated with palayaddari in the morning and evening in their Dera, temporary stay arrangement, and would also restart his studies during day time without going to the school on regular basis. In fact he had made up his mind that he would neither go back to his parents then onwards, who virtually were helpless and frightened to retain Mr. Ramji Dass with them due to the psychological pressure from the people of Parangoli village and least support from own relations, nor stay in Gurudwara with Shri Munshi Ram, the then caretaker, who would not do anything meaningful personally but used to keep Mr. Ramji Dass over engaged in the activities of rural cattle trade beyond his age and capacity at the cost of his health and future life what to talk of his studies. Thus, one day he boarded the bus without knowing even where to go that time. Just out of this kind of mental pressure, frustration, harassment, confusion and no exposure at all outside village life, Mr. Ramji Dass sat on the floor of the bus with the impression that only bigger people were supposed to sit in the chairs. However, the bus conductor took him to the available seat in the bus and asked him where to go which he responded very sharply that he would like to go wherever the bus would go ultimately. The conductor asked him to pay Rs.2.50/- for Jammu being final destination of the bus, which he did out of total money of Rs.16/- in his pocket that time. Thus, late in the evening he reached Jammu and got down in the new bus stand which had started functioning just during those days. In fact, few days before, the general bus stand in Jammu was located at Parade Ground in front of Brahaman Sabha premises.

It was in 1970-71 at the age of just 15-16 years when Mr. Ramji Dass landed for the first time in Jammu late in the evening in search of a job so that he could restart his studies independently, though without any pre-identification of such an appropriate employer. Soon after arrival at Jammu he thought of spending the first night in Mandir Purani Mandi Jammu whose Mahant Ji late Shri Sita Ram Dass had visited Gurudwara Parangoli on the request of the villagers through late Shri Ram Dass of Satura village of the then District Kathua. Accordingly, he finally reached Purani Mandi Mandir on foot at about 9 pm with the help for route direction to this place from the passerby people on the way from Bus Stand. Just within minutes of his arrival in the temple he met Mahant ji and narrated as to why he left Gurudwara Parangoli and came over there. Without wasting any time and waiting for further detail, Mahant ji, the very next day, deputed a senior student of Raghunath Mandir Pathshala, late Shri Ram Swaroop Dass who was staying in Purani Mandi Mandir, for admission of Mr. Ramji Dass in the Sanskrit Pathshala located in the premises of famous Raghunath Temple.

of Jammu. Surprisingly on the recommendation of Mahant Ji, Mr. Ramji Dass was admitted to the Pathshalla at the entry level again without any past background documents of his education. With this, new chapter in his life started with several other students staying in the Chhatravas (hostel) of Purani Mandi Mandir, Jammu and pursuing different courses like 10+2, B A, B Sc, B Com, M A, and Sanskrit Courses including Pragaya, Visharad, Shastri, Acharya and Ph. D. of Raghunath Mandir Pathshala and Ranbir Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Jammu. Several people from different parts of the country had been staying there, pursuing their studies successfully and also got settled in life.

Mandir Purani Mandi, Jammu is very renowned Ram Temple, also known as Rani Mandir, in Jammu city. Late Shri Sita Ram Dass was 4th Mahant of the Temple when Mr. Ramji Dass came over there in search of job as stated above for restarting his studies. Originally this Ram Mandir was handed over by Maharani Bandral to the then its Pujari late Shri Pushkar Dass who became first Mahant of this great Temple followed by late Shri Sant Ram Dass and late Shri Thakur Dass and in this succession order late Shri Sita Ram Dass became next Mahant after the demise of Shri Thakur Dass. Just within few days when people of Parangoli also came to Mandir Purani Mandi Jammu to take Mr. Ramji Dass back, Mahant ji categorically advised them not to come in the way of his studies and sent them back empty handed. As per traditions and norms of the temple, each student staying there used to participate in its various activities. Accordingly, Mr. Ramji Dass had taken keen interest in these activities before and after his study timings. During just that time many students studying in the said Pathshala of Raghunath Temple, had shifted to the newly opened Ranbir Kenriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Jammu at Gandhinar, a Campus of Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, where all the students were also getting scholarships to meet their basic needs. Having learnt all this in the Pathshala of Raghunath Temple itself from his classmates, Mr. Ramji Dass requested late Shri JagpuranDass Shastri, another senior student of Sanskrit staying in the temple and doing Ph. D. in Vidyapeeth, to accompany him to the Principal of Ranbir Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Dr. Anant Maral, for his admission there. In fact, admission for the year to various courses there had closed by that time, yet seeing his interest, eagerness and performance just within a month or so in the Pathshala of Raghunath Mandir, Mr. Ramji Dass was admitted to PrathmaPrathmVarsh in Ranbir Kendriya Sanskrit Vidypeeth as a special case. Mr. Ramji Dass studied in this Vidyapeeth for more than two and half years and qualified PrathmaPrathmVarsh and also DwetiyaVarsh of Prathama with first class first position. While pursuing Tritiya Varsh of Prathma in the Vidyapeeth, Mr. Ramji Dass had

thought of taking up modern education instead of continuing with Sanskrit course in Vidyapeeth. During that time, he happened to observe late Shri Tej Ram Khajuria, the then Principal of Ranbir Higher Secondary School Jammu a much matured, well-meaning and highly educated regular visitor to Mahant Ji. Accordingly, Mr. Ramji Dass sought suggestion from Khajuria ji as to how he could join main stream education at that late stage at about 16-17 years of age. Accordingly, Khajuria sahib suggested him to qualify “Bhushana” examination for proficiency in Hindi followed by “Parbhakar” and thereafter two papers of English in BA and thus he would be BA without starting from 6th standard afresh, as he had left studies after passing 5th class in Parangoli village 6-7 years before. Accordingly, he qualified Bhushana in 1973 but dropped this path for BA degree thereafter as he also learnt from another visitor to Purani Mandi Mandir viz., Shri Girdhari Lal Sharma that he could do Matriculation as private candidate of J&K Board of Secondary Education and pursue modern education accordingly that too on regular basis. Thus, he filled up the form for Matriculation Examination as a private candidate and took help for pursuing this stream of studies from his roommates, particularly late Dr Ram Paul Sharma, in the Purani Mandi Mandir and passed the same in second division in 1974 at the age of 19 years without having gone to any formal modern school education after 5th class in Parangoli which he did in 1965-66, though he couldn't perform well in Mathematics and English due to obvious reasons. On this success Mr. Ramji Dass received lot of attention, encouragement, blessings and appreciation in this temple as it was a miracle to many that a boy of 19 years of age having left modern school education after 5th standard in a remote village viz., Parangoli about several years before could do Matriculation on his own as a private candidate in the first attempt that too in second division with the then marking pattern.

Along with studies as per his plan for which he had left both Gurudwara in Prangoli and Parents in Sohal, Mr. Ramji Dass had taken up every work honestly and very seriously whenever and whatever asked by the management of the temple so that he would continue to get financial support to pursue his mission. As reward for good is more work, he went on getting tremendous workload here too. To mention a few, he used to bring fresh water in a copper urn on his head every day in the evening for Puja in the temple from the well located just at the bank of Tawi river near PeerkhohGupha, sweep the temple premises in the evening, look after goshala, cook the food in the Langar, wash utensils at times, and gradually everything in the temple as and when required as a stop gap arrangement. So much so, at several occasions' entire management of the temple, including puja both times, months

together in the absence of Mahant ji came into his hands as if only he was there for everything in the temple. All this kind of his engagement in the temple affairs along with his studies led to finally declaration of Ramji Dass one day by Mahant ji as his successor to the fact of which he signed an Affidavit also on August 26, 1976. He also gave new name to him as “Ram Sharan”.

With the passage of time, he also happened to interact with late Shri Radha Krishan Anand, renowned book seller of Pacca Danga Jammu who was regular visitor to Mahant Ji. Soon after having appeared in the Matriculation Examination he discussed his further plan of studies with Anand Sahib who suggested him to join Commerce stream to which Mahant ji also didn't object, though originally, he wanted Mr. Ramji Dass to pursue studies in Sanskrit only in line with his succession planning for the Temple. During his stay in Purani Mandi, Mr. Ramji Dass happened to have a roommate of Karloop village in Jammu district viz., late Dr. Ram Paul Sharma who was preparing himself for 12th examination for securing adequately high score for admission to MBBS. Thus, besides getting help from him for preparing the examination of Matriculation, Ramji Dass developed interest to seek admission to medical stream too. But he couldn't do that as he had taken Arts subjects in Matriculation due to aforesaid obstructions in his studies from the very beginning. Accordingly, as per advice of late Shri Radha Krishan Anand, Mr. Ramji Dass joined PUC in the then S P M R College of Commerce, Jammu and finally qualified B. Com. in 1978 with 54.76% marks. Due to lot of difficulties in understanding English and accountancy in the college classes, he did take private tuition too for a while. After B. Com. Mr. Ramji Dass was interested to live a comfortable life with visible contribution to mankind in his limited way and accordingly he thought of finding some job outside the temple. In order to pursue further studies, Mr. Ramji Dass didn't need any job as long as he would stay in Mandir Purani Mandi, for which he remained life-long indebted, yet he was free to decide his further plans in his life. Thus, after graduation he started searching for the job as many of his classmates did.

Soon after graduation he applied for the post of Branch Manager in the then Jammu Rural Bank and accordingly prepared for written test and interview and thus got selected finally. He worked there for about six months at Ramgarh Branch, now in district Samba, when he resigned due to peculiar work pressures from different quarters for unethical lending operations in conflict with his taste and nature. Hence, he decided to go for higher studies in Commerce. He did M. Com. on regular basis in 1980 with more than 64% marks. Interestingly while doing M. Com. in University of Jammu, Mr. Ramji Dass had drawn the

attention of all students and faculty members in the Department of Commerce, University of Jammu as a quite disciplined and hardworking student. During these two years he remained class representative in the Department and also took keen interest in the extracurricular activities in the University. Surprisingly on September 25, 1980 when he was appearing in the last paper of M Com, late Dr L C Khullar sought his consent to take some classes in PG Diploma in Business Management and PG Diploma in Office Management and Secretarial Practice in the evening which he readily accepted and started taking classes from that day itself. It was a surprise to many as to how he was given the responsibility of taking classes of PG Diploma Programmes when he had just finished his own master degree examination the result of which was yet pending. In the meantime, he got a job in SD Sabha Higher Secondary School for teaching commerce at nominal salary of just Rs. 250 per month which gave him lot of satisfaction as that time he was very keen to meet his personal expenses on his own instead of taking support from Mandir Purani Mandi although he continued carrying all the activities in the Temple as usual. After M Com examination he too had applied for the position of Lecturer in Commerce, University of Jammu and for the job of cashier-cum-clerk in J&K Bank. Just after 4-5 months in S D Sabha Higher Secondary School, he got selected in J&K Bank too. He did join the bank but just within 15-16 days later Mr. Ramji Dass was appointed as Lecturer in Commerce, University of Jammu which he joined on February 14, 1981. Surprisingly he received no salary for the period for about five months he took classes in the aforesaid two diploma programmes in Management stream of University of Jammu during September 25, 1980 to February 13, 1981 as neither any budgetary provision nor any other source for payment was there for taking the classes as stop gap arrangement for the classes originally allotted to a regular faculty member of the Department of Management if he/she had to go on deputation for higher studies. In this case Dr. M R Rana, his own teacher in M. Com., had gone to IIM Ahmedabad for short term programme in Management. Thus, ever since he left Parangoli in 1970-71, Mr. Ramji Dass rarely said no to any responsibility naturally and in routine coming to him for which, as he felt, Almighty always strengthened him for further struggle in life.

There is very interesting background to his aforesaid appointment as Lecturer in Commerce, relevant for understanding the significance of self-vigilance and meaningful intervention whenever required and enough confidence in presenting the arguments with convincing logic and evidence in life. In fact, Mr. Ramji Dass had opted for Project Work, being practical work in the field on the most burning topic of the time, as one of the papers in master degree

programme in commerce. Accordingly, due to little more time required in completion of the project work as compared to non-project candidates and subsequently also delay in getting the convenient date from the External Expert for viva voce, his result of M. Com. got delayed abnormally. Consequently, the last date for submitting the application for the position of Lecturer in Commerce of University of Jammu was over; however, he submitted the application in anticipation of the successful result. As per practice and the then norms, his application was rejected by the University for the Interview fixed on December 4, 1980 by inviting only two candidates. As detailed earlier, by this time having stayed in a highly meaningful ethical environment always near the Almighty in Mandir Purani Mandi for about ten years, vis-a-vis simultaneously his educational grooming for few months in Raghunath Sanskrit Pathshala for a few months, two and half years in Ranbir Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, four years in SPMR College of Commerce and two years in PG Department of Commerce of Jammu University, Mr. Ramji Dass had gained lot of confidence and reasoning in arguments. Thus, having heard about the rejection of his candidature for the interview on account of non-declaration of his result of M. Com. degree for none of his faults, he approached the Controller of Examination of the University for the same. In fact, result was ready but got delayed just due to non-availability of requisite quorum of result approving committee, just a too little man-made hurdle in the University System. However, the Controller of Examination was kind enough to complete the formality and declare his result on December 01, 1980. Thereafter he immediately went to the then concerned Assistant Registrar for the interview call letter but he categorically declined to issue it due to the reason that Mr. Ramji Dass was not eligible with requisite qualification on the last date for submission of the application for the said position. He did explain lot of justification as his result got delayed abnormally due to faulty process in the University itself. Finally, he sought time from the then Registrar late Dr. J. R. Rathor and requested him for the opportunity with a convincing argument as to how University on its own, as mentioned in the advertisement, can call any candidate for the interview even if such person has not applied. Moreover, he cited an example wherein the university had appointed a person as Lecturer in Management earlier who had neither applied nor even appeared in the interview. The Registrar did listen to him patiently and took up the matter with the then vice chancellor late Prof Satya Bhushan. Though no decision could be communicated to him in the form of interview call letter prior to the date of interview yet Mr. Ramji Dass was advised verbally to be present on the date of interview. Accordingly, Mr. Ramji Dass remained present and finally he was asked verbally to appear before the selection committee. Accordingly, he appeared in the interview and got

selected as Lecturer in Commerce. Finally, he joined the University of Jammu on February 14, 1981 and served on different positions including as Vice Chancellor.

Hard work with timely sincere efforts never goes unrewarded.