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*In memoriam*

## *Able organiser, amazing orator*

-Shivraj Singh Chouhan

I met Sunderlal Patwa for the first time during the 1974 bye-polls. There was glow on his face and authority in his voice. His speeches impressed me a lot. Patwa was an able organiser, effective leader and an amazing orator. His oratory was formidable. There was pin drop silence when he used to speak in the state Assembly.

I came in close contact with Patwa, when he contested elections from Bhojpur in 1985. We had worked hard in those elections and I got a chance to see him from close quarters. He was a leader of unmatched courage and a lively person. As BJP state president he appointed me as state president of Yuva Morcha. He used to motivate me a lot. He had the passion of youth. It was due to the industry of party workers and popularity of Patwa that BJP came to power in the state in 1990. His foot march from Bastar to Jabua took his popularity to new heights. He used to sing and recite poems during this march. I never saw him tired. Patwa used to lead a simple life. Though he was 92, he did not like him being called old. He had amazing skills and inimitable capacity to encourage the younger generation. When I became the chief minister, he gave me his invaluable guidance and suggestions from time to time. I used to call on him whenever I was caught in any adverse situation. Patwa influenced me deeply in my personal life too. I had decided to not to marry but Patwa motivated me to lead the life of a 'Grihastha' and serve the nation and the society. During my term as president of Yuva Morcha, Ramjanambhumi movement in Ayodhya had started. The devotees of Ram were shot in Ayodhya. Several of them sacrificed their lives. The then Prime Minister VP Singh had come to Bhopal. We decided to protest. Patwa was chief minister. Administration tried its best to stop us. Police had made foolproof security arrangements for Singh but the workers of Yuva Morcha succeeded in 'Gherao' of Singh. Black flags were shown, demonstration was held, cane charge took place and there was stone pelting too. Singh sat on a dharna at Patwa's residence. I thought that no one could save me now. But Patwa came out and told media that so many Ram Bhakts had died and if a few stones were hurled, skies would not fall. Patwa was matchless in articulation too. The life profile of Patwa is an inspiration for the present and coming generations. I salute his sacred memory. (THE WRITER IS THE CHIEF MINISTER OF MADHYA PRADESH)