



NARISSETTI INNAIAH

HUMANISTS CHIEF MINISTERS | MET



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Humanists I MET Chief Ministers

Narisetti Innaiah

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By **INNAIAH NARISETTI**

Published : 2011

Price : Rs.70/- \$10

© Innaiah Narisetti

copies available

2 hawlings court

Brookville

MD 20833

USA

email: innaiah@gmail.com

Printed at :

KARSHAK ART PRINTERS

40-APHB, OU Road

Hyderabad - 500 044.

Phone : 040-27618261, 27653348

Sole Distributors :

AKSHARA

Plot No. 5, Rd. No. 3

Banjara Hills

Hyderabad -500 034.

Ph : 040 - 23554096

Dedicated to
my friend
REKHA SARASWAT
Editor
Radical Humanist
with admiration and affection

HUMANISTS I MET

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A.B.SHAH

(Amritlal Bhikku Shah)



AB Shah played a crucial role in the Indian Humanist, secular movement. Right from 1964 when I met him for the first time, I continued my friendship with him until he passed away in 1982.

The Koneru family conducted a humanist training camp at Avanigadda in Krishna district in 1966. A B Shah made his presence felt on all the days by taking part in discussions and serving as a source of encouragement. He made it a point to get the Telugu speeches translated into English so that he could follow what others had to say.

Aavula Gopala Krishna Murthy, an academician and Principal, undertook the translation task for the benefit of A B Shah. A B Shah appreciated the spirited speeches of Raavipudi Venkatadri, Tripuraneni Venkateswara Rao, and NV Brahmam.

Among other participants were Malladi Rama Murthy, G V



Photo L to R Mandava Srirama Murthy, Koneru Kutumba Rao, Amruthlal Bhikhubai Shah (A.B.Shah), N.Innaiah at radical Humanist study camp 1965, Avanigadda, Krishna Dist., A.P.

Krishna Rao, Kalluri Basaveswara Rao, Meka Chakrapani, Ch. Rajareddy, M V Ramanayya, Tripuraneni Gokulchand, Bachu Venkateswarlu, and Gavini Venkataswami.

I turned out to be a good companion to A B Shah. We indulged in chitchatting over a peg of drink or a round of smoking. A B Shah smoked through pipe whereas Raavipudi relished smoking cigars. Mandava Sriramurthy contributed to the success of the camp. Kutumbarao made commendable arrangements and extended good hospitality.

A B Shah toured Andhra many a time at my invitation. He developed friendship with ABK. When he was bed-ridden following cardiac arrest in 1967; we took an undertaking from him that he would go to Madras for treatment. He, however, passed away when he suffered a second heart attack even before he could go to Madras. .



**Hamid Dalwai (Writer of 'Muslim Politics'), A.B.Shw
addressing Secular Society Forum in Hyderabad.**

I conducted many meetings of A B Shah in Guntur, Vijayawada, and Hyderabad .He addressed bar associations. His speech at the AC College in Guntur won a lot of appreciation. Yelavarthi Rosaiah, whom it was difficult to please, too praised A B Shah. We conducted many crucial meetings with Hindu-Muslim associations on secularism. Alam Khundmiri cooperated with us in the conduct of such meetings..

We had dinner with the then Vice Chancellor D. S. Reddy. Planning to give his daughter in marriage to Vice Chancellor Narotham Reddy's son, he elicited from me the family's background. The marriage did take place but broke down later.

I introduced Aalapati Ravindranath and V R Narla to A B Shah.

A B Shah brought out very good books under the banner of Nachiketha Publications. He published a book after every seminar. He directed me to sell the books and share half of the revenue with him. We had sold literature on humanism

that way. Gurijala Seetharamayya from Tenali and Koneru Kutumbarao from Vijayawada helped me a lot. We translated A B Shah's book on Scientific Method into Telugu. Anupama Publishers of Vijayawada released the book of essays at a function, with Sriramamurthy as the chief guest.

A B Shah was on the editorial board of the *Radical Humanist* magazine. He later brought out the *Quest* magazine. He established the Secular Society and published the *Secularist* magazine. He told Puri Sankaracharya that there were references in the Vedas to Hindus consuming cow meat. Tarkatirtha Lakshmana Sastry supported A B Shah. With the assistance of M P Rege, A B Shah ran the *New Quest* magazine. Dilip Chitre acted as its editor for some time.

M N Roy enunciated the principles of humanism based on modern science. He opined that arriving at principles based on the Vedas was not correct. C B Ray agreed with him while V M Tarkunde differed.

I read a written copy of his book *Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science*. He passed away before he could get it edited and published.

The writings of A B Shah were very scientific and organized.

In 1978, I received a letter from Garden Stain from the U.S. asking me to write on Humanist, rational, secular movements in India. He also wanted me to do an *Encyclopedia of Unbelief*. A B Shah had suggested my name for doing the work. I accepted the assignment and brought out the book. I kept Garden Stain

informed of the book's contents. He died of cancer after the book's publication.

I met so many learned men like VV John, J B Naik, and Amrik Singh through A B Shah.

A B Shah was born in Gujarat in the Digambar Jain community and turned into a Humanist under the influence of A N Rai. He moved to Maharashtra and lived in Mumbai and Pune. During the Emergency, he stood by Jayaprakash Narayan.

V K Sinha, a disciple of A B Shah, runs the *Secularist* magazine now. B A V Sarma, also a follower of A B Shah, moved to Hyderabad from Bombay and passed away after working in Osmania University. He was one of the geniuses along with Srinivasan and Prabhakar Paadhi in the secular movement.

A B Shah founded the Satya Sodhak Mandali in Maharashtra and facilitated translation of Hamid Dalwai writings into English by Dilip Chitre. I translated the book on *Muslim Politics* into Telugu. The *Prasaritha* magazine carried it.

I introduced A B Shah to Bhavanam Venkatram when he was Chief Minister. As they found themselves on the same wavelength, they grew closer. Edward Shills ran the *Minerva* magazine from Chicago. With that as an inspiration, A B Shah ran the *Humanist Way* magazine for sometime. A B Shah published the writings of G D Parekh, a good friend of his. *Critic of Hinduism* and *Essays on Tilak* were some of the articles the *Humanist Way* carried. It stopped appearing after eight issues.

A B Shah came to Hyderabad for a seminar at the YMCA.

Narayan was staying at the Taj Mahal hotel. We were amazed when he asked us to get a taxi to go to the seminar hall, which was very close. It did not strike us initially that he was not keeping good health. Doctors, whom we approached, diagnosed him as suffering from a cardiac problem. He left for Pune for treatment.

I introduced Rashiduddin Khan, Y. Ragahavaiah, G. Ram Reddy, K Seshadri, P V Rajagopal to A B Shah. All of them appreciated his wisdom.

The books on Gandhi and Nehru by A B Shah were the products of a seminar he conducted. Some of his well-known books are *Scientific Method*, *Tradition and Modernity*, and *Challenges to Secularism*.



AGK

(Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy)



This happened one day at a well-attended marriage function at Tenali in June 1963. Even as the marriage between Jayasree and Rajagopal took place, a famous writer-cum-journalist working in the US Consulate General, Madras, Mr. B S R Krishna, walked in, took out a piece of a paper from his pocket, and handed it over to Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy

(AGK). BSR was not an invitee to the marriage as we initially presumed. He had dropped in to accomplish a special mission. It was to extend an invitation from the US Government to AGK to visit their country as its guest. All of us were pleasantly surprised.

AGK was not a politician, who held any position. He was not a celebrity in the field of cinema or sports. He was not the



Avula Gopala Krishna Murthy addressing : Gora, M.V.Rama Murthy, Behind N.Innaiah (1965)

recipient of any Government awards and titles. Yet, the US Government chose to invite him as its guest. He was the first in AP to receive such an honor.

AGK had served as Chairman of the Tenali Municipal Corporation only once. By profession, he was an advocate. He was born in a remote village called Mulpuru in 1917. It was from that village that Avula Sambasiva Rao, who served as a High Court Judge, hailed. AGK had obtained his MA LL. B from Lucknow. He was married and had six children.

AGK had seen the nation before and after the Independence. He did not belong to any well-known political party. He took part in the Radical Democratic Party, which M N Roy founded in 1940 and dissolved in 1948.

As a student, he met Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. When Bose lost in the race to become Congress President in 1938, nobody bothered about him. AGK, however, invited Bose to

his hostel room and took care of him. After all, our society honors and worships those in power..

AGK met T Rama Swamy, well-known reformer and revolutionary writer, in Tenali. Rama Swamy performed marriages in Telugu and advocated the equality of sexes. He also developed friendship with Chalam. He introduced both of them to M N Roy in 1940.

He was a great essayist-cum-speaker. He wrote essays and gave lectures in both English and Telugu with great ease. He was a wizard with words. He kept gatherings at marriage ceremonies spell bound.

He started his own magazine but was unsuccessful.

T Rama Swamy introduced marriage oath taking in Telugu. He treated upcoming writers and artists, especially those belonging to backward classes, with respect. He dealt with poetry and prose touchingly. He excelled in subtle as well as carping criticism.

Poems of Samuel Johnson, Mathew Arnold, Stephen Spender, and Audin in English and writings of Yetukuri Narasaiah, Tripuraneni, Sripada Krishanmurthy, Pendyala Subrahmanyam, and Jashua in Telugu were his favorites. He loved playing badminton and encouraged others to take part in sports.

AGK took part in the Red Cross and other social movements enthusiastically and encouraged them. Many painters including Goli Seshaih and poets like Kondaveeti Venkata Kavi, Venkata

Subbayya Vasireddy (Vadlamudi) often visited him. He never pardoned writers and poets with destructive or negative thoughts. Such writers ranged from Nori Narasimha Sastry to Viswanadha Satyanarayana. He loved drama and encouraged it.

His friends' circle included G V Krishna Rao, Palagummi Padmaraju, Bairagi, Gokulchand, Yelavarthi Rosaiah, Jasthi Jagannadham, and Gopichand.

Politicians of different hues like Acharya Ranga, Damodaram Sanjivayya, and Aalapati Venkatramayya tapped him often for his sane and wise advice.

Some of the people who had to face the brunt of his criticism were Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, Alluri Satyanarayana Raju, Kalluri Chandramouli, S B P Pattabhi Rama Rao, and Mandali Venkata Krishna Rao. He had a knack for spotting people with talent whether they enjoyed any position or not. He identified Peddireddi Timmareddi as a fighter for farmers.

He trained innumerable youth. He wrote the foreword for books written by them.

In 1960, he invited Annadurai to Tenali and conducted meetings on rationalism. M N Roy visited Tenali many times after that.

Can we describe AGK as a journalist? Yes and no. He wrote exhaustively and edited a number of small magazines. He turned to editors like. Panditaradhyula Nageswara Rao and Narla Venkateswara Rao for advice.

Great humanists including Abburi Ramakrishna Rao



AGK's Certificate

consulted him. When AGK wrote an article defaming Gandhi, a surprised Abburi complained it to M N Roy.. Contrary to Abburi's expectations, Roy supported AGK.

When AGK during his US visit criticized Jawaharlal Nehru, the then ambassador B K Nehru threatened to send him back to India. AGK remained unfazed and undeterred.

When AGK was planning his return to India, some people asked him to praise Vivekananda. He refused to oblige them by saying that he would speak the truth as he knew it.. Andhra Prabha magazine editor Neelamraju Venkata Seshayya accused AGK of defaming. AGK paid him back in the same coin.

Presno Municipality in the State of California chose him as a member of its board. He used to interact with children whenever he visited a school in the US. He lived for some time with Vadlamudi Srikrishna in Chicago.

All this happened in 1963. On his return, he spoke and wrote about his experiences in the US.

S.Ramanathan

Pioneer of Rationalist Movement

Ramnathan pioneered the Rationalist movement in Madras and took it to the national level. In 1938, he served in Rajaji's Cabinet. He ran *Indian Rationalist* and built a good library of books on rationalism. He traveled all over the country to spread the movement.



We invited him to Hyderabad in 1975. By then he had grown old. He addressed the audience in a very low voice at the Y.M.C.A Hall. Abburi and A L Narasimha Rao were among those present.

We went to his residence in Madras. After his death, his wife did not show interest in running the library and the magazine. Suryanarayan and Jaya Gopal took up those responsibilities.

Jaya Gopal, who went to the US, started a web site from

Atlanta. He died around 2000 A.D. Suryanarayan went back to Kerala.

In the 1970s, we published the magazine from Hyderabad with Avula Sambasiva Rao as Editor. N K .Acharya, Jasti Jawahar Lal and I ran the magazine. Jaya Gopal used to contribute articles. After sometime, Suryanarayan moved the magazine back to Madras. It did not last long.

Ramnathan was the foremost among Indian Rationalist movement leaders.

I am proud of my association with such a great leader.



Basava Premanand

Basava Premanand traveled widely in India and other countries exposing the fraud *babas* and *mathajis* perpetrate on people by resorting to mesmerism and magic. He brought into open the cheating indulged in by Puttaparthi Sai Baba and others. He published a book, *Murders in Sai Baba's Ashram* and another scientifically



explaining the tricks of magic. When religious parties tried to destroy a science exhibition Dr. M P Bhargava planned to conduct in Podanur near Coimbatore, Premanand went to his rescue and organized it at his place.

He ran a monthly called *Indian Skeptic*. He left us a treasure trove of literature.

Like Abraham Kovur, Premanand too served in rationalist movements.

Aged 80, he has been suffering from terminal cancer.
He has willed his body to the Medical College.

We are going to lose such a great personality soon.



G.D.Parekh - Indumathi



Both Mrs. Indumathi and Mr. G D Parekh were dedicated to the Humanist movement.

G D was the spokesperson of the Radical Democratic Party and a famous speaker. Yelavarthi Rosaiah and Avula Gopala Krishna Murthya (AGK) recalled that he captivated the audience with fluent speeches. He exchanged glances with M N Roy if he happened to be around, and halted his speech if he noticed M N Roy frowning. He often joked and drew applause.

I spent five days together with G D during a study camp at

Dehra Dun. We met unexpectedly on train as we were on way to Dehra Dun from Delhi. V. B. Karnik too traveled with us. G D took part in the debates at the study camp. He eloquently explained M N Roy's policies on decentralization. They sounded good but appeared impractical.

There was a social get-together at M N Roy's house, 13, Mohini Road. People from different regions narrated their experiences and shared jokes as Gowri and Indumathi served cocktails. Parekh made everybody laugh. Malladi Ramamurthy, Guthikonda Narahari and I were there. Ramamurthy did not drink normally. At our insistence, he too had a drink on that day much to our amusement.

Tarkunde's eyes were wet with tears as he recalled the days he spent with M N Roy in that house.

I used to meet G D in Bombay where he was working as University Rector. He wrote a book on *General Education*

G D translated Lakshmana Sastry Joshi's book in Marathi into English under the title '*The Critic of Hinduism*'. I translated that into Telugu and published it in '*Prasartitha*'. A B Shaw published G D's articles supporting some of the policies of Tilak in '*Humanist*'. G D's articles used to appear in '*Radical Humanist*'.

Indumathi Parekh, a doctor, started serving the Bombay's underprivileged and earned a place in their hearts. She rendered social service with dedication.

We participated in small gatherings at her residence. On a

visit to Hyderabad, she stayed as our guest. Indumathi and Gowri used to shop together in Hyderabad Old City.

Indumathi toured Andhra many times. She released my translation of M N Roy's biography into Telugu at Telugu University.

She organized International Humanist Conferences quite successfully in Bombay.

She came to Washington while I was there to discuss women welfare programs. As a leader of the Humanist Association, she encouraged voluntaries and secretaries. She believed in practicing what she believed in. She was neither a great writer nor an orator. Yet, international Humanists recognized her for her work.

I wrote about Indumathi in *'Encyclopedia Unbelief'* at the request of its Editor, Tomplin.



J.B.H.Wadia

Humanist, Producer of Stunt Pictures



The wall posters of Nadia were a great attraction when I was an Intermediate student in Guntur in 1954.

Although J B H. Wadia released his movie '*Hunterwali*' in 1935 and '*Miss Frontier Mail*' in

1936, movie theatres in Andhra screened them only 20 years later.

Wall posters showing Nadia wearing black sunglasses and tight pants and holding a hunter attracted youngsters. In the movie, heroine Nadia races beside a train on a horse, suddenly jumps off the horse and hops into the train, beats the villain, hops back onto the horse and rides away. The movie watchers jump in their seats as they watch the thrilling scene.

The movie was a great success at the box-office.

Hindi stunt movies came 30 years earlier. Vithalacharya's and Nadia's movies made students and youth go into a frenzy those days.

By 1943, Nadia had acted as a romantic tragedy heroine in the movie '*Manje*'. Although she was a foreigner, she was the first Indian heroine to act in stunt movie. Later she settled in India and married.

J B H Wadia's son ran his 'Movie Tones' studios in Bombay. Wadia spotted talent in Nadia when she was 20 years of age and inducted her into the movie world. Gradually, she became closer to Wadia's family and wanted to marry his brother. However, his orthodox Parsi mother did not approve of it. Nadia waited until after her death in 1960 and married Wadia's brother.

I met Nadia around 1970 through Wadia. She had stopped working in movies by then.

Around 1970, I got acquainted with J B Homi Wadia as he too happened to be a follower of M N Roy. Wadia, who played a pivotal role in the Radical Humanist Movement as a close companion of M N Roy, called himself a 'Royist'.

He wrote a small book with a nice title - '*The Man*' — about his attachment to M N Roy. Hidaythulla, Vice -President of India, released the book.

He collected rare photos of M N Roy. Casa Da Vinci was the name of Wadia's Bombay residence. The Roy couple stayed there and enjoyed the hospitality of Wadia. Wadia was very courteous to his guests.

I invited Wadia to Hyderabad and arranged meetings where he narrated his experiences.

We once organized a meeting at Hyderabad Central University Office, located in Abids then. Abburi Ramakrishna Rao, A L



Narasimha Rao, Avula Sambasiva Rao, Jasti Jawaharlal, N K Acharya, A. S. Vadwalkar, Alapati. Ravindranath and Alam Khundmiri participated in that get-together with enthusiasm. Wadia delivered a speech. We queried about his movies and especially about Nadia. He answered patiently. That was a memorable experience.

Wadia hinted on that occasion that he would produce a documentary on M N Roy. It, however, materialized many years later only.

Never had I imagined during my Inter days when I watched Nadia's movies that I would meet her and Wadia. As I became close to Wadia, I corresponded with him and met him whenever I was in Bombay. As a Humanist, he never injected religious superstitions into his movies.

Wadia was close to V B Karnik, V M Tarkunde, G D Parekh, Indumathi, G R Dalvi, and A B Shaw.

Nadia's original name was Mary Anne Evan. Her mother was Greek, and father Welsh.

Mary Anne Evans came to India at the age of five. Along with her father, she trained in horse riding and ballet, and worked in Jarcho circus.

About 1930, Wadia saw her, invited her, and molded her into a heroine. She bade good-bye to the movie world in 1970 after the movie '*Ek Nanni Munni Ladaki*'. Soft-spoken Nadia settled well in a Parsi family. She died in 1996.

J B H Wadia was an extraordinary filmmaker, director, and Humanist. He worked in the Radical Democratic Party founded by M. N. Roy. He kept politics separate from filmmaking.

Wadia passed away in 1986.



Samaren Roy



Innaiah with Samaren Roy

I, along with my friend Isanaka Muralidhar, met an aging Samaren Roy in Kolkata during 2005. He welcomed us heartily into his residence and served us snacks. He posed for a photograph with us.

I had been in correspondence with Samaren for a long time. He worked in the American Consulate in Kolkata and retired in early 1950s.

Always interested in M N Roy, he did a lot of research into Roy's early phase in life. He published a couple of books on M N Roy as a communist and as a radical.

Samaren claimed that M N Roy was the first communist in India in that he founded the communist party of India in exile from Tashkent in early 1920s.

Samaren described Roy as a restless Brahmin.

When I published my biography of Evelyn Trent, the first wife of M N Roy, a fascinated Samaren sought a copy. I sent one to him. I was critical of Roy's attitude towards his first wife. Roy mercilessly divorced Evelyn, who had played a major role in his life, in 1925. Samaren agreed with me.

Regarding the birth date of M N Roy there was a difference of opinion between Sib Narayan Ray and Samaren Roy.

Samaren travelled frequently to the US and maintained cultural contacts with Bengali associations in Texas.

He told me several interesting facts about M N Roy. He died in 2007.

I recall my association with him whenever I look up his photograph with Isanaka Muralidhar and me.



Mani Ben Kara

Humanist Heroin



Born into a middle class family in Bombay, Maniben Kara studied Social Science in Birmingham, U. K. On her return, she involved herself in labor affairs. She paid attention to the problems of port workers, slum dwellers, and oppressed women.

Accepting assignments in various labor associations, she grew into an all-India trade union leader. In the process, she got in touch with people like V B Karnik and N M Joshi and with their cooperation rendered matchless services.

She established and ran a printing press in Mumbai. In 1930, she got acquainted with M .N. Roy who had just returned from abroad. . Her friendship with M N Roy led her to assume an important role in the Radical Democratic Party founded by him.

Later she immersed herself in the Humanist Movement. In 1931, she met Lucy Gesler who landed in Mumbai on a ship from Switzerland. Maniben rescued her from British spies and took her to M N Roy in secret. But soon, the British Government traced Lucy Gesler and sent her back

Maniben was arrested in 1932.

She was elected a Member of Parliament at the Center. Maniben conducted social programs in many slums with great courage. Indumathi Parekh supported her. Maniben served in various Government-appointed women welfare organizations.

She visited Hyderabad at our invitation in 1974. She had become aged by then. Komala and I accompanied her to the Malakpet residence of lawyer Avula Sambasiva Rao, renowned Humanist of those times. His daughter Manjulatha had just given birth to a son. Maniben presented a souvenir to that baby boy. She showed interest in many things in Hyderabad old city. She described her work in women's organizations and her experiences with M N Roy to us

Maniben died in 1979. V B Karnik published a biography of her.

Maniben represented India in many national and international conferences, including the Free World Labor conference in the UK in 1949.



Sib Narayan Ray



Innaiah with Sib Narayan Ray

I read the book of essays titled *Explorations* written by Sib Narayan Ray some time in 1958. I tried in vain to translate it into Telugu.

Sib Ray was then Head of the Department of Indian Studies in the University of Melbourne, Australia. On returning to India, he served on the Editorial Board of *Radical Humanist*. I occasionally contributed articles for the magazine.

Once I sent him an article covering a lecture by Avula.Gopala Krishna Murthy (A G K) lecture in which he criticized Rabindranath Tagore. When Sib Ray objected to the content, I told him that *Radical Humanist* should not shy away from carrying critical articles. Afterwards, I received a letter from V B Karnik asking me to leave the matter at that. On my insistence, Sib Ray wrote to A G K.

We told Sib Ray that we were withdrawing the report at his request, although we felt there was nothing in what AGK had said and what I reported.

When I broached the subject with Sib Ray later, he trotted out a lame excuse. Apparently, his Bengali sentiment and love for Tagore came in the way of his carrying the report.

In his lecture, A G K took exception to forced spiritualism in Tagore's writings. A G K appreciated Sarat's *Sesha Prasna* and his portrayal of Kamala in that novel. M N Roy too had expressed a similar opinion earlier. Sib Ray did not publish the report because it ran against his line of thinking.

I had many occasions to stay with Sib Ray in Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, and Hyderabad. I introduced him to Alapati Ravindranath and V R Narla. We took him to the Salarjung Museum where he spent an entire day going from pavilion to pavilion and jotting down notes. We invited Sib Ray for Humanist conferences held in Hyderabad.

Sib Ray published M N Roy's biography as a serial in *Radical Humanist*. I translated that into Telugu before it appeared in

book form. Sib Ray happily shared the news about translation with many people. Tarkunde and Indumathi also came along with him for the book release function.

Serving Bombay College, he worked in association with A B Shaw in the Humanist and Secularist movements. He wrote good pieces on Gandhi and Nehru following seminars conducted by A B Shaw.

Sib Ray died at his home in Santhiniketan in 2008.

Sib Ray encouraged Taslim Nasreen in her writings and stood by her in Calcutta. Taslima was very fond of Sib Ray.

Sib Ray supported the Humanist movement without formally assuming any responsibility. He encouraged Tarkunde in his Civil Rights movement. We spent time together during conferences at Santhinikethan in his last days. He collected a lot of information on the Radical Humanist movement and on M N Roy. He wrote many authoritative pieces on the movement in *Quest*, *New Quest* and *Radical Humanist*. All through his life, he was a Royist Historian.

We regarded him as the father figure of the Humanist movement.



V. B. Karnik



V B Karnik, Roy, Maniben

My acquaintance with V B Karnik (Vasant Bhagawant Karnik) began with correspondence in early 1960s and grew into thick friendship over the years. He visited Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad in particular, several times.

Dr G R Dalvi in the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) invited V B for taking classes on labor problems. We utilized V B's Hyderabad visits to organize Radical Humanist

conferences, study camps, and lectures. We were fortunate to tap his services that way.

VB, affectionately called Baba in Mumbai, was born in 1902. He studied in Mumbai and Pune, and worked as an advocate for some time. V B however, devoted most his life to labor problems and worked with N M Joshi. He was in almost all trade unions in Mumbai and rose to become an all-India trade union leader.

V B was the first person to meet M N Roy when he stepped into Mumbai city during 1930s under the pseudonym of Mahamood. Thereafter, he became the right hand of M N Roy. V B stood by M N Roy through thick and thin, and rescued him when he was in trouble. When M N Roy was in jail, V B kept in touch with him through letters and visits, raised funds, and helped run journals like *Independent India*, and *Radical Humanist*. During the formation days of the League of Radical Democrats, V B organized meetings and membership enrolment. When M N Roy was accused of receiving Rs.13,000 from the British during the War, V B issued a powerful rejoinder.

The labor wing of the Radical Democratic Party extended strong support to M N Roy because of V B.

V B continued his Humanist activities after the death of M N Roy. He edited *Radical Humanist* and worked in the Radical Humanist organization.

I met him during the Dehra Dun camp (1975), Bombay conferences, Nagpur meetings, and Andhra tours. We organized

innumerable meetings of V B in Hyderabad. V B addressed Leslie Sawhney democratic training camps in Andhra.

V B wrote extensively on labor problems and the life of M N Roy. I translated all of his major works into Telugu. The Telugu Akademi in Hyderabad published them. The biography of M N Roy, which I translated, has run into several editions. *Strikes in India* and *History of Trade Unions*, authored by V B, have become reference books. I translated both of them into Telugu and the Telugu Akademi published them.

The National Book Trust published a brief biography of M N Roy done by V B, as also my rendering of it in Telugu.

When his wife was cruelly murdered during 1970s, I visited Bombay and consoled him. Undeterred by the tragedy, he remained active in the movement. I visited V B until he breathed his last in 1985.



Susheel Mukherjee



Innaiah with Susheel Mukherjee

Sushil Mukherjee was the founder-publisher of Minerva Associates in Kolkata. He brought out thought provoking writings of famous authors like Jaya Prakash Narayan, Niran Dhar, and V R Narla. He was also the founder- president of Kolkata Book Fair.

Sushil was a staunch follower of M N Roy thought.

I developed acquaintance with him during early 1970s and

invited him to Hyderabad. In Hyderabad, I introduced him to V R Narla, the founder-editor of *Andhra Jyothi*. We met several times at Narla's house. Fascinated by Narla's thoughts and personality, he volunteered to publish his book *God's Goblins and Men*.

The book, a compendium of Narla's pithy sayings, provocative thoughts, and aphorisms, sold well.

Had I not published my book on *Andhra Pradesh Politics*, he said he would have published that too.

Sushil's publication of *Vedanta and Bengal Renaissance* by Niranjan Dhar created an uproar among orthodox Hindus. I used the material in the book for doing articles especially on Vivekananda in Telugu. My articles in *Udayam* daily triggered a lot of controversy.

Sushil brought out a book on late Jaya Prakash Narayan's decentralization policy.

In Hyderabad, I introduced Sushil to several Rationalist and Humanist friends. One of them, K B Satyanarayana of Book Links, kept himself in constant touch with Sushil.

I later visited Sushil, by then an octogenarian, at his Kolkata residence. Although he was sick and bound to a wheel chair, he extended hospitality to Muralidhar Isanaka and me. A smoker and pleasant conversationalist, he told us he was soon moving into a new house.

Sushil died in 2007.



Malladi Ramamuthy



Malladi Ramamuthy with Innaiah

Malladi Ramamurthy, who worked as President of the Indian Radical Humanist Association, was my close family friend for as long as half a century. I met him for the first time around 1960 when he was practicing as an advocate. Malladi. Subbamma, his spouse, was then a homemaker. A good-hearted couple, they offered food affectionately whenever I visited their house.

Ramamurthy encouraged Subbamma, a high school graduate,



**Avula Gopala Krishna Murthy addressing : Gora,
M.V.Rama Murthy, Behind N.Innaiah (1965)**

to study privately for Inter and B.A and groomed her as a Humanist.

Ramamurthy, a communist early in his life, became a Humanist under the influence of M N Roy by about 1940. He remained a Humanist for the rest of his life.

He worked for the Humanist movement even as he took care of his legal practice. Both of us took part in many meetings and training camps. I wrote many articles for a monthly magazine founded by him. We together attended All India Humanist Conferences. In the same way, we worked together in the Rationalist movement.

Ramamurthy played an active role in citizen forums and human rights organizations. He was very well acquainted with everyone from Jayaprakash Narayan to V M Tarkunde. A trainee of M N Roy, Ramamurthy was logical in his thinking and writing.

He was very close to Avula.Gopala Krishna Murthy. (AGK). We met at AGK's residence frequently. Ramamurthy conducted many secular marriages, wrote drama scripts, and got them enacted. He translated some books into Telugu and published them under the banner, '*Praja Swamya Prachuranalu*'. He visited many countries.

Towards the end, he groomed Subbamma to become a leader. He was uncompromising in his adherence to human values. He was imprisoned during the 'separate Andhra movement' and the Emergency imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. He died in 1999.



Tarkunde



Innaiah With Tarkunde

Tarkunde was popular among Radicals of Andhra right from 1940s. He used to say that his ancestors migrated from Andhra and that his family's surname was Tadikonda. In course of time, Tadikonda in Telugu metamorphosed into Tarkunde in Marathi. His full name was Vithal Mahadev Tarkunde (03.07.1909 - 22.03.2004).

He was a close friend, follower, and companion of M N Roy, both in the movement and in the party. Coming from an ordinary family, he studied law, practiced as an advocate, and became a

High Court Judge. As a Judge, he caused a commotion by ruling that all citizens have the right to obtain a passport. It was a historical judgment.

He said he was sentimentally attached to M N Roy. His eyes turned wet as he recalled his association with M N Roy at commemorative meetings in Dehra Dun.

He resigned as Judge and started practicing in the Supreme Court as he felt that his responsibilities as a Judge prevented him from playing an active role in the Radical Humanist movement. Practicing in the Supreme Court, he took part in the Humanist, Rationalist, Secularist, and Renaissance movements and launched the Civil Rights movement.

He opposed the Emergency clamped by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and backed Jaya Prakash Narayan to the hilt.

He assisted M N Roy a great deal in running *Radical Humanist*.

They traveled countrywide and enlightened a number of people through conferences, meetings, and study classes on the Humanist movement. I met him in Bombay, Dehra Dun, Hyderabad, and Delhi a number of times, and worked with him in spreading the movement.

Gowri, Tarkunde's wife, helped him in his writing and publishing activities.

He hosted us many times at his home in Delhi. He himself used to drive M V Ramamurthy and me to his home. In Bombay, we used to meet at Indumathi Parekh's residence.

I introduced him to Narla .Venkateswara Rao and Alapati.Ravindranath. .Narla dedicated one of his works to Tarkunde.

In 1982, the marriage of Tarkunde's daughter, Manik, took place at the India International Centre in Delhi. He was very happy to see me, the sole guest from Andhra. Later, Manik and I used to meet some times. She was not active in the movement. After Gowri passed away following a brief illness, Manik looked after Tarkunde.

Sib Narayan Ray used to remark that the Radical Humanist movement earned recognition because of Tarkunde. M A Rane,



Tarkunde's visit to Hyderabad -Speech in Nizam's college

**Left to Right: 1 st row: V.M.Tarkunde, Gopalrao Ekbote,
Avula Sambasiva rao**

**2nd Row: A.H.V.SubbaRao, P.V.Raja Gopal,
Abburi Rama Krishna Rao, A.L.Narasimha Rao**

3 rd row: 1) ... 2) Alam Khundmiri 3) G.R.Dalvi

4th row: 1) N.K.Acharya, 2)A.S. Wadvalkar, 3).... 4) N.Innaiah

5th row: Jasti Sulapani, Kosaraju Sambasiva Rao, P.S. Narayana

a favorite disciple of Tarkunde, released a nice commemorative edition. *Renaissance*, with assistance from Azad Pancholi and B D Sarma, organizes lectures in memory of Tarkunde every year.

When the Andhra Pradesh Government appointed the Justice Bhargava Commission in 1976 to inquire into the killing of Naxalites in fake encounters, Tarkunde argued on behalf of Maoists. He visited Hyderabad frequently then.

He believed that M N Roy's 22-rule policy was infallible. Disagreeing with him, A B Shaw and I argued that some changes and additions were essential in the context of scientific advances. Similarly, Tarkunde reposed faith in Homeopathy and opted for that therapy occasionally. We argued that Homeopathy should not be accepted until science established its validity.

Even as he stuck to his views, he respected others who disagreed with him.

As President of the Indian Humanist Association and leader of the Renaissance movement, he toured the entire country, conducted training classes, and motivated many with his oratorical skills to plunge into the movement. The credit for popularizing M N Roy's thought goes to him.

Given to simple living and high thinking, he longed for personal friendship. Knowing him and being close to him was very fulfilling.



CHIEF MINISTERS I MET

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Rajaji (C. Rajagopalachari)

Although I did not meet Rajaji (C. Rajagopalachari) when he became Chief Minister of Madras State for the second time, I had the privilege of associating myself much later after he formed the Swatantra Party.

Rajaji had to take over as Chief Minister to save the State from slipping into Communist hands. The first general elections in the country in 1952 witnessed Communists getting elected in large numbers to the Madras Assembly. Naturally, they aspired to assume power. Tanguturi Prakasam was willing to oblige them since he was offered chief ministership. Prakasam had worked against the Congress Party and played a key role in the defeat several popular Congress Ministers in the Andhra area.



The Central leadership of the Congress Party, however, put in all efforts to stall Prakasam from forming the Ministry with Communists as partners. It sought the cooperation of Rajaji. He accepted the offer, mustered enough strength, and prevented the Communists from coming to power under Prakasam's leadership. Prof. N G Ranga supported Rajaji. With the support of the Krishikar Lok Party legislators Rajaji became Chief Minister.

I followed the political developments as a college student.

Both Rajaji and Rangaji came out of the Congress and founded the Swatantra Party in 1958.

After launching the new party, Rajaji and a galaxy of other leaders toured Andhra during 1958-59. The tour started at Bapatla and ended at Bobbili.

I had just joined as personal assistant to Rangaji. I was at Sangareddi in Medak district with my sister when I received a post card from Rangaji asking me to join him as personal assistant. Surprised at the offer, I called on Mr. Avula Gopalakrishna Murty at Tenali and sought his advice. AGK described the offer as a great opportunity to get in touch with national leaders and movements. He counseled me not to involve myself in active politics as personal assistant to Rangaji.

I went to Nidubrolu where Rangaji lived and joined duty. My association with Rangaji provided me the opportunity to meet Rajaji.

I followed Rajaji and other leaders from Bapatla to Bobbili

and witnessed the massive rallies and meetings. I had occasion to converse with Rajaji during breakfast, lunch and dinner every day in guesthouses/travelers' bungalows as he moved from place to place.

Since Rangaji introduced me to Rajaji on the first day of the tour itself, I faced no problem in interacting with him. I asked him about many things which others dared not.

In response to a query, I told Rajaji that I was reporting to *Vahini*, the Telugu weekly of Rangaji, about the campaign. The weekly covered the tour elaborately.

At Kakinada we met at Mr. M V Sastri's house. Rajaji had his hot coffee holding the cup with a kerchief. I asked him why he needed a kerchief to hold the cup. He gave me the cup and asked me to hold it. I could not since it was very hot. That did not prevent Rajaji from sipping and finishing the hot coffee. It was black coffee without sugar. He told me that I could not enjoy black coffee unless habituated. He offered me a small quantity asking me to try it. It tasted like *kashaayam* (a bitter potion) to me.

Then Rajaji went on narrating his personal experiences.

Starting from Bapatla, several persons tried to translate Rajaji's speeches in English into Telugu. Veerachary, Vijayaraja Kumar, Usha Sri, Sunkara Satyanarayana and a few others failed to translate his lucid, simple, witty, and sarcastic speeches. At last, Gouthu Latchanna took the mike and received thunderous applause for rendering Rajaji's speeches into idiomatic Telugu.

Rajaji praised him and asked him to continue translating him.

I traveled with Bezwada Ramachandra Reddi from Bapatla to Bobbili in his Fiat car. Mr. S. V. Pantulu joined me during the tour.

Spending time with Rajaji was a unique experience. Every day, he asked me if I had done my report faithfully and without distortions. He commented that reporters were given to putting their own idiosyncrasies into reporting. I reported as I understood his speeches, I told him.

I asked Rajaji how he viewed the speech of Mr. Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy at Bapatla. That concerned the 17th amendment to the Constitution under which the Nehru Government opposing on cooperative farming. Rajaji, who was on the dais, applauded his speech as wonderful, and said that there was no need for him to speak after hearing AGK. That was a great compliment to AGK.

I never involved myself in Swatantra party politics. After a couple of years, I withdrew as PA of Rangaji. My stint with Rangaji provided me the unique opportunity of coming close to Rajaji, M. R. Masani, and Bezwada Ramachandra Reddi.

My differences with Rajaji on religion never came in my admiration for his genius.



Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu

(1872-1957)

Few could rival Mr. Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu in contemporary India in one sterling leadership quality: He spent all that he earned as a successful lawyer in fighting the British and in serving the nation after Independence. The thought that he should set aside at least a part of his earnings for the rainy day never crossed him.

Living and moving amidst people, he led many a battle with unrelenting zeal and courage. That was why people did not fault him whether he changed parties, or committed indiscretions or ran into debts.



He excelled not merely as a State leader but also as a national leader. Along with Swarajya Party's Motilal Nehru, he took part in the Central Assembly debates. He worked for some time in the National Party founded by Madan Mohan Malaviya.

Undeterred by financial constraints, Prakasam Pantulu

founded Swarajya daily and published it in both English and Telugu from Madras. His staff would not protest even he did not pay their salaries on time. Immersed as he was in the freedom struggle, he reportedly asked his sub-editors to touch up his writings for want of time.

Although he too found himself entangled in factional politics, he ushered in many reforms like the constitution of firkas to decentralize administration and abolition of spinning mills to safeguard the khadi industry when he was in power. He exemplified how a genuine public servant should behave.

He took on veterans like C. Rajagopalachari and fought them both within and outside the Assembly.

His requisitioning of the Malabar police to stamp out the Communist menace in the Andhra region constituted an important milestone in his life's journey.

Despite Herculean efforts, Prakasam failed in getting Madras included in the newly constituted Andhra State. He fought from the Madras Beach constituency to establish that Madras belonged to Andhras but tasted defeat.

He launched the election campaign in Andhra and made Congress veterans ranging from Kalluri Chandramouli to Kala Venkata Rao bite dust. He tried to become the first Chief Minister of Andhra by joining hands with the Communists. When he could not strike a deal, he joined hands with the Congress and succeeded. Mr. Tanneti Viswanadham stood by him unto the last.

I had the privilege of meeting Prakasam for the first time in Kurnool when I was a student. I was studying in A. C. College in Guntur when I had the opportunity to go to Kurnool and meet him. I met at him at Guntur also on some other occasions.

The Kurnool meeting took place in peculiar circumstances. Mr. Gouthu Latchanna's followers, Mr. Vaddegunta Venkateswarlu and Mr. Madala Pedda Thimmayya, were the leaders of the Rickshaw Workers' Union. Those days, there were cycle rickshaws and as per rules a rickshaw should carry only one passenger. On learning that the police in Vizianagaram permitted two passengers, they wanted to meet Inspector General of Police Nambiar to seek a similar relaxation in rules for Guntur rickshaw drivers. Since they felt Mr. Nambiar could not understand Telugu, they wanted me to accompany them to Kurnool so that I could be their translator. Not that I was proficient in English. All of us went to meet Mr. Nambiar in his tent in Kurnool. As I fumbled and faltered in conveying the Rickshaw Union leaders' plea in English, Mr. Nambiar understood my predicament and spoke in Telugu. I sighed in relief. He readily conceded the request for permitting two passengers in rickshaws.

Having accomplished our mission, we wanted to call on the Chief Minister also. We walked into Mr. Prakasam's bungalow. Those were the days when the security apparatus did not stand as a stumbling block between leaders and people. We offered *namaskarams* to Mr. Prakasam, and took our seats. He had already grown too old to move about freely. His eyesight fell and memory

power dwindled. He had developed tremors in his hands. He spoke to us affectionately. Since we had gone to him in a reverential and deifying mood, we were happy with the reception we had. He inquired of Guntur affairs. I met him a couple of times later at Kurnool along with Mr. Latchanna.

I still cherish the memory of my first meeting with Prakasam. Unmindful of my young age, he made me feel at home. He showered similar affection when I accompanied Mr. Latchanna on a visit to him. Mr. Latchanna was a family friend of ours. My father Rajaiah and my brother Vijayaraja Kumar happened to be Prof. N. G. Ranga's followers. Mr. Latchanna was a frequent visitor to our home. That way I became close to him as also Mr. Obula Reddy and Mr. Neerukonda Rama Rao. However, I had little to do with Prof. Ranga's party politics and I had never dabbled in any party politics. All that I had was personal regard and affection for them. Even when I served as personal assistant to Prof. Ranga I could function transcending his party politics.

Whether he was in power or not, Prakasam used to inquire of my welfare and wellbeing. I could meet him freely when he stayed at the Municipal Travellers' Bungalow in Guntur. By then, he had ceased to be Chief Minister. I was surprised when he recalled our meeting in Kurnool. Few had addressed me in first person singular in Telugu. Yet, his address reflected his affection. He asked Mr. Latchanna to propose his name as Chief Minister. Mr. Latchanna exited after saluting him. Mr. Prakasam had already been deserted by people. He was too old to continue in politics. After coming out, Mr. Latchanna commented that

Pantulu garu was still enamored of becoming Chief Minister even at his advanced age.

On another occasion, Mr. Yenugula Venkataramaiah, Mr. S. V. Pantulu and I went to see Mr. Prakasam at the Travellers' Bungalow in Guntur. Outside his room, there was a basket full of oranges. Mr. Neti Chalapathi was seated in a chair eating the oranges. After getting in, Mr. Venkataramaiah told Mr. Prakasam that Mr. Neti Chalapathi had been gorging on oranges brought in by his admirers. Mr. Prakasam asked Mr. Chalapathi whether he was helping himself to all the oranges. He claimed in reply that he was distributing them to all visitors. We came out laughing.

Asked why he was so discourteous to Mr. Chalapathi, he said he was not rough in his treatment of Mr. Chalapathi. Mr. Venkataramaiah used to work in the Bharat Sevak Samaj office in Guntur. Mr. Paruchuri Veeraiah was his boss. Mr. Venkataramaiah was known for his ready wit and humor. He was an ardent admirer of Mr. Prakasam.

Mr. Prakasam passed away shortly afterwards. Later on I studied his life thoroughly by reading his writings. I incisively examined what he did when he occupied positions of power. Mr. Prakasam wrote his autobiography. In that he dwelt at length on the Simon Commission's visit to Madras in 1927 and the police firing it sparked. The story doing the rounds then was that Mr Prakasam bared his chest to the police and asked them to shoot him. Mr. Prakasam's action was touted as a testimony to his courage.

In his autobiography, Mr. Prakasam made it clear that when

he was on his way to visit a person killed in police firing, a police constable tried to halt him. When his followers told the constable that the visitor was Mr. Prakasam, the constable stood aside and permitted him. Contrary to what Mr. Prakasam himself narrated in his autobiography, the story of his baring the chest had become a legend. When I wrote an article in *Eenadu* in 1982 quoting Mr. Prakasam himself, his fans spewed fire at me. Mr. Gajjala Malla Reddy, then *Eenadu* Editor, told me that he had received thousands of protest letters.

Mr. Prakasam's association and disassociation with Prof. Ranga led to many twists and turns in Andhra Politics. Mr. Prakasam, a bed-mate of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, provided a different leadership to the Congress.

My association with Mr. Prakasam when he was Chief Minister and later remains etched in my memory. Mr. Prakasam those days was a hero in politics. He was a synonym for courage.

In his last days, he earned some bad name because of his son Hanumantha Rao. Although his health deteriorated, he died without retiring from politics.

Mahatma Gandhi said that Mr. Prakasam, who collected money from the public and squandered it without accounting for it after being released from jail after the Quit India movement, did not deserve to be Chief Minister. Mr. Prakasam, however, defied Gandhiji, then the undisputed national leader, joined hands with Mr. Kamaraj Nadar and became Madras Chief Minister. Even Rajagopalachari lent his voice to Mahatma Gandhi and defied Mr. Prakasam. Mr. Praksam withstood all

such challenges and showed his mettle as an unrivalled people's leader. Mr. Prakasam figuratively bared his chest to Maharma Gandhi himself, if not to the police during the Simon Commission visit.

Mr. Prakasam was the first Chief Minister I acquainted myself with. It was a pleasant experience. But I had to content myself with a few meetings and a little acquaintance because by the time I met him for the first time, he had already entered into his 80's and died a few years later.



Bezwada Gopala Reddy (1907-1987)

When Andhra's last Chief Minister Bezwada Gopala Reddy changed the name of Bezwada to Vijayawada, people asked in



a lighter vein whether Bezwada Gopala Reddy too would hereafter be known as Vijayawada Gopala Reddy.

Even as a newspaper reading high school student, I learnt about Mr. Gopala Reddy, as he had become a Minister by 1937. When Kurnool was Andhra's capital, I happened to visit it frequently on some work. I was a college student when I met Mr. Gopala Reddy at his bungalow in Kurnool for the first time in the company of Mr. Gouthu Latchanna and Mr. Govada Paramdhamaiah. I greeted Mr. Gopala Reddy and sat quietly as the elders engaged themselves in a discussion. Mr. Latchanna introduced me to Mr. Gopala Reddy by referring my keenness to see him. Mr. Gopala Reddy expressed his happiness and made

some inquiries of me. Although I did not see him for a long time later, I kept following Mr. Gopala Reddy's political career.

When I met Mr. Gopala Reddy for the second time at his bungalow in Kurnool, cine artiste Bhanumathi was there. Artistes and poets used to call on Mr. Gopala Reddy because of his interest in language, literature, arts, and culture. He interacted with such people wherever he went.

I listened to Mr. Gopala Reddy's speeches during the 1955 elections to the Assembly. He used to distinguish himself from others by speaking with dignity in his Nellore accent. Post-elections, he lost importance in State politics. Later on, he served as Governor and Union Minister. I did not meet him for a long time then.

However, we met whenever he visited Hyderabad. Staying in Mr. Maganti Subbarami Reddy's guesthouse in Jubilee Hills, he sent word for me. We enjoyed listening to poetry and having dinner together. I accompanied him if he attended any programs in the city. Some times, Mr. Alapai Ravindranath, *Misimi* Editor, one of Mr. Gopala Reddy's close friends, joined us.

Mr. Gopala Reddy and I had exchanged many letters. I handed over some of them to the State Archives in Hyderabad. Whenever I visited Nellore, I spent time with Mr. Gopala Reddy. On one occasion, he was seated alone in his big house. His wife was somewhere in the interior. Intending to offer me a cup of coffee, he shouted for domestic help. There was no response. To relieve him of embarrassment I told him not to bother about offering me coffee since I had come to have some good time with him. Yet, a sense of disappointment creased his face. Mr.

Gopala Reddy, who had occupied many positions of power, led a simple and austere life after retirement. His lifestyle presents a stark contrast to that of present-day politicians.

During his Madras visits, Mr. Gopala Reddy called on friends at their homes or invite them to his place of stay. Among those he interacted with were Mr. Chandur and Mr. D. Amnjaneyulu. I met Mr. Gopala Reddy at Mr. Anjaneyulu's residence some times.

I used to ask Mr. Gopala Reddy to shed light on certain events in the country's political history and his own career. He skirted some questions altogether and was economical with answers to some others.

A fan of Rabindranath Tagore, he translated some of his poems into Telugu. He wrote some pieces under the influence of Bengali literature. Although I could not relish the Bengali influence on him, he presented me a copy whenever he published a book. When he read out poetry he wrote under the title 'She', I asked him whether 'She' stood for somebody in real life. He avoided a straight reply. My interactions with Mr. Gopala Reddy most of the time transcended politics.

Although I quizzed him repeatedly on the conferment of 'Gnanapith' Award on Viswanatha Satyanarayana by referring to people's doubts and the reported backroom maneuvers, he would merely say, "Let bygones be bygones" but not share the facts.

Mr. Gopala Reddy was deeply interested in arts, chess, and Hindi language. Poets, singers, and artistes kept him company all the time.

Neelam Sanjiva Reddy

(1913-1996)

Mr. Neelam Sanjiva Reddy was a veteran who rocked politics in Andhra, Andhra Pradesh and the country. Although he studied only up to Intermediate, he rose to become the President of the Indian Republic and played a key role in national affairs.

I met him for the first time in Kurnool, the then capital of Andhra State. Mr. Sanjiva Reddy had become a controversial politician by then. His dislike for Prof. N. G. Ranga put me off. Nevertheless, he was a leader I could not ignore. I could not describe my first encounter with him as pleasant.



Mr. Sanjiva Reddy visited Tenali as Minister in 1954-55 when Mr. Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy was Municipal Chairman. At a public meeting, Mr. Gopalakrishna Murthy urged Mr. Sanjiva Reddy to sanction two roads in Tenali. Mr. Sanjiva Reddy said

he was sanctioning one of the two roads, conceding 50 percent of what the Chairman had asked for. He added that he was conceding such a request on the spot for the first time as Minister.

Thanking Mr. Sanjiva Reddy for the gesture, Mr. Gopalakrishna Murthy said that sanction of one of the two roads did not amount to conceding 50 percent of his request as one road was to cost Rs.1.5 lakh and the other Rs.50,000 only. Amidst applause from the audience, he told Mr. Sanjiva Reddy that he would be happy if he sanctioned the road costing Rs.1.5 lakh.

Later, Mr. Sanjiva Reddy vent his ire at Mr. Alapati Venkatramaiah, who had invited him Tenali. He felt he had been insulted at the public meeting. As a spectator in the audience, I could not but admire Mr. Gopalakrishna Murthy.

Sri Venkateswara University conferred honorary doctorate on Mr. Sanjiva Reddy when he was Chief Minister. My brother, Mr. Vijaya Rajakumar, a Senate member, filed a case accusing Vice Chancellor Govindarajulu Naidu of unilaterally and undemocratically deciding to confer the doctorate without taking the Senate into confidence. Chief Secretary Bhagwan Das issued a directive on behalf of Mr. Sanjiva Reddy against prefixing his name with 'Dr.' until the case was disposed of. Mr. Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy, who took up the case in the Nellore court, abandoned it midway. Mr. Sanjiva Reddy did not take it seriously when I told him that Mr. Vijayaraja Kumar who had filed the case was my brother. Later on, we became friends.

Mr. Sanjiva Reddy and Mr. N. G. Ranga campaigned jointly

during the 1955 Andhra elections, mounting an unprecedented anti-Communist blitz. My brother Vijaya Rajakumar took part in many meetings as a follower of Mr. Ranga. I met Mr. Sanjiva Reddy on some occasions as a well-wisher of Mr. Ranga.

After he became Chief Minister and Union Minister, I met Mr. Sanjiva Reddy only on a few occasions. Gora and his followers observed '*satyagraha*' in front of 'Greenlands,' the Chief Minister's residence, in 1963 demanding that politicians lead a simple life and promote the raising of vegetables in place of flowers. I too squatted on the road along with Gora, his wife Saraswati, Mr. Patti Seshaiyah, Vempo, Kana and some others. Mr. Sanjiva Reddy invited Gora for discussions and hosted him a lunch. Later, at the instance of Gora, he called in all others. He asked me whether we had not met earlier at Kurnool and Tenali. "Your memory is phenomenal," I told him.

I met Mr. Sanjiva Reddy many years later when had become a Janata leader after going through many vicissitudes in the political maelstrom. I met him along with Mr. M. V. S. Subba Raju, a family friend of ours, and an ardent disciple of Mr. Sanjiva Reddy.

Thanks to *Commando* Editor Vinukonda Nagaraju, I met Mr. Sanjiva Reddy many times. I became close to Mr. Nagaraju following our meetings at Hotel Sarovar in Hyderabad. Mr. Nagaraju, who became close to Mr. Sanjiva Reddy, contested elections on behalf of the Janata Party and lost. Later on, he used to meet Mr. Sanjiva Reddy in Delhi when he became the President of India. I used to meet Mr. Sanjiva Reddy in

Hyderabad, though not in Delhi. I used to meet Mr. Sanjiva Reddy also in the company of *Misimi* Editor Alapati Ravindranath, a long-time friend of Mr. Sanjiva Reddy.

In his last days, Mr. Sanjiva Reddy got his autobiography published by my friend, Book Links K. B Satyanarayana. I became closer to Mr. Sanjiva Reddy as I went through the manuscript and offered my suggestions. Mr. Sanjiva Reddy, who was brutally frank in disclosing certain matters in the manuscript, deleted them for some reason or the other when the book appeared in print. Apparently, he wanted to avoid controversies. The book carried the title *From Farmhouse to Rashtrapathi Bhavan.* Allied Publishers brought out another autobiographical piece of his under the title *Without Fear or Favor*.

As Speaker of the Lok Sabha and President of India, he extensively read modern literature. Pleasantly surprised, Justice M. C. Chagla congratulated Mr. Sanjiva Reddy on his learning.

Compared to many politicians, Mr. Sanjiva Reddy led a simple and austere life. Shortly before he arrived in Hyderabad, he used to ask Mr. S. V. Pantulu to book him accommodation in Hotel Sarovar. His Hyderabad visits provided me an opportunity to spend some time with him.

Mr. Sanjiva Reddy outgrew politics by keeping himself abreast of modern developments. It is a matter of pride and pleasure that I could associate myself with him closely in his last days.

A highlight of his life was the way he differed with Mrs. Indira Gandhi by describing the Emergency imposed by her as

undemocratic. After his brother-in-law Tarimela Nagireddy (Communist) trounced him for the first time in Anantapur, he never contested from the district again. He won all the time from outside the district.

Mr. Sanjiva Reddy distinguished himself by coming out of narrow Congress politics and blossoming as a democrat in the Janata Party.



Damodaram Sanjivayya

(1921-1972)



I developed a great liking for Mr. Damodaram Sanjivayya, although I had only a brief acquaintance with him. I met him twice or thrice when he was Chief Minister, incidentally at Tenali on all the occasions.

Mr. Nannapaneni Venkata Rao, Tenali legislator and prominent Socialist leader, provided me the opportunity for my fruitful interactions with Mr. Sanjivayya. Mr. Venkata Rao organized a three-day workshop on problems of weaker sections at the VSR College in Tenali after Mr. Sanjivayya took over as Chief Minister. At the instance of Mr. Venkata Rao, I drew up a list of subjects for discussion at the workshop, chose the participants, and prepared background papers.

Dr. R. V. R. Chandrasekhara Rao, Dr. Raghavendra Rao, Mr. Ravela Somayya, Mr. Suryadevara Hanumantha Rao and others dealt with the subjects in depth and elevated the discussions to a higher plane in the presence of Mr. Sanjivayya.

Mr. Sanjivayya burned with a desire to help Dalits and other weaker sections but could do little, as he had to reckon with factional rivalries within the party and hostility from higher castes, and limited tenure as Chief Minister.

An orator in both Telugu and English, Mr. Sanjivayya captivated audiences with his pleasing speeches. He spoke with anguish and passion when he dealt with weaker sections. I had the privilege of discussing weaker section development with him from many angles.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's ideology, Mr. Rammanohar Lohia's philosophy, and Mr. M. N. Roy's vision provided the compass for weaker sections' development. However, vote bank politics prevented the Congress from appropriate actions. Mr. Sanjivayya could not air his views in public although he shared them with friends in private. His concern and agony over the plight of weaker sections was palpable. Delighted over my views, he wanted to know my background. Mr. Nannapaneni Venkata Rao described me as a Radical Humanist to Mr. Sanjivayya. Those experiences would remain etched in my memory.

I met Mr. Sanjivayya in the company of Mr. Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy on another occasion, again in Tenali. Mr. Sanjivayya as Chief Minister was to visit a girls' orphanage located atop a hill in Vijayawada old town. Having gone up to the foothill, Mr. Sanjivayya beat a retreat claiming he could not go up the hill. The Chief Minister's failure to turn up deeply disappointed both the inmates and the management, who had been anxiously waiting to extend him a warm reception. *Andhra*

Patrika daily carried the news report of Mr. Sanjivayya's failure to make it the orphanage. On seeing the report, Mr. Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy commented, "Could not one who crawled up to the Chief Minister's seat walk up a small hillock?" *Andhra Patrika* carried the comment, reported by its Tenali correspondent Venkatappayya Sastry, verbatim, and displayed it prominently.

Struck by the barb, Mr. Sanjivayya immediately set off for the orphanage. After visiting the orphanage, he came to Tenali and congratulated Mr. Gopalakrishna Murthy on his well-meaning comment. I was a witness to the affection he showered and respect he bestowed on Mr. Gopalakrishna Murthy. We discussed many issues on that occasion.

Soon after entering politics, Mr. Sanjivayya attracted Mr. Rajagopalachari's attention in Madras. By acting with dignity in whatever position he happened to occupy, the man from the backward Kurnool district drew the attention of Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru in Delhi.

Mr. Sanjivayya became Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister in 1960 as a compromise and stopgap candidate when Mr. N. Sanjiva Reddy had to resign following Supreme Court's strictures over nationalization of certain bus routes. Mr. Sanjiva Reddy resorted to nationalization to undermine Mr. Pidathala Ranga Reddy, his political rival and bus operator. Being a nominated and not elected Chief Minister, Mr. Sanjivayya had to live with caste and factional rivalries. The strong Reddy lobby revolted against Mr. Sanjivayya and formed its own group. An arrogant

A. C. Subba Reddy insulted Mr. Sanjivayya by making caste-oriented remarks.

Mr. Sanjivayya wanted to become Chief Minister again when the Congress returned to power in the 1962 elections. However, the Congress High Command did not give its green signal.

A day after submitting his resignation to the Governor, Mr. Sanjivayya, accompanied by his wife, walked to Ajanta Talkies in Secunderabad to watch a movie. At his instance, Mr. S. V. Pantulu, who he ran into en route, accompanied him to the theatre. We cannot imagine a present-day Chief Minister behaving like Mr. Sanjivayya.

Mr. Sanjivayya, who later served as Union Minister for Labor, earned a good name for himself with his mastery of labor problems and industry limitations. Oxford University Press published his work, *Labor Problems and Industrial Development*.

Mr. Sanjivayya's death in 1972 was a great loss for Dalits and other weaker sections. My acquaintance with him might have been limited. But I had unlimited insights into his life and work.



Kasu Brahmananda Reddy

(1909 – 1994)



Mr. Kasu Brahmananda Reddy, committed to politics all through his life, left his imprint on politics at both the State and national levels. Having tried and failed to become a public prosecutor, he started his political career as a Minister in the Neelam Sanjiva Reddy Cabinet. Later on, he found himself occupying many prominent positions.

I met Mr. Brahmananda Reddy for the first time in the 1950's when I was a student of A. C. College, Guntur. I went to his residence on Amaravati Road to invite him for the marriage of my brother Vijayaraja Kumar. He treated me to a cup of coffee as he received the wedding card. That he did not turn up for the function was another matter.

I used to see him playing cards at the LVR & Sons Club, then

opposite the AC College. I sat in a bookshop of my brother on the club premises during my leisure time and handled sales. I used hear the discussions Mr. Brahmananda Reddy, Mr. Salam, and some other Guntur celebrities had as they played cards.

Mr. Salam, a member of the Madras Legislative Council (???) and Guntur Municipal Council, was a good conversationalist known for his quick wit and repartee. One day, Mr. Brahmananda Reddy, looking at Mr. Salam, asked him, “I understand you are stooping so low as to accept even Rs.25 or Rs.50.” Mr. Salam retorted without batting an eyelid, “What can I do? People tell me they will approach Mr. Brahmananda Reddy if it were to cost them Rs.100 or Rs.200.” Every one had a hearty laugh.

Mr. Brahmananda Reddy graduated himself from a district to State leader over the years. However, right from the beginning, he was deeply immersed in factional politics. Initially, he attained prominence by serving as the right hand man of Mr. Sanjiva Reddy. Later on, he rebelled against Mr. Sanjiva Reddy and became Chief Minister. As one of the most prominent national leaders, he split the Congress and became its President. He earned name and fame for fiscal management.

I met Mr. Brahmananda Reddy on many occasions when he was Chief Minister. I interviewed him and did a piece for *Telugu Vidhyarthi* monthly, edited by Mr. Kolluri Koteswara Rao. When Mr. Brahmananda Reddy convened a meeting at Jubilee Hall in the wake of communal riots in Old City in 1968, I took part in it as a representative of the Radical Humanist organization and offered my suggestions.

The separate Telangana movement in 1969 badly dented Mr. Brahmananda Reddy's image as Chief Minister. At one stage, he and his ministerial colleagues could not move about freely in Hyderabad. Those days, Mrs. Tella Lakshmikanthamma, Member of the Lok Sabha, and I used to call on him. He looked dejected in his deserted bungalow. Separate Telangana activists resorted to obscene graffiti against Mrs. Raghavamma, Mr. Brahmananda Reddy's wife. Telangana women leaders like Mrs. J. Eswari Bai, Mrs. Sangam Laxmi Bai, and Mrs. Sarojini Pulla Reddy condemned the wall writings and launched a drive to erase them. Mrs. Lakshmikanthamma and I gave him a lot of solace by meeting him and tendering our advice in such a critical situation.

Mr. Brahmananda Reddy, true to his notoriety as a factional leader, sought to bring *Andhra Jyoti* and its Editor Narla Venkateswara Rao to their heels. He sought to deny Government advertisements to *Andhra Jyoti* and muzzle the Press in general by introducing a Bill in the Assembly. The Rationalist Association of which I happened to be a leader organized a meeting at the YMIS Hall in Sultan Bazar and put up a stiff opposition to the Bill. Mr. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangaiah was the star attraction at our meeting, which condemned the Chief Minister's move unequivocally. Our protests had their echo in newspapers at the national level. Mr. Brahmananda Reddy wriggled out of the embarrassing situation by referring the Bill to a Select Committee.

Mr. Kapila Kasipati brought out a biography of Mr. Brahmananda Reddy under the title, '*Brahmananda Yatra.*' Although Mr. Kasipati made many critical observations in the

book, Mr. Brahmananda Reddy was generous enough not to fault him. He organized a meeting at Jubilee Hall, distributed copies of the book, and listened to speeches made by his admirers.

The Congress appointed a committee under the leadership of Mr. Neti Chalapati to go into his anarchic actions as Guntur District Board President. The committee reportedly upheld the allegations against him. When I asked Mr. Brahmananda Reddy whether there was any truth in the charges, he fiddled with his cap and skirted a reply with a smile. It was very difficult to draw out Mr. Brahmananda Reddy both within and outside the Assembly. Colleagues and party people could not make out what was on his mind. He played with his cap whenever he wanted to avoid a reply.

Mr. Brahmananda Reddy displayed political astuteness by making his erstwhile bete noire Mr. Jalagam Vengala Rao Home Minister. He was adept at both cultivating and crushing his opponents. Once a close associate of Mr. Sanjiva Reddy, he rebelled against him later.

When Mr. Sanjiva Reddy was Union Minister of Steel, an agitation for the establishment of a steel plant at Visakhapatnam rocked the State. Mr. Brahmananda Reddy was said to have instigated Mr. Tamanampalli Amrita Rao, a party activist, to go on a fast unto death in support of the steel plant demand. Mr. Brahmananda Reddy's hand was seen in agitators pulling down a bust of Mr. Sanjiva Reddy in Vijayawada.

Dr. M. Channa Reddy, who served as a member of the

Brahmananda Reddy Cabinet and later went to take up a position in Delhi, plunged himself into the Telangana agitation after he lost his position following a court verdict. Mr. Brahmananda Reddy, however, did not capitulate because he enjoyed unquestionable majority in the Assembly. Yet, Mrs. Indira Gandhi replaced him with Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao as Chief Minister in the State's interest.

Mr. Brahmananda Reddy occupied many other positions like Maharashtra Governor and Union Minister for a long time. He had no children. History will pronounce its verdict as to what extent he rendered justice to the positions he occupied. I met him frequently even when he was out of power.



P. V. Narasimha Rao

(1921-2004)

“Serpents and scorpions are making our lives miserable.”

When prominent Janata Party leader G. C. Kondaiah made the wisecrack, it sounded like a riddle wrapped in an enigma. A little later, every one addicted to politics realized he was alluding to the affinity between Pamulaparthi Venkata Narasimha Rao and Tella Lakshmikanthamma. (*Pamulu* in Telugu means serpents and *Tellu*, scorpions).



My acquaintance with Mr. Narasimha Rao began when he was Education Minister in the Kasu Brahmananda Reddy Cabinet. His interviews to *Telugu Vidyarthi*, a monthly brought out by Editor Kolluri Koteswara Rao, made excellent copy. Gradually, we became closer.

We invited Mr. Narasimha Rao as the chief guest for the 50th birthday celebration of the then *Andhra Bhoomi* (Telugu daily) Editor Gora Sastry (formerly Editor of *Telugu Swatantra*) at Kurnool in 1968. Mr. Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy was then Kurnool Zilla Parishad Chairman. Agricultural Development Bank Officer Mandava Srirama Murthy, Mr. C. Dharma Rao of the Telugu Official Language Commission and I organized the felicitation function and extended some financial assistance to Mr. Gora Sastry. We also brought out a souvenir. Mr. Narasimha Rao delivered an erudite lecture on the occasion. I had the opportunity of discussing a number of issues with Mr. Narasimha Rao then.

Mr. Gora Sastry, Mrs. Tella Lakshmikanthamma, and I used to meet Mr. Narasimha Rao when he served as Minister and Chief Minister in Hyderabad. Mrs. Lakshmikanthamma was a close friend of our family. Having been in politics for for a long time, she became close to Mr. Narasimha Rao. Her encounters with Mr. Narasimha Rao surprised me because she openly displayed her affinity towards him some times and made fun of him some other times. Later on, Mr. Narasimha Rao portrayed Mrs. Lakshmikanthamma as a character in his English novel, *The Insider*, and took potshots at her indirectly. Realizing it, Mr. Lakshmikanthamma condemned Mr. Narasimha Rao publicly.

Mr. Narasimha Rao regarded me only as a Radical Humanist. I used to call on him as a friend and talk to him freely whether he occupied any position or not. Prying into the mind of Mr. Narasimha Rao was not an easy task because he was adept at

camouflaging his thinking. Mrs. Indira Gandhi kept him at a distance for some time before she declared internal Emergency. Mr. Narasimha Rao, then staying in Adarsh Nagar in Hyderabad, did a satire on Mrs. Indira Gandhi and read out a few excerpts to me. Asked whether he aimed his barbs at Mrs. Gandhi, he greeted me with silence. As he left for Delhi at the invitation of Mrs. Gandhi and began to play a key role in national politics, he concealed his indignation against her.

Mr. Narasimha Rao translated Viswanatha Satyanarayana's '*Veyi Padagalu*' in Telugu into '*Sahasra Phani*' in Hindi. On a couple of times, I conveyed my resentment against his venture. He did not fault me.

Those days, I used to meet my friend Mr. Dandamudi Mahidhar and his colleague Mr. Ramamurthy Venu in the Hindi wing of All India Radio, Hyderabad. I then learnt that Mr. Ramamurthy Venu was doing '*Sahasra Phani*' in Hindi. When the book finally appeared, it carried the name of Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao as the translator. I did not know to what extent they shared the translation work. Mr. Ramamurthy chose to remain silent when I quizzed him about it.

Mr. Narasimha Rao excelled as a member of both the Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha because he did his homework thoroughly whether he had to deliver a speech in the House or tackle the Opposition in debates. He stood for a united Andhra Pradesh when the separatist Telangana movement rocked the State. The land-owning classes turned against him when as Chief Minister he ushered in land reforms including

imposition of a ceiling on land holdings. Mr. Narasimha Rao had to go through the pangs of witnessing a separatist Andhra agitation too.

I saw him only rarely after he moved to Delhi, although we had occasion to meet and talk at Raj Bhavan on his Hyderabad visits.

As Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao visited Washington DC and addressed the American Congress. Sitting in the Press lobby, I felt impressed by his scholarly address. I was then Washington correspondent of Telugu daily *Vaarta*. My friend and *Vaarta* Editor K. Ramachandra Murthy helped me get the American Government accreditation as a correspondent. He published news reports and features sent by me.

Surprisingly, American newspapers did not carry a single line of the Indian Prime Minister's address to the American Congress. Prime Ministers of small countries like South Korea received good and prominent publicity in the Press when they address the Congress. When I broached the subject with a few friends of mine in the Washington Press Club, they pointed out that the Press ignored Mr. Narasimha Rao because he did not say anything new or did not propose anything that would have appealed to the super power. It was no reflection on the quality of his address, they added. The newspapers, however, carried his visit to a museum as an important piece of news.

I met Mr. Narasimha Rao then. Among the journalists accompanying him was Ms. Kalyani Sankar. She had worked under Mr. Sitaram in UNI, Hyderabad. She used to seek

clarifications and details from me frequently after Press conferences. Later on as a journalist in Delhi, she occupied many prominent positions and became close to Mr. Narasimha Rao. Mr. Narasimha Rao took part in a '*kalyana mahotsavam*' in Tirupati, seating her beside him.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao deserved credit for opening a new chapter in India's economic history by inducting Dr. Manmohan Singh as Finance Minister. He, however, had to bear the cross for the Babri Masjid demolition. That he looked the other way as miscreants brought down the Masjid was the allegation against him.

Mr. Narasimha Rao learnt working on a computer in his ripe old age. He started his political career as a journalist and ran *Kakatiya* newspaper. He used to write articles in the newspaper under the pseudonym of Jaya in the 1950's. He was a master of many languages.

Mr. Narasimha Rao earned notoriety for indecisiveness in politics. Time turned out to be the best healer when he allowed some issues to fester. He was a lover of arts and literature.

Mr. Narasimha Rao had many close associates. He helped some directly and some others indirectly. He faced an embarrassing situation when he got his childhood friend Kaloji Narayana Rao for the Padmabhushan award. When Kaloji, who was close to Communists, hesitated to accept the award, Mr. Narasimha Rao persisted and persuaded him to accept it.

Mr. Narasimha Rao, a deshमुख, was known as a lord in

villages. His land running into many acres remained fallow.

He attracted charges of indirectly encouraging BJP's communalism following the Babri Masjid incident.

Happy over a fellow Telugu-speaking man becoming Prime Minister, Telugu Desam Chief Minister N. T. Rama Rao did not field a candidate against him in the Nadyal Lok Sabha by-election.



Jalagam Vengala Rao

(1922-1999)

Revolutionary writer Sri Sri forecast in an interview in 1978 that Jalagam Vengala Rao would go down in history as the last Congress Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. That he miserably failed in anticipating the shape of things to come was evident from the fact that Congress Chief Ministers continued to rule the State later on also.



I had occasion to interact with Mr. Vengala Rao when he served as Panchayati Raj Chamber President, Home Minister and Chief Minister and developed affinity with him. As Chief Minister, he used to address some Press reporters in his chambers in the first person singular. *Hindu's* Rajendra Prasad and I were among the few exceptions. Although we were hurt by the way he treated some reporters, surprisingly the reporters themselves did not take any exception. Beholden to the Chief Minister for

the small favors they sought and received, they put up with the way he dealt with them. Of course, it did not redound to the honor of journalists.

Drawn by his commitment and dedication to the panchayati raj system, Mr. G. Rami Reddy, K. Seshadri and I became close to Mr. Vengala Rao and discussed many relevant issues. Later on, Mr. Vengala Rao outgrew his district-level factional politics and played a key role as a loyal follower of Mr. Sanjiva Reddy.

Mr. Vengala Rao initiated the Telangana agitation in Khammam district by making a student, Ravindra, to go on an indefinite hunger strike. Mr. Kasu Brahmananda Reddy was the Chief Minister then. In no time, Mr. Vengala Rao became Home Minister and abandoned his pro-Telangana stand.

As Home Minister, Mr. Vengala Rao gave a free hand to the police to tackle naxalites. He curtly told them, “I don’t bother how you go about your way; but ensure that I don’t get any complaints. I will ensure that you are not blamed.”

The police took advantage of the Chief Minister’s stance and killed many naxalites in the name of encounters. Later on, a commission headed by Justice Vimad Lal was appointed to go into allegations of fake encounters. People like me working in humanitarian organizations resented Mr. Vengala Rao’s policy. Mr. M. V. Rammurthy and I persuaded Justice V. M. Tarkunde to argue before the Vimad Lal Commission. Friend and lawyer Kannabiran stood by us. The Leftist parties welcomed Justice Tarkunde arguing on behalf of victims of police atrocities.

Mr. Venagala Rao became Chief Minister in peculiar circumstances. To bring the situation under control after the separatist agitations in both the Telangana and Andhra regions subsided, the Union Government appointed Mr. Sarin as Advisor to Governor. Politicians who had enjoyed power felt like fish out of water within six months of Governor's rule. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi felt that the next Chief Minister should be from Telangana and acceptable to leaders of both regions. Mr. Nookala Ramachandra Reddy and Mr. Raja Ram figured prominently among the probables. Mr. P V. Narasimha Rao, who had to resign as Chief Minister, surreptitiously propped up Mr. Vengala Rao. As the battle raged between prospective candidates, a rough estimate showed that as many as 155 legislators were opposed to Mr. Vengala Rao. However, common people are ignorant of backroom machinations and manipulations that influence decisions in politics.

Navabharat (Company) Chowdary, a long-time friend of Mr. Vengala Rao, and some others decided to project him as the next Chief Minister. They suggested his name to people like Mr. Dikshit who were close to Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Even Mr. Kotha Raghuramaiah plumped for Mr. Vengala Rao. They told Mrs. Indira Gandhi's associates that Mr. Vengala Rao enjoyed total support, concealing the opposition to his candidature. Once Mrs. Gandhi gave her nod, all those who opposed him became his supporters. Even some top police officials played their part in enthroning Mr. Vengala Rao. He was fortunate enough to become Chief Minister. Since Emergency was in force during

his reign, he ruled the State unhindered by opposition or obstacles. Even the Vimada Lal Commission could not destabilize him.

Mr. Vengala Rao was reputed for quick decision-making and prompt implementation. He did not earn the opprobrium of a man after money. His personal staff used to handle money, if necessary. However, he appeared to be personally above board.

Mr. Vengala Rao wanted to expose the secret behind Mrs. Indira Gandhi clamping Emergency on the country. He brought out his autobiography after he retired from politics. In it, he made certain observations on the judgment of Justice M. L. Sinha of the Allahabad High Court. Taking serious exception to them, Justice Sinha threatened to file a contempt of court case against Mr. Vengala Rao. Tendering an unqualified apology, Mr. Vengala Rao recalled the publication, made amends, and brought out another edition. In his book, he criticized Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, Mr. Nadendla Bhaskara Rao and Mr. Kasu Brahmananda Reddy in many matters. His daughter Vani and some journalists like J. Umamaheswara Rao (Savyasachi) took notes as he dictated.

Mr. Vengala Rao, who lived in Dwarakapuri Colony both when he was in power and out of it, became a voracious reader of books. Mr. S. V. Pantulu and I used to meet him regularly. Police officer Balaji served Mr. Vengala Rao loyally and affectionaely.

Mr. Vengala Rao responded to most questions promptly and without any reservations. He, however, skirted replies to

questions on Sanjay Gandhi's visit to Andhra Pradesh during the Emergency and his weakness for pleasures of life.

When I met Mr. Vengala Rao as *Andhra Jyoti* Bureau Chief after elections had been announced, I saw money being distributed to candidates in a rear room of the Chief Minister's chambers. His personal assistants like Mr. Prakasa Rao and Mr. Sitapati played a key role in his office. His peon Lokayya too was highly sought after.

All of Mr. Vengala Rao's programs took place without any hassles since he was time conscious.

He gave full freedom to his Cabinet colleague Mandali Venkata Krishna Rao in organizing the World Telugu Conference in 1975. The successful conduct of the event earned Mr. Vengala Rao and Mr. Krishna Rao a good name. I introduced Prof. Robert Freekenburg to Mr. Krishna Rao, who in turn took him to Mr. Vengala Rao. He was born in Guntur district in a pastor's family. He speaks Telugu fluently. He retired as Professor of Political History in Wisconsin University where. Mr. Velcheru Narayana Rao too had served. While in the U.S. I used to correspond with Mr. Freekenburg. He congratulated Mr. Vengala Rao and Mr. Krishna Rao on the successful conduct of the World Telugu Conference. The Oxford University Press published his historical research work titled '*Guntur District*'.

When poet Kaloji Narayana Rao contested the election to the Assembly from Sattupalle constituency, the Left parties supported him. Visiting the area for election reporting, I met

Mr. Vengala Rao. He commented why the Left parties were making so much fuss about a seat in which they would forfeit deposit.

On some occasions, Mr. S. V. Pantulu and I accompanied Mr. Vengala Rao on his visits to Khammam district. He treated us with great affection. When the Chief Minister visited Girijan areas, I accompanied him, interviewed Girijans, and wrote a lengthy report in *Andhra Jyoti*. When Mr. H. K. Babu, Director of Tribal Affairs, complained against my critical observations, Mr. Vengala Rao not merely ignored him but congratulated me on opening Government eyes to the situation at the ground level.



Dr. Marri Channa Reddy

(1919-1996)

Dr. Marri Channa Reddy's anger knew no bounds when he saw the *Secularist* monthly's cover page. The magazine, edited by Prof. A. B. Shah, carried a picture of Deoars Baba blessing Dr. Channa Reddy by placing his foot on his head. The godman of Uttar Pradesh, where Dr. Channa Reddy had served as Governor, used to live on a treetop.

Swaying with rage, Dr. Channa Reddy ordered, "Summon Innaiah wherever he is. We will thrash out the matter with him."

When I called on Dr. Channa Reddy, he hurled the magazine at my face shouting, "Should you stoop so lowever much you might have been cut up with me?"



I quietly pulled out a souvenir his fan Paramahamsa brought out on Dr. Channa Reddy's '*shashtipurthi*' (completion of 60 years)

in consultation with him. It carried a full-page color picture of the Baba blessing Dr. Channa Reddy by placing his foot. Dr. Channa Reddy was stunned. Discretion deserts when anger takes over.

My love-hate relationship with Dr. Channa Reddy dated back to 1958. Addressing a meeting at Vijayawada in the presence of Prof. N. G. Ranga and others in the wake of the Swatantra Party formation, Dr. Channa Reddy thundered, “A fatal plunge into River Krishna is preferable to clinging to the Congress.” Mr. S. V. Pantulu too was present at the Vijayawada meeting.

That he joined the Congress after his return to Hyderabad was another matter. My relationship with Dr. Channa Reddy, which began with the Vijayawada meeting, continued until he passed away.

On another occasion, Dr. Channa Reddy reportedly threw away a book of mine on Andhra Pradesh political history when friends drew his attention to references in the book to corruption allegations against him.

I cannot recall the number of times I met him when he launched and led from the forefront the separate Telangana agitation and rocked the entire State. Despite his occasional outbursts, he treated me with affection.

When the Telangana movement was at its zenith, some friends of mine including advocate S. K. Acharya, Radical Humanist Kosaraju Sambasiva Rao and journalist A. L. Narasimha Rao from the Andhra region wanted to call on him. Those days

people from the Andhra region shuddered to meet Dr. Channa Reddy. When I took them to Dr. Channa Reddy's residence in Lalapet, he counseled them, "If all of you join hands with the Telangana people and take part in their movement, none would touch you." Those who called on him beat a retreat in silence.

Not keeping quiet, I asked Dr. Channa Reddy after my friends had left, "Are you sending a message that their interests will not be safe if they do not join the Telangana movement?" Instead of replying, he made me take a seat and inquired of Prof. N. G. Ranga and Mr. Gouthu Latchanna, the staple food of our dialogues.

I had had innumerable encounters with Dr. Channa Reddy when he was Chief Minister. On a visit to the Journalists' Colony, he said he wanted to open more journalist colonies but he could not locate prominent Telugu journalists to name the colonies after them. He made the point as he inaugurated the M. Chalapathi Rao colony. Mr. Konda Laxma Reddy asked me to propose a vote of thanks. I thanked Dr. Channa Reddy for his offer and added that I was prepared to give him the names of as many prominent journalists as the number of colonies he proposed. For instance, I said amidst applause from journalists, the colonies could be named after Narla Venkateswara Rao, Kotamraju Punneyya, Kotamraju Rama Rao, C. Y. Chintamani and Khasa Subba Rao. Dr. Channa Reddy was hurt but kept quiet.

When he constituted his Ministry, Dr. Channa Reddy initially did not give importance to Mr. Nadenda Bhaskara Rao, who

claimed closeness with him. When he sulked, he gave him the Finance portfolio. Later on, Dr. Channa Reddy clipped his wings once again. Mr. Bhaskara Rao could not harm Dr. Channa Reddy by lodging complaints against him with the High Command.

I used to shoot many embarrassing queries at Dr. Channa Reddy during Press conferences. When he found them inconvenient, he asked me to come up with a reply.

On one occasion, when Dr. Channa Reddy returned from Delhi to Hyderabad a large Press contingent turned up to meet him at the Begumpet airport. It was because of the widespread rumor that he was about to be replaced as Chief Minister. As the reporters talked to him sympathetically as if he had already lost power, I told Dr. Channa Reddy, “Congratulations, Sir, on continuing as Chief Minister.” He said with a smile, “You should know better.”

My Press colleagues were surprised. A happy Mrs. Uma Venkatram Reddy rushed to me asking anxiously, “Is it true? Only much later, Mr. T. Anjaiah replaced Dr. Channa Reddy.

I met Dr. Channa Reddy at Gandhi Bhavan when he served as State Congress President.

Dr. Channa Reddy, a man of extreme likes and dislikes, never concealed his passion and anger. Asked about Justice Mr. Pingali Jaganmohan Reddy and some other Congress leaders, he used to react sharply.

He used to dwell at length on his practicing medicine and running a newspaper.

The role he played in the Telangana movement was different from the one he played as Chief Minister and Governor. Corruption in politics was a hot subject of discussion during his reign as Chief Minister. His participation in '*tulabharams*' attracted a lot of public attention.

Dr. Channa Reddy conducted himself without fear. He used to invite the people he liked to share the dais with him. People like Mrs. Durga Bhatavatsalam enjoyed such an honor. Mr. V. B. Raju used to remark that it was safer to keep Dr. Channa Reddy in power than out of it.

Dr. Channa Reddy was adept at winning over even his political rivals. Only he could appoint Mr. Vandemataram Ramachandra Rao, who contested against him in the Assembly elections, Chairman of the Official Language Commission, name a district after his father-in-law K. V. Ranga Reddy without any inhibitions and persuade CPM leader Putchalapalli Sundaraiah to take over as Drainage Board Chairman.

As Chief Minister, Dr. Channa Reddy underwent some diagnostic tests by joining the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi. In a neighboring room, Mrs. Menaka Gandhi had given birth to a boy. As Dr. Channa Reddy readied himself to congratulate her, Mr. Sanjay Gandhi who was present stunned him by asking him to be ready to quit. By the time he returned to Hyderabad, the stage had been set for his exit.



T. Anjaiah

(1919-1986)



After he became Chief Minister, Mr. Anjaiah declared his original name was Tanguturi Krishna Reddy, and not Talla Anjaiah as some believed. He also asserted that he belonged to the Reddy caste and dispelled the notion that he was from a backward caste.

Mr. Anjaiah began his career as a six-anna (equivalent to less than 40 paise now) daily wage earner in Allwyn Company. He strove politically for the welfare of the poor, especially hut dwellers, for a long time. Leading a simple life without any pomp, he laughed a lot and made others laugh with his witty and lively dialogues.

I met him for the first time when Dr. M. Channa Reddy galvanized the separatist Telangana agitation. Mr. Anjaiah too used to take potshots at Mrs. Indira Gandhi as part of the

agitation. He contested on the Telangana Praja Samiti ticket and won. Once the TPS merged with the Congress, he became an ardent and unwavering follower of Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

Mr. Anjaiah staked his claim when the Congress High Command was on the look out to replace Mr. Kasu Brahmananda Reddy as Chief Minister in 1972. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, however, did not oblige him. Subsequently, Mrs. India Gandhi lost popular support after she imposed Emergency in 1975. Yet, Mr. Anjaiah stood behind her like a rock. He used to visit Delhi frequently and meet Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi. He became one of the close followers of Mr. Sanjay Gandhi. Mr. Sanjay Gandhi's death in an air crash stunned and shocked Mr. Anjaiah. (I happened to be with him when the news broke).

His discussions with me at his Barkatpura residence in Hyderabad, he was brutally frank and forthright in commenting on politics and his colleagues in the Congress Party.

Right from the day Dr. M. Channa Reddy became Chief Minister, Mr. Anjaiah used to lodge complaints against him with the Congress High Command by mail and occasionally in person.

Mr. Anjaiah renewed his interest in becoming Chief Minister when an unpopular Dr. Channa Reddy steered the party downhill along with him. Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao extended his support to Mr. Anjaiah. Since Mr. Anjaiah was a favorite of Mr. Sanjay Gandhi, Mrs. Indira Gandhi chose him Chief Minister and fulfilled his long cherished dream.

Even before he became Chief Minister, Mr. Anjaiah had built bridges of understanding with Central Congress leaders. He acted as in-charge of Congress affairs in Bihar. His fluency in Hindu and Urdu and his genuflecting tendencies stood him in good stead.

He stunned political circles by constituting a 61-member jumbo jet Ministry as Chief Minister. To the inquisitive reporters, he disclosed who recommended whom and how he had to oblige all of them. When the High Command directed him to prune the Ministry, he dropped 20 members and promised to accommodate them in other positions.

Miffed over denial of an important portfolio, Mr. Nadendla Bhaskara Rao behaved as if he did not care the Chief Minister. When an indignant Anjaiah sacked him, Mr. Bhaskara Rao lodged a 17-page complaint with Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Promising an inquiry into his allegations, Mrs. Gandhi sent word to Mr. Bhaskara Rao through Mr. Balraj Chopra that he should not quit the party or attempt to float a new party in haste. Complaints against Mr. Anjaiah did not sway the party High Command, which had a soft corner for him.

I used to meet Mr. Anjaiah a number of times those days. He entrusted the Department of Archeology to his loyal disciple Mr. P. Janardana Reddy (PJR) . He wanted me to explain to PJR what the department did. I took him to the State Archives in Tarnaka, Hyderabad, and made him study its working. I used to guide him on answering questions that cropped up in the Assembly. He followed my suggestions with humility and respect.

When we took part in functions, Mr. Anjaiah directed organizers to feed the media and drivers first.

When poet Dasaradhi commented that Mr. Anjaiah spoke in real Telugu, some newspapers lampooned his Telugu with cartoons. There were many jokes centering round Mr. Anjaiah those days. Some had their origin in Mr. Anjaiah's comments, while some others were the figments of imagination of others. Mr. Anjaiah used to mix Urdu and Telugu words in his comments as was evident from a remark of his in Telugu that "we need not worry about oil scarcity hereafter since 'tel' (oil) has been struck in the sea." Some sought to make fun of his love for laborers by alleging that he enquired whether there was no labor ward in an eye hospital.

To extend a grand welcome to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on a visit to Hyderabad, Chief Minister Anjaiah assembled a large number of people at the Begumpet airport. Irrked by Mr. Anjaiah's pompous welcome, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi called him a *'buffoon'* disregarding that he was the Chief Minister of a State. When the newspapers carried Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's acerbic comment in banner headlines, all parties were enraged. Mr. Anjaiah wanted to resign as Chief Minister but his supporters thwarted his plans.

The affront to Mr. Anjaiah had gained currency as an affront to all Telugu-speaking people by the time elections to the State Assembly took place. The elections witnessed the trouncing of the Congress by the Telugu Desam Party led by Mr. N. T. Rama Rao.

By inducting Mr. Anjaiah whom he had insulted into his Cabinet, Mr. RajivGandhi exemplified Congress culture.

Mr. Anjaiah passed away in 1986. He was a great man for friendship.



Bhavanam Venkatram

(1932-2002)

Mrs. Indira Gandhi treated Chief Ministers in Andhra Pradesh as pawns on her political chessboard. She replaced Dr. M. Channa Reddy by Mr. T. Anjaiah, and Mr. Anjaiah by Mr. Bhavanm Venkatram as Chief Minister.

Dr, Channa Reddy inducted Mr. Bhavanam Venkatram as Education Minister in 1978 and later made him a member of the Legislative Council. Dr. Tangirala Subhash introduced me to Bhavanam for the first time.



Bhavanam was a Congress man with socialist leanings. He was a politician deeply interested in arts, culture, language, and movies. Although a Reddy, he married Jayaprada, a Kamma. It was a marriage of the dry land and wetland cultures of Guntur district. A good conversationalist, Bhavanam was adept at converting others to

his viewpoint. He, however, found himself a square peg in the round hole of Congress factional politics.

When he was Education Minister in Andhra Pradesh, Mrs. Shiela Kaur, a family friend of the Nehru family, was Union Education Minister. On a study visit to Andhra Pradesh, she complimented Bhavanam on his style of functioning and good taste. It paid him rich dividends later on.

Mrs. Shiela Kaur proposed Bhavanam as a successor to Mr. Anjaiah when the High Command considered a change of the Chief Minister in Andhra Pradesh. She marketed the idea to the right persons at the right time. It was she who finally swung the decision in his favor, although many others claimed credit for his elevation as Chief Minister,

Bhavanam gained rich experience as Education Minister. I helped him address educational conferences. When he had to inaugurate a conference of scientists at Jubilee Hall in Hyderabad, I drafted his speech dwelling on the importance of promoting scientific culture among students, keeping in mind the country's future as also Constitutional obligations. Bhavanam received compliments from the scientists for his progressive thinking. Overwhelmed by the reception he got, Bhavanam thanked me profusely later on. Since then, we had virtually become Siamese twins in thinking.

Bhavanam used to dilly dally in taking decisions because he did not enjoy political support within the party although he had admirers in all parties

Bhavanam took me along with him to Delhi when the High Command considered him as the prospective Chief Minister. Even after he became Chief Minister, I accompanied him on all his Delhi visits. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's personal assistant helped us meet her. Delhi is a center for nocturnal politics. Even Bhavanm as Chief Minister held discussions with Mrs. Indira Gandhi only late in the night. That is part of Congress culture.

Since I was close to the Chief Minister, a number of people wanted to use my good offices for personal benefit. As I ignored them, they drifted away.

I regarded Bhavanam as a friend. I did not allow my friendship to come in the way of my objective journalism. Occasionally, my critical commentaries stung Bhavanam. However, he soon forgot them, dropped in at my rented house in Adarshnagar as usual, and accepted our hospitality. Among those who came to see him at my residence were Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, Mr. Nara Chandrababu Naidu, and Mr. Paladugu Venkata Rao. Although such meetings had become a daily ritual, I did not dabble in politics. Our friendship continued even after Bhavanam stepped down as Chief Minister.

In retrospect, one should say that Bhavanm as Chief Minister accomplished little. Leaders like Mr. N. Janardana Reddy ignored him even as they continued to be members of his Cabinet. Mr. Nadendla Bhaskara Rao tried in vain to get into some position with Bhavanam's help.

The presence of Mr. N. T. Rama Rao during the swearing in of Bhavanam as Chief Minister surprised many. Bhavanm and

NTR had been friends in college at Guntur. In addition, Bhavanam was a movie fan.

Bhavanm was an admirer of Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao.

I did not believe reports that Mrs. Indira Gandhi brought money to Hyderabad and entrusted him with the responsibility of distributing it among party candidates in Anantapur district. Without disclosing the purpose, Bhavanm wanted me to accompany him to Anantanpur in his car. We talked a number of things all along the way.

At the 'Travelers' Bungalow in Anantapur, I saw Bhavanm handing over cash to Mr. B. T. L. N. Choudary towards election expenses. Mr. Choudary wanted Bhavanm to ensure that he got some more money. Bhavanam told me later in response to a query that it was a fact that Mrs. Gandhi had brought cash and gave him a portion of it for distribution among party contestants.

Mr. Nara Chandrababu Naidu was a Minister of State in the Bhavanm Ministry. Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy wanted Bhavanam to elevate Mr. Chandrababu Naidu to Cabinet status. He broached the matter with me before I accompanied Bhavanm to Delhi and asked me too to put in a word if possible. Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy used to help friends without any reservations. I, however, did not intervene.

Without the High Command's nod, Bhavanam could not make any changes in his Cabinet. Bhavanm himself unburdened his helplessness to me.

As a close associate of the Chief Minister, I had some good opportunities in life. One morning, the Queen of Melody Lata

Mangeshkar dropped in Bhavanams' residence to seek a site in Musheerabad for establishing an institution named after her father. Since none was around, Bhavanam asked me to keep her engaged until he readied himself. I had the privilege of talking to her for a long time and learning of her rich experiences in life. Surprisingly, there was not even a camera in the Chief Minister's residence to record the visit of such a famous singer. There is a world of difference between Chief Ministers then and now.

When Bhavanam was Education Minister, UGC Chairperson Madhuri Dikshit visited Srikrishnadevaraya University at Anantapur to deliver the convocation address. I accompanied Bhavanam to Anantapur. Being a Satya Saibaba devotee, she decided to visit the deemed university at Puttaparti first. I told Bhavanam that her behavior was an affront to the university in that she gave priority to her personal faith. Agreeing with my contention, Bhavanam too stayed away from Puttaparthi.

Bhavanam did not bother about god men and god women who called on him. One Sivaswami from Kadapa dropped in one day and placed 'sacred ash' and a fruit in Bhavanam's hands. He claimed he had created them out of thin air. Sitting by the side of Bhavanam, I whispered that he ask the Swami to produce a pumpkin. When Bhavanam made the request as suggested, the helpless Swami beat a retreat. The fake swamis materialize only those objects that fit in a fist. With sleight of hand, they pull out the objects before the gullible and cast a spell on them. The swami had come to seek permission for a junior college. Largely, Bhavanam kept them at a distance.

Bhavanam had the opportunity of appointing a Vice Chancellor for Andhra University. When he asked me to suggest some suitable person, I mentioned Mr. Avula Sambasiva Rao, who had just retired as Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court. He immediately approved the idea and entrusted me with the task of persuading Avula to accept the assignment. I could accomplish that.

One good initiative taken by Bhavanam concerned the establishment of an Open University to provide higher education opportunities to rural students who could not afford studies in a regular university. At the Chief Minister's instance, Mr. G. Rami Reddy studied the functioning of Open University in Britain and submitted a report. Bhavanam wanted to establish it at Nagarjunasagar.

When Bhavanam considered Mr. Rami Reddy for appointment as Open University Vice Chancellorm, the Head of the Department of Genetics in Osmania University emerged as a competitor. My friends and I supported Mr. Rami Reddy, although Mr. O. S. Reddy too happened to be a friend of ours. He was hurt. We persuaded Bhavanam to appoint Mr. Rami Reddy.

Once he quit as Chief Minister, Bhavanam did not play any active role in politics. He remained close to me until he breathed his last. Few visited him as his health deteriorated. In Congress culture, those who cease to be in power become 'un-persons.'

Bhavanam went down in history as a Chief Minister who lasted a mere seven months.

Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy

(1920-2001)

I met Mr. Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy for the first time in 1968. I was then organizing a function in Kurnool to celebrate the 50th birthday of Mr. Gora Sastry (Govindu Rama Sastry), Editor of *Telugu Swatantra* and *Andhra Bhoomi* and writer of radio plays. As Kurnool Zilla Parishad Chairman, Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy extended his cooperation and helped us make the function a success. He delivered a fine speech on the occasion.



The acquaintance I struck with him enabled me to meet him now and then in Hyderabad subsequently. In contrast to other politicians, Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy was a gentleman. He enjoyed playing cards with friends in the Old MLA Quarters and Gopi Hotel in Hyderabad.

After he quit State politics and migrated to Delhi, he did not

concern himself with local politics. Concerned over the miserable state of the party and its bleak prospects in the 1982 elections, the Congress High Command made him Chief Minister. Having already changed three Chief Ministers in the State earlier, Mrs. Indira Gandhi had made the party a laughing stock in the State. With a view to retrieving the lost prestige, Mrs. Indira Gandhi made Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy Chief Minister. He, however, could not prove himself a match to Mr. N. T. Rama Rao, who had just entered politics and enlisted massive public support by undertaking a whistle-stop tour of the State. Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy offered to supply rice at Rs.1.90 a kg to counter NTR's promise of rice at Rs.2 a kg. Yet, the people ignored his offer.

Mr. Bhavanam Venkatram, Mr. Madan Mohan, and I were seated opposite Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy when he took oath of office as Chief Minister.

Shortly before he stepped down as Chief Minister, Mr. Bhavanam Venkatram had signed on a file providing for reservation of 11 medical seats to Karnataka on a reciprocal basis. The incoming Chief Minister too was to approve it. Bhavanam and Mr. Madan Mohan, the outgoing Health Minister, wanted me to request Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy to clear the file since they found it embarrassing to approach him. When I conveyed the request, Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy, immediately after assuming office, asked the Chief Secretary to get the file and signed on it immediately, much to my pleasant surprise. My friendship with him served a good purpose.

I did not meet Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy frequently later.

Whenever I met him, he spoke affectionately. Having stepped down as Chief Minister within four months, he left for Delhi and returned to Andhra Pradesh as Chief Ministers once again. He was a failure even during the second term. He earned ignominy by leading the Congress to defeat for the second time and virtually handing over power on a platter to NTR's Telugu Desam Party.

When he became Chief Minister for the second time, Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy appointed a friend of mine, Mr. Abburi Varada Rajeswara Rao, as Chairman of the Official Language Commission. They had known each other in Delhi. However, Mr. Abburi died of illness in hospital even before he could take over.

When Mr. Vijayabhaskara Reddy was breathing his last in Apollo Hospital, Hyderabad, few bothered to call on him. His death exemplifies Congress culture, in which persons sans power become *unpersons*.



N. T. Rama Rao

(1923-1996)



Mr. N. T. Rama Rao (NTR) made history by leading the Telugu Desam Party he founded in 1982 to a resounding victory within nine months. He had plunged into elections with the objective of restoring the self-respect of Telugu-speaking people and making Delhi open its eyes to Andhras' great history and rich culture.

Donning military fatigues, he roared, "Naxalites too are patriots, Brother." Wedded to the world of movies all through his life, he entered politics all of a sudden and brought about a sea change in Andhra Pradesh history. Apparently, he had his finger firmly on the people's pulse.

Before his advent into politics, handsome NTR had cast a

spell on four generations of Telugu-speaking people with his marvelous acting. The mythological and social roles he played left an indelible imprint on people's minds. People on a pilgrimage to Tirupati invariably went to his residence in the then Madras and had his '*darshan*' too.

By 1981, Mrs. Indira Gandhi had replaced four Chief Ministers in Andhra Pradesh in as many years. They were shuffled like cards in a pack. People perceived her actions as repulsive and insulting, demeaning to the prestige of Telugu-speaking people and detrimental to democracy. Although a novice in politics, NTR played his cards adroitly by forming a party to fill the developing vacuum.

I used to meet NTR oft and on at that point of time. He received visitors at Ramakrishna Studios right from early in the morning. Mr. Mahipal Reddy, Mr. Bhim Reddy, and Mr. Tummala Gopala Rao were among those who accompanied me. Some people eager to contest elections on behalf of the newly formed TDP wanted me to put in a word to NTR. Since I would not succumb to such pressures, I could drop in at NTR's place any time and talk to him without any inhibitions.

When NTR unleashed a political tsunami on the eve of elections, I happened to write a lengthy piece in *Eenadu* on Mr. Tanguturi Prakasam. In that article, I referred to an incident during the Simon Commission visit to Chennai. When Mr. Prakasam was on his way to visit a person who died in police firing, a constable obstructed him. When others explained to the constable who Mr. Prakasam was, he stood aside and gave

way to Mr. Prakasam. Quoting from Mr. Prakasam's autobiography, I added that the legend about Mr. Prakasam baring his chest when a constable aimed his gun at him was a figment of imagination. Unable to digest the truth, diehard supporters of Mr. Prakasam took cudgels against me. Although I cannot claim that my piece in *Eenadu* influenced NTR, his barbs at Mr. Prakasam infuriated some people.

Both as reporter and in my individual capacity, I met NTR on a number of occasions when he was Chief Minister. He always treated me with affection. Mr. Vemuri Satyanarayana of the Hindi Academy wanted me to contribute an article on NTR for a publication the academy planned. He had offered to get my piece in Telugu translated into Hindi and paid me Rs.1000. When I handed over the article, Mr. Satyanarayana remarked that NTR might not relish my incisively critical observations. Mr. Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad whose opinion NTR sought, said the article was worthy of publication. Mr. Vemuri Satyanarayana, who had not bargained for NTR's clearance, was, not pleased.

NTR received many recommendations when he had to make a choice between Mr. Parvataneni Upendra and Dr. Yalamanchili Sivaji for a Rajya Sabha seat. Mr. Upendra, miffed over my accompanying Dr. Sivaji to NTR, stopped talking to me for some time.

NTR as Chief Minister ushered in a social revolution by initiating reforms like conferring the right on women to a share in their parents' ancestral property, providing for reservations

to backward classes and doing away with the caste barrier for appointment of temple priests.

NTR had some good advisors like Mr. Parvataneni Koteswara Rao, Mr. V. Appa Rao and Mr. P. S. Ramamohana Rao among police officers. He also had some IAS officials like Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan who rendered him unbiased and rational advice. There were indeed some officials, who with their superstitious beliefs sought to mislead NTR. NTR was not enamored of either god men or god women. He, however, was a theist. His great reverence for Lord Buddha prompted him to get a gigantic Buddha statue sculpted and installed on Gibraltar Rock in Hussain Sagar lake in the heart of Hyderabad city. He got statues of Telugu legends installed on Tank Bund as a tourist attraction.

I once accompanied Potti Sriramulu Telugu University Registrar Sivarama Murthy to NTR as he wanted to present some university publications to NTR. As we were about to return after presenting the books, NTR said, “May God bless you.” I immediately asked him which god he had in mind and added, “Why should you invoke other gods? Deeming you god, people prostrate before you?” Perhaps, few people would have talked to him in that vein. NTR smiled and commented, “Why do you take exception to a routine greeting?”

I understood that NTR ordered an inquiry into the murder of some people at the Puttaparthi Ashram and directed police to arrest Sai Baba if necessary. He merely smiled when I met and congratulated him on his decision. However, the police did

not carry out the Chief Minister's orders. What I learnt later on was that Sai devotees among his officials thwarted NTR's orders without his knowledge. Sai Baba did not put his foot on the soil of Hyderabad as long as NTR was Chief Minister. In fact, NTR lampooned a character like Sai Baba in one of his movies.

Immediately after he became Chief Minister, NTR appointed renowned journalist and Editor Narla Venkateswara Rao as his Cultural Advisor. Narla used to clear files after taking my suggestions. NTR felt happy when he learnt of my role. Narla's recommendation that all the cultural academies be abolished angered vested interests.

Some people exploited NTR's weaknesses to get their work done. As a tribute to Prof. N. G. Ranga's services to the nation, his followers collected donations, built a Ranga Bhavan in Hyderabad, and formed a trust to manage it. Some relatives of Prof. Ranga bent upon appropriating Ranga Bhavan got the public trust converted into a private trust. They made Prof. Ranga himself to put in the request to NTR. NTR, without going into its propriety, conceded it. It would have been better had NTR not committed such mistakes.

When NTR was Chief Minister, I organized a seminar on the functioning of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University under the aegis of ICSSR in the Osmania University Library. Taking part in the seminar, I criticized how Mr. G. Rami Reddy, the founder Vice Chancellor, surrounding himself with sycophants, had whittled down standards. While his followers vehemently protested against my remarks, Dr. Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad

observed that the criticism was well intentioned and that a debate on the university's strengths and weaknesses was unexceptionable. However, Mr. Rami Reddy and his followers could neither rebut the criticism nor digest it.

Although Mr. Rami Reddy had migrated to Delhi by then, he instigated his followers over phone to counter my criticism. Not knowing how to go about their job, the Vice Chancellor, the Registrar, and some professors used university vehicles to call on people in positions of power and launch a calumny campaign against me. Newspaper editors turned down their demand against publishing my writings. Book publishers like K. B. Satyanarayana of Book Links refused to take my publications off their shelves. Seminar participants like Prof. Wilson would not oblige them by tendering an apology. Mr. V. Hanumantha Rao of Data News and Features spurned their demand for dropping me from his organization.

Finally, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu, Mr. Gali Muddukrishnama Naidu, Mr. Indra Reddy, Justice Jaganmohan Reddy, and Justice Avula Sambasiva Rao laughed away their charge sheet against me. As a last resort, they called on Chief Minister NTR and sought action against me. He laughed loudly and asked, "How are we concerned with such things? Rebut him, if you can."

At the end of the month-long drama, an Open University professor commented that their operation was a success except that the patient died. "We have thoroughly been exposed for what we are — fools."

Could you imagine the *dramatis personae*? They included Prof. Haragopal, Mr. Chekuri Rama Rao, Mr. K. Madhusudhana Reddy, Registrar Nagaraju, Prof. Sivalinga Prasad, Vice Chancellor Navaneetha Rao and Dr. C. Narayana Reddy. People run berserk if they throw discretion to the winds. The fact did not dawn on them until NTR upbraided them in his inimitable style.



Nadendla Bhaskara Rao

Mr. Nadendla Bhaskara Rao was a practicing lawyer before he entered politics.

As a Youth Congress leader, he was a frequent visitor to the *Andhra Jyoti* office opposite the Secretariat when I was the daily's Bureau Chief. He talked to me over phone almost daily and released press statements some times. Mr. Bhaskara Rao was astute and intelligent in grasping political issues quickly. A man of initiative and drive, he moved with all people irrespective of their status in the party.



Early in his political career, he became close to Dr. M. Channa Reddy. He served as Minister for Legislative Affairs in the first Channa Reddy Cabinet. He had expected a more important portfolio because of his intimacy with Dr. Channa Reddy. Since Dr. Channa Reddy did not oblige him, he boycotted the dinner

hosted by Governor Sarada Mukherjee to the new Ministers to register his protest. Although Dr. Channa Reddy gave him a better portfolio later on, he could not retain it. Suspecting that he carried tales against him to Delhi, Dr. Channa Reddy cut him down to size again by allocating an insignificant portfolio.

Mr. Bhaskara Rao went through such vicissitudes during the Channa Reddy and the Tanguturi Anjaiah regimes. Even Mr. Anjaiah dropped him from the Ministry once. He tried in vain to become a Minister in the Bhavanam Venkatram Ministry.

It was then that Mr. N. T. Rama Rao entered the political scene even as Opposition parties tried to forge an alternative to the Congress. Mr. Bhaskara Rao became close to NTR and played a prominent role in the Telugu Desam Party. He handled key portfolios in NTR's first Ministry and described himself as a co-pilot. Given to extreme likes and dislikes, he could not sail together with some leaders like Mr. Upendra. After all, he had joined the Telugu Desam Party ignoring Mrs. Indira Gandhi's advice against acting in haste. Carrying the genes of Congress culture in his blood, he found himself a misfit in the Telugu Desam Party.

When NTR left for the US for heart surgery, Mr. Bhaskara Rao conspired with other parties and dethroned him with High Command support and Governor Ramlal's blessings. In contrast to NTR who came to power democratically, Mr. Bhaskara Rao staged a coup to become Chief Minister. He ushered in curfew-like atmosphere in Hyderabad. He lured weaklings among TDP legislators with promises of a bright future for them. That was

how legislators like Mrs. Tripurana Venkataratnam and Mrs. Nannapaneni Rajakumari became Ministers.

Mr. Bhaskara Rao acted at electronic speed in sanctioning colleges and doling out favors to his backers. He, however, had not bargained for indignation against his coup not merely in the State but all over the country. He lost his position within less than a month, paving the way for NTR regaining power.

What is surprising is that the Congress, which had promised to stand by him, dropped him like a hot potato. The party rehabilitated Mr. Anjaiah as Union Minister, although Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had humiliated him. However, Mr. Bhaskara Rao became politically untouchable to the Congress.

I stopped meeting and talking to Mr. Bhaskara Rao as I could not reconcile myself to his treacherous and undemocratic behavior.



N. Janardana Reddy

My acquaintance with Mr. Nedurumalli Janarana Reddy began when I was Bureau Chief of *Andhra Jyoti* in Hyderabad. When Dr. M. Channa Reddy became Chief Minister in 1978, Mr. Janardana Reddy joined him as a Cabinet Minister and played a prominent role. We used to meet frequently and discuss political and other matters.



As Political Correspondent for *Zamin Ryotu*, published from Nellore, I used to contribute weekly reports to it at the request of its Editor Mr. Sreerama Murthy. Mr. Janardana Reddy, who had good relations with the weekly's management, wanted to find out who its Political Correspondent was. Mr. Sreerama Murthy found Mr. Janardana Reddy's curiosity embarrassing. Since I happened to be *Andhra Jyoti* Bureau Chief, I could not

assume authorship for the reports I contributed to *Zamin Ryotu*. Whenever Mr. Janardana Reddy found reports and features unpalatable, he used to pressurize Mr. Sreerama Murthy to reveal who the contributor was. Mr. Sreerama Murthy narrated his plight to me. However, he was not inclined to ask me to stop writing because he got excellent feedback for the reports I contributed. When the pressure from Mr. Janardana Reddy became unbearable, Mr. Sreerama Murthy unburdened himself to me. I told him that I would stop writing and spare him embarrassment, but he would not agree. A little later, Mr. Sreerama Murthy passed away paving the way for Mr. Dolendra becoming Editor and my bidding goodbye to *Zamin Ryotu*.

Mr. Janardana Reddy is a good friend of mine. We used to meet several times and discuss many issues freely and without any reservations. He is a great host and the courtesies he extends some times suffocate the guests. On days when the Assembly adjourned to meet in the evening after its morning session, we went to his residence, had Scotch whisky and Nellore food, and attended the Assembly session in the evening. He used to address many people in first person singular and occasionally appeared to be arrogant.

Right from the day Dr. Channa Reddy became Chief Minister in 1978 Mr. Janardana Reddy coveted that position and tried in vain to accomplish his life's ambition. As a member of the Bhavanam Venkatram Cabinet, he ignored the Chief Minister taking advantage of his soft nature. After many political vicissitudes, Mr. Janardana Reddy realized his dream of becoming

Chief Minister. The Congress High Command chose him to replace Dr. Channa Reddy in his second term.

Once in power, Mr. Janardana Reddy sanctioned private dental and medical colleges left and right, got works done in haste and earned notoriety. Even the High Court faulted his policy decisions. Despite disapproval among the public, he enjoyed the confidence of 160 party legislators. He expanded his Ministry by inducting new faces within a year. Yet, concerned over the deteriorating party position, the Congress High Command replaced him with Mr. Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy. Mr. Janardana Reddy thus let the opportunity of serving people as Chief Minister slip through his fingers. Hostility within the party dogged him.

Mr. Janardana Reddy, always cordial with me, invited me for functions like marriages in his home. The man who started his career as a teacher rose to great heights in the State and the country.



Nara Chandrababu Naidu

(1950)

I had met Mr. Nara Chandrababu Naidu long before he became Mr. N. T. Rama Rao's son-in-law. One evening in 1977, Mr. Ratna Sabhapati, Mr. S. V. Pantulu and I were chatting over drinks in the Old MLA Quarters when an agitated Mr. Chandrababu Naidu and Mr. Subrahmanyam rushed in with anxiety writ large on their faces.



Going by their discussion with Mr. Ratna Sabhapati, I made out that they had come straight from Tirupati where Kamma and Reddy students had clashed. After listening to them, Mr. Ratna Sabhapati called up Mr. Nedurumalli Janardana Reddy and requested him to ensure that clashes did not recur. That was how I met Mr. Chandrababu Naidu for the first time.

Following his election to the Assembly in 1978, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu lived in the New MLA Quarters. Mr. Lakshminarayana stayed with him. I was living in Mr. Kolluri Kotewara Rao's quarters. As a result, our meetings became frequent and relations stronger. I used to draft questions and call attention motions Mr. Chandrababu Naidu might raise in the Assembly.

Chief Minister Dr. M. Channa Reddy kept Mr. Chandrababu Naidu and Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy at a distance. Mr. Chandrababu Naidu, Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy, Mr. K. E. Krishna Murthy, Mr. Karanam Balaram and I met frequently. Even after Mr. Chandrababu Naidu moved to Jubilee Hills, we discussed politics over lunch or dinner. Those days, Mr. P. Rajagopala Naidu, a disciple of Prof. N. G. Ranga and the political guru of Mr. Chandrababu Naidu in Chittoor district, used to drop in.

Once Mr. T. Anjaiah replaced Dr. Channa Reddy as Chief Minister, both Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy and Mr. Chandrababu Naidu gained importance. That was when NTR offered his daughter in marriage to Mr. Chandrababu Naidu.

In the Anjaiah Ministry, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu as Minister of State handled Animal Husbandry and Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy, Medical Services. Following the pruning of his Ministry, Mr. Anjaiah entrusted Libraries to Mr. Chandrababu Naidu, and Rural Development to Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy. A proposal to make NTR a member of the Rajya Sabha did the rounds then.

Mr. Bhavanam Venkatram, who succeeded Mr. Anjaiah, made Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy prominent by entrusting him with the

Excise portfolio. He made Mr. Chandrababu Naidu a Minister of State in charge of Minor Irrigation. Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy strove to get Cabinet rank status to Mr. Chandrababu Naidu. He wanted me also to put in a word to Bhavanam when I accompanied him to Delhi. Since the Congress High Command alone made such decisions, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu did not get the Cabinet rank. I used to meet Mr. Chandrababu Naidu in his chambers frequently.

Later in the Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy Ministry, Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy got Education and Mr. Chandrababu Naidu Technical Education portfolios.

Once Mr. Chandrababu Naidu became NTR's son-in-law, politics in the State underwent a change. Mr. Chandrababu Naidu contested on the Congress ticket in the 1982 Assembly elections and lost to the Telugu Desam Party. In fact, he had made a couple of statements critical of his father-in-law but attended the swearing in of NTR as Chief Minister at the Lal Bahadur Stadium in Hyderabad.

Mr. Chandrababu Naidu drifted away from the Congress, joined the Telugu Desam Party, and gained importance. Although he held no position, he grew into a power center as NTR's son-in-law.

Mr. Chandrababu Naidu visited me at my Adarshnagar residence in Hyderabad many times and I visited him at his Jubilee Hills residence. He dropped in invariably whenever Bhavanam as Chief Minister came to my place. He always

brought a Tirupati laddu for us. However, he never accepted hospitality from our end.

Mr. Chandrababu Naidu was quick at grasping things and prompt in acting on good suggestions. Noticing my closeness to him, many people were after me to avail of my good offices. I never obliged them since it was foreign to my nature. Mrs. Renuka Choudary, contesting on behalf of the Telugu Desam from the Nandyal parliamentary constituency, wanted me to put in a word to Mr. Chandrababu Naidu concerning dispatch of money as early as possible for her election expenses. Mr. Chandrababu Naidu commented that the rich woman did not deserve the party fund.

I met Mr. Chandrababu Naidu formally after he became Chief Minister following his revolt against NTR, but I could not bring myself to congratulate him. Later on, I stopped meeting him altogether.

Mr. Chandrababu Naidu visited New York when I happened to be there. He met my son working in Wall Street Journal and invited him to India. Although I was aware of his presence in New York, I did not feel like meeting him. Our meetings became rare after he became Chief Minister.

Mr. Chandrababu Naidu earned encomiums from all for waging a determined battle for reinstatement of NTR as Chief Minister and restoration of democracy in Andhra Pradesh. He safeguarded the MLAs from being poached upon by the Congress by taking them from Hyderabad to Delhi initially and

later to Mysore and Bangalore. Finally, he brought them back to Hyderabad for a trial of strength in the Assembly.

I attended a tea party hosted by Karnataka Education Minister Raghupathi to Mr. Chandrababu Naidu in Bangalore and congratulated him on his Herculean efforts. Setting off for Hyderabad, he wanted me to come along with him in the convoy of vehicles. Among his fellow travelers were Mr. M. Venkayya Naidu, Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy, and Mr. Parvataneni Upendra. In Bangalore, I counseled MLAs like Mrs. Katragadda Prasuna not to fall into Mr. Nadendla Bhaskara Rao's trap.

I was hurt when Mr. Chandrababu Naidu, who fought for restoration of democracy in Andhra Pradesh, confined MLAs in Viceroy Hotel and staged a coup against NTR.

He returned to power in the elections that took place subsequently. As Chief Minister, he did commendable things like placing Andhra Pradesh on the world map, making US President Clinton visit the State and encouraging information technology.



Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy

(1949-2009)



I met Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy for the first time in 1978 when he became an MLA. A medical professional by training, he never wielded the stethoscope.

As we became closer, I used to provide him questions, call attention notices, and short notice questions he might raise in the Assembly. He chose what appealed to

him and raised them in the House.

I used to write on Andhra Pradesh politics for publications in both Telugu and English. He took a liking for my reports in English.

We used to visit a number of friends together. Whenever he accepted hospitality of a friend either in the form of a breakfast or lunch or dinner, he invariably asked, “Can we be of any

assistance to him/her?” Among such friends of his are Mr. D. Seshagiri Rao and Mr. Alapati Ravindranath. They in turn maintained they merely cherished his friendship and needed no favors. I mention this to drive home his helpful nature.

Our family was happy to have him for breakfast or lunch many a time. Innumerable were such occasions when Mr. Bhavanam Venkatram was Education Minister and later Chief Minister. In turn, we enjoyed his dinner hospitality at his residence on the way to Jubilee Hills. Bhavanam, Mr. K. V. P. Ramachandra Rao and I moved together like a triumvirate. We savored a peg or two of whisky before dinner together. Those days, KVP did not relish alcohol although he smoked heavily. Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy’s spouse, Vijayalakshmi, a great cook, personally served food with warmth. She is a good-natured woman.

Mr. Raja Reddy, Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy’s father, narrated me many of his experiences in life when I met him for the first time at their house. He talked about his Burma visit and his conversion to Christianity. Suri (Suryanarayana) used to live with them. We moved together like family for many years.

When Bhavanam became Chief Minister, Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy, without my knowledge, pressured him to give me some position or the other. In response, Bhavanam sent for me and asked in what way he could be of assistance to me. I told him respectfully but categorically that I was interested in merely being a friend of his and not in any position. Dr. Rakasekhara Reddy was always intent upon helping friends.

Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy was initially in the Reddy Congress. Later on, he pitted himself against Chief Ministers Dr. M. Channa Reddy, Mr. Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy, and Mr. N. Janardana Reddy. He earned the sobriquet of a dissident in the party.

Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy once shared with me the magnitude of the impact Mr. N. T. Rama Rao (NTR) made on Andhra Pradesh. NTR founded the Telugu Desam Party, undertook a whirlwind tour of the State, and stormed into power within nine months. Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy told me that he survived the tsunami unleashed by NTR and won the election to the Assembly from Pulivendula with great difficulty.

After he became Chief Minister, Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy became prominent both in the State and at the Center. The importance he accorded to agriculture impressed even US President George Bush.

When I sent him a message of congratulations from the U. S. after he took over as State Congress President, he wrote back promptly.

I did not meet him frequently after he became Chief Minister. Whenever my name figured in press conferences, he reportedly asked whether I happened to be in India. It was but natural since I lived far away from India and could not focus on politics.

Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy's sudden death in a helicopter crash was unthinkable. He left an indelible imprint on politics in Andhra Pradesh.



Konijeti Rosaiah

“**L**ife becomes miserable if one does not believe one is handsome,” Mr. Rosaiah told me one day in 1954, as he shaved looking into the mirror in his room at Guntur.

Those were the days when he distinguished himself as a student leader in the Hindu College, Guntur, and as a disciple of Prof. N. G. Ranga. He contested as President of



the college Students' Union on behalf of the Vidyarthi Sammelan, the student wing of the Krishikar Lok Party, and won. My friends and I, then students in the A. C. College, Guntur, campaigned for him. Mr. Jasti Jagannadham, a Radical Humanist, was elected as Secretary of the Students' Union. They used to collect donations for Vidyarthi Sammelan and spend it on breakfast and coffee those days. Mr. Rosaiah was very active in

organizing programs like *kavi sammelans* and delivering speeches.

Mr. Rosaiah hailed from Vemuru near Tenali. He started his political career at Tenali where Prof. N. G. Ranga organized the first State-level conference of the Krishikar Lok Party, which he founded after quitting the Congress in 1951. Since then, we have remained close friends.

When Prof. Ranga campaigned on behalf of the United Congress against the Communists in the 1955 elections, Messrs Rosaiah, Veerachari, Vijayaraja Kumar, Sunkara Satyanarayana and others undertook a whirlwind tour of the State, and enlisted people's support in trouncing Communists. When later on Prof. Ranga distanced himself from the Congress and became Swatantra Party President, Mr. Latchanna and Mr. Rosaiah sailed with him. Although Dr. Channa Reddy too joined Mr. Ranga initially, he dropped out later.

Whenever politicians visited Tenali, Mr. Rosaiah used to welcome them on behalf of Prof. Ranga and translated their speeches into Telugu. Among those whom he translated was Mr. Rajagopalachari. Starting his life thus as an active worker, he became a prominent State-level leader.

Mr. Rosaiah attained prominence as an Opposition leader. Mr. S. V. Pantulu and I issued Press statements backing him and gained good publicity for his viewpoints. Mr. Kasu Brahmananda Reddy as Chief Minister helped Mr. Rosaiah become a member of the Legislative Council.

Mr. Rosaiah was my neighbor when I stayed in the New MLA Quarters from 1972. We met almost daily until he joined hands

with Dr. Channa Reddy in 1978. By going hammer and tongs at Dr. Channa Reddy during his early days as Chief Minister, Mr. Rosaiah deprived him of sleep. Mr. S. V. Pantulu and I were then the right and left hands of Mr. Rosaiah in people's perception.

Notwithstanding such a backdrop, Dr. Channa Reddy inducted him into his Cabinet as a Minister. Mr. Rosaiah who had excelled in the Opposition till then settled down in the Congress. Whoever happened to be Chief Minister, Mr. Rosaiah became indispensable. His reputation spread up to Delhi. We used to meet even after he shifted to his own house in Ameerpet. He used to inquire of my family's welfare whenever we met.

The Congress High Command chose Mr. Rosaiah as Chief Minister following the sudden death of Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy in a helicopter crash. Perhaps, it is a great turning point in his life.

Off and on, he used to tell me, "All through my life, I have been wedded to politics and nothing else. I cannot change course at this stage and at my age. I have to stick to politics willy-nilly."

