

Saryu Rai: Advocate of environment, staunch opponent of corruption



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In an era when politics is increasingly measured by optics and slogans, Saryu Rai continues to stand apart as one of India's rare public figures whose politics is rooted in relentless activism, environmental protection and an uncompromising fight against corruption.

From exposing major scams in Bihar and Jharkhand to challenging powerful establishments within his own political ecosystem, Rai has built a reputation that transcends party lines. His journey has not merely been electoral; it has been deeply interventionist. Whether raising questions over illegal mining, public expenditure or governance failures, he has repeatedly chosen confrontation over convenience.

But beyond politics, perhaps his most enduring contribution lies in the environmental movement he helped shape through Yugantar Bharati, an organisation that has quietly emerged as one of Jharkhand's most committed voices for ecological preservation. Under his guidance, campaigns such as the Damodar Bachao Aandolan, Subernrekha Pollution Mukti Abhiyan, Save Saranda Campaign and Jal Jagrukta Abhiyan have brought environmental degradation into mainstream public discourse.

"At a time when development is being measured only in terms of concrete and capital, we must remember that a destroyed river or forest can never be rebuilt by policy papers. Public life has meaning only when it protects people, nature and future generations," Saryu Rai has often maintained while speaking about environmental accountability.

At a time when rivers in mineral-rich Jharkhand were choking under industrial pollution, Yugantar Bharati began conducting scientific studies, water quality monitoring and public awareness drives long before environmental activism became fashionable. The organisation also established analytical laboratories,

community awareness programmes and training modules focused on conservation, biodiversity and sustainable development.

What makes Saryu Rai politically significant is that he has consistently refused to separate governance from accountability. Even while serving in government, he publicly objected to decisions he believed were legally or morally questionable. His anti-corruption campaigns eventually evolved into wider public movements aimed at systemic reform and citizen participation.

In today's political climate, where ideological positions often shift overnight, Saryu Rai's public life offers a different template — one driven less by power and more by persistence. Supporters may call him stubborn, critics may call him inconvenient, but few can deny that he has remained consistently aligned with the causes he chose decades ago: clean governance, environmental justice and public accountability.

And perhaps that is precisely why, even after decades in public life, Saryu Rai continues to remain relevant.

(Writer is a renowned journalist)