

## Cheddi - A Unique Leader

(Taped address by Janet Jagan at the Cremation Site, Babu John, March 9, 2003)

I regret being unable to attend this ceremony due to health problems, but take this opportunity to thank everyone here for paying tribute to our late President and Father of the Nation.

Not far from where you are today, he was born to sugar workers of Port Mourant, Jagan and Bachaoni, both born in India and who arrived in the then British Guiana with their parents who were indentured labourers. From this humble beginning, Cheddi reached the highest position in the land of his birth, the Presidency.

But, it is to his everlasting credit that he never forgot his roots. His whole life was dedicated to the betterment of humankind, both in his country of birth and everywhere that people lived and suffered.

Through his many years of active life in the service of humanity, his contributions to society in general were enormous. He led the anti-colonial struggle in Guyana and in the historical sense is related to all the leaders of these struggles - Nehru, Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Mandela and others. He actively fought for and led working people in their struggles for a better life, never giving an inch or making compromises that endangered their rights.

Perhaps, one of the most remarkable aspects of Cheddi Jagan's life was his consistent struggle for justice, never compromising his beliefs and always advocating equality, unity and struggle. Unlike many before him and after, he never sold out the people. His honesty and integrity made him unique in the realms of leadership. Even those who hated him the most, never doubted his honesty or his intentions.

What we can learn from the life of Cheddi Jagan is never to give up, once you know that you are doing what is right. In the face of the most difficult situations and the most dangerous period, as in the 60's, Cheddi never gave up and in the face of terrible attacks, still called for national unity, as he knew how important this was. At the height of the combined forces which had one objective - the removal of the PPP from office and the aim that it would never again gain office - in 1965 he said:

"Regardless of race or ethnic origin, let us consolidate our forces, win new support and march forward to victory ... Racism is the greatest curse of our land... anyone who spreads racial propaganda must be severely dealt with. Such a person is an enemy to himself and his country.

" Unity of the working class regardless of race is vital. If we are to go forward, the party must have the backing not of one race, but of all races. We must take the offensive. We must combat racism mercilessly and build a disciplined party .... " (1967)

Today, as we pay tribute to the Father of Independence, let us remember this man who was our brother, our father and who gave our country the unique leadership of a man who truly cared about the people. Long may his name be kept alive!