

# **Cheddi Jagan - a real life success story**

by Janet Jagan

(Text of an address given at Babu John on March 3, 2002)

Cheddi Jagan's whole life is a success story - a record of achievements. Despite so many obstacles and setbacks, he succeeded in everything he started.

As a student, life was hard for him. Attending Queen's College, Cheddi certainly did not have it easy. He stayed with a family in Georgetown that believed in the caste system and treated him with scorn and arrogance. At school, he lacked most of the things students from well-to-do families had, but it never deterred him.

Going abroad was a matter of luck, and he made the most of it. Besides the passage raised by his father for the trip to the USA, he had no other financial backing and had to work his way through university, up to the time he became a Doctor of Dental Surgery.

The archives at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre include a letter written to him when he became President. The writer said he remembered Cheddi who was the "elevator boy" in the residential hotel he lived in during the '40s; and was happy at his advancement. All through his academic years, he worked an 8-hour day/night shift and came out on top in his studies.

As a professional, a dentist, he was the very best. His practice of dentistry before he left it to go into political life full-time, was a reflection of his character and behaviour all his life. He gave only the best; second best was out of his range. He never shortchanged his patients and refused to abide by the high-controlled fees of the other dentists. He always discussed with his patients what they could afford and adjusted fees to meet their pockets. He felt strongly about poor dentistry and covering teeth with gold crowns. He helped break that pattern which was a craze in the '40s and '50s, concentrating on good dental health for both adults and children - the latter being neglected until he came on the scene.

As a family man, he was a role model. He did his best to give his brothers and sisters an education. He was a loving son to his mother and father, helping them as they had helped him. To his own children he was a caring father - a hero. He enjoyed being a grandfather and had fun with them, as well as guiding them. I recall how he would cut fruit for them and encourage them to eat local foods and not so many sweets. As a husband, he was understanding and demonstrated his genuine belief in the equality of women.

In politics, he was many things - an idealist who felt the pain of the world's homeless and poor, a visionary, some said, way ahead of his time, an academic who read deeply and studied documents and books all his adult life, a writer who has left a huge amount of his writings, now housed at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre. And of course, his main role in Guyana as a leader, a teacher and an activist who never lost touch with the people he led.

By his wisdom and the love and respect held for him by the masses, he liberated Guyana twice - once from British colonial rule and then, he fought tirelessly to win the return of democracy - which he achieved in 1992 - another success story.

Before he died, he set Guyana on a course for recovery after the dreadful 28 years of PNC rule which had devastated Guyana.

Cheddi Jagan's life is one of achievements - in overcoming the most difficult obstacles and in giving the leadership Guyana needed over the last half century.

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