



AJAY KUMAR RUNGTA

May 27, 1939 – February 24, 2015

Ajay Kumar Rungta

– A Tribute

"All that a man does outwardly is but the expression and completion of his inward thought. To work effectively, he must think clearly; to act nobly, he must think nobly". Shri Ajay Kumar Rungta truly epitomised this homily in his work and achievements throughout his life.

Born on May 27, 1939 at Chaibasa, a prominent town in the mining belt in Bihar, now Jharkhand, Ajay Kumarji Rungta was the eldest son of Shri Chandi Prasad Rungta and Smt. Rameshwari Devi Rungta, who were blessed with three sons and three daughters. With business interest in mining industry, the family hailed from Bagar, a small town in Rajasthan. Ajay Kumarji's grandfather, Shri Mangilal Rungta made pioneering contributions to the family business and moved to Calcutta in the early part of the last century. In the wake of expanding business opportunities under the Imperial administration, the family business of the Rungtas' expanded from mining to textiles, medium and heavy engineering industry and chemicals. Shri Mangilalji's eldest son, Shri Madan Gopal Rungta was the President of Bharat Chamber of Commerce in 1961 and 1962.

Shri Chandi Prasad Rungta was the second son of Shri Mangilal Rungta and the six brothers together built the business empire of Rungta Mines. His entrepreneurship was ably taken forward by his cousins and his three sons – Ajay Kumarji, Krishna Kumarji and Ashok Kumarji.

Ajay Kumarji belonged to a family which attached importance to education, humility, simplicity and benevolence as the hallmark of character building. Thus, he acquired the virtues of selflessness, perseverance, courage and honesty at an early age and these invaluable qualities of life were reflected in his acts and deeds till his last days.

After completing his school education at Shree Vishuddhanand Saraswati Vidyalaya, Calcutta, Ajay Kumarji graduated from St. Xavier's College, Calcutta at the age of 18 only in the year 1957 and

earned the Post Graduate Degrees of M.Com and LL.B from the University of Calcutta. His zeal for furthering his professional education took him to Birmingham, where he earned the Degree from the Accountants & Business Training International (ABTI) College of the University of London. His interest in developing excellence in professionalism led him to earn a Diploma in Public Speaking. The flair in public speaking and interest in sports made a mark throughout his educational career and strengthened the potentials of his leadership qualities.

In the year 1958, Ajay Kumarji was married to Smt. Savitri Devi Beriwalla belonging to the reputed Beriwalla business family of Calcutta having interest in mining, medium and heavy engineering industries. The couple was blessed with two sons Sanjeev and Rajeev, and two daughters Madhu and Aarti.

Ajay Kumarji nurtured his interest in the intricacies of business practices from his early days by getting acquainted with the nitty gritty of family business. This approach greatly assisted him to mature his business acumen leading to the expansion of the business horizon of Rungta Sons. His brothers Krishna Kumar and Ashok together provided unstinted support to him in fortifying the family business. Thus, beyond mining of manganese and iron ore and other minerals, Rungta Sons diversified to some of the new areas of commerce and industry like synthetic fibres, steel, engineering, automobile and financial services. He served as the Director of Zenith Fibers Ltd. and Aaekay Investment Centre Ltd. as well as Chairman of Rungta Enterprises and Rungta Mines Ltd.

Ajay Kumarji inherited the entrepreneurial vision of his forefathers and added innovative ideas and pragmatism in his approach. This crystallised the traits of able leadership in his character. He was one of those industrialists who, despite unbelievable hurdles and obstacles pursued economic development with a rare nationalistic fervour. In fashioning his life, he created around him an atmosphere of uncomplicated goodness and uprightness, which often disarmed his critics. With his erudition, he had the ability to make his points on diverse subjects in a cogent and precise manner usually dissolving complex and critical issues to a

consensus. As an orator, he had excellent command on persuasiveness, which was the hallmark of his leadership and this unique quality earned him the highest positions in several industrial, social and philanthropic organisations in the country.

In the wake of planned development of Indian industries in the early 1960s, the Government of India evolved policies to regulate mining industries. In these circumstances, the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) was established in the year 1966 to negotiate and deal with the governments both at the Centre and the States. As one of the doyens of the Indian Mining Industry, at a very young age of 27, Ajay Kumarji took the initiative to constitute this premier national organisation as the spokesman of the mining industry in the country. Today, FIMI envelopes in its fold mining, mineral processing, metal making and other mineral-derived industries and fondly remembers the contribution of Ajay Kumarji in its formative years. He was the President of this premier body in 1968.

Diversifying from mining to metals, Ajay Kumarji launched production facilities for steel wires under his business domain. With his clear perception of the future path of growth of this important sector of industry, Ajay Kumarji was made the Vice-President and then the President of the Steel Wire Manufacturers' Association for the years 1974 to 1976. Shri Ashok Kumar Rungta, his youngest brother made signal contributions to the development of steel wire manufacture by ably sharing the elder brother's responsibilities.

In his pursuit to be actively associated with the development of a cross section of trade and industry in this part of the country, Ajay Kumarji joined the Committee of Bharat Chamber of Commerce in the early 1970s. As a great visionary he was invited to provide leadership to the Chamber and became its President in the year of its Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in 1977. During his Presidentship, he led the Chamber's first ever foreign Delegation to the UK and France.

The leadership of Ajay Kumarji at the Chamber continued even after his retirement from the Presidentship and has left stature to the organisation for many decades. As a biggest supporter of change and

liberalisation, he had no difficulty in lending his wise counsel and guidance to the management of the Chamber in a selfless manner. He had been the Chairman of the Core Committee of the Chamber — the think tank — constituted to chart the path to prosperity and development of the Chamber till he breathed his last. The new premises of the Chamber, which is nearing its completion, was his dream project and could not have been conceived without his dynamic approach and effective decision making. At Bharat Chamber of Commerce members will never say in grief : *"Ajay Kumarji is no more"*, but will live in thankfulness.

In the 1980s, Ajay Kumarji was invited to be an active member of the Committee of the All India Organisation of Employers (AIOE) and in the year 1987, he was elected as the President of the Organisation. This was a time when the 'regulatory issues', concerning organised employment were receiving a new thrust from the Government. In this regard, Ajay Kumarji's rationalised approach was accepted by the powers-that-be in formulating future policies.

The jewel in the crown of Ajay Kumarji's leadership traits eventually came in the form of Presidentship of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in the year 1994. *De facto*, he had also led the Committee of the Federation while being the Vice-President in view of the unforeseen indisposition of the then President. This was the period of liberalisation, globalisation and opening up of the Indian economy, which had far reaching implications on trade and industry for being unprepared to witness the unexpected developments. Ajay Kumarji's legendary vision on Indian industries helped him to interact with the policy makers from the apex body to ensure a smooth transition from control to liberalisation. The new business ambience of liberalisation necessitated a structural gear-up in the activities at the apex body. Ajay Kumarji introduced several unique reforms and changes at the FICCI secretariat to facilitate this requirement. His innovative ideas thus again found a channel for application at a national level and has left an indelible mark at FICCI.

In tandem with the Presidentship of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Ajay Kumarji was the President of

the Indian Council of Arbitration (ICA) and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC India). As the leader of these three national and apex organisations of trade and industry, he explored the opportunities of expansion of the country's trade in the era of globalisation by leading Trade Delegations to several countries including USA, Latin American countries, United Kingdom and several European countries like France and Germany, and, Japan and South Africa.

At a level of personal interaction, Ajay Kumarji had earned the unique distinction of meeting all the Prime Ministers of India in the post-Nehru era. He also had the privilege of meeting most of the Hon'ble Presidents of India. His interaction with luminaries had also extended to the USA where he had the opportunity to meet President George H Bush.

Prominence in the industrial and business circles in this part of the country had brought Ajay Kumarji a number of offers to officiate as the Honorary Consul. However, in view of his deep passion for natural beauty and interest in mining he accepted the position of Honorary Consul of South Africa in Kolkata in the year 1999 and he signed the acceptance letter in presence of no less a person than Mr. Nelson Mandela. Earlier, in the year 1995, he was the President of the Indo-US Commercial Alliance (USICA).

In addition to managing his multi-faceted public positions, Ajay Kumarji had the time and patience to contribute to the management of a number of institutions and philanthropic organisations which include Industrial Investment Bank of India, Sports Authority of India, International Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution, Vocational College of Studies of Delhi University, Calcutta Improvement Trust, West Bengal Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation and Dr. Nihar Munshi Eye Foundation. Apart from being a member of The Bengal Club and The Calcutta Club, he was the President of Bengal Rowing Club, Rotary Club of Calcutta and Vividh Kala Vihar and Vice-President, Rajasthan Club, West Bengal Red Cross Society as well as Marwari Relief Society.

Ajay Kumarji provided invaluable support and guidance to the Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management as a

Board Member and took a lot of initiatives in the development of Rajiv Gandhi IIM, Shillong, in its formative years.

Enlightened leadership and highest levels of performance come to only the people who are intuitive and can imbibe the culture of selflessness. Ajay Kumarji personified these rare qualities. He was also an humble and simple person having the ability to be friendly and at the same time maintain his remoteness, wherever and whenever required. Ready wit with a pleasant disposition was another unique characteristic of this man which would be difficult to emulate.

The early hours of the May Day, 2013 brought the deepest sorrow in the life of Ajay Kumarji when his beloved wife Savitri Devi left for her Heavenly Abode. It was, however, typical of the person that while he was calm outwardly, and it appeared that life would go on for him as before, it was also apparent how much he was internalising his grief — most unusual for a forthright person. Deep down inside, he was bereft, lost without her, and unsure as to how to live. Grief and sorrow perhaps eroded his life cycle and in the early hours of 24th February, 2015 at the age of 76, Ajay Kumarji breathed his last.

A life well lived, Ajay Kumarji carried with him the spirit of the verse from the Bhagavad Gita :

यद् यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.

Issued by the Secretary General, Bharat Chamber of Commerce, Kolkata, on the occasion of the Memorial Meeting on Monday, the 9th March, 2015 at Taj Bengal, Kolkata to condole the sad and sudden demise of Shri Ajay Kumar Rungta, one of the most distinguished former Presidents of the Chamber.



BHARAT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **KOLKATA**

CONDOLENCE MEETING IN THE MEMORY OF LATE AJAY KUMARJI RUNGTA

A LEGENDARY AND NOBLE INDUSTRIALIST

DATE : MONDAY, THE 9TH MARCH, 2015
TIME : 4.30 P.M.
VENUE : TAJ BENGAL, KOLKATA.

P R O G R A M M E

CHAIRMAN

SHRI SUBRATA MUKHERJEE

*Hon'ble Minister-in-Charge
Departments of Public Health Engineering
Panchayat and Rural Development
Government of West Bengal.*

Garlanding and Homage by the Chairman

Homage by :

SHRI SAJJAN BHAJANKA

*President
Bharat Chamber of Commerce.*

MS. HELEN LAFAVE

Consul General of USA in Kolkata.

SHRI C M BACHHAWAT, IAS

*Addl. Chief Secretary
Commerce & Industries Department
Government of West Bengal.*

SHRI DIPAK RUDRA, IAS (RETD.)

Former Addl. Chief Secretary and Food Commissioner, Government of West Bengal and Former CMD, UCO Bank.

SHRI ATMARAM SONTHALIA

Former President, MCC Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

DR. SOMENDRA CHANDRA NANDY

Former President, BNCCI and Former District Governor, Rotary 3290 and reputed Historian.

SHRI HARSH VARDHAN LODHA

Chairman, Birla Corporation Ltd.

SHRI DHIRENDRA KUMAR

*Former President
Bharat Chamber of Commerce.*

**Condolence Resolution :
to be moved by**

SHRI PAVAN PODDAR

*Former President
Bharat Chamber of Commerce.*

ONE MINUTE SILENCE
