



# Thoughts of Karpoori Thakur

## #70<sup>th</sup> BPSC Mains Study Material

### GS Paper- 1, Section- I

#### Bihar Naman GS, Patna



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#### Introduction

Of all the social revolutionaries across Bihar, Bharat Ratna awardee Jananayak Karpuri Thakur has played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of 'Bihari Samaj', challenging contemporary social norms and igniting a movement that improves the status of backward castes. Has played an important role. Karpoori Thakur's personality had a mixture of foresight, courage and innovation which 'liberated' his mind. It was the liberation of his mind that he demanded a more just society for the marginalized Dalits and backward castes of the society. He was the first revolutionary thinker of Bihar who kept striving for the social, political and cultural transformation of Bihar all his life and when it came to bringing about these changes within his jurisdiction, he did so. He started the movement of 'self-respect' for social change through logic and reason in the 20th century Bihari society, as a result of which the consciousness of equality and fraternity developed among the backward and Dalit groups of Bihar. At the national level, efforts for the liberation of the Dalits and the underprivileged included in the Varna Ashram system of Hinduism and its rituals were continuing, which were led by many non-Brahmin leaders. At the same time, Karpoori Thakur alone took command of it in Bihar. Through his methods, he successfully showed the Dalit-backward communities of Bihari society the way to live with respect and get equal rights in the society. The starting point of decision regarding the form of modernity in Bihari life today begins with the revolutionary thoughts of Karpoori Thakur.

Let us now study the thoughts focused on the movement and thinking of Karpoori Thakur:

(Note: If you are asked in the question that how relevant are the thoughts of Karpoori Thakur in the present time? then the answer can be given by adjusting the various ideas given below)

### **Early life**

Karpoori Thakur was born on 24 January 1924 in Pitaunjiya (now Karpoorigram), a small village in Samastipur district of Bihar. His mother's name was Mrs. Ramdulari Devi and father's name was Mr. Gokul Thakur. His father was a marginal farmer of the same village and supported his family through small-scale farming and animal husbandry. Besides, his father also used to do his traditional profession of hair cutting. In his childhood itself, Karpuri found an environment in his family that was untouched by caste, communal sentiments and other prejudices. His strong sense of patriotism was a gift from his family. Since childhood, Karpoori Thakur was completely sympathetic towards the helpless, needy and unhappy people. It was in Pitaunjiya that he received his primary education and it was here at the age of just 14 that he founded the 'Navyuvak Sangh'. After this, he took up the post of librarian of Home Village Library in the village itself. Later Karpoori Thakur passed the matriculation examination from Patna University in second division in 1940 AD. Patna University was a place in Bihar which was considered the center point of national and entire Bihar politics. For this reason, if any political incident happened anywhere, the news would reach Patna University first. One such incident was the Quit India Movement of 1942, which, although politically motivated, had a social purpose. So how could socialist Karpoori Thakur not jump into this social revolution? He jumped into this fight of Quit India Movement with all his energy and caused great loss to the British. As a result, he was arrested and kept in the camp jail of Bhagalpur for 26 months where he was subjected to various types of torture in the jail. By the time he was released in 1945, his fame had reached national level. Jayaprakash Narayan considered Karpuri Thakur as his disciple. Therefore, in 1948, Karpoori Thakur was made the regional minister in the Samajwadi Party of Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan. In the first general elections of the Republic of India in 1952, he was elected from Tajpur assembly constituency of Samastipur at the age of only 31 and never lost in any election again.

In the general elections of 1967, the Samyukt Samajwadi Dal (United Socialist Party) (SSD) was established as a strong political party under the leadership of Karpuri Thakur. On 22 December 1970 (to 2 June 1971), he became the first non-Congress Chief Minister of Bihar. The two most important things he did as soon as he became the Chief Minister were – (1) implementing complete prohibition in Bihar for the first time in 1970 and (2) implementing the recommendations of the Mungerilal Commission in the state of Bihar. In the recommendation of Mungerilal Commission, it was said that quota should be implemented for backward classes and even among the backward classes, there were some castes which were in a very pathetic condition, they were listed as Most Backward Class i.e. EBC. He did both these things.

In 1973-77, he became actively associated with the student movement of Loknayak Jayaprakash. In 1977, he became MP from Samastipur parliamentary constituency of Bihar.

Sometime on June 24, 1977 (till April 21, 1979), he again became the Chief Minister of Bihar. Then in 1980, when mid-term elections were held in Bihar, Lok Dal under the leadership of Karpoori Thakur emerged as the main opposition party in Bihar Assembly and Karpoori Thakur became the leader of the main opposition party in Bihar Assembly. He died of a heart attack on February 17, 1988.

### **Thoughts of Karpoori thakur**

**Thoughts on education:** According to Karpoori Thakur, the medium of instruction in schools and colleges should be regional language because it makes children's learning more comprehensible. Spending years teaching English, which is not our language, is a waste of time. Despite spending so much time, we are still not able to master this language. People who know English start thinking that they are different from others. These people are parasites. The English language has created a gap between the intellectuals and the common man. Therefore, regional languages should be used in all walks of life. They should be given priority in courts, markets and all walks of life. According to him, 'Education does not just mean passing some examinations, but it also means becoming capable of thinking logically on all the problems. He considered education as an important and essential component for all-round development. Especially he believed that the upliftment of women, Dalits and backward people can be possible not only through planning but also through the spread of education among them. Therefore, he laid special emphasis on improving education for Dalits, backward castes and women of all classes.

**Economic Thought:** Karpoori Thakur's economic thought is related to the hard work of farmers and laborers. He considered farmers and laborers as the backbone of the country's production system. He believed that it was because of his labor that India and Bihar are so prosperous today. But their condition is very bad in this state and the country. Therefore, he accepted policies to improve their condition. For this, he supported the ideas of efficiently combining public finances and spending, investing in wells, ponds, canals, agricultural knowledge and the public sector. According to Karpoori Thakur, there should be such a process of economic development in the country which first pays attention to the most backward people. Any kind of economic development in the country should start from the development of these people who are victims of neglect. He was in support of the establishment of small scale and cottage industries and other handicraft industries at the rural level. The sale of various types of crops, fruits and grains grown in rural areas should be done only through locally developed markets and markets so that the economic condition of the local workers and laborers can be strengthened and they can get full benefit of it. Farmers can get it.

**Thoughts on democracy:** Karpoori Thakur was a strong supporter of democracy. He insisted on strengthening democracy on moral grounds. In his words, "The basic problem of democracy is that morality is declining among the people." He said that unless moral and spiritual qualities are developed among the people, no matter how good the polity and constitution is, Democracy will not be able to function properly. He always used to say for democracy that people should have faith in truth, tolerance towards the opinions of others, a

sense of responsibility, faith in simple life, renouncing violence of any form. We should support non-violence, respect everyone's freedom and have deep faith in it, there should be a feeling of mutual cooperation among all. These were some of the conditions which according to Karpoori Thakur are most important for a democracy. Karpoori Thakur wanted to implement democracy at the grassroots level in which the party system should be built on accepted principles and not on defection. Whatever may be the circumstances, defection should be stopped and there should be a provision to recall the recalcitrant and tainted representatives. It is the responsibility of all political parties to sit together and see whatever faults and demerits there are in the democratic governance system and remove them together. Defects and demerits should be removed from the present democratic governance system. To make democracy safe, people power has to be accepted otherwise if democracy is misused then the future of the people will be ruined.

**Thoughts on Socialism:** Karpuri Thakur's socialism was based on a new concept and philosophy. He was not a socialist in the traditional sense. He most opposed Marxism and communism. He wanted the Indian socialist movement to be free from Marxist thoughts and actions where language of violence and hatred etc. was used. He was influenced by the Gandhian principle of non-violence. Besides, the ideas given by Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan on democracy also had a deep influence on him. He played an important role in bringing about a synthesis between Gandhian and Marxist concepts. He contributed to give a new purpose and method of action to the socialist party to make it the most effective weapon against the capitalist system. Karpuri Thakur defined socialism as equality and prosperity for the people. According to his example, if socialism has to be defined in two words then it can only be general and prosperity. In a region like Bihar, which was deeply entrenched in the caste system and untouchability in the 1960s and 70s, this system was most painful for Karpoori Thakur. He wanted to implement the socialist system in Bihar by any means possible and he always thought about how we can bring equality and prosperity together in our Bihar. Throughout his life, Karpoori Thakur had seen the aspect of destitution, extreme poverty and a homogeneous society which was surrounded by a deep social divide. Karpoori Thakur was always worried about the socialist ideology being lost due to productivity and low income. Therefore, to establish socialism, he first tried for the welfare of Dalits, backward people and women.

**Thoughts on religion and spirituality:** Karpoori Thakur had deep faith in religion and spirituality but he did not trust it blindly nor did he consider it supreme. Like other ideas, Karpoori Thakur was also towards the then Indian society and religion. He kept thinking and it was seen in his thinking and actions that he had little faith in orthodox beliefs about God, he even refused to accept the existence of God, but when we carefully study his character Then you will find that he never denied the immense powers inherent in him. The proof of this comes from an incident. Karpoori Thakur was giving a speech in the Bihar Assembly on 21 August 1984. In this sequence, he said that 'Bihar will not progress by going to Babadham (Devghar). I do not say that worship should not be done, people should not go towards spirituality (Dr. Ambedkar himself used to say that every human being needs spiritual



feelings along with material happiness), but someone should go to Babadham for the sake of their son or daughter. If you get four cows (after making a vow), then nothing is to be expected from it. It is clear from the above statement of Karpoori Thakur that he was not against religion. But if you want to get rid of your daily routine problem then you will have to find a physical solution for it. There will be no solution through spirituality alone. That means you will have to work hard for your success and your progress under any circumstances. His character was more inclined towards atheism but his identification with the wonderful cultural diversity of the country always remained. He was always against the mixing of religion in the politics of the country and Bihar.

**Thoughts on Politics:** Karpoori Thakur's political views were that every kind of evil, anarchy and corruption should be opposed in the state. This also includes the behavior of government officials and injustice of jurists. Among the means of struggle he has included Satyagraha, non-payment of taxes, educating voters, etc. If the government is not involved in these activities and is not providing relief to the public, then the public should take the management of their own matters into their own hands. That means the people should form their own government. This is true for democracy also. It is necessary for political democracy that the public's dependence on the state should be as minimal as possible. According to both Mahatma Gandhi and Karl Marx, the highest state of democracy would be one in which states disappear. He believed that in political democracy it is necessary to have an opposition party. He always kept social service above politics.

Capital plays a big role in current Indian politics. Karpoori Thakur was against it. In politics, Karpoori Thakur was against 3 C (Cash, Caste and Crime). He was a vocal opponent of the capitalist character of governments. On December 18, 1980, he had said in a resolution in the Bihar Assembly that 'to bring about a change in the capitalist economy of the country, it is necessary to eliminate the government which was born in capitalism, which wants to make rich people rich. He considers the capitalist economy as one of the responsible causes of inflation and says that some solution should be found to remove the shortage of all the essential public goods and one of the solutions should be to end the capitalist government and establish a new economic government.

He strongly criticized party politics and said, 'Politics gives rise to leadership, suppresses political morality and promotes lack of conscience, deceitful conduct and conspiracy. In his political journey, he observed that political party-change is the root of political corruption. The country has witnessed the shameful spectacle of political collapse due to political party-change. The market of buying and selling of MLAs is going on in full swing. Its main greed has been ministerial post and money. This dirty trick has caused a huge loss to the political code of conduct, the propriety of the party system, the credibility of political parties and the biggest loss to Indian democracy, which is difficult to calculate. He believed that parties create disputes where unity is needed and exaggerate differences where they should be minimized. Karpoori Thakur considered party politics to be the biggest reason for the unbearable condition of the people because party politics promotes moral degradation and corruption in the society. Majority power parties take power in their hands

and promote autocratic rule instead of democratic rule. The public is made to forget the false assurance of good governance. The real difficulties of the common people are not resolved. Power-hungry political elements fulfill their personal interests in the name of public interest. This situation existed during the time of Karpoori Thakur and is also seen in present day politics. The recent change of power in Bihar politics in 2024 and the arrangements made for it are proof of how far-sighted Karpoori Thakur was. Every single thing said by him is being implemented in the politics of Bihar even today.

**Views on caste system and reservation:** Karpoori Thakur was strongly against the caste system and was a strong supporter of reservation. He considered the caste system as a stigma of the society and accepted that the root cause of various types of problems existing in the society is the caste system. He also believed that if economic inequality is eliminated by any means then caste discrimination and poverty will automatically end. On this point there is similarity between communist and socialist ideology. Karpoori Thakur has termed caste as an inanimate class because the stranglehold of caste has made the social life of Bihar and India lifeless. Expressing his views in this regard, Karpoori Thakur has said that 'big elements of life like wedding, feast, marriage and all the rituals take place within the framework of caste. On such occasions, people of other castes stay on the sidelines. Due to the caste system, the lower class is exploited a lot. Caste keeps them away from opportunities for advancement. There are many examples of stories of caste system in Bihar due to which Dalits and backward castes are still victims of exploitation. Karpoori Thakur's reflection on subverting caste reflects his social revolutionaryism. The barrier of caste will not be broken merely by individual likes or dislikes of the Indian and Bihari society. To break this, organization, concern and dedication are required. He was not a supporter of caste based organization of castes. As a wonderful experimenter of caste in politics, Karpoori Thakur gave the aim of organizing various castes. In the 1970s and 1980s, Karpoori Thakur gave a very famous slogan 'Socialists have tied the knot, backward people will get sixty out of a hundred.' That is, he was in favor of giving 60% reservation out of 100 to the backward classes on the basis of caste equation in the Indian and Bihari population structure. For them, backward classes also include tribals, Shudras and backward castes and women of gold. Like Dr. Ambedkar and Jayprakash Narayan, Karpoori Thakur also considered untouchability to be the result of the caste system and opposed it. To solve the problem of temple entry of Harijans, he started the Harijan Temple Entry Movement in Bihar. Karpoori Thakur, while mentioning the ill effects of the feeling of untouchability, said that due to the ill effects of the feeling of untouchability, not only has there been national disintegration and degradation, but as a result of this, Bihar has also to bear national and international insult and neglect. Is lying. If we want to make our mark in the international arena, we will have to take effective steps to eradicate untouchability. His suggestions for solving this problem were as follows - developing a sense of self-respect and fearlessness among the Harijans, spreading education among the Harijans, providing equal spiritual rights to the Harijans and humane treatment towards the Harijans. Karpoori Thakur was in favor of reservation on the basis of caste. He

saw reservation as a weapon to bring the marginalized communities of the society into the mainstream.

**Thoughts on Modernity:** It was Karpoori Thakur who understood modernity as a set of approaches based on reason, the imperative of development in a post-colonial state like India. With the rise of democracy in India, there was a great need to eradicate poverty and ensure fulfillment of basic needs for the common people. It is in this area of eliminating poverty and underdevelopment that India became modern in a very physical and concrete sense. He talked about making health care system accessible in India, arranging education and developing basic industries in a scientific manner. He believed that it is only modernity that will create new employment opportunities in a backward and poor state like Bihar, which will eliminate poverty and inequality. The invented modernity left its indelible impact on all areas related to human life like social, economic, political, religious, cultural etc. in Bihar. Apart from the beneficial effects that modernity left, it also created many more complex problems. The progress in science and technology in the second half of the 19th century completely changed the social structure of Bihar. The agricultural society was replaced by the urban industrial society. In search of livelihood, people of Bihar started coming towards big industries. Human behavior began to be controlled by industrial discipline, which brought mechanical irregularity to life. Life in cities became more free but anonymous. Modernity not only attacked the traditional social structure but also attacked the irrational religious beliefs of the traditional society. Karpoori Thakur's greatest attachment to modernity was that modernity exposed the miracles, mysteries, superstitions etc. already prevalent in Bihar, which was a positive sign for the upliftment of a backward social environment like Bihar. The feeling of disbelief is paramount in modernism. He expresses his faith in traditional ideas, commitments, beliefs and values and expresses a rebellious tone by challenging them. Modernity does not accept historical, social, moral, religious, ideological, nature, tradition and oppression etc. under any circumstances. When Karpoori Thakur talked about modernity, he used to say that the feeling of self-realization and individuality is prominent in modernism. It does not accept the social existence of man because it transforms man into a fragmented, lonely individual and throws him into the world willingly, with no present, no beautiful past and no bright future. Lonely, fragmented and helpless man is the center point of modernism.

**Thoughts on Socialism:** Karpoori Thakur's socialism is inspired by Jaiprakash Narayan's socialism. According to him, "Socialism is not a personal code of conduct but a system of social organization and the purpose of social organization is to remove the disparities of status, culture and opportunity, to end the painful unequal distribution of the best things of life and that "The condition should be ended in which the majority of people live a life of poverty, hunger, filth, disease and ignorance and a few enjoy comfort, culture, position and power." Karpuri Thakur wanted that in place of the present social system based on individual ownership of the means of production and independent industry, a new social system of state control and ownership of the means of production should be brought in and this is possible only when the system of governance is in the hands of the socialists. In other

words, to fulfill the objectives of his desired economic and social reconstruction, Karpoori Thakur considered it necessary that the socialists should establish their control over the system of governance. As a socialist thinker, Karpoori Thakur had clear knowledge of the economic bases of politics. He considered socialism as a complete theory of social and economic reconstruction. He was in favor of reducing land tax and nationalization of industries. He wanted to implement the land donation movement that started in South India in Bihar also. For this, he also went on foot tours in Bihar to solve the problem of the landless. He was in favor of resolving land distribution issues through non-violent means. When he became the Chief Minister of Bihar, he also did exemplary work in this direction. It was the result of his dedication that this Padyatra started by him brought awareness among the landowners and it also brought a lot of awareness among the landless. He wanted to hand over the reins of this social and intellectual revolution to the youth. He wanted the village to be made autonomous and self-reliant.

**Thoughts on secularism:** According to Karpoori Thakur, secularism is the exclusion of religion and religious ideas. As a philosophy, secularism seeks to explain life only on principles taken from the material world, without resort to religion. In political terms, secularism is the equal treatment of all religions by the state. A secularist will not accept any dogma, superstition or belief just because someone deriving his authority from certain scriptures holds certain ideas as infallible and dear to his heart. Secularism is a way of conduct and life. 'Secularism' is neutrality towards any religion, which means it accepts all religions and respects pluralism. In political terms, secularism means that governments should remain neutral on issues of religion and should not enforce or restrict the free exercise of religion, leaving religious choices to the freedom of people. As far as the nation of India is concerned, it is with the 42nd amendment of the Constitution of India which was enacted in 1976, that the Preamble of the Constitution states that India is a secular country. In reality it means that the government of the country is not godly. Secularism has both positive and negative aspects. He praises the Constitution saying that the Constitution has struck a balance between the temporary provisions which restrict it to a person professing a particular religious faith or belief and allowing him to practice his religion subject to public order, morality and health. Allows to do and propagate it. The positive part of secularism is assigned to the state to regulate by law or executive order. The state is prohibited from giving protection to any particular religion as a state religion and is ordered to maintain neutrality. The State strikes a balance between realizing the full development of the personality of its people and making them rational beings on secular basis, ensuring an environment of complete faith and trust to improve individual excellence, regional development, progress and national integrity. Religious tolerance and fraternity as a scheme of national unity and sectional or religious unity are the basic features and principles of the Constitution. Programs or principles developed by political parties on the basis of religion amount to recognition of religion as a part of political governance which the Constitution clearly prohibits.



**Thoughts on feminism:** Karpoori Thakur was very famous for his intelligence, knowledge and outspokenness. He continuously raised questions not only on politics but also on the conservative principles and philosophy of Indian society and expressed his views on these points very vocally. The situation of women in Indian and Bihar society has been very worrying. Whenever he would give a speech on the stage, he would always say that 'Patriarchy in India is embedded in the core of our mentality.' Spreading violence on women, treating them as an inferior species and mistreating them has been the hallmark of Indian society for a long time. One of the biggest shortcomings of the early independence movements was that it was largely non-inclusive and consisted predominantly of upper-class Hindu men. A central argument against women's participation in the political movement was that their role was defined within the home and was associated with the care and service of other male members of the household. Men, on the other hand, were considered ideal for leadership because of their physical strength and aggressiveness. According to Karpoori Thakur, such understanding of the role of women in society is very archaic and is not based on rational understanding. They refused to confine the gender debate within clear-cut ideas relating to sexuality or asexuality, emotional or physical matters, personality or social roles. They continue to criticize the prevalent and socially accepted practices in every household. He not only discussed the difficulties faced by women in the outside world but he was also concerned and influenced by every problem that women had to face on a regular basis. Like women having to fight smoke in the kitchen or carrying water over long distances or eating the leftovers of the men in the family. He considered Draupadi to be the most powerful symbol of womanhood who had a sharp intellect and the courage to speak her mind. He also criticized and pointed out that Draupadi's anger was not just against the Kauravas, but also against their husbands, who considered her a valuable piece of their property. His speeches and his writings reveal his immense love, respect and concern for women. He spoke openly about the beauty of women, whether the woman was dark or fair, low caste or high caste, laborer or employer. But he did not consider women only as an embodiment of beauty. They considered them productive human beings – both outside and inside the home. His dream was not only to end oppression and exploitation. He was in favor of promoting the well-being of each individual and collective happiness. He envisioned a society in which every person would have the opportunity to progress according to his capabilities and thus create a happy and satisfied society. In his view, a happy world was one in which there was gender justice and gender equality and which was ultimately sex-free. Karpuri Thakur says that woman is the ideal of the then culture because she supports the man in moving the chariot of the world forward by performing all the duties of the family and society. A woman with a capable personality and who holds an important place in every sphere of life should get a special place in modern times. When women from Bihar participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942, he expanded their activities. Karpoori Thakur had raised questions on the conservative beliefs and religious authority that gave recognition to the oppression, exploitation and second class status of women. He considered the girl's consent necessary at the time of marriage.

Karpoori Thakur had immense love for his state and country and he wanted to spread this love to the people of India. He wanted that every people of India and Bihar should participate in the social struggle along with the freedom struggle. For this he composed a poem, which is as follows-

*We have come to awaken the sleeping country,  
We have come to join dead hearts,  
The government does not give food to the poor,  
Have come to fight with the oppressors,  
Don't tease us any more, you cruel one.  
We will erase all these scenes of oppression,  
Or we ourselves have gone crazy to disappear,  
We are going to wake up the sleeping country...*

### Conclusion

For the Indian and Bihari society, Karpoori Thakur has deeply attacked the caste system, male-female inequality, untouchability and communalism. His social thinking has developed the mind and soul of Indian and Bihari society. Karpuri Thakur has a leading place in the intellectual and political development of modern India. There are many people in Bihar who love and praise him, but the sad thing is that the number of people who share his ideology is very less. He is one of the few thinkers of modern Bihar who established a new ideology of socialism known as 'Swadeshi Socialism'. The democratic social approach validates his ideology as a coordinated phenomenon for the kind of political upheavals taking place in Bihar in recent times. Karpoori Thakur was the most inspiring, courageous, coherent and creative thinker of the 20th century. His thoughts and ideas on various issues are relevant even today and will remain relevant in the coming centuries.

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