# FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

N. G. RANGA

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*Autobiography*

*of*

N. G. RANGA

1968

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Dedicated

to

Our Nayak forefathers,

Prolaya, Kapaya, Vinayak Dev,

Harihara, Bukka, Vira Ballala, Soma Deva,

and

Confederacy of Nayaks of Dakshinapath

who fought

for

Freedom

( 1320-1365 A.D. )

# *Preface*

The narration that fills the pages that follow is intended to record my role in most of the public events that have made their impact on the life of Andhra Pradesh and this Himalayan-canopied sub-continent known as Bharat Bhoomi from the Vedic ages. It also details the glimpses of my public activities right up to the foundation of the Swatantra Party (Freedom First) in 1959.

So many friends say that the bright and constructive phase of my life has begun with my decision to join forces with Rajajee and the advent of the Swatantra Party. Certainly Bharati Devi is happy that throughout these years, she has not had to worry about any possible intrigues or contests from the same quarter to upset my position in this new political platform that we have chosen to raise.

Fates willed it in such a way that I had not to place myself at the mercy of Jawaharlaljee, when he was the Prime Minister during that prolonged period and I could remain in the front-line of our national politics without having to compromise with my fundamental faith and political stand. We both stood for planned progress of our people, but approached it from opposite ends. I feared inflation as the worst economic plight for our people and especially peasants while he indulged in it like a prodigal politician. We wanted India to be strong and safe in this world but while I hoped for that strength and safety through the national independence of Tibet, he banked on China's friendship.

Both of us knew that our relations were tenuous and could not be expected to grow as strong and binding as between

himself and other Congressmen who cared only for power, or who hoped for favours or who loved to bask in his personal glory and glamour. Hence his lack of interest in my election campaign of 1957.

No wonder he exerted his utmost to oppose me, when I stood for Parliament as the Swatantra President in 1962 general elections and succeeded in preventing my re-election. When I stood in the bye-election to the Lok Sabha in 1962, he saw to it that Ministers from the three States of Andhra, Mysore and Madras, including Chief Ministers campaigned against me. Twenty-two Ministers and Chief Ministers of Andhra, Mysore, Madras States, two Central Ministers and two successive Chief Ministers marched at the head of a Congress procession through the streets of Chittoor, just to demonstrate their loyalty to Jawaharlaljee and the total opposition of the Congress against me. The Congress President-cum-Chief Minister appealed to the people to defeat me because while every other leader, from Kanya Kumari to Himalayas, was avowing Jawaharlal's preeminence, I was consistently bent upon defying him. Thank God, the people of Chittoor succeeded to elect me and defeat Nehruism.

Many an old Congress colleagues wonder whether I could not have achieved more by continuing to remain in the Congress instead of breaking away from our mutual comradeship in 1959. When I ask them how the Nehruean drive towards national campaign for co-operative farming could have been stalled and stopped, if I had not joined hands with Rajajee and the Swatantra Party, their anguish seems to be lifted. The Swatantra Party's challenge to wrong policies of the Planning Commission, indeed to the extra-constitutional status assumed by the Commission, helped the country to pause, review and realise the dangers inherent in its Communist-oriented plans and their priorities.

Our opposition to his moves to exploit the Gram-Dan campaign made Jawaharlaljee to start his move for co-operativisation of agriculture and land holdings and when we thwarted that insidious move also, he stumbled upon the Seventeenth Amendment Bill to the Constitution in 1963. Would it have been possible for me and my Kisan colleagues in the Congress alone to

conjure up the nation-wide opposition to that breach of faith with the Constituent Assembly on the part of Nehru that the Swatantra Party has engineered ? It was because of that effective resistance offered by the Swatantrites in and outside the Parliament, with the blessings of Rajajee, that Nehru was obliged to eat the humble pie and exempt all the agriculturists below the ceiling-holdings from the mischief of that Amendment.

We have been opposing the Congress regime of controls, permits and licences and achieved signal success in getting the peasant masses out of mischief of its legislation controlling the distribution and sale of Essential Commodities. The Swatantra Party has been demanding the abolition of Land Revenue, the traditional levy upon peasants, through which agriculturists have been harnessed to the power-chariot of every government from time immemorial, has at last come to be abolished by the Swatantra-led Ministry of Orissa and its example has been followed by the non-Congress Ministries of U.P., Bihar and Punjab. These are some of the good results and reforms which I can claim to have achieved by parting with the power and influence that I was able to exercise while remaining at the top echelons of the Congress leadership and by working as a catalytic force in the democratic opposition.

If the Planning Commission has ceased to be the Super-Cabinet and if agriculture is being given pride of place in our national priorities, the political lead given by the Madras Conference on 4th June 1959 is fully justified.

During these nine years of my work in the Swatantra Party, we organised national campaigns against the demon of inflation and corruption, the era of excessive repression of Head Loaders; *i.e.*, peasants and workers carrying foodgrains from place to place.

The formulation and propagation of the economic principles of liberal Philosophy in its positive and critical aspects has had a salutary effect upon the economic programme of the Jan Sangh which had also been placed by its founder, the late Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, on the road towards Liberalism as opposed to Totalitarian Socialism. The foundation of the Swatantra movement, as a check upon and reaction to Nehrujee's plans and socialist controlled economy added further strength to the Jan Sangh's challenge to the Congress. Thus, these two forces have

come to reinforce each other's efforts in developing and posing a creative, powerful and democratic alternative to the Congress Party and its Nehruean leadership.

In the international sphere, we have been demanding a complete reorientation of our policies; the replacement of non-alignment by positive moves for evolving Pacific Concord between South East Asian countries to contain Communist China's expansionist moves, and closer relations with our immediate neighbours. We plead for the recognition of Israel and Taiwan as independent countries and of Dalai Lama as the head of Tibet. We demand that India's foreign policy should not continue to be tied up with that of U.S.S.R. or U.A.R. or U.S.A.

Rajaji made a notable contribution to the protection of the World from the disastrous Atomic fall-out by his ceaseless campaign for ending the Atomic Bomb Tests. I am convinced that in these and other directions, we of the Swatantra Party have helped our people to rethink about our role in world politics and shake themselves free from the myopia of Nehruism.

It is good fortune of our people and democracy that Rajajee decided to fight Nehruism at about the same time and invited us to range ourselves in the vanguard of opposition to Nehruism and Communism. I am happy to find, in the light of subsequent developments, that my decision to leave the Congress in 1959 proved to be a timely catalytic force needed by our democracy.

Nehru knew the moral strength of our challenge. He realised that unlike the splinter groups—like the K.M P., K.L.P., P.S.P. which broke away earlier from the Congress in 1951-52 long before the dangers inherent in his plan for control-economy—our opposition was being mounted after the country had time to experience all the pains caused and none of the progress promised by his plan-minded regime.

His successors in the Congress leadership, headed by his daughter, again fought me in their customary vengeful manner and inflicted a defeat on me in 1967 general elections. Once again I stood for the Lok Sabha seat, vacated so generously and loyally by Sardar Latchanna, the leader of our Group in the Andhra Assembly, and succeeded inspite of all the disgusting electioneering manoeuvres of the Congress.

Such is the price that I am obliged to pay; that is 4 fights for 2 entries into Parliament, for the privilege of remaining in opposition to the Congress Party, which had been built up by our common efforts and sacrifices but which is now monopolised by Nehruvean totalitarians.

I am glad that our voters have refused to be beguiled by the Congress' blandishments. They have survived the Congress threats, discrimination and victimisation. They have overcome the efforts of the Congress drugs of money, casteism and official favours. We salute these freedom-loving masses as the heroes of the Swatantra. They make me feel vindicated and justified in placing at their disposal whatever I have come to be, as a public worker, as is indicated by these glimpses into my public life.

I am sorry to find two chapters missing, which deal with my activities during 1926-30. I was then the Chief Professor of History and Economics in Pachaippas College of Madras University. I worked also as the Hon. Economic Adviser to the Government. It was during that period that Shri C. Annadurai, the present Chief of D.M.K. Ministry of Madras, happened to be one of my students and joined our self-respect movement.

The Manuscript of this volume was prepared intermittently whenever I was privileged to take time off from my incessant public activities. The bulk of it was ready in 1957. I have only added a few jottings here and there to indicate some subsequent developments. The narration is upto 1959 when the Swatantra Party came to be founded and another phase of my public life began.

I am grateful to Shri A.P. Jain, Executive Secretary of the Swatantra Party in Parliament, for attending to the final editing, Shri R.K. Sharma, Joint Editor of the Weekly Swarajya-Sandesh, for reading the proofs and preparing the index. I am thankful to Shri Shyam Lal Gupta, the enterprising printer and publisher, for having undertaken the responsibility of printing and publishing this volume.

Go-Bhumi
NIDUBROLU
26th January, 1968.

N.G. Ranga

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# *My Childhood and Early Age*

was born in Nidubrolu, an ancient village with a Shiva Temple, built a thousand years ago by the last Chola Emperor, Kulottunga, with his capital Kanchipuram in Tamilnad. My village is situated in the midst of more ancient villages on all sides ; for instance, Kondamudi, only 2 miles away boasts of a temple built by the Vishnu Kundins of the fourth or fifth century A.D. ; Chebrolu seven miles away to the west with its Buddhist ruins of the satavahana age in the B.C. and Bhattiprolu, seven to eight miles to the east, with its famous Stupa built by Ashoka with the relics of Gautama Buddha.

The literal meaning of the name of my village indicates that it must have been a long township of the early ages. Bhattiprolu used to be a great city with its own self-governing municipality and its own seventeen committees to look after various departments of civic life. Buddham, another Buddhist village is only six miles from Nidubrolu. Therefore, my village must have absorbed to some extent the spirit of the Buddhists and Vishnu Kundin, Chola ages of South India and their Village Commonwealths.

Our District was known as Krishna District until 1900 and it lay on either side of the river Krishna. Right up to thirteenth

century, this area was known as the Karma or Kamma Rashtra or the province of toilers or peasants and artisans and the local people were termed as Karma (Kars) or Kammas. Since it was usual for Buddhist terms to be given a Sanskritic turn and (or) vice versa, it is natural for us to assume that the terms Kamma and Karma were synonymous and being a predominantly agrarian region, its people were generally toiling whether they were toilers on the land or artisans at their looms or kilns etc. The agriculturists of this region have somehow managed to retain that ancient Budddist name, Kamma. It is my good fortune to be born of such peasant parents.

Most of us, agriculturists of India, have had tribal origins and social organisation. Each tribe used to consist of so many clans. The clans of any linguistic or regional sphere were so related to each other that half of them would consider each other as brothers and sisters and the other half as people with whom they could have marriage relations. The clan of my father, for instance, was known as Gogineni or Gangineni and that of my mother Pamulapati. My father's clan took shape first in Cuddapah, next in Warangal. Some of them migrated from Khammam to Divi Island, and thence into Bhattiprolu environs, Nadimpalli, Gudavalli and drifted about 250 years ago into Nidubrolu. My mother's clan too had its earlier home in Pamulapadu in Krishna District, to the North of the river Krishna and came to Nidubrolu about 250 years ago. The people of these two clans of kisan tribe, have been playing a notable role in the social life of my village.

Anyone, living in any of our villages, comes to be familiar with almost all social forces that are at work in India's life. We have people, professing almost all religions of India ; that is, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity. We have also people of all important kisan and artisan clans, if not the whole tribes of the local linguistic area. Generally almost all the peripatetic parvenors of adult-educational, amusement activities visit every village once or twice a year and stage their recitations, discourses or performances and make their collections from their traditional patrons. During the Christian festivals, open-air discourses, Bhajans and recitations are organised by the local Christians. Similarly the various sects of Hindus organise their own performances, recitals, Bhajans and processions during their respective festival occasions.

The Moslems celebrate their Id and Moharrum. On all these occasions, people of all religions take part in the festivities and enjoy cultural and other amenities offered. It is true to say that on the whole social life in our villages is enlivened and often uplifted by those socio-religious festivities.

Unfortunately for our villagers, our people are organised on a caste or tribal basis and for several of their intimate social occasions, they restrict themselves to their social ceremonies, although they attempt to infuse a varying degree of cosmopolitanism during the public celebrations. In public dinners organised on the occasion of marriages and funeral ceremonies, men and women of all the so-called upper kisan tribes mix and dine together and the Harijan tribes of Malas and Madigas are also entertained but separately. The blight of untouchability and the socio-religious faith in the gradations of nigh and low castes have poisoned our rural social life and militated against the consolidation of the natural feeling of villagers for unity among themselves. The kisan tribes of Kammas, Reddis, Telagas, Yadavas of a village were looked down upon by the socially ascendant Brahmins but they in their turn looked down upon the Harijan kisan tribes of Malas and Madigas. The merchant tribe Vaisya used to be treated as second only to the Brahmins, although the locally ascendant kisan tribe would get on with them, more or less as equals. The artisan tribes were loved and treated with consideration but as younger brothers and comrades of the ascendant kisan tribes.

The possession of land gave both social security and economic strength in the rural society. It enabled one to provide employment to artisans like carpenters, potters, blacksmiths and distribute foodgrains—the most important rural means of exchange —to all the minstrels, bards and adult educational practitioners and, therefore, made one feel as a significant member of the rural society. Thus, anyone of any caste who had an independent living from his holding was enjoying a status of his own, equal to others irrespective of the position of many other members of his clan or tribe.

I was born on the seventh of November, 1900. People were glad that it was the full moon-day of the Kartik—the season of the most enchanting moon-light of the East, about which the Poet

Kalidas and so many of our poets wrote so romantically and the thrice-blessed day of Buddhists and of Vaishnavas' Gajendra Moksha.

My grand-parents from the mother's side were very successful peasants. Grand-father Ramanayya was an enterprising cultivator. He was famous in our neighbouring villages for his physical powers, industry, initiative and success in agriculture. He inherited a good holding. He increased it three-fold, saved a substantial sum and left his family in affluent circumstances. He died when I was in my fifth year. I feel I can remember his impressive face and broad shoulders. He used to give me great happiness by carrying me on his shoulders to see the festival at Ponnur, the neighbouring village, a mile from my own. His wife, Ammimma, was a short, thin, beautiful lady of Punjabee complexion and facial features. She was even more generous than her husband. She was so kind-hearted that Harijans and others would always get their usual wages and perquisites supplemented by her from her own resources. Both of them were popular among Harijans, artisans and all the thrifty, hard-working peasants of our village and neighbouring villages.

My grand-parents from father's side were not so well off, nor were they so enterprising or successful. My grand-father was more fond of cattle than of land and tended them carefully, yet he was losing heavily on their account. By the time he died, he lost half his lands and left a legacy of debts to my father, his only son. My grand-mother on the father's side did not succeed in aiding her husband in agriculture and cattle and dairy farming, though she was extremely hardworking.

These two families were very closely related before my mother Achamamba was given in marriage to my father Nagayya. Among South Indians, there used to be an almost unbreakable convention that if a young man and young woman were willing to marry each other and happen to be the grand children of brother and sister, their parents should be willing to make everything possible for their marriage to take place. That convention prevented in-breeding and at the same time ensured a reasonable degree of social hegemony and security for the families concerned. It was in pursuance of this convention, that my parents came to be married and thus the Gogineni and Pamulapati kisan clans were

reunited, half a century after Butchi Rayudu, the father of Ramanayya and Bullimma, sister of Ankamma (*i.e.*, grand-mother of my mother) were married. This convention has lost much of its strength by now, although its growing weakness has opened the floodgates for the disastrous competition among parents of girls to offer dowries to the prospective sons-in-law. Most of our relatives were people of Appikatla, and Eeteru, 8 miles from our village, as in those days, people used to go long distance for marriage alliances, whereas now, there is too much of in-breeding among the people of the same tribe within the same village, thanks to the 'evil of dowry'. The strange thing is that though transport facilities have since multiplied manifold and propaganda against caste-bounds has become fashionable, neither inter-caste marriages nor non-dowry marriage settlements nor finding mates in distant villages even from one's own tribal people has become either popular or practical.

Apart from the fairly large-sized holdings of fertile land both wet and dry and extensive house-sites and houses and cattle sheds that we have inherited from our grand-parents, it appears as if, they and their grand-parents have also bequeathed to us a praiseworthy intangible heritage of public spirit and social service. Gogineni Nagayya, our great grand-father, held an important post in the then land revenue administration (1790–1800) an reclaimed nearly one-fourth of the area of our village lands under cultivation. He set apart, from his own holdings, lands needed for cart-tracks and planned the settlement of the other holdings. He organised, in cooperation with similar leaders of the neighbouring villages of Aluru, Ponnur, Kondamudi, the celebrations of the fortnight long festival of Bhava Narayana Temple of Ponnur and endowed a life-sized statue of a celestial horse for that Deity. He brought into prominence the Vishnukundin's Temple of Vishnu of our village—more ancient than the 1000 A.D. Shiva Temple of the Cholas—by offering to lead the annual procession of Vishnu on the *Vijaya Dasami,* the day of the first victory of Arjuna of Pandavas, after their successful emergence from the 13 years of banishment from Indraprastha—the ruins of which are to be found in New Delhi. To this day, that initiative of our family is honoured by one of our relatives, continuing to organise its annual celebration. He and his uncle of the Pamulpati family—a branch other than that of Sri Ramanayya and Butchi Rayudu—raised a temple in our village in commemoration of the "Sati"

performed by his great aunt, somewhere about 1700, when her husband—a scion of the Pamulapati clan—died in the forests of Nallamalai in Kurnool District, while fighting against a tiger. That temple is even today venerated as a tribute to the Indian conception of marriage between a husband and wife not only in their mortal life but also in the immortal life in limitless time.

That constructive spirit of public work seemed to have passed on from the Gogineni branch to the Pamulapati branch of our ancestors. During the next generation, P. Ramanayya, the grandson of Nagayya, recaptured the latter's genius for social work and constructed a splendid choultry or a public Guest-House at a huge cost ; that was about eighty years ago. It may be interesting to know that these very buildings and the valuable sites all around have been placed by our family at the disposal of the Indian Peasant Institute ever since December 1933. Another significant thing is that these buildings were much better built, and bigger than the humble tiled-building in which Ramanayya my mother and his other children and myself and my brothers were born. He helped a number of Brahmins, the traditional intellectuals of our Hindu Society, to attain initiation into Brahminism and to get married through his liberal gifts. These public gifts of his were in line with the Ashokan tradition that one could have seven types of progeny, apart from one's own children ; namely to help Brahmins, to offer poor feeding, to dig a well, a tank or a lake, to plant trees or gardens, to encourage bird—beast—sanctuaries, to construct a temple, to found a school—recitation centre and to protect women and children. Ammimma, his wife, was keen on poor feeding and protection of women and children. Thus his family lived up to the example set by G. Nagayya. Their son—Ramaswami—was equally public-spirited and founded the village public library in 1910 and it has been taken up in 1958 by the Government under the Public Libraries Act and paved the way for the modern educational development of the village. I might as well add, in this connexion, that Ramaswami's cousin brother, P.B. Naidu, that is, the son of Ramanayya's brother—Ankineedu—has come to be the founder in 1951 of the First Grade P.B.N. College of our village, under the aegis of the Andhra University and endowed it from his family property as much as Rupees 200,000, the largest single family donation in the Andhra for any college.

Both the families of our grand-parents and their successors have had more fraternal and sympathetic relations with the Harijans—the so-called untouchables of those days and the depressed classes—than the other equally influential and socially dominant families of this neighbourhood.

From my very early age, I used to hear my families talking about this tradition of Ashokan services—sapta-santanams ; their gifts to various institutions and their first place of honour in such and such social and religious ceremonies of our village. I have no doubt that all that must have engendered in me and my brothers a sense of admiration for that glorious heritage. We must have begun to cherish that heritage as much as the landed and other properties that we have inherited since what might appear to be intangibles to the grown-ups would as naturally seem to b atngibles to the children brought-up in such an atmosphere.

My mother, Atchamamba, was a highly religious person, and very much devoted to the idea of Indian marriage. When she did not have any children for years after marriage, her father Ramanayya took my parents and others of the family on a pilgrimage through South India—for in those days, North India did not have so much glamour for South Indians. And they prayed to Venkateswar of Tirupathi, where there is today the Venkateswar University, and Sri Ranga Nayak of Srerangam in Tamilnad for their blessings. When I was born on Wednesday of Kartika month, my parents named me after both Venkateswar and Sri Ranga Nayak ; both representing the forces of construction and protection of the universe.

Both my parents were very self-respecting—bordering on being proud. My father inherited a heavy debt and contracted some more through the continuing ill-luck of the family in cattle-wealth. My mother would not wear the silk sarees and other dress and ancient jewels given to her by her parents, befitting their high social status, so long as their debts were yet to be liquidated, nor would she attend any social functions of that village or its neighbourhood. This distressed my uncle—her brother Ramaswami—and so he wanted to pay off her debts but that was not allowed by her as she was particular that no self-respecting daughter should take from her parents' family anything more than 'Sthree Dhan' or 'Woman's Dowry' given to her at the time of her marriage. Equally proud

was my father. So they worked hard, economised on everything, and improved the fertility of our lands. My mother took charge of our cattle wealth and due to her luck, it turned out to be a productive asset. Thus in about six years, they were able to clear off all the debts and save a little. Then alone did she care to done her jewellery and use the fine silk sarees which her brother had brought with such affection from the distant city of Madras. But alas, she could enjoy that sense of economic freedo from debts only for a short while before cruel death took its toll on her at the tender age of thirty-two, when I was only eight, brothers Venkatappayya six and Laxmi Narayana three years old. She was considered to be the most beautiful lady of our village. I have the impression that her complexion was as golden as that of a Guzerati kisan lady and her charm was typically that of a handsome Andhra. Women of our village used to talk of her lustrous eyes, her Grecian stature and her stately forehead and her thin, wiry, deer-like body and her glamorous laughter. It may be strange, but it is true that though I was eight years old when she died, I do not remember more of her physical features than this vague appreciation of her ineffamable beauty and charm, whenever she walked, smiled and talked.

My father was short in stature, dark in colour and fairly good looking. But he developed a deformity in his nose, after I was born. He was always of indifferent health and became sickly after my mother's death. He was self-centred in village affairs and would not be drawn into the usual village groupings. Since he had to live all by himself in the very large ancestral house, as all of us, his three sons were being brought up by our uncle's family after our mother's death, and as he had decided not to remarry in the interests of his sons, he must have suffered much from loneliness and bad food. He kept silent about all his suffering and it was only once, that too, a month before I left for England in August, 1920, he gave me the reason for not remarrying and not bothering about his personal comforts. He observed, "after all I have had you, three boys from my married life and I should be content with this wealth, especially as all of you are such good students".

My father sent me to England in August 1920 in the hope that I might join the Indian Civil Service and thus help our peasants to become independent of the mischief of Revenue Offi-

cials and public works department with whom he had many unsuccessful fights and from whose mischief he suffered so much. Like all peasants, he used to think that he was the monarch of all his fields and no power on earth could interfere with his fields. He did not know of the existence of the Compulsory Land Acquisition Act. So when some peasants had demanded the right of way across his much-prized field for their irrigation channel, on the instigation of the Local Revenue and P.W.D. Officials who were his opponents, and when Government sent police to aid the Revenue and P.W.D. Officials to demarcate and to dig the channel through his field, he revolted against what he considered to be an injustice and drove away the police etc. When he was charged, later, with causing obstruction to public servants in the discharge of their duties, he answered, "What right have they to step into my field and desecrate it, without my permission? I have not insulted or beaten anyone in his home or in any public place. I have not interfered with their enjoyment of their properties and rights". The District Munsiff understood the humour and pathos latent in his stand and dismissed the case but advised him to let the channel be dug on one side of his field. It may be interesting to note that this very field is today given over to the "Ranga's Trust".

Another time the Local Revenue Officials instigated some peasants to encroach on our field and occupy 0·06 of an acre, pretending that it also belonged to them. When their misdeed was reported to my father, he observed that it was the duty of the same Government which compulsorily acquired his land to see that his own field would not be encroached upon. So he went to the courts, spent a goodly sum and got the encroachment removed by courts' orders. I was associated intimately with my father, both emotionally and otherwise, in these struggles of his for what he considered to be his rights. I learnt how to survey lands, draft the various documents, such as promissory notes, Mortgage and Sale Deeds and fill in the Vakalats for the lawyers, answer the court summons etc. at my early age of fifteenth to twentieth years. Naturally he must have thought that when I could graduate from my high school in 1920, with such distinction, even while answering so many public and family responsibilities during all the six years of my high school career, I should be capable of competing successfully for the I.C.S. and so decided to risk all his hard-earned savings over so many years upon my studies abroad.

When actually the time came for my departure on the 19th August from my village to London via Bombay he could not see me off at the Railway Station, overcome as he was with his long pent-up affection for me. During the seven months after my departure for England, he was faced with the unexpected but continuous sagging of prices of paddy, the main source of our income and the fall in the exchange ratio of Rupee. The burden of my expenses at Oxford began to be twice as big as he was given to understand to be his responsibility. He remained firm in his resolve to keep me at Oxford and at the moment of his death, he charged my brother anxiously and repeatedly that I should never be allowed to feel the want of money from home. Then and then alone did my brother and others of our family know how deeply he loved us and with what self-control he kept it all such a secret. That was my father, Nagayya.

I have so far given a peep into the happenings of later years of this story to indicate the personality of my father. Now we have to go back to the days of my childhood.

My grand-father—Ramanayya—died before I was initiated into writing and reading—a sacred function among Indians. Our family had a poignant experience to impress upon them the extreme need for peasants like us to be educated. Ramanayya had an Achari as his Secretary to keep his accounts and had lent a considerable sum to him. Because he could only affix his signature but could not read and write with facility, the clerk managed to secure his signature on the cancellation of the loan. After his death, his son, Ramaswami, who could read better discovered this mischief and dismissed the secretary and sued him in the courts. Eventually we won the suit and the loan was collected. My father was also suffering from the same disability like both my grand-father Ramanayya, and Ankamma. So my mother was too keen on my education and my uncle was equally keen on starting a library and helping our peasants to improve their reading and writing capacities.

My initiation ceremony of writing and reading was performed with great eclat and I was later told that the joy of my mother knew no bounds. But my educational career for the next 3 or 4 years was not at all happy for me or for my mother. The Telugu and Karnataka scripts are so difficult to learn and more

difficult to spell and pronounce and much more troublesome to read that I found no pleasure in going to school. I do not know who devised these scripts and its manipulations but he couldn't be a friend of children nor could he be so keen on universal education. Recently Vinobhajee said this of Oriya but Oriya is a very easy script when compared to Telugu and Karnataka scripts. No wonder I took a long time to learn that complicated script. In the meanwhile the blandishments of teachers and my mother proved a veritable persecution to me. How one wishes that atleast in regard to script, our national leaders would give priority to the needs of our children and agree to adopt either Roman or Deva Nagari script for the whole of India, so that our children need not be troubled so much and exercise their minds needlessly over learning so many complicated scripts. Let them atleast achieve some unity or mutual approach between Telugu and Kannada by making a few changes in the scripts and accepting 40 to 50 words of both dealing with everyday needs.

My aunt, Mangamma, the eldest of Ramanayya's children and a virgin widow took me under her protective wings, sympathised with my sufferings at the hands of the teachers and so began to encourage me to go with her to the fields and roam about amidst the fields, canals and grazing lands and the cart-tracks and befriend the other children of all castes, including Harijans who were engaged, even at that tender age, to watch over the crops and cattle. This proved to be more educative to me. I used to take ink bottles of my uncle and draw pictures, primitive, untutored herioghyphics on the soft dust I would gather, and weave stories about crops and cattle and peasant-children and talk about them to my mother, other kisan men and women who used to gather round her whenever she was having midday and afternoon rest. In that way, I gained intimate knowledge about the crops that were being raised in our village, more in the form of stories as if each crop had a personality of its own and about the life, activities, mental reactions and emotions of peasants, both landed and landless, owners and tenants, aged and young adolescents and children. Srimati Mangamma was a marvellous teacher, thanks to her deep and vast knowledge of all agricultural activities and crops and the influence of weather on various crops and effects —good and bad—of rotation of different combinations of crops in different seasons. She loved work and tended plants so carefully, as if they were her children. She used to talk to crops as

such, and individual plants too in her own quiet but affectionate manner and I was always by her side, absorbing all her wisdom and love of nature as if it was my mother's milk. I don't think I was consciously imbibing her love of land, agriculture, vegetation, cattle and birds all of which make up the infinite beauty of landscape. Not an year passes, in this second half of this century, as I move about the world, thanks to the plane journeys, without my dipping into the vast and rich substrata of knowledge, piled up in my memory by her constant bee-like musings with nature. That was indeed a magical period of growth of my communion with the life of our peasantry and the teacher, Mangamma, was blissfully unconscious of the priceless education that she was imparting to me.

My own mother too was not educated but she was impatient that I should become as learned as a Brahmin. So she had no patience either with me or with my auntie and used to chide me and abuse her for my neglect of formal education. Unfortunately the teachers believed more in beating students than in devising ways and means of interesting them in someone or the other method of education and their primitive method of making students memorising everything and beating them into compliance with their horrid methods of teaching failed miserably with me. So, all that I could do was only to displease and distress my mother, while all the time my auntie was unconsciously laying the sound, broad and deeply inspiring foundations for my later career. It was only during the last year of her life 1909 that I was able to please my mother with my ability to write in Telugu and show some promise of making an effective departure from the half illiteracy of my father and grand-father. Fortunately my brother Venkatappayya also began to show some promise of learning to read and write. So, when her call came all so untimely, my mother died peacefully, leaving us to the tender care of my auntie, Mangamma, grand-mother Ammimma and adopted sister Lakshmi Devi, the wife of Ramaswami.

I could not somehow reconcile myself to formal education in those morbidly orthodox schools which kept young people for too long in the preliminary stage of reading and writing only. As luck would have it, a railway employee, Maistri of permanent-way gang workers came to our village and began to take interest in narrating stories from Mahabharat and Ramayan to a number of

boys. He found in me his most enthusiastic listener. In a few weeks he discovered that I was gathering together at the fields all the boys and girls who were looking after crops and cattle and relaying to them the stories that he was communicating to a few of us in the village. So he grew more enthusiastic and brought books containing such stories and helped us to read from them and talk about those stories in our own words. This method proved to be a tonic to me and I became, in my turn, an enthusiastic teacher to the other children. Thus, I found myself suddenly transformed from being an aimless roamer in the fields into a story-teller about crops and cattle, the mysterious love-lorn ballads woven by mother earth in her communion with the seasons and their offspring, the worms, birds, bees, snakes, fish and frogs, the various grains, pulses, fibres, vegetables, leaves, flowers and foliage, the greenness, the brownness and autumn's rainbow coloured skies and spring's ebulliant atmosphere of ever-present, all pervading life with its smiles and scents. My aunt Mangamma had taken the place of my mother, after her death and has come to be, since then, much more than my mother in every sense of the term. Indeed she became my first listener and presided over my first set of audiences, as I began to repeat, in my own boyish language, the stories I was learning from the Railway employee. Soon another teacher came to me. He was an old Harijan by name Narayana and he was a master story-teller. He knew the stories of the Rebel Gods who fought against the Orthodox Gods, that is, he was a Shaktaite and believed in primaeval power of this universe and existence. Within a year after my mother's death, I learnt all that these story-tellers could teach me and read all the books that they could indicate to me for seeing those stories in the shape of written words and I was getting ready for the next adventure.

My uncle Ramaswami and his friend Jampani Anjaneyulu, another kisan of our village came under the influence of the Nationalist Movement that arose in the wake of the 1908 Bengal Partition agitation. They learnt that the kisans of our neighbouring village, Amrutaluru, had opened a Bilingual Library containing books in Telugu and Sanskrit and organised a Sanskrit College to teach Sanskrit to non-Brahmins also, who had hitherto been considered as unfit to learn Sanskrit. So, Ramaswami and Anjaneyulu decided to organise a library in our village too. One day a parcel of books was received by Ramaswami and I happened

to see how beautiful was the binding and sweet-smelling were the pages and attractive were the printed letters in those books. I approached my mother Mangamma that evening with the request that one of those very attractive books should be given to me. She asked my uncle for a book, saying that it was good that atleast her son had taken a fancy of his own accord to reading such a book. I was asked to go to the library on the next morning and take a book from Anjaneyulu. When I went to the library, there was Anjaneyulu, handling the books and looking at me with some interest. I approached him shyly and asked him to give me a book. He asked what book I wanted. I suggested that all the books be shown to me. When more than twenty books were spread out before me, I picked up the most attractively-bound book. He asked me to read the title and when I read it out as "Rani Sanyukta", he gave it and asked for its return in a week's time. I was a bit disappointed because it was not given away to me. But I asked that if I returned it, would I be given another book. He said I could go on borrowing all the books but one by one, on one condition that I would narrate the gist of those books to him. When I took that beautifully bound book, my joy knew no bounds for never before did I handle such a beautiful book. I went with mother Mangamma, as usual, to the fields but once I began reading that story, it was difficult for me to tear myself away from the book. It is difficult to say which pleased me most, the types, paper, story or the discovery that I could read continuously and spell out consistently chapters after chapters of that book. Mother Mangamma had to come in search of me in that heavily-laden corn fields to remind me of my lunch. I was in an enchanted mood for the next 3 days, going through the story of how the last of the Indian emperors, Prithvi Raj and his queen, Sanyukta, died fighting for the protection of the freedom of our country against the invaders from Afghanistan and their Indian ally, Jaichandra, who was no other than the father of Sanyukta. On the fourth day I went back to the library and met Anjaneyulu a little boldly and asked for another book. He asked for the story and I went on, in a breathless manner, narrating the story for more than an hour. He was impressed and uncle Ramaswami was so much pleased and others began to exclaim this Ranga would become a Pandit. As reward I was lent two books. This is how I was introduced to the new movement of libraries and the new publications from Madras, and *Masula* known as Vijnan Chandrika and Andhra Pracharini, edited by G. Harisarvottama Rao and

Dr. Pattabhi respectively. Such was the influence of good printing, binding and story books on a young mind. Hence my welcome to the foundation of the National Book Trust.

No sooner did I realise the beauty of these new books, their source, the library, than I began to gather round myself all my young friends of the village and persuade them to share in my new pleasures. During the next one year (1909-10) I seemed to have been living in a dream world, singing the poems and songs of Telugu poets of the Mahabharata, Prabandha and modern periods, reading the novels based upon Rajasthan, Bengal, Indigo Plantation and other patriotic themes. Anjaneyulu proved to be an excellent guide for me during this extraordinary period of my intellectual growth. He would hear my narration of the stories I read about. He would clear my doubts as to the meaning of certain phrases in Telugu. He would explain to me the historical significance of the stories. Thus he put me in tune with the then political situation, when hundreds of people were rising in revolt against the British, just as in the earlier times of which the novels were written, Indians were fighting the Moslem invaders. He used to explain how the Moslems of our neighbouring villages, Ponnur Chebrolu, Chandole were not the descendants of foreigners but were descended from the converts from our Indians who had joined hands with the invaders and he wanted me to work for Harijan welfare ; because he was afraid of what might happen if they became Christians, under the influence of the Christian rulers.

I found that the Kisan and Harijan boys—rural girls had not yet begun to go to High Schools in our area—were not able to show as good a record as the Brahmin boys of Ponnur, Munipalle, Munukuduru, Aluru. I was ashamed of this. So I started to give private free tuition to all such students as were willing to come to me during the week-ends. One such student has since risen to be the head of a Department. I was also anxious that *kisan* adults too should be taught to read and write, because, illiteracy was the bane of our kisans and there was a great urge, among all enthusiasts of library movement, to blot out illiteracy. By the way, that was just the first decade of the Andhra Library Movement, and its Journal edited by Sri Ayyanki wielded much influence over youths like me. So I started a night school in our village and one of its adult students later became a prominent public worker of our village.

The Andhra Patrika Daily with Sri K. Nageswara Rao as its editor, which used to set the pace in social activities for such youths as myself, began to popularise the method of collecting rice from different kisan families by youths going round once a week and thus finding funds for paying the fees of poor students. I organised this campaign in our village with the help of a few fellow-students and youths working with me in the library. One of the poor students, belonging to the Reddi groups of kisans, was thus enabled to graduate from our High School with those cellections. He has subsequently become an M.A.B.L., a prominent social and political leader of the Andhra Pradesh.

Kisans of certain tribes used to be looked upon by all others in our villages as of Kshatriya origin, what with their martial traditions and their historic relationship to the past rulers of the Palnad, Chola, Kakateeya, Yadava, Vijayanagar kingdoms. There is a particular sub-tribe of bards for each main Kshatriya—like caste or tribe, to keep records of the feats of prowess, heroism and specially spectacular achievements of the great men and women of each caste or tribe and to compose poems, songs and ballads and to sing—recite, recount and interpret them in every village during their annual peripatetic visits. All the so-called four tribes have their complement of such a sub-tribe of bards, whether they be kisans or kalakars. Their visits were sources of amusement, education and excitement to the village youths. I was particularly interested in their sayings and songs and gained much useful knowledge of the history, achievements and social aims of our different rural tribes. But I could not reconcile myself to the ups and downs of the gradations of social importance of various tribes. So I wished to cut across all such snobbish distinctions and help my fellow rural youths to gain a sense of our social unity and equality, thanks to the missionary teachings of Veeresalingam, the great writer and social reformer of Andhra and the moral support of Anjaneyulu and Venkayya. So I used to organise cosmopolitan dinners between youths and social workers of all castes of our neighbourhood during the periodical meetings of the village libraries that we organised. The weavers, carpenters, blacksmiths etc. who had been kept beyond the pale of village social elite were brought into their very centre. Thus were sown the seeds of the spirit of democracy and social equality for which I have come to fight so vigorously in my later career. For a kshatriya youth to see the kshatriya spirit in everyone else of

merit is indeed a good beginning for a career in democracy.

Anjaneyulu played the principal role during the village library phase of my life ; that is, from 1910 to 1916. He saw to it that I would speak Brahmanical Telugu, with almost that accent. He initiated me into the first phases of Sanskrit and Telugu Grammar and Lexicon. He familiarised to me the teachings of Veeresalingam, the Brahmo Samajist, who wrote so passionately and convincingly against untouchability, caste system, traditional taboos regarding Gods and Goddesses. He explained to me the philosophical teachings of Vivekananda, the political teachings of Lok Manya Tilak and B.C. Pal and introduced me to the history of the National Movement for freedom. During this period, Bengali literature, thought and political ferment were having their greatest influence on Telugu literature, press and people. Anjaneyulu who was so sensitive to all such ferments naturally passed on its influence to me. That was a great formative period in my educational career through my avid reading of all the books which were being published in Telugu with Anjaneyulu's help. I read books on botany, anatomy, chemistry, physics, constitutions of U.S.A., U.K. and political and constitutional history of England, U.S.A., and Japan all in Telugu. And through my study of the Andhra Patrika, the Daily and Weekly editions and Krishna Patrika Weekly, I was able to acquire so much knowledge of history and politics, which I found later on even many graduates of universities did not possess. I owe all that and more to Anjaneyulu. No wonder I have ever since had great faith in the efficacy of teaching only in one's own mother-tongue and hailed the linguistic movement of our country. As I was proving to be the best and most frequent reader of the books in our library, Anjaneyulu decided to take me under his care, and uncle Ramaswami began to take a new interest in me, as he was convinced that I was going to be a good scholar. He took me to the First Andhra Conference held in Baptla in 1911 and told me about its significance. He asked me, as he was pointing at B.N. Sarma, who later rose to be a member of the Central Cabinet of the British Viceroy in Delhi, if I would like to learn English. I said I would love to. But on Anjaneyulu's advice, I continued to concentrate on learning Telugu well enough to be a scholar. Sri Ramaswami was so much pleased with my progress that he began to overwhelm me with tokens of his love. He grew very angry with the Pandits of Ponnur because of their refusal to teach me Sanskrit. So he was mooting

the idea of sending me to the English school in Ponnur. He was so much satisfied with my progress in studies that he once exclaimed with tears in his eyes, "if only my sister who had such a passion for educating Ranga had been alive today to see his progress, how glad she would have been." Another time he said, caressing me, "I am glad I have spent so much on this library because it has revolutionised my Ranga's life and turned him into a scholar." He was generous of heart and liberal in sympathies. Alas, he fell ill and died in 1911 too soon to see me studying English. He loved us, his three nephews, so well and cherished the memory of his sister so much that he bequeathed the whole of his considerable property to us and made his beloved wife Lakshmi Devi, sister Mangamma and mother Ammimma our guardians. Sister Laxmi Devi lost her beautiful daughter a few years earlier. She loyally carried out the wish of her husband Ramaswami and looked after us, motherless children, as her own and devoted the whole of her husband's property to our welfare. But for that great bequest and her fraternal sacrifices for our sake, I would not have been able to obtain Oxford education nor could my brothers have been able to prosper so well and attain their educational qualifications. Thus the library phase of my education was partly responsible for my uncle's decision to leave his whole property to us and for my sister to mother us as her foster brothers. I am glad to have been able to dedicate my book "Credo of World Peasantry" to both of them.

My uncle's untimely death delayed my going for English studies by two years. Mother Mangamma could not make up her mind to send me to the English school, as she was afraid the cost of English education might be beyond our means and as she was convinced that I had already learnt enough to be able to carry on agricultural pursuits, keep our family accounts and look after the family. She desired me to get myself trained to fill the place of my uncle in the management of our agricultural operations. Anjaneyulu and myself were very keen on English education, as I had completed the study of almost all the Telugu books, as were available to us through modern publishers. Mother Mangamma consulted the local Pandits and they said that English education would be useful only to such people as Brahmins who had no lands of their own and who must therefore learn English to earn a living, whereas we of the land-holding peasantry did not need such English. That settled the matter for her and she wanted me to

concentrate on agriculture. Loyally did I turn to agriculture and devoted the next two years to farm work, even while devoting much time for my own reading and for popularising the local library and teaching a number of my contemporary kisan youths. This additional almost whole-time concentration upon agricultural operations, including the keeping of family and farm accounts during these two years, proved to be of inestimable value in decades to come. That experience has been the touch-stone on which I could judge the suitability or otherwise of many a plan or thought or programme that came up for discussion during all these later years. Anjaneyulu, however, insisted upon my going to English school and both of us prevailed upon my father to express himself in favour of our wish. When mother Mangamma was told by so many of our relatives that my father got into trouble with Government because of his lack of knowledge of modern laws and that to manage her large property and later on, our father's property too, one of us in the family should obtain working knowledge of English, she reluctantly agreed to let me go to the English school in Ponnur. That was in 1914 : the year of the outbreak of the First World War.

Once I joined the Ponnur English school, the teachers soon found that except in English, I was nearly as learned as most of them in all other subjects. I was accepted as the first and best student of my class. The teachers took special trouble to teach me well and treat me with affection. From my third form onwards, I had the guidance and enthusiastic support of an ideal teacher, Sri R. Venkayya of Nellore, a lover of nature and Wordsworth's poetry and a follower of Swami Ram Tirth. He appreciated my extra-school activities and cooperated with me and Anjaneyulu in our efforts to start libraries in all the neighbouring villages. Under his fostering care, I practised public speaking in our High School Debating Society and developed my powers of essay writing in Telugu through the Essay contests organised by him.

The happenings of that world war were awakening the educated people in our villages. The Andhra movement which initially demanded a separate linguistic province for the Telugu-speaking peoples grew into a powerful wing of the nationalist movement and dared to demand swaraj for India. My political yearnings too began to grow in tune with those of the Andhra Movement. Both

Venkayya and Anjaneyulu encouraged me to defy the Governor's ban on students' participation in political conference and to go to the Andhra conference held in 1917 in Nellore, the home city of Venkayya. It was at that conference, I saw and heard for the first time that dynamic and spirited patriot-poet, Andhra Ratna D. Gopalakrishnayya. As I heard him sing the poems written by the young poet of Tagore's school, Rayaprolu Subbarao, the glory of the Andhra's history came powerfully into my mind, thanks to my study of the two volumed "History of Andhras" written in Telugu by Chilukuri Veerabhadra Rao. When references were made by speakers to sacrifices of Tilak, I was thinking also about the patriotic exploits of Shivajee, whose biography in Telugu by K.V. Lakshman Rao proved to be my favourite. When the demand was being voiced for swaraj, I was thinking of the descriptions of the achievement of Magna Charta and Bill of Rights, I read about in the Telugu book on "Constitutional History of England". In this manner that Nellore conference proved to be a great eye-opener. Moreover, I had the first exciting and liberating experience of defying the British Government and joining in the swelling stream of a new adventure. Soon after that conference, Dr. Annie Besant, the Irish Orator and famous Theosophist, was interned by the British Governor. The Telugu press protested against the outrage. The "New India", the English Daily edited by her, was writing in such simple English style that I could understand well. And its editorials emboldened us, through their courageous espousal of India's cause and their daring the British authorities removed whatever hesitances so many of us would otherwise have nursed and made us all to think, talk and write openly and bravely against the British regime. My guides, Venkayya and Anjaneyulu were helping me further to understand the national and international significance of the world war, its possible impacts upon our national life. More than everything else, the entry of Mahatma Gandhi into Indian public life after having triumphed over the Whites of South Africa, the release of Lok Manya Tilak after 6 years of incarceration in Burma and his declaration of faith in swaraj and the championing of our national cause by no less a person than the greatest white woman orator of her era—Annie Besant—fired our national ambitions. So I led the procession of protest—the first of its kind in the whole of our neighbourhood—against the internment of Besant by the British Government. Soon after, the police came and warned Mother

Mangamma against such activities of her beloved son. My father, however, felt glad that I was beginning to walk along his path of revolt against the Government.

I read and re-read the ten volumes of Veerasalingam'e inspiring writings, from my thirteenth to seventeenth years and began to try to practise his teachings. So I gave up the worship of Gods as such and believed only in one God. I would not eat non-vegetarian food. I refused to recognise the superiority of Brahmins or any others, merely as a matter of their birth-right and insisted that the goodness or greatness of anyone depended upon his behaviour, scholarship and nobility and not on birth as such, and so on. I read his "Autobiography" as well as his 'Biographies of the World's Great Souls'. I was, therefore, tempted to write my diary. I find a perusal at this distance of time of a few of those pages quite interesting and revealing. For instance, I find it noted that such and such young companions came for Recitals, Kalakshepams or Bhajans on such and such days ; lectures were given in such and such villages on social reform, need for education, rural libraries, evils of superstition and idolatry and such and such Andhra poets have performed satavadhanams, Ashtavadhanams etc.

Most inspiring experience of mine of those days (1917) was the return from South Africa of a relative as have been dead for twenty years. I sat with him for several evenings and took down copious notes of his talks, meetings, impressions of "Mr. Gandhi" as he used to say. He went to jail with the Mahatma. He gave a world picture of Gandhi and Kasturba. Thus the role of Mahatma came so intimately into my life at that tender age through an elderly peasant of my own neighbourhood.

During my high school career, I found much difficulty in coping with other students in English and Mathematics and Physics, as I could not prepare myself in them on my own as in other subjects. As I was one of the oldest students in my classes, owing to my late joining for these formal studies and as I had already become well-known in my village and its neighbourhood as something of a scholar and public worker, I was naturally anxious not to cut a poor figure in the school examinations. So I needed friends to coach me privately. I was fortunate in finding

two such friends, one in Appikatla and another in my own village. The Appikatla friend was also a relative by name Achanta Nagayya. He was studying in Bapatla High School in a class higher than mine and was specially strong in Mathematics and English. Shri Nagayya used to be so patient with me and cooperative and continued to help me with my studies for 2 years. Accidentally both of us passed the Matriculation examination in the same year 1920 but because he was a poor kisan, he could not continue his studies. It is one of my great good fortunes that he has continued to this day to be my comrade in the kisan movement and a reliable and wise counsellor. There are few who are more loyal to ideals of public service that I have endeavoured to develop and promote than Sri Nagayya. The other friend was Sri Gopala Krishnayya, a Brahmin youth of our village, studying in the Guntur college. He was an enthusiast of English literature and a splendid teacher of Mathematics. But for his coaching, I could not have passed in Mathematics and Physics in Matriculation examination. Unfortunately he had to retire, in later years, rather too prematurely from a successful career as a teacher in Mathematics, owing to paralysis. I have had the pleasure of continuing to enjoy his friendship and appreciation.

My student career had its share of rivalry from other students and also some degree of jealousy from a few teachers. A few students who had been failing to pass the third form for a number of years came to our school from Bapatla High School and wanted to be recognised as the first cadre but the Head Master insisted upon general and uniform excellence in all the subjects for over a period of 3 months before anyone could be recognised as the first student. I was able to stand first in that rather prolonged impartial test and I continued to be recognised as the first student of the school until I matriculated. One or two teachers wondered why I should be playing such an important role in extracurricular activities and wanted to find fault with my school career to discourage me. As luck would have it, they could not make any tangible complaint and though Venkayya had left the school by 1919, the other teachers continued to respect me.

A wave of enthusiasm came over the High Schools during 1919 for the Scout Movement, because it was felt that it would prepare our youths for social work. One of our senior students

obtained special training and returned to train some of us. I too joined the first batch and won my colours.

Our District Cooperative Conference was held in 1920 in our High School Hall. I was chosen as the leader of volunteers. That conference helped me to hope that our kisans and kalakars could also achieve some liberation from money lenders and merchants and their exactions, through cooperation.

We organised a Foot-ball Club. I joined it. I found some pleasure in that. Our school team took part in District tournaments but we did not achieve any distinction. I did not continue my interest in such sports as my time after the school-hours was taken up by library, adult education and other movement. Even now NIDUBROLU team is famous in Andhra.

Anjaneyulu used to take special interest in poets and their poetry and songs. Famous poets used to go to our village to seek the patronage of our Munsiff Sri P.V. Subbayya and to enjoy Anjaneyulu's friendship. I was naturally introduced into their company, as a promising scholar from a famous kisan family. I did attempt to write a few poems but I could not succeed in writing poetry with any distinction. Even at that tender age, I was unwilling to persist in a line in which I could not do so well. I continued, however, to enjoy poetry and ballads, songs and extempore composition. In fact most Andhras are potential poets and all of them are so fond of poetry and song. That has been one of my favourite hobbies.

Anjaneyulu tried to learn to play on flute, violin and harmonium. He could not become proficient in any of them. Yet his trials engendered in me a taste for music and a partiality for musicians. We both used to go to Ponnur and Bapatla whenever there was a musical performance. Eventually we organised an Amateur Dramatic Society in our village and it enacted a number of plays. Unfortunately the actors began to display special fancy for some social evils and so, that society fell into disrepute. Yet, that effort led to a big achievement ; that is, one of the kisan actors Sri P. Veerayya later grew to be one of the outstanding musicians of Andhra and I was fortunate in obtaining for him one of the Republic President's honorariums. I

did not wish to become an actor but Anjaneyulu and the society forced me to act once as the herald of war news in a play dealing with the famous Kuru-Pandava battle. But this experiment kindled an interest in my mind in all such amateur theatricals and I have been trying ever since to encourage the cultivation of such fine arts in our villages.

Sri Anjaneyulu and P.V. Krishnayya were keen on holding the Madras Presidency Kamma conference. They wanted me to join them. That and the next decade were the era of the awakening of many a hitherto socially depressed castes into political and social self-realisation. Caste conferences were then serving a progressive purpose. They were trying to reform, uplift their masses and make education popular among them. And that was the era of such conferences of all awakening tribes which were discovering their socio-political personality. I consulted Venkayya and he agreed. So, we sought neighbourhood. The wonder is that though it was called a Kamma conference, all the Non-Brahmins of our Taluk cooperated with it : possibly because they instinctively realised that they should all stand together. To that conference came the late P.V. Subbarao, Barrister who married a London Englishwoman, Sri V. Ramakrishna, M.A. (Edinburgh) who was to go back soon after to England as one of the ICS probationers and who was to become my guardian at Oxford and the late K. Gopala Krishnayya. The welcome poems were composed and sung by a young kisan poet, Tummala Sitarama Murti, who has since become so famous as a poet as to be given the title "Abhinava Tikkana". The success of this conference lay in avoiding any political resolutions, contrary to the National Demand, in deference to the wishes of some of us, the nationalist Non-Brahmin youths and in reiterating the conference's general stand on the need for social reforms, *i.e.*, the right of all men, women to read, recite Vedas, Upanishads and all other sacred literature to abolish untouchability, purdah and dowry system and to organise anti-illiteracy, adult education campaigns and to develop rural libraries etc. I succeeded in giving a peasant-colour to many of the resolutions. When the question came for publishing a weekly, I insisted that it should deal with kisan problems.

We were able to save quite a sum from the collections made, mostly by P.V. Krishnayya and myself. There arose differ-

ences between the organisers in our village and other leaders of all kisan tribes who were all working together for educational development of each other as to the manner of utilising those funds. Many of those who were holding some important position or the other within the governmental set-up favoured the suggestion that we should start a weekly in Telugu and it should be called, the "Kamma Patrika". I suggested that it should be called the 'Ryot' since all those who took part in the conference belonged to the peasant class and were drawn from all the ryot castes. The Government officials and the social aristocracy did not relish such a stiff opposition from such a youth, who was studying only in a High School. But they knew that the collection of the funds was made largely due to my influence with the local people and I was so much loved by them. Eventually my suggestion that it should be called the "Ryot" Patrika, *i.e.*, the peasant, was reluctantly accepted by the British-minded Non-Brahmin leaders and hailed by all the youth. This happened a few months before I matriculated. This decision was finally adopted by the local leaders, when the send-off function took place, on the eve of my departure for England in 1920. When I look back upon that day on which that decision was taken, I wonder how I could take up such a wise stand at such an early date but which was frought with such world-wide, revolutionary consequences.

After all I was not so untutored when I made that suggestion. My study and acceptance of Veeresalingam's teachings against caste system, Brahminical orthodoxy, taboos against untouchability, devil and deity worship and my admiration of his courageous stand for such social reforms, as widow-remarriage, women's education, social equality and economic uplift of our masses, have uplifted me so much that I was far ahead of all the British-minded communal leaders many of whom were twice or thrice my age. My adoration of Mahatma Gandhi and Lok Manya Tilak and my acceptance of the political leadership of the National Congress prepared my mind in such a way that I could not be content with casteism or Non-Brahminism.

We celebrated the Anniversary of our rejuvenated library in 1915 and some lawyers of Bapatla were invited to address us. That was the very first public function in which I ventured to speak on a public platform on behalf of the kisans of our area.

We sought the advice of the lawyers, for whom we had a great respect. They advised us to eschew factions and to maintain unity. I felt that was sound advice. And soon afterwards I sought the cooperation of our village officials, who had till then kept aloof from our library activities. The Karanam—Accountant—responded cheerfully and his contribution came to be extremely useful as he knew a bit of Sanskrit and he was keen on improving finances and accounts of the library. But the next celebrations of the Anniversary sounded a discordant note and led to important consequences. We invited a kisan Barrister of Krishna District. Sri T. Ramaswami, who had returned a few months previously from England. I was excited over the prospects of his visit, as I heard that he was a poet, disciple of the famous poets—Tirupati Venkateswarlu, who were then extremely popular all over Andhra. When he did arrive and spoke in our great gathering his thoughts stirred us and his learning impressed us. Most of the teachers of the High School, Pandits of Ponnur, the lawyers of Bapatla and Tenali who also came to hear him were furious with his revolutionary thoughts and grew angry with us, for having invited him, because he questioned the very foundation on which priestly supremacy was accepted by our masses.

I approached him, shyly with the question whether he would criticise the Andhra, and Congress movements also. He said he was also in favour of them. That set my mind, somewhat, at rest.

This unjust and unprovoked hostile reaction of local Brahmins made Anjaneyulu evince interest in the Non-Brahmin movement which was raising its head in Madras. I did not like that. I argued that Veeresalingam, who pleaded for social equality and worked against caste system, was himself a Brahmin and as such, there was no special need for Non-Brahmin movement. We, however, began to think that if Brahmins reacted so violently to the Non-Brahmin assertion of their social equality with all others, what guarantee would there be that when political power came, they would allow the masses to enjoy political equality. To strengthen our fears, there were some political leaders who were suggesting educational qualifications for voters, and we knew that the great majority of our kisan masses could not then qualify for votes. What were we to do ?

Whom were we to support. The situation was becoming too difficult for us to understand.

To know and study these matters better we began to get the "Justice", the English Daily of the Madras Non-Brahmins and the "Ryot", the Weekly of the Bombay Non-Brahmins in addition to the "New India" by Annie Besant and Andhra Patrika of Sri K. Nageswara Rao. Someone told me that Dr. T. M. Nair, the champion of the Non-Brahmin cause, was himself a social-reformer like Veeresalingam and was not particularly a pro-British. So I began to study his writings and also learn about him. I was becoming impressed with his courageous struggle against the British capitalists and Bombay industrialists over the need for protecting factory labour from exploitation. Just then he died in England, while busy giving evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee. I was struck with his sincerity. So I began to write his biography in Telugu. But I could not agree with his political stand in the last phase of his life. At that stage, differences arose between myself and Anjaneyulu, he wanted to swerve towards Non-Brahminism and I was against that. Our new young village munsiff Sri P.V.K. began to support him and I was unable to go with him. Anjaneyulu reviewed the socio-political angle and said that until and unless the Brahmin monopoly of our people's mind was withdrawn, there could be no swaraj in India. The leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement were going to meet in Vijayawada sometimes in 1917 to obstruct the advent of swaraj, unless certain safeguards were given to Non-Brahmins. Anjaneyulu agreed with me that such a move would be a retrograde one and would only postpone the achievement of Swaraj. The world-shaking happenings of that war and the extreme need of the United Kingdom for India's support and the debacle of the British defeats in Arabia at the hands of the Turks forced the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George offer constitutional reforms, and enabled Mr. Montague to speak in Parliament as if responsible Government was going to be offered to India. The hopes of the awakened sections of our people were kindled. So we could see what a disastrous diversion could be caused by the political stand of the Non-Brahmin movement. When we went to Vijayawada to attend the special Andhra conference to assert Andhra's support to the Congress demand, we found ourselves face to face with the secession of the Non-Brahmin leaders from that conference. Both of us chose not to go out with them

but to remain loyal to the National Demand. Soon afterwards, we attended the Nationalist Non-Brahmin conference, organised under Brahmin inspiration but under the presidentship of Barrister Ramaswami.

Political developments do not generally follow a consistent line in harmony with the national interests of any period. This was exemplified by what happened in 1918-20. Even while Barrister Ramaswami was trying his best not to succumb to the blandishments and political baits that were being offered to him by the leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement and trying to remain loyal to the National Demand, the Brahmin Pandits of Krishna and Guntur Districts began to wage a campaign of bitter personal vendetta against him because of his attack upon their ideological supremacy. This caused a dreadful diversion in the Barrister's politics. To make matters worse, one Swami Saraswati captured the imagination of the educated and other sections of Kamma, Telaga, Reddi kisan tribes of Krishna and Guntur Districts, through his declarations that these kisans were kshatriyas and so, were entitled to study and recite Vedas and Upanishads ; that even women were entitled to the same right and untouchability was nowhere recognised by the Hindu scriptures. He challenged Brahmin Pandits either to accept or repudiate his theses. The Brahmin Pandits reacted spiritedly against such a public challenge, with all the glamour of growing mass support. Thus arose a powerful conflict on platform, in the press and everywhere in the Northern circars, more especially in the Delta Districts around Godavari and Krishna rivers. The Government took a hand and encouraged this Non-Brahmin revolt and so, the Non-Brahmin officers began to take part in such socio-political demonstrations. The Non-Brahmin youths of this region were keen on wearing the Jandyam, like Brahmins and adopting Brahminical titles like Sarma, Varma and attaching themselves to the totemic gotras of ancient Rishis. We were also pressed to do the same. I could not agree because of my faith in Brahmoism.

Barrister Ramaswami was, however, vehement against the Brahmin's insistence that they alone should learn Vedas and Upanishads and that Sudras, Harijans, women should be denied that privilege. Having already been conversant with the teachings of the social reformer Veeresalingam, neither I nor Anjaneyulu

found it hard to agree with him. But when he proceeded to say that Brahmins misled Rama into killing the Saint Sambuka, a Sudra, because he threatened to break their monopoly of spiritualism, I found it so hard to accept his thesis. So he left his Telugu book "The Murder of Sambuka" with me for careful study. I read it many times and it was with very great difficulty and after a long time I could bring myself to believe that even that much loved Lord Rama could commit such a sacrilege under the influence of the priests.

The violent reactions of local Brahmins against all of us, the Non-Brahmin students and educated peasants, and to Barrister Ramaswami's speech were a shock to us. Thereafter, the earlier atmosphere of tolerance towards the minority, that is, the Non-Brahmin students in our high school was slowly replaced by one of hostility towards us and because I was the most outstanding Non-Brahmin student—my class happened to be the highest in our school which was gradually reaching up to the Matriculation standard, their ill-will was centred on me. Mother Mangamma who had such a live fear of their ill-will began to pray more and more for my safety and patronise but in vain, the Brahmin mendicants who used to go to us from Ponnur etc.

In yet another direction both Anjaneyulu and Venkayya helped me to absorb the traditional philosophical faith of our country. I drank deep from the rural beliefs, practices and animistic festivities of our kisans, through my enthusiastic participation in them, like all rural children, in which the Harijans are the priests and masters of ceremony and all the Non-Brahmin masses take part, without any consciousness of touchability and untouchability. In the cult of Shaktaism, Harijans are accepted as the custodians of that faith. Veeresalingam denounced those blood-curdling observances, the killing of animals and the frightening processions of demons and deities. I had also heard the preachings of Shaivaites, Vaishnavaites, who were wrangling with each other over their respective superiorities. I heard the Christian English missionaries declaiming our idolatry and our faith in the love-sick Lord Krishna. I was actually in love with the Potanna's poetry all around the beautiful Krishna and his passion for embracing all humanity and indeed creation with his abundant love. I read Bhagavad Gita respectfully without under-

standing much of its essence, for I was too young and untutored for that. Somehow Veeresalingam's teachings sounded to be an inadequate guide for me to understand the inner essence of India's philosophy.

It may be wondered why and how, the young Ranga in his teens, that I was at that time, could come to be obsessed with all these deep complicated philosophical topics and controversies. That is exactly the special feature of India, especially rural India of the first two decades of this century and indeed, of even the present day. Everyone of the beggars, bards, the religious mendicants, the social mono-actors, minstrels, the peripatetic sanyasins, and even the numerous poets and writers that one finds in an Indian village or town talks, sings, muses, discusses or curses mostly in terms of religion and philosophy. While in the United States, priests draw their similes and figures of speech from commerce and industry, in India almost everyone draws similar inspiration and support from philosophy and examples from our epics. No wonder I was full of that environmental knowledge and didactic logic. My memory was almost saturated with the poems and songs of Bhakti Cult, whether the God be Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Shiva or any of the ever-growing order of saints of all Cults. So it was natural for me to be anxiously searching for a synthesis. And I found it in the teachings of both Vivekananda and Ram Tirtha. Both rejected all the dross that had gathered around the concept of Vedanta. Both said that all religions wished to lead people towards the same goal, the realization of God and oneness with God. Both re-interpreted such great philosophical discoveries of ancient Vedantists as Tatwamasi, Twamekam, Aham Brahmosmi and appeared to have brought them within the understanding of ordinary people. Both opposed any monopoly of knowledge or privileges in religion or philosophical discussions by any caste. Both considered idol worship, casteism, sacrificial ceremonies put up for the benefit of the entirely undeveloped humans by priests and philosophers who despaired of leading the masses into intelligent appreciation of the universality and utterly loving nature of God, one and the only God. I felt so happy that I found at last an explanation for all the confusing but contradictory social atmosphere with which I had been surrounded, almost to suffocation. Fortunately Vivekananda's writings were published in Telugu by that great

publishers, the Vavilla. But Ram Tirtha's speeches were available only in English. His style was so simple, fluent and his thoughts were expressed in such an eloquent and convincing manner. I had a burning desire to translate them into Telugu. Anjaneyulu encouraged me. So I translated 200 pages during 1920 and several of those chapters were published in the Telugu weekly "Samadarsani" in 1920 and other chapters in "Swarajya" in 1923. This big intellectual as well as emotional effort instilled into me an effective sense of discipline and self-control.

One other similar emotion gripped me in 1919-20. As I read again and again, the life-sketches by Veeresalingam of "Great People of History", I began to think of writing the biography of the Empress Rudrama Devi of Kakateeya Empire, who ruled so well for more than 35 years and furthered international commerce so much that the globe-trotter Marco Polo had written so much in praise of her regime. I read about Queen Victoria, St. Joan, Florence Nightingale from Veeresalingam's book. Surely Rudrama Devi was a much greater personage, as I could see from Chilukuri's "History of Andhras". When I learnt from that book that she was born in my kisan tribe and that she got her four daughters married to the princes of four different kisan tribes and thus attempted to bring them all together, I was lost in admiration of her statesmanship comparable to that of Queen Elizabeth of England. So I ventured to write her biography in Telugu. When I completed it by the end of 1919 and read it out to our villagers and they appreciated it, my joy knew no bounds.

From 1917 onwards, those few of us who had put ourselves in tune with the national happenings through our assiduous study of the nationalist newspapers, the "Andhra Patrika" and "New India", were following with rising emotions the inspiring activities of our national leaders, Mahatma Gandhi, Tilak and Annie Besant. When Gandhijee favoured recruitment to the Army with the full confidence that the British would certainly concede swaraj after the war, if India helped them unconditionally, Shri Krishnayya began to recruit Harijans for the Army and we did not object. When we thought that Tilak told the "War Conference" of Lord Hardinge that he would favour India's cooperation only if swaraj would be promised, we felt bold about our thought of swaraj. As Mahatmajee defied the ban of the Champaran Magistrate, some

new strength and courage seemed to be seeping into our nerves. When he was fasting in Ahmedabad to make the mill-owners and workers agree to be nationally disciplined, we used to feel that a new force was coming to energise our nation. We read about Gandhijee's efforts to save the people of Kaira from the dire effects of famine and his successful struggle against Government. My own father said, as we were all sitting together on one summer evening in our garden, that he was glad there were peasants in this country to dare the Government. When I told him about Gandhijee, he exclaimed that he seemed to be the true friend of peasants. In this way I began to feel that the true interests of our people were safe in the hands of Gandhijee and that their fate was inter-twined with that of our national movement.

Gandhijee gave the call to all patriotic persons to obtain signatures for the Congress Manifesto to be presented to Montague. All the youths and elders who were associated with me in all the libraries, night schools read about it in the papers. We were already attuned to the national movement. So I suggested that we should secure the signatures of our people. When I asked my father for some money for the campaign, he quietly said, "Let my ungainly signature be the first", so it was. We toured more than ten villages and secured hundreds of signatures and thumb prints. I think we got the little formula from the Andhra Patrika. Our activity and achievement were not published—the press reporting had not advanced as yet but the police knew about it and were on the alert. Nothing untoward happened from their side. Thus, in our own untutored, spontaneous manner the whole of our neighbourhood joined the nationally swelling tide of swaraj. As I look back from this distance of time upon that achievement of forty years ago, I do feel deservedly proud and happy that I had my father's kisan signature as a blessing to my subsequent public career.

Uncle Ramaswami brought suits for me in 1910 and familiarised me with English dress. When Krishnayya was donning the gilt caps of zamindars, my uncle too brought them also to me but my proud mother would not allow me to wear them, saying they are caps of the rich and the lazy and not of the toilers like her father and husband. Later on so many new fangled shirting clothes came into fashion and my sister bought shirts made

of them for us. I became familiar with the drawing-room furniture, carpets, sofas and mirrors of the British by visiting frequently P.V. Subhayya's English rooms. But my appreciation of the Swadeshi movement helped me not to go for such furniture for our home also. I was taken up with Gandhijee's teachings and wanted to emulate the example of Venkayya and so, I began to wear swadeshi clothes and use swadeshi things. In this way I prepared myself for the later swadeshi movement.

We had in our village also a large number of weavers, a few families of blacksmiths, many more carpenters and goldsmiths. My grand-mother used to spin regularly on her spinning wheel until my mother died. We used to produce some cotton and purchase some more. She used to give the yarn to the weavers of our village and get clothes woven and pay them by the yard. She used to purchase colours and dye the clothes. I used to take so much interest in all these activities that I spent hours after hours at the weavers' homes and take my meals along with their children and sometimes my own mother would discover me hiding in a weaver's pit and beat me for trying to escape thus from school—little could she imagine what valuable education was being imparted to me by those weavers. A son of one of those dear weavers Sri Goli Basawayya is alive and is a good friend of the weavers' Congress which I have had the honour of founding in 1925. I was equally on friendly terms with the potters and their kilns, the smiths and their blowpipes and furnaces, the jewellers and their beautiful metals and moulds, the carpenters and their hammers, chisels and other implements, and with the leather workers and their needles and knives. I cannot say how many hours I spent at each of their places but they were all my friends and I knew their work, their days of hunger and feasting, their joys and sorrows. Many a time, my grand-mother was my ally in quietly taking to them rice, pulses, vegetables, sweets etc. and relieving their pain of hunger. I became their favourite and they loved my grand-mother. When therefore Mahatma's exhortations to our people to renovate village crafts were coming through the press, I began to feel from 1917 onwards that I was already familiar with all those crafts, their votaries and their needs and sufferings. That inspired me to feel confident about myself and my social work in our villages. I used to go to my friends among those kalakars or artisans and tell them about Gandhijee's thoughts

and assure them that when Swaraj came to be achieved, their future would be bright. Whenever Gandhijee's statements on those topics came, I used to rush to mother Mangamma and tell her that what her sister had thought as useless waste of my time was coming to be looked upon as good education by Mahatma Gandhi and she used to be pleased with herself, because she laid more in store with my communion with Mother Earth and agriculture and crafts.

Even as I was thus developing myself into a national worker and a conscious nationalist-cum-social reformer, I was careful to see that my brothers, Venkatappayya, Lakshmi Narayana were also educated in a similar manner and trained to appreciate the national movement. They were always associated with me in the library movement, adult schools, anti-illiteracy campaign, social service, fraternisation with kalakars and Harijans. Mother Mangamma once again hesitated when I was trying to get Venkatappayya admitted into High School and said that one English-knowing boy would be enough for a peasant family. She exclaimed, "After all, we have enough land, we need not enter Government service and become slaves. My father Ramanayya would turn in his grave if any of his grandsons were to become a servant". I prevailed upon her by assuring that we need not join Government service merely because we would learn English. When later the turn of Laxminarayana came, there was no difficulty because by that time, I gained the leadership of the family. I hope I have proved to them as good a teacher, guide and friend as I was to hundreds of boys of our neighbourhood. I am, however, afraid, I used to be a harder task master for them than for others because of greater anxiety that they should learn much and well and be exemplary students. I have been most fortunate in them, because, both have come to be among my earliest disciples, staunchest believers in all the movements I started, and causes I espoused. Achanta Nagayya alone can claim to excel them. The elder one Venkatappayya had to discontinue his studies after Matriculation, as he had to undertake the management of the agricultural and other affairs of my uncle and father, after their deaths. He has nevertheless continued his studies of Vivekananda and Ram Tirtha. He had the satisfaction of seeing that a statue of Vivekananda was raised in our village. Lakshmi Narayana took M.A. in First Class and was also called to the Bar.

He gave up practice in 1935 to join the Kisan, Kalakar and cooperative movements and aid me in my public work.

The High School which was originally started as a Middle School was at first situated in Ponnur. It was organised by a few public spirited Brahmins of Ponnur and Vaddemukkala and one of their most successful lawyers, the late Sri Bhavanachari was the president of the Board of Management. The late Pattayya gave five acres of wetland as permanent endowment. When I reached the third form, permission was obtained to raise it to the status of a High School, with an additional advanced class to be opened every year. As I was passing my annual exam in one form, the school was ready with the higher form to admit me into it. Thus, I was one of the first batches of five students to graduate from it in Matriculation Public Examination. It is but natural that I should entertain affection for this Institution.

When it was decided by Government to raise it to a High School, one of the poor kisans of Nidubrolu, the late Sri K. Laxmayya, offered to contribute Rs. 7000 towards the 50% share of the cost of the building. He built it in Nidubrolu area and so, the school has come to be known after our village. Laxmayya found the building come to cost much more than Rs. 20,000 and so lost almost all his lands and became almost a pauper. Yet he did not lose heart nor did he curse his fate. He continued to eke out his living by renting others' lands, and carting for hire and only towards the end of his life he received a goodly inheritance and died in happy circumstances. He was an illiterate kisan, and he gave such a munificent public gift and helped the High School to become a permanent institution. Tummala Sitaramamurti wrote a fine and inspiring poem, in the Wordsworth's manner, about this great public benefactor. I am glad to have been able to render some help to his school in 1955 in getting Government's permission for the exchange of Pattayya's land for the nearby Temple land, so that the school could have a big enough playground.

This High School has recently the special distinction of having one of the most efficient teachers of Andhra Sri Prasad as Head Master for over six years. He was a great leader of teachers, disciplinarian of students and an altogether successful Head

Master. His traditions are being maintained by his successor Sri Subbayya, another kisan, belonging to a Backward Class. Some of the students of this High School have come to distinguish themselves as professors and lecturers, poets, administrators and political leaders, barristers and doctors. I am proud of its record and contribution to Andhra public life.

My father began to feel it was getting time for us, the elder brothers to be betrothed. Sister Laxmi Devi was in favour of delaying it until we took degrees, so that we could be married well into rich and distinguished families. When my father consulted me at last and told me that he was feeling too ill and so, would like me to be married soon, I reluctantly agreed, although I said I was indifferent as to how he would arrange it. He agreed to the suggestion of Anjaneyulu that Bharti Devi, then a young girl, the daughter of a well-known kisan of Machavaram would be best suited to his son and family. Anjaneyulu said he was impressed with the pearly lotus-like eyes, the stately forehead, pan-leaf like cheeks and the beautiful head of the girl. He was full of praise for Sri Velaga Subbayya, her father, the most courageous, successful and hard-working peasant of Machavaram, the village from which his own wife hailed. My father was so much impressed that he agreed. I was asked to go and see the girl but I said it would be enough if both of them were satisfied. Thus I came to be betrothed. Such a betrothal is considered to be as binding as a western marriage but with one great difference, that there might not be any honeymoon for years thereafter. In our case, we waited till 1924 before we actually married, in the Western sense ; that is till after my return from Oxford. I can say Anjaneyulu's description of her proved correct.

This betrothal period of feasting at Bharti Devi's place proved to be another apprenticeship into practical public work. Her father took up the leadership of the peasants of Machavaram, Munukuduru, Chintalapudi to get the resluicing made on the irrigation channel, so that their tail-end lands could be assured of timely water-supply. When I went to their villages I found him and other peasants depend so much upon a Brahmin friend that they could not make a single move without his guidance. But he was not popular with the P.W.D. engineers nor could he discuss with them effectively. On the suggestion of Sri Velaga

Subbayya, my father-in-law, I intervened on behalf of peasants, drafted their petitions and interviewed the engineers and brought about some improvement in their relations with the officers. This impressed Sri Subbayya so much that he said that all his doubts that his prospective son-in-law might prove to be only a Government servant were dispelled and he was glad that I was learning English. He used to discuss with me, my father's idea that I should prepare myself for the ICS ; so he was told by Anjaneyulu. I told him that there could be no harm if a peasant became a civil servant. "What for", he shouted, "to become a slave". I countered by saying, "But you are so humble when you go to the Collector. You write all these petitions and prayers". He replied. "That is only to ask him to do his duty. We the peasants are the real masters. We are free and independent. We earn our own livelihood, we are the real princes of the land". I asked him, "What about the British ? They are our rulers". He replied, "Oh, many more went before them. They would also have to go. But we would always be the princes in our land. That is God's will"

How I wish the present facilities made available to students to go on educational tours to various places of historical, cultural interest were available when I was a student ! Until 1919 Christmas when I was able to go to Madras, I was not able to go beyond the bounds of Guntur, Nellore and Krishna Districts although I was reading about the daily happenings in different parts of our vast country ever since the birth of the Daily Andhra Patrika. I went twice to Mopidevi, the place of the Adi Sesha, the primeval Serpent on which the whole universe is to rest : once when I was too small to remember anything and another time when I was studying in the High School. Both myself and my brothers went on this pilgrimage. I enjoyed the crossing of the two branches of the beloved Krishna. I had all the trouble to keep my books dry as suddenly the sea-water flushed the river and our bullock-carts were almost swallowed up by the Krishna. I was excited on reaching the mound at Bhattiprolu, where once there used to be the great Ashokan Stupa of Buddha. I was glad to see the ancestral environs of our family at Gudavalli, and Kallepalli in Devi island. I was struck with the very tall stature of the people of Divi and the long corn ears of their maize crop. Another time, my parents took me and my brother Venkatappayya to the

famous temple of Shiva at Kotappa Konda. I was very young. I enjoyed that 20-mile journey on bullock-cart, in the company of my beautiful mother, cheerful father. Both of us, brothers found the ascent of the hill most enchanting, so much so we raced with each other. My brother was saved from falling headlong on those stony-steps at the right nick of time.

The other town to which I used to go with my father was Eluru in Godavari District. We had to purchase oil-cake for cattle feed. My father was good at higgling for the price and also for the quality of cake. The oil-mongers and merchants knew the tastes of my father and used to serve him well, so much so, his reputation for getting the best oil-cake was high in our village. I enjoyed those two days every year in Eluru. I used to be amused at the sight of the women of that place who used to wear different dress, would not wear bodices, and would magically balance two, three vessels on their heads and make fine swinging pictures, swiftly ambling along the roads. The temples and tanks of Eluru had some personality of their own. I loved the Sindhur marks on the foreheads of their women, as it somehow resembled the mark on my long dead mother. But I could not appreciate their aweful habit of smoking long, ugly cigars. To this day, that habit of so many of our women of Godavari and Kalinga and the cigarette smoking habit of the western women displeases me, as much by the smell as by the atmosphere of uncleanliness. May be, I am too orthodox.

I could not visit Hampi, the lost capital of Vijayanagar, Warangal, the ruined capital of Kakatiyas ; Karempudi, the battlefield of Palnad, the Fort of Vengi, the temple of Satavahana King Andhra Vishnu in Srikakulam to mention only the nearest Andhra places of historical interest, because in those days, the educational value of such towns was not realised. I had to wait for many years before I could go to Ajanta, Elephanta, Haridwar and Hrishikesh.

My district is famous for producing the best chillies and cucumbers. And the best and most satisfying meal I remember to have had as we were going to Kotappa Konda while a boy, was the hot rice with the chutney made of green chillies and cucumbers with the home-made Guntur Ghee. My happiness was

heightened by my mother feeding both of us with so much charm. And who could excel my father as a driver of that covered wagon, with a high turban on his head and a coloured whip in his hand, while the bullocks were bedecked with bells, coloured scarfs. This festival lasts but one day of the Newmoon. The night witnesses the grandeur of hundreds of almost sky-high upright standards of the glory of Lord Shiva, known as 'Prabha'. They taper into the topmost bronze togas and on them are inscribed the pictures of stories of Shiva. The musical bands, flutes, drums and bells are all relaying their exclamations of their homage to God. But the confusion that arises in their noises is somehow pleasing to our people. Children, that we were, certainly impressed with all that terrific importance of God. I have toured round the world so many times in planes, on steamers and trains, by cars but somehow no journey seemed to have made as lasting an impression as that ancient one in the company of my parents. Could it possibly be because I lost my mother when I was only eight and my father when I was twenty and I did not have enough of their affection or company ?

Guntur was our market town, as well as District headquarters. My father used to take both of us, elder brothers, once a year to that town and each of us had to drive a bullock-cart, laden with paddy, on our way to the town. We used to start early in the evening after having dinner and reach the town by the morning. Our father used to take us for lunch at about 12 noon to a hotel, by a margosa tree when we were so hungry. I had to go with him to the commission merchants, check up the calculation of the price paid and count the money and give it to him. There was always the fear of thieves and that used to make the journey so exciting. It was indeed a worthwhile experience for me.

I did come to have an extraordinary advantage of following through my mind's eye, the all India tour made by Sri Anjaneyulu and his friends, in 1916-1917. He went to Puri, Calcutta, Bodhgaya, Benaras, Prayag, Delhi, Kurukshetra, Hrishikesh, Hardwar, Bombay, Pandaripur, Hyderabad and intervening places. He used to write to me long letters from every important place visited by his group and give detailed accounts of the interesting things that they saw and exciting happenings. For

instance, what he said about the irreligious greed of the Pandas at Banaras stayed long in my mind. He wrote that Delhi's name was so grand but its substance so poor ; that it was more full of graves than "Live happenings". He was all praise for Punjabees, their martial stature, their Grecian beauty and their attractive colour. When he reached Bombay, he fell in love with the Parsees. In this way, the whole social panorama of India was made to come before my eyes, as it were, and my knowledge of India was so much enriched and enlivened by his letters. We need more and more of such tourist accounts, travel books. We have to organise such tours too for our kisans. It was in answer to such an urge among the present day kisans, that my disciples, Sri Veerachari and V.V. Ramana, M.P. have organised special kisan trains and took hundreds of kisans round the whole of North India in 1954-57 and 1958. K.V. Subbayya, another kisan youth, has written an excellent description of that tour. This is indeed great progress from those days. Yet I feel grateful to Anjaneyulu for helping me to think of India as a living, lovely, organic entity.

When at long last I went to Madras in 1919 X-mas and to Calcutta, Kakinada, Rajahmundry, Machilipatam in July, 1920, I did not find them strange, as I had already been familiarised with their huge buildings, confusing tiers of streets with their congested growth of shops, houses and offices by Anjaneyulu's tour. In one respect, I was shocked into realisation that electricity could kill one, as lightning does, when some mischievous city students of Madras slyly asked me to turn the switch on in the hall of the University Union. It was leaky and so, I had to forget my dignity of the turban I used to wear and shout for life, and I turned round only to find all the boys bursting with laughter.

The food in Madras was mostly Tamilian in taste. All other Andhra boys used to dislike it. Somehow I took to it and it certainly improved my health. But the Bengali food, with its liberal doses of mustard oil, could not be mastered. The few days of my stay in that saffocatingly big city were a misery because I could not eat that food.

But how I enjoyed the Botanical Gardens, that vast Maidan,

the imposing statues and Victoria Memorial and the Museum and inspiring university hall. More than anything else, the park and fountain, called after Vidyasagar, inspired me so much, because that name was made so dear to me as much by my reading his biography in Telugu as by Veeresalingam's devotion to his ideals. Was not Iswarchandar the saviour of Hindu widows? Did he not refuse to wear a shirt at the bidding of British Viceroy? Such were my thoughts on the occasion.

I knew that one of the mouth-pieces of Gangajee would be seen in Calcutta. But what a disappointment it was to be told, when I actually went near her that her name was not Gangajee but Hoogly. What an ugly name for such a lovely river, made so dear to every Indian by our immortal poets! I had one consolation when I was bathing at Kalighat; that in that very same ghat Ramakrishna Paramahamsa also used to bathe every morning. I had already read his sayings and Vivekananda's book on him and sister Nivedita's about Vivekananda's teachings but how could I say that I did or could understand the full meaning of their writings. Yes I did comprehend, with my Indian mind which is accustomed to accept miracles as of everyday possibility, how Paramahamsa's back reflected all the vehement but poignant pain inflicted upon a buffalo by her keeper's whip, as he was going to Kalighat.

On my return from Calcutta, I was fortunate to get the early morning darshan of the beautiful lake Chilka, the parrot among lakes. How vast, placid and smiling she was in that Sandhya. I loved her at that first sight. For miles and miles, the train passes by her apron's swings and one can feast upon her beauty to one's heart's content. I was told by Srimati Bharti Devi decades after this, when she too had her first darshan, she enjoyed Chilka saras in the same way. Kakinada too had her fascination for me. Sri Gopalakrishnayya told me so much about the Grand Old Master of Shakespearean English, Raghupati Venkatratnam Naidu. I read so much about his real practice of social reform from the Autobiography of Veeresalingam. So I derived great satisfaction by having his darshan. Later he came to be knighted by the British, elected the Vice-Chancellor of the Madras University. He was indeed the Bapu of so many Harijan youths, whom he adopted as his own children and launched them into the ranks of Andhra intelligentsia.

I reached Rajahmundry with an overwhelming sense of exhilaration, for there I could see the beloved mother of Andhras, the river Godavari, the town-hall, the widow's home and Ashram and High School built by Veerasalingam, my Acharya. I was not disappointed when I saw them all. But I grieved so much that my Acharya was no more ; that he died two years ago and that I could not have his darshan again, as I had that of his noble colleague, Naidu. Veeresalingam started life as a middle-class Brahmin teacher and rose to be one of the greatest social leaders of Andhra of his age—1860-1918. He fought so relentlessly all forces of reaction, meaningless vestiges of tradition, superstition and stood like a rock by all the helpless and downtrodden. He conveyed through his more than 100 books in chaste Telugu prose—indeed he was hailed as the father of Telugu prose of the modern times—all the breath-taking and exhilarating inspiration of European liberalism and renaissance. I was so much steeped in his thoughts that my two days in that town proved to be laden with golden memories. Yes, I enjoyed a dip in the Godavari—the favourite river of the poet Sri Natha, of whom Anjaneyulu was so fond. As I saw those streams of women having their 'dip' in the sacred river, washing their clothes and carrying drinking water, I could realise where from Sri Natha got his models for his beautiful poems about the handsome women of different social strata. It is possible our Andhra women were more charming and better built in his days because the country was not then so overpopulated and denuded of its wealth by foreign invaders.

I returned home after this first long all-India tour of mine and told my father that I did not feel like studying in Indian universities as I felt that what I needed was more of the Western atmosphere. Mother Mangamma was afraid that her resources would not be enough to send me abroad and my grand-mother was already seventy years old and they wanted me to be in India. All of them were agreed that as I had won such a good name in the whole of our Taluk of 100,000 people as the most promising and public spirited kisan youth of exceptional social qualities, I should be helped to study further. So, in deference to their wishes, I joined the Andhra Christian College, Guntur, for my graduation course. But I could not be content with that. Anjaneyulu persuaded my father to send me to England at his cost. So, my father advised me to go quietly to Madras and obtain a passport.

In those days to obtain a passport was a very difficult affair. One needed reliable and distinguished recommendations to the Government. I was warned that the police reports about my role in obtaining signatures for the National Demand and in protesting against Besant's Internment might prejudice the District Collector and so it would be best to try to obtain it from Madras. So I went to Sir P.T. Chetty, the First Indian Mayor of Madras and the foremost leader of the Non-Brahmin party, as his recommendation would surely win for me the coveted passport. He proved to be as noble as he was known to be great. He asked me why I wanted to go to England and when I told him that my father wished me to compete for the ICS, he slyly asked me what I myself wished for and ferreted out my reply that I wanted to educate myself to be able to work for Swaraj. Oh how he laughed and how affectionately he patted me on the back ! He cautioned me that when the police and the city Commissioner would ask me, I should take care to mention only the ICS. Such a good patriot he was. When his turn came in 1920 to be the first Indian Chief Minister of Madras, he declined the offer on the ground of his old age and named Sri Subbaraya Reddi as the Chief. I had the satisfaction of dedicating to him in 1930 what has come to be accepted as the epoch-making book "The Economics of the Handloom" in Indian Economics ; that is, long after he passed away.

I received the passport only on the morning of the day on which I was scheduled to leave my village and my father was so nervous that I might not get it at all. The late Jampala Sambayya, who did so much to encourage kisan youths to go abroad for higher studies, arranged everything for my shipping passage, train journey across France etc.

On the previous day, a send-off function was organised in our village. The announcement was made that "Ryot" Patrika would soon be published and Barrister Ramaswami would edit it. In my reply I said that I was anxious that the Ryot Patrika should stand by the National Demand, espouse the cause of Ryots and fight the bureaucratic oppression of the masses and stand for social equality of all tribes, castes, sections of our people. Barrister Ramaswami advised me to concentrate on the ICS and assured me that he would look after the rest.

My grand-mother who had lost both her sons and my mother

Atchamamba was inconsolable ; Mother Mangamma dared not appear unhappy lest that too might prove unlucky, sister Laxmi Devi was openly jubilant that her sacrifice would bear fruit through my studies and my father was diplomatically non-enthusiastic but business like about arrangements for my long and hazardous journey.

The earliest occasion when I was made to take seriously panegyric traditional addresses of Bhatraju bards was when the Kshatriyas of Buddham-Khajeepalem who were recognised as such by Brahmins brought for me, what are known as "Racha Goche", that is, the Lungotis of Kshatriyas and I was made to wear them with the exhortation that nothing else should be worn, until I grew old enough to wear trousers.

On another occasion I was singled out from other children and placed in the lonely company of the two nephews of the Late P.V. Subbayya, the rich village Munsiff, when both he and my uncle returned from Madras with suits and gilted caps for us and donned them on us. My mother saved me from entertaining any sense of supriority and snobbery by preventing me from wearing that gilted cap, the hall-mark of the predatory zamindars, to the disappointment of my uncle.

My father also had conceived the idea that his sons should not be allowed to develop any snobbery. So he did not consolidate his holdings with those of our uncle, even though, we were to inherit them, for fear that if we knew he had the largest single holding for our family, we might be tempted to give up the actual cultivation and think ourselves too good for kisan's way of life, as P.V. Subbayya was attempting to do. By the time I came under the influence of Venkayya, and Veeresalingam, I was able to realise the need for all my family and such other kisans to keep ourselves among the masses and not to isolate ourselves.

## Rural, Social and Political Environment
## (1914—1920)

My ancestors were Kakateeya warriors of Warangal.

Today (1957 August Fifteenth) is the tenth anniversary of the Indian Independence Day. I was present at the New Delhi

celebration at the famous Red Fort, which was built by Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan. The weather was almost symbolic of the change taking place in our country during the past decade ; on the first occasion, the early morning sun was as hot and blinding in brilliance as were our hopes of achieving the social revolution of India, and this morning he was as soft, shy behind the clouds and smiling with the aid of the drizzle, just like our softened and chastened mood of wondering where and how to find funds for the fulfilment of the Second Five Year Plan. As our Prime Minister was speaking from that fresh green ramparts of the Red Fort, and referring to the great heroes and heroines of the first war of Independence, I was led to remember and admire the Andhra kisan warriors who had fought thrice so bravely and recklessly on the banks of the Godavari in 14th century and once again on the banks of the Krishna in seventeenth century to keep off the Moslem invaders from North India and to defend the independence of their beloved Dakshina Path (South India below the Godavari). If the brave Pratap Rudra Dev was trying to save the threatened independence like Prithvi Raj of Rathod three centuries earlier, his nephews Rolaya and Kapaya Naiks attempted as bravely to regain the lost freedom just like Netajee (Subhash Chandra Bose) of this country. So while Nehru was paying homage to the countless people who had suffered in the century-old fight for freedom and the recent struggle for national independence under the leadership of Gandhijee, I felt that those ancients of our rural kisan families who non-cooperated with the Delhi Padushas and British also played a progressive and heroic role.

And what a beautiful picture was made by those cupolas and sun-bathed arches on that majestic Lal Kilah Gate, with the shy sun-light adding its colours to the intervening lattices. Mr. Nehru referred to the past rulers and the millennium old history of India. I could see, in the mind's eye, how all those lakhs of kisan warriors of the North and South were fighting against the foreign invaders in those ages past with the additional hope of becoming rulers in their own right. All that has yielded to the present epoch and ideal of democracy, full-fledged and representative and of the Common Man, in the fields, in the factories, by the implements and at the desk, wishing not to be masters of anyone and not willing to be mastered by anyone but keen on the most constructive and disciplined freedom. It is on

the threshold of this epoch that the first decade of Swaraj India has brought our kisan, Kalakar, Karmik masses within the folds of our national reconstruction plans and programmes. I am glad to feel that it is towards the achievements of this era of National Freedom and Democratic Development that my family's patriotic and martial traditions have also helped me to make my contribution.

These thoughts led me to remember that there are a few kisan families in my village bearing their clan name "Orugallu" or Warangal, the capital of the famous Kakatiyas and their heroic last ruler Pratapa Rudra. I used to hear when I was a boy, how their ancestors belonged to that Kakatiya Tribe and how they had left that great city after it fell to the Moslem invaders. I also remembered that there used to be in Ramaswami's house a huge bamboo-basket, containing a consecrated sword, a shield and few small daggers and in the house of my father's cousin another similar basket. For years those baskets and their contents used to be treated as holy of holies and all the youths of our families were encouraged to offer homage to them once a year and to take the oath that we would strive heroically and shed our blood for the protection of our people. From 1914 onwards I began to include the country also in our prayers and vows ; that we would fight for our national freedom. That tradition of our families was indeed a useful and progressive one. It was natural that I should enquire about the import of those heirlooms. I learnt that those were the weapons with which the military leaders of our clans had fought for the independence and glory of the Kakatiya and Vijayanagar regimes and that when the British offered service in their army to their later heads of our families, they refused to serve them and secreted those arms in those baskets and venerated those heirlooms. In fact many kisan clans of Andhra had thus refused their cooperation and sheathed their warriors' swords and secreted them.

**My debt to uncle Ramaswami and his wife, Laxmi**

Sri Ramaswami, my uncle, was a well-built, medium-sized person. He was brown in colour, cheerful in domeanour and charming in his dealings with the local people. He was generous to a fault and as tender-hearted as his mother. He did not have the organising capacity of his father, Ramanayya, nor did he set much value on money and property as Mother Mangamma did.

During the few years of his management, he spent all the net income from his lands and encroached upon a good portion of the accumulated funds that Ramanayya had left for him, despite the scrupulous economy observed by his wife and others in his family. Mother Mangamma used to worry about me in later years that I was as careless of money and as unable to cherish property as Ramaswami. He had no faults or failings, which were the usual trappings of such rich youngmen. He took pleasure in spending rather freely in relieving the distress of the poor. He used to provide poor feeding to all the wandering mendicants, Brahmins and other poor people. He patronised poets, singers and social entertainers. He was indeed hailed as the best patron of the votaries of fine arts. In this direction, he found a good friend in the village Munsiff Sri P.V. Subbayya who was only a few years older than him. Sri Subbayya was a bolder and more accomplished social leader. He displayed interest also in patronising peripatetic but professional troupes of actors, both male and female and enriched our social life by getting a number of plays enacted every year for the benefit of all the village. Although I benefited much from this aristocratic, socially entertaining and culturally uplifting environment provided at that early age by these two relatives of mine, I was more influenced by simplicity and *dharmic* way of life favoured by Mother Mangamma, sister Laxmi Devi.

Laxmi Devi was indeed a noble woman. She was as beautiful and fair as an Italian woman. Her very bearing, stature and walk were so much like Greek women. Even as children, my brothers and I used to be charmed by her. She was famous in our village for her dignity, self-control and sense of duty. She supplemented Mother Mangamma in providing an inspiring home atmosphere for us, the three boys.

I did not have to suffer so much then, as later on from the evil effects of electioneering in my public activities. Only once we indulged in election for the managing committee of our village library and for the local panchayat and Taluk Board and it only exacerbated the dormant differences.

**Rural Sports**

I was so fond of all the rural games and took part in them,

every time they were organised by others or by me in our village right up to the time of departure for England. They were manly sports, with the fullest scope for exercise, display of initiative and personality. The games which were centred round the climbing up trees were my special favourites and there was almost no tamarind (chinta) with strong, wiry branches which I did not climb up or jump from in our village and its roads. The moonlit nights specially enabled us to carry on the "light and shade" games. Uptill my seventeenth year, I took part in those games also in which both boys and girls could take part. The great "Swinging on the hammock" tied from the tamarind branches was the most exciting of those games, because in those days both men and women used to rival with each other in swinging up to higher and higher heights. Of course the India-wide manly game of "Bali Gudu" was also our favourite. It was indeed an era of varied games fit for robust and cheerful people and village life used to be enlivened by their frequency and popularity. The poorest too could participate in them as money was not needed for them. It is good that the N.E.S. and the kisan movements of today are trying to re-introduce these games and whip up public enthusiasm for them.

Our village is fortunate in having many tanks. There is one in front of "Gobhumi" and another in front of the institute. The biggest of them is in front of the Elementary school and Shiva's temple. The play of the sun and moon on these tanks is so delightful. Once a year the 'non-vegetarians among our Non-Brahmin people used to get fish caught from these tanks by the professional fishermen and Harijans and enjoy a "Fish Week" as it were a week of much pleasure for young people. Now-a-days this week is not being observed. What a pity swimming is not permitted, nor encouraged in any of these tanks. It is a greater pity that the lotus in tanks is not well tended as it ought to be to beautify our villages and to enrich the colour-effects of our landscape. A boat was placed in one of our tanks and our youths were helped to row it and enjoy themselves on the tank. In some villages, there is an annual Boat Festival, when the local deity is taken in procession in moonlight on the tank with hundreds of torches to brighten up the function. How I wish such festivals are organised in every village.

When I was between ten to fifteen years old, the village

leaders brought deer, antelopes, fine horses, dwarf bullocks as well as racing bullocks, swans and ducks, peacocks and singing birds, as showpieces and provided a miniature 'Zoo' for us. The young people of neighbouring villages used to go to our village just to look at all those wonderful animals and birds and we were naturally proud of our village possession. We should come to have such miniature zoos, arboribums, museums in many centres of rural India.

Traditional magicians used to visit our village once or twice a year. Some of them were known as 'Veena Mushti People.' I remember one great performance of theirs ; a man of 30 years of age reclining on a cot built out of the softest pith of corn stalks and the cot being carried by four men, two in the front and two at the back. How that reclining individual made himself into mere "featherweight" was a mystery to the whole village folk. Many such wonderful feats used to be performed by those magicians.

**Rural Festivals**

Ponnur, our neighbouring village, only a mile from Nidubrolu enjoys a fortnight's glory once every year during Lord Bhava Narayana's festival during the Vaisakh. Peasants used to make their annual purchases of timber, agricultural tools, clothes, cots, boxes and other furniture in the numerous shops and stores that are organised specially during that season. There were the expert and traditional dancers of Bharata Natya and famous players on the Sannayi and Mridanga, about which post-swaraj India is so keen. There were also many amusement parks for children. To all the youths of our neighbourhood, that was a great fortnight when we could gain such interesting knowledge of the products of the local handicrafts, and arts and we could see people of distant parts coming there for business, for festivities and fun. Such is our rural environment even today.

Such centres of religious celebrations and social festivals spring up from time to time in different places; some become permanent features, some fade away after a period of fame. Govada, our neighbouring village, conceived the idea of celebrating a miniature Shiva Ratri, to the glory of Lord Shiva, after the fashion of Kotappa Konda. Its leaders suggested to the leaders of the neighbouring villages

to cooperate by bringing in their prabhas. Gradually the festival gained momentum and by the time I was nine years old it was quite a grand affair. I remember how much I enjoyed going to it in the company of my uncle Ramaswami in 1910 and how our people used to lose their separate, sedate personalities, merge themselves in the new excited and thoughtless personality of the crowd and shout and jump and gallivanate as if they were suddenly released from all social discipline. This Govada festival has become a permanent feature of the rural social life of this area.

One brilliant Brahmin of Sangam Jagarlamudi, and another of Marripudi, and a third of Appikatla conceived the idea of celebrating a yagna in the fashion of the ancient Rishis. Within a period of six years, each one of these three villages witnessed successively two annual yagnas and more than 100,000 rural and urban upper-caste people of the Districts of Krishna and Guntur were fed sumptuously for a few days and more than a million people visited each of them. During those week to fortnight functions, discourses of religion, recitals and interpretations of the Epics, especially Mahabharta, Bhajans, Religio-social Dances and public processions were organised. The Munsiff of Chebrolu tried with some success over a few years to whip up public enthusiasm and support for the annual festival for the local Deity. Though this village has many historically famous temples, its festival could not become so popular. The leaders of Appikatla have been trying for the past 50 years to make their festival of Vishnu also as popular. But it continues to be a local affair. I have enjoyed my visits to all those festivals. I am even now convinced that such festivals are necessary. The people of the environs of Angalakuduru have organised in April, 1958 a twenty-five days celebration of Sree Rama's story and fed more than 200,000 people —mostly poor—as the guests of Sree Rama. They serve the very useful purpose of enlivening Rural Life. They can be made to promote public enlightenment and adult education. They are a safety valve to our convention-ridden society. As a youth I gained so much from them. I found to my surprise that the English and the Scotch use such carnivals with great gusto and display much more social cosmopolitan spirit. Of course the Americans revel in them.

## Varied Influences shaping My Social Attitude

Veeresalingam's writings on social and religious problems, the cynicism of the late C.R. Reddi, a Cambridge graduate and one of the most distinguished university Vice-Chancellors, which was so powerfully expressed in his two great works in Telugu, the "Principles of Telugu Poetry" and "Economics" and the late Ramaswami's incisive criticism of the so-called infallibility of Puranas or the Epics had done so much to crack the edifices of religious faith built into my mind through the Mahabharat Kalakshepams. And those Kalakshepams were indeed a powerful media for spreading general knowledge about Indian cultural heritage. For instance, I gained so much by attending the four or five annual recitations and interpretations of Mahabharata given in our village between 1916—1920 by a kisan interpreter. Even to have such a kisan interpreter for the highly Brahminised Epic was itself a revolutionary achievement. Yet the Vedantic teachings of Vivekananda and Rama Tirtha saved me from becoming a reckless cynic without any faith in any of our social standards fashioned after the basic tenets of Indian Vedanta. The famous poems of Telugu statesmen and saints, Sumati and Vemana —both of kisan tribes—were recited by me like all Telugu youths. I took a special liking for the sweetness of their composition and wisdom of their thoughts. I was attracted by the life-story of saint Vemana. Both of them were social reformers and bold, free thinkers. I used to read someone or the other of the poems of these two great thinkers, whenever I could find spare time and think about their social significance. By about 1918, I could realise that those poems embodied most of the essence of the equally famous Sanskrit poems of Bhartrihari, a North Indian statesman-saint and also of the teachings of Mahabharata, the great epic. Since then, they formed the kernel of my attitude towards most of Indian religious belief. For instance, Vemana questions : "If stones are God will they not swallow up all the hillocks of food ?" Sumati warns : "If the woman in the family is ever made to shed a tear because of her family unhappiness, the Dame of fortune will not like to remain in the family." Sumati exclaimed that "it is best for any intellectual to find a free living on land by ploughing it with a pair of bullocks instead of serving an ungrateful or thoughtless prince." In another, he said, "you cannot expect statesmanship from an unworthy or untutored person merely because you

enthrone him on a golden throne". It was all this wisdom of the ages of India, cynicism of Reddi, Ramaswami and Vedantism of Vivekananda which formed the basis for my philosophical attitude towards life. Sumati warned and "wealth may come in spontaneously just as water comes into a coconut ; it may also go just as the essence of the wood apple disappears when an elephant swallows it". So he consoles the public not to be worried over such unexpected upsets, for "it is as natural for carts to be carried on ships as for the parts of a ship, when scuttled, to be carried on carts". Vemana cautioned statesmen not to be particular about their importance in places where they are not so easily known or respected for after all "does not a hill look so small in a looking glass". Sumati preached in the manner of Lord Jesus that "there is something specially noble only in doing good to the evil-doer without giving thought to his misdeeds". Their thoughts roll on in this fashion and are so convenient for quotation. It was such teachings and thoughts that captured my mind.

Poet Patanna gripped my heart also. He made a free-translation of Mahabharata, the epic of Lord Krishna's life. His poetry is a peerless beauty. He was himself a great devotee and a real saint. His was a living and infectious faith. I am moved so deeply by his devotional poems even today. He refused to dedicate his great Epic to the then Emperor of the South and allowed his manuscript to be buried by the disappointed ruler rather than be forced to dedicate it to a mere ruler, in preference to God. He spurned royal favours and gifts of gold and land. He refused to accept the teachings of saint Sukra who anticipated Machivellian politics. I took to heart, even at that tender age of fourteen to sixteen, his noble teaching that "after all, all the long line of those kings who merely cared for their earthly powers and pride, had come to be forgotten while those few noble rulers like Sibi who saved a bird by giving his own flesh in exchange to a hunter became immortal" and ever since that has become the touch-stone as well as source of strength and inspiration to me.

The ancient planners of Indian villages provided for groves of Mangoes, yielding lovely and tender leaves to feed the singing cuckoo, and sweet and nourishing fruits for all and tamarinds, supplying the most important and appetising tamarind fruit, the

indispensable ingredient of most Indian dishes. It was within these groves that weavers used to size up their warps. They also planted the spreading banyan tree which affords plenty of fruit, as food for birds and shade from the sun-harassed animals and people on all the four approaches of every village and also on the banks of tanks, I found the vestiges of that excellent planning in every Guzerati village. Unfortunately the modern Electrician, Road-Builder has ignored their indispensability for rural India and has been destroying them to make way for roads-linings and electric posts. But in Moscow the engineers take special care not to indulge in this destructive work.

Laterly our villagers have come to lose sight of the multi-purpose utility of these tamarind groves and banyan trees. It is interesting to note that while Indian villagers were discouraged from allowing a tamarind tree to grow around their houses, for fear of ill-luck, I found that the Sinhalese planted the same tree in their most cherished places like universities, on the Day of their Independence, as being suspicious, because it is the longest-living tree.

**Love of Birds and Trees**

My joy knew no bounds when I found that the very love of birds, crops, trees and all the beauties that Indian seasons clothe our vegetation with, which I developed long before I went to High School, thanks to Mother Mangamma's unconscious teaching, was considered to be a valuable possession by my teacher Venkayya and also by the English poet Wordsworth. Poet Potanna's delightful poems about the birds and trees with which the shepherd damsel of Brindavan and Lord Krishna were so much in love stamped each one of the parrots, Mynas, etc. among birds and punnaga, 'poona', Mogali and Rose and chrysanthemum with a personality of its own and my heart was full of their charm and aroma.

**Participation in Village Community Life**

Annie Besant's demand for the resuscitation of village panchayats and Sankaran Nair's retort to the British that India had known democracy through her ancient village Republics fired my hope for the future of our villages and I began to dream

of village self-government. Although I read in Telugu books about "political science" I did not understand the full import and even main features of representative government, because, in our village environment, we did not have fully functioning self-governing institutions. The one and the only election that had taken place in our area was when our village Munsiff P.V. Subbayya stood for Taluk Board and defeated the Chairman of the Union Board of Ponnur, *i.e.*, in 1916 but the vote was restricted to a few scores of big landholders in each village. Therefore I welcomed the short pamphlet published by Sri Rama Koteswara Rao about the significance of "vote" as it was proposed to be given to very large sections of our people by Montague. Thus I was very far behind urban youths of my ages in the environmental awareness of the intricacies of working of democratic institutions.

I was fortunate in gaining much valuable experience in working among villagers, kisans, their youths and students during those six years of public work in my village and its neighbourhood. It has stood me in good stead in all my subsequent plans and work for rural people. For instance I used to visit every head of a family or his wife or both and their children too, many times a year either to canvass for their membership of the library or to collect their subscriptions. I used to beg their children to go to school, to go to my tutorials, to attend my night schools or to come to our public meetings and for that, I had to visit their homes. During the campaign of collecting rice to finance the education of poor students I had to personally go and place the baskets in the homes of those kisans who agreed to offer rice and later on, collect them, laden with rice-offerings. I used to canvass for orders for various Telugu books from men or their wives and obtain parcels from Madras and distribute them. I volunteered to take library books to kisans' homes to persuade their women—to read them. I organised a number of community dinners, the celebrations of the Enthroning of Lord Sree Rama on the Sree Rama Navami etc. How is it ever possible to describe adequately the extreme difficulty of persuading our rural masses to pay regular subscriptions and agree to continue their membership regularly for years and attend meetings at stated periods ? When I find nearly forty years later, the NES Administration detailing the duties of their village level workers and the officers above them and the programmes indicated for their day-to-day work among our

villagers, I am only reminded of a good portion of the work I and my fellow workers used to carry on during that period of 1914—1920. The workers of both the periods are face to face with the considerably difficult problem of how to persuade villagers to realise the need for the "follow-up programme" through the creation of an efficient local organisation, free from election squabbles, with enough funds and a good number of loyal and honest youthful workers.

I found it easy, as do the Village Level Workers (V.L.W.) of the present day, to get villagers agree to contribute fairly well for any occasional celebration. But I could not be so sure, as the present N.E.S. workers too cannot be sure, that such celebrations or activities would be taken up by the villagers as regular programmes of their own. Hence my admiration for the successful planners of ancient or medieval India who had intertwined our rural social programmes with religion so well that even today, our villagers scrupulously celebrate Sree Rama Navami, birthday of Lord Krishna, Vana Mahotsav or Vinayak Chaviti, Vijaya Dasami, the spring festival, Sankranti, the harvest season and so on.

**Why do great and good men oppose each other**

A sense of pride in our nation developed through veins as I read that the people of Maharashtra presented Balgangadhar Tilak with a purse of a lakh of rupees and hailed him with the title of Lok Manya Tilak, on his release after six years of imprisonment for Sedition against the British Raj. His declaration "swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it" began to inspire us, the rural youth of the High Schools. I remembered then how he was obstructed all so painfully and unwisely by no less a man than Gopala Krishna Gokhale of his own city Poona, who was also acclaimed as a patriot by Mahatma Gandhi. I recollected how I was encouraged in the anti-illiteracy campaign of my boyhood era by the passionate plea of Gokhale for his resolution in the then central legislature demanding an annual grant of one crore for the spread of elementary education and I wondered how and why two such great patriots should have obstructed each other. I could understand only later on after getting into political life that such otherwise unwise and unprogressive obstructive activities of great and good men are an inevitable concomi-

tant of interplay of passions and mutual jealousies of almost all the great men of history. Very soon after I had left for Oxford Annie Besant began to fight the Non-Cooperation movement started by Mahatma Gandhi and she called him all sorts of names whom she had hailed only a few years earlier as the Mahatma, so did Srinivasa Sastri, the stentorian orator so well admired by the British. As a passionate nationalist youth, I joined other students at Oxford in expressing my resentment at their criticism of Gandhijee in 1920-21.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati's great book "Satyardha Prakasika" reached us in its Telugu version in 1920 and I read and appreciated his teachings. Having been already influenced by Veeresalingam's teachings, I readily agreed with Swami's criticism of the caste system and the orthodoxy of priests and the utter anti-national significance of untouchability. I could not however accept his faith that Vedas are any more God-given than the other sacred books. (It was my good fortune to visit Ajmer in 1949 and see the temple and rooms where the Swami used to do his tapas and composed his great book "Satyaisha Prakasika".

I have later come to realise how in the minds and practices of so many Indians, there is a great divergence between what they accept intellectually as the right and just social conception and their almost sheepish practice of traditional customs and beliefs, as if there can be no hypocrisy involved therein. Somehow, that has not been my habit. I cannot feel happy until and unless my practice conforms to my beliefs and professions. I derived no end of satisfaction, indeed inspiration when I discovered in later years that Bapujee too was noted for such a quality. Indeed Indian philosophers have always preached the need for unity in thought, word and deed, though so few are able to achieve such a unity. In fact, I began to exhibit at such an early age as fourteen, the overpowering propensity to begin to practice what I was convinced about. For instance the moment I found so much pleasure in reading story-books, novels etc., I began to persuade my fellow students to do the same. When I felt inspired by Veeresalingam's teachings against caste system and untouchability, I began to practise cosmopolitanism among friends and youths of different castes and refuse to observe untouchability. Similarly when I was doubly convinced through the teaching of

both Veeresalingam and Dayanand that Idol worship and Shaktaic Sacrifices were unnecessary and uncivilised, I began to oppose their observances in our villages. When years afterwards, that is in 1933, I read Tagore's "Gorah", I discovered how truly he pictured the mental and moral tribulations and social reform activities of such rural youths as myself in that distant period of 1916—20.

**How U.S.A. came into my student life**

I was fortunate in having read the excellent biography of Abraham Lincoln by Sri. G. Hari Sarvothama Rao of the Andhra Vijnana Samiti, even while I was in the village school. But I cannot say that I was able to get the import of it until my third reading of it when I had begun to take active interest in politics, that is 1917. By that time I was becoming familiar with Christian names. I had the opportunity of studying the Telugu editions of Plutarch's Lives, a biography of Benjamin Franklin. I could see how the American Negroes were liberated from their slavery and began to dream of the liberation of our Panchanos—later to be known as Harijans—from untouchability. Thus in a vague way I was coming to be aware of the existence of a great country of the English speaking people, the United States.

Then came the participation of U.S.A. in that first world war and the newspapers were full of the American contribution, her history, her love of liberty and national freedom and her past war of Independence and her opposition to imperialism. Soon after came the inspiring messages of President Woodrow Wilson, almost rivalling with the declarations of Indian nationalists declaring the right of all nations for self-determination and expressing abhorrence of all types of imperialism and domination of one nation by another. That was like a great relief haralded by terrific lightning flashes and heavy rain after almost endless gloom and breathlessly stormy sky. India grew almost hysterical with joy when his famous fourteen points were published. Sir Subrahmanya Iyer, the first Indian Chief Justice made bold to appeal to him to apply his principles to India and help her to attain self-determination. Poor President Wilson had no chance of using his good offices because the British hastened to condemn Iyer's action in appealing over their hands to an outsider, however great he might be, thus daring to warn the American President against interfering with British imperialistic domestic matters. Thus was closed that brief though

enthralling interlude of hope for India. We were all beside ourselves with resentment against the British reaction and with joy that we had one Indian, Iyer, courageous enough to rise to the occasion and appeal to the conscience of the world against the suffocating British Imperialism.

We heard that the League of Nations was being brought into existence and India was also the signatory of its foundation document and we read about the Indian signatories too, Lord Sinha and Maharajah of Bikaner. The British were disappointed in that these names or their signatures failed to enthuse youths like me in India, because by then, our hopes were kindled by the Home Rule League and the idea of self-determination of nations became popular among us and so, we could see that India was desired the essence of what would make a country free and independent.

The British publicised the heroic role played by Indian troops ; how some of our ordinary Indian soldiers achieved feats of extraordinary heroism and endurance and military prescience and so, won the coveted Victoria Cross. But all that only strengthened our conviction that our people were second to none in heroism and military leadership and at least as a return for our great contributions to the Allies' victory, National Independence should have been offered to us.

**Lag in Time-spirit between Towns and Villages**

Thus the first twenty years of my life were spent in the comparative quietness and social placidity of the twenties of Rural India. When I look back upon it from this distance of time, I find some interesting features which distinguish or compare with the later developments in my own career, thoughts and those of rural India in particular and India in general. I have found that there is an important time-lag between India and the Western World, say France and England, not to speak of the much more progressive and racy United States in their capacity to become aware of new trends in scientific and technological thoughts. Much more difference is found in their psychological readiness to adopt them in their national equipment. Immensely greater difference is there in their respective ability to accept such latest thoughts, machinery, industrial and commercial techniques. And rural India of the pre-

sent day is found lagging far behind urban India in every aspect. Just imagine what must have been the position in 1910-20 when I was opening my eyes into realisation of the existence of a real world outside our twenty, fifty or hundred villages in our Firka, Taluk and a few sleepy and smoky and dusty towns !

If it had not been for Anjaneyulu who was trying to keep himself in touch with national trends as reflected and approved by the Telugu newspapers and Venkayya who did imbibe the nineteenth century liberalism of England and the Vedantic reaction to it by Vivekananda and Ramatirtha and Veeresalingam's epoch-making writings, it would have been almost impossible for me to get even a glimpse of the world-shaking thoughts, movements and events outside our very limited rural ken.

Even at that, I was unaware of the nature and significance of the Russian Revolution and its impact upon world events. I could not fully comprehend the import of President Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points and the idea of the League of Nations, beyond what it might mean to India's national movement. I was not able to understand the slavish kowtouring towards the British and autocratic attitude towards their own subjects that the Indian Princes were playing. We were blissfully thinking that Princes and Zamindars were the last but welcome vestiges of what had been real Indian India before the invaders subjected India. I am not quite sure that most of even the educated people of our mofussil towns were clear in their minds as to the role to be played by ICS and other administrative services in relation to the national movement ; as otherwise the elite of the intelligentsia of Bapatla, Tenali, Guntur who gathered at the send-off function on the eve of my departure for Europe in 1920 would not have been so enthusiastic about the ICS, as if there was nothing else to be aimed at by a youth.

We did realise that something horrible was being done, when Rowlatt Act was being passed, because even such a renowned Moderate as the Late Srinivasa Sastri was protesting against it. We all fasted on the exhortation of Gandhijee as a protest against the Jallianwalah Tragedy. We were feeling that the British Government was not keeping faith with our nation. But somehow, there was not that intensity of realisation and strength of organised,

incessant, informed atmosphere of discussions, agitation and action that there could be in a town or a city with its clubs, associations, public meetings and large numbers of educated, politically-minded people and youths. As for the vast masses of peasant proprietors they were mostly ignorant of the national and international happenings. They had to wait until 1921 and 1930-31 movements before opening their eyes and see the need of their participation in them. Hence our readiness to think of my going to England for higher studies and ICS competition, even while Gandhijee was preparing for his national campaign of non-cooperation with the "Satanic Government". I was considerably chagrined when his great movement was decided upon, only a few months after I had left for England and the non-cooperation movement with its objective of "Swaraj within an year" was launched within the very first year of my study at Oxford ; that was possible because of the aweful, though painful time-lag that intervened between Rural India and Urban India in their respective realisation of the full significance of any national movement or crisis. Though the position has improved to some extent, I am afraid that disability still afflicts most parts of our rural India and its peoples.

I think it was on the day of my departure from Nidubrolu for Bombay that I put on the European suit. Except on those few occasions when I was a young boy, and when my father was alive, I never put on such a dress and it was quite a job to learn how to do it. Indeed, I could not put on properly the tie until I reached London. I used to wear my hair in the orthodox Brahmin Pandit fashion, with a long tuft of hair and had to remove it at Bombay on the eve of boarding the steamer. I was a complete vegetarian, in conformity with the Pandits' standards and as per the Vedantist tradition and so I had much difficulty to gradually learn on board the steamer how to be a non-vegetarian. I was told that it would be practically impossible for one to be a vegetarian in Europe and in fact, even now, it is a difficult job for one not to be non-vegetarian.

My unhappiness at the difficulties encountered by me in getting used to European ways of life, especially in food, dress social etiquette could be understood, if it is remembered that I had to get used even to drinking coffee, tea, cocoa, learn to use forks and knives and table manners all for the first time

in my life. Although I knew how to look upon women as mothers and sisters, I was not used to mix with them as fellow students, playmates and mere girls and women.

Fortunately for me, there were more than 300 Indian students on that first Indian steamer S.S. Loyalty of the Scindia Navigation Company, an Indian concern, in addition to more than a hundred Europeans. So there was no need for me to be overwhelmed by fear of making serious mistakes in social etiquette among Europeans. The Indian students were highly conscious of their nationalism that there was no chance for the European passengers to behave badly. And by habit I was so much absorbed with my studies and thoughts that I suffered much less than other Andhra students from inadequacies in our social behaviour in the European fashion.

**My communion with Sir P.C. Ray**

We were lucky in having with us Sir P.C. Ray. I knew about him and his great discoveries in chemistry and his sacrifices for the Bengali students. I had read his inspiring speech made on the occasion of opening the Gokhale Hall in Madras in 1917-18 and Venkayya told me such fine things about him and the politician-patriot Gopalakrishna Gokhale. I was therefore elated that I was travelling on the same first class deck as that great patriot. I went to him and sought his advice as to what and where I should study in England. He was surprised that I was going to England without first of all making sure of a seat in any university and without selecting the subject of my study ; yet he evinced great interest in me because of my profound interest in the national problems. I asked him several questions about Ram Mohan Roy, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Bankim Chandra, whose biographies I had already read in Telugu. Being an ardent Bengali, he was so much pleased with me when I talked about his own great achievements in science. He favoured me with his friendship. We used to spend together a few hours every day, either walking or sitting on the deck and discussing so many questions. He inspired me so much that I forgot to be home-sick and sea-sick, though that monsoonic Indian ocean was so frightful and the waves were so mountainous.

The Indian Ocean was a terrific phenomenon. Never did I imagine that it could be so tempestuous. What I saw of a sea in Madras was nothing when compared to the monsoonic Indian Ocean. The Red Sea was not so frightful. The Mediterranean was very wild in that September. After 3 long weeks on those seas, we reached Marsailles and once we set foot on land I had a great sense of relief. How white, short, buxom and bright-eyed were those Marsailles ! I remembered the French National song called after that city. We were all provided berths on a special train and its speed was so exciting. Early on the next morning I got up, shivering—so cold it was. And the large compartment—wide glass windows were so pleasing and the sylvan green—so fresh, so attractive—of the French countryside and the columns of smoke from the chimneys of rows and rows of houses in those small towns and the slender but gushing streams and rivers, smiling in that emerald green countryside made a deep impression, as three distinctively new features of that morning's sight.

The Indian students were considerably amused, I remember, at the sight of men kissing each other, husband and wife kissing each other on the Railway stations and on the trains, for in India, such endearments are expressed only in privacy of one's room. We asked some English passengers about it. They said, "Oh that is the French way". Soon the gurgling and running rivers Rhone and Rhine reminded me of our own canals. I was surprised to know that they were styled as rivers, though only as big as the Tungabhadra Canal by my village. From then onwards, most of the natural phenomena were found to bear the same relation to similar things in India as the Rhone and the Rhine did to our Tungabhadra Canal.

The crossing over the English Channel proved to be painful. We reached London late in the evening during September 1920. We were all taken to the Shakespeare Hut of YMCA in Goodge street. I remember how I was tickled by the exhortation made by the Secretary that we should not try to sleep, as we do in India, on top of the beds but get under the sack-like blankets, as otherwise we should be frozen to death by morning.

During the next day I found out that it was not at all an easy matter to get admission in any university and that our

Indian Matriculation Certificate was not considered as adequate to open the portals in British universities. This was a bitter disappointment to me. Somehow, someone helped me to send a wire to Sri Ramakrishna, an ICS Probationer, whom I had met in my village at the 1918 Conference and on receipt of his reply, I went to Oxford and met him. That meeting proved to be so inspiring to me, because he encouraged me to feel confident of getting a seat in Oxford University. He took me under his wings, helped me to get into the stride of Oxford student life and began to teach me how to prepare myself for the entrance examination, called the Responsions. Both he and T.B. Rao took me to the Censor of the St. Catherines, Mr. Baker and obtained the promise that I would be given a seat once I passed the Responsions. It was thus I was launched on my Oxford student career by Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Rao.

**From Rural India to Rural England**

We all moved into Botley village, two miles from the city. They stayed in the Elms Farm, an ancient farm-house and I stayed in Elms Lodge across the road, a modern cottage with modern sanitary conveniences—a comfort to me. Off and on, I stayed in that village for a number of years. Oxford was itself not too big a city, though it had all the comforts and conveniences of a modern city. To me who had gone almost straight from my Indian village, that stay in the English village, Botley, was an unlooked-for blessing. I loved its walks and lanes. I became a daily hiker on the rural roads to the neighbouring villages, Ensham, Cumnor. The rivers Thames, the Isis and their many tributaries, running in a snake-like fashion in that rural neighbourhood were to become my favourite companions as it were. The Elms, Oaks, Chestnuts, and Poplars—all old, grand and impressive trees of England—were my friends, reminding me of the Jamboo, tamarind and peeple trees that I befriended ever since my childhood in Nidubrolu-Ponnur environs. Thus I was introduced to life in England through the English countryside and therefore, I did not feel so much lost in that wilderness of the great city of London or so much fascinated by urban fashions. I was transplanted, as it were, from Rural India into Rural England—the best possible introduction into English life.

# 2

# *My Ancestors*

My ancestors were toilers for the past two millenniums. They were also fighters in the cause of the country. That used to be the case with all the agriculturists in most countries of the world. In Buddhist times, differences between the upper and lower classes Aryans and Dasyus, intellectuals consecrated as priests, Kshatriyas charged with the main profession of soldiering were sought to be overcome. During those centuries, the landed socially advanced and culturally self-reliant sections of agriculturists were known as Kshatriyas in the west, Karmakars, Kurmis in the Gangetic Valley and Kammas in the doabs between Mahanadi-Godavari-Krishna-Penna and Tungbhadra rivers of the South. As is well-known, Buddhists generally softened the Sanskrit words ; so Dharma came to be Dhamma and Karma was turned into Kamma.

The great mass of the liberal-minded, free, independent, agricultural masses of the country, south of the Mahanadi in Orissa, have since come to be known as Kammas. They were as good soldiers as agriculturists and they were as keen on playing their role as leaders in their village commonwealths as they were expert and enthusiastic peasants.

When the general leaders of the society switched over from Buddhism to Hinduism, those Kamma (Karmakar) masses

had to be accepted as honourable partners in village society and not as untouchables, or as tribal people consigned to the hills or as menial sections of village communities, as had been the lot of those unfortunate social cadres who had lost at some stage or the other of our ancient history in the race for social and political status and freedom. Their deep attachment to land and its ownership and advanced cultivation and their inalienable love of fighting for their own freedom and social status and national independence seemed to have helped them to retain their leading position in the reoriented Hindu Society after the fall of Buddhism.

Were these people racially or socially homogeneous ? It is difficult to assert that. From the days of earlier Pallavas to the times of the Cholas, there seems to have been a quiet but continuous process of fusion between the indigenous masses and the incoming conquerors and soldiering masses of Pallavas, Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas and Cholas. We find the relics of what must have been a broad and progressive movement of uplifting process of social development, achieved through the inter-marriages between the local people and the ruling class and classes, in the surnames and names of many of the clans of these Kamma masses.

Pallavas ruled over Andhra and Karnataka during 5 to 6 centuries A.D., Rashtrakutas during 6 to 8 centuries and Chalukyas during 9 to 10 centuries and Cholas during 10 to 11 centuries and they were followed by Kakatiyas during 11 to 13 centuries and Rajas of Vijayanagar during 14—17 centuries.

This healthy social process of fusion of the old and new peoples from different parts of the Deccan and the Gangetic Valleys seems to have come to an end, once the foreign Muslem invaders began to challenge, with growing fury and success, the social life of the peoples of the Dakshinapatha from the banks of the Godavari.

Who were the Kakatiyas ? The Kammas claim them to be their direct ancestors ; so do the Velamas, Telagas, Munnuru Kapus. They certainly shared the Kshatriya traditions, and succeeded to the Cholas' ruling powers, Chalukyas' dynastic authority and Pallavas' inheritance of being good builders and sailors. They

were producers of agricultural wealth and the deserving inheritors of all their statecraft, military prowess and love of cultural pursuits. To this day, these successors of Kakatiya tradition proudly carry the name of those ancient ruling leaders of South India as the hallmarks of their clans.

It was the order of the day till the fall of Kakatiyas of Orugallu or Warangal, the Rayas at Vijayanagar, (Hampi) and Chandragiri and Raya Vellore and finally the Nayaks at Tanzore and Madura for all the numerous and socially and variously graded clans of this broad tribe—if at all it is to be treated as a tribe or a caste, in tune with the Indian sociological history—to inter-marry among themselves. But whenever the local leaders were too short-sighted or reactionary or too much under the influence of the local socio-religious leaders, the offspring of such inter-marriages were obliged to slip into a new clan, as a higher or lower cadre in that society. Thus have sprung up several social distinctions, to the growing weakening of the social and military strength of the Kamma masses.

The tradition of the Andhra masses was no exception to the general Indian historical weakness of the masses, that as any set of families achieved any social or military regal status, they and their original clans or tribes tend to grow into separate clans with exclusive and touch-me-not arrogant privileges. This process of constant alienation of every new and fortunate ruling group from the main bulk of the masses has proved to be the main weakness of Indian society vis-a-vis the religiously-insulated invaders, the Moslems and Europeans.

Thus arose from out of the Andhra masses of toilers, the Velamas, Reddis, Munnuru Kapus, Telagas, Koppula Velamas, Gazula Chettis, Balijes, Goudas, as distinct clans, the residue continuing to be the present day Kammas. All of them have in them the heroic and historic traditions of the Pallavas, Rashtrakutas, Cholas, Kakatiyas, Rayas and Nayaks, to take only the latest cadres among the great rulers and upholders of the Indian civilisation.

During the Kakatiya regime of three centuries, the military leaders of these Kamma masses were known as Nayaks, Nayanim-

war, Needu, Rayudu, Rayalu indicating their regal aspirations and origins. Their chiefs were then known to be 300 and the inheritors of their tradition came to be known as Munnuru Kapus.

The most distinguished Kakatiya ruler was Gajapati Deva (his title 'Deva' corresponding to 'Deo' in Orissa). He had a great and powerful young general known as Gangaya Sahini. He was the chieftain in the Bana Seema, corresponding to the present day Chittoor, Cuddapah and Anantpur areas. That Gangaya served the next ruler, Queen Rudrama Devi, the warrior-daughter of King Gajapati Deva, as her chief minister as well as principal Nayak (corresponding to general in modern times). The descendents of that Gangaya Sahini founded the fort and called it Ganginenikonda now in Cuddapah District after their great ancestor. Several villages in Chittoor, Nellore, Krishna, Khammam Districts came to be founded and named after the famous general.

Those three hundred Nayaks have deserved well of Indian history by the heroic fight they put up against the North Indian invaders, during and after the times of Alluddin Khilji and his commander-in-chief Malik Kafur. They defeated the Delhi forces on two occasions under the heroic leadership of Maharaja Pratap Rudra Deva, the grandson of Rudrama Devi and great-grandson of Gajapati Deva. On the third occasion, their stiff and prolonged defence of Warangal forced the Delhi rulers to reach an agreement with Pratap Rudra. But the internecine divisions among the various clans and cadres of the Kamma Nayaks, thanks to their mutually antagonistic religious faiths within the broad Hindu culture, weakened them so much that some of the clans broke away from the main body of Pratap Rudra's defence forces. So, the fourth invasion from Delhi succeeded through treachery of some Nayaks and the great Kakatiya power was broken up, leaving no other great Hindu power to prevent the triumphant march of Malik Kafur right down to Kanya Kumari.

The Nayaks could not swallow this terrible blow to the country, its culture and their own heroic traditions. So, they recovered, within a little more than a decade, from the shock of that aweful defeat and the fall of their three-centuries old

Kakatiya's kisan rule. They found, once again, a leader from among the original mass of peasants, a scion of the heroic Pratap Rudra called Maharajah Prolaya Nayak. The three hundred of them rallied under his leadership and raised the banner of revolt by hoisting the noble Varaha Mudra, on the Ganganeni Konda, and so many other forts. His nephew Kapaya Nayak provided the most effective and dynamic leadership. Thus in a trice as it were, they marched on Warangal, defeated the Delhi's Viceroy and declared the independence of Dakshinapath. For more than two decades, those brave, freedom-loving Nayaks, held together, regained the whole of the land below the Godavari and assured the Saiva, Jaina Lingayat, Vaishnava, Smarta sections of Hindus, freedom to live their peaceful and free social life and protected the Kamma and other agricultural masses from the ravages and oppressions of the Delhi rulers. The Gangaya Sahini's sons, grandsons and other followers were in the vanguard of that Freedom fight. They drove away the Governors of Delhi Moslem Emperor and liberated their own ancestral kingdom and then joined forces with the other Nayaks in installing Prolaya and later Kapaya as Andhra Rashtra Adhyakhas.

The descendants of those brave, freedom-loving and patriotic upholders of national self-respect and cultural independence came to call themselves proudly by the heroic names of those brave and successful Nayaks. Such is my surname. It is derived from the glory of Gangaya Sahini and his sons and grandsons and colleagues who liberated their Gangineni-konda and later joined in the victorious liberation of the whole of Dakshinapath. So my family name has come to be variously known as Gangineni, Gogineni, Govidi, Ganga, depending upon local pronunciation and usage.

It was after the reconquest of Andhra by the Moghuls in 1326 and the defeat of Kapaya Nayaka of Musunuri clan of the Kammas, the break-up of the great confederation of Kamma, Reddi, Telaga, Velama, Boya Nayaks, took place. Then the Ganga Nayak's (neni) clan decided to abandon the profession of arms, as their major occupation and chose agriculture, as their major source of living. Even then, they continued to cherish their martial pursuits and heroic military past by offering at least once a year their homage to the family heirlooms of Swords and Shields, that their ancestors had used. The Veera-

Katti or Martyr's Sword is worshipped by us all. One of my cherished childhood memories is how my brothers and myself used to be encouraged by our parents to offer "puja" to those sacred Swords and Shields, which used to be brought out from the innermost room of our ancestral house in a ceremonial fashion from out of the venerable bamboo-baskets. We have no idea as to when, why and how our ancestors migrated from Cuddapah to what is now known as Gangi-nayani-Palem in Chittoor (Punganur) District; Gangineni in Warangal-cum-Khammam and also to Goginenipalem in Nellore and Krishna Districts. It is possible that the sons and grandsons of Ganga Nayak decided to settle down, after the fall of Warangal, into the hands of Moslems in a number of places as their fortunes led them. It is noteworthy that in so many places chosen by these people, they founded new villages in commemoration of their great Kakatiya ancestor, Ganga Nayak.

In the later centuries, the descendants of these knight-templars sought scope for their military prowess and agricultural skill and passion for land in the Vijayanagar and Nayak or Naik regimes, *i.e.*, right up to the advent of British regime. They ruled over those feudal zones as efficiently as they brought wild lands under the plough and improved the agricultural economy. Thus we find the various clans and cadres of these Kammas, Reddis, Telagas, etc., Velamas, all over Tamilnad, *i.e.*, wherever Rayas ruled. In all these areas, there are even today a few scions of the Ganganeni tradition.

It is interesting to note that some of those heroic Nayaks earned such repute for their achievements and sacrifices that their descendants have come to be acclaimed as Veera (heroic), Macha Neni, Veera Gandham (one who was anointed with Sandal, deserved only by a unique hero), Vasi (famous) Reddi, Veerapa (martyr) Neni, Surapa (heroic) Neni, Suri Reddi.

To remind the descendants of those noble three hundred Nayaks, who are today found in all the main peasant clans of Andhra of their brave deeds and achievements of their descendants, they have been maintaining by offering annual grants to two special clans of Bards known as the Bhatrajus or the Kshatriya Bhats and Pitchagunta Balad singers.

My own ancestors in the immediate past were known as Gangineedu, Ankamma, Nagayya, Anandayya, Ankineedu, Ankamma. It is not clearly known when precisely our clan has given up military service. But we do know that none of our ancestors, who had chosen to migrate from Warangal, after the fall of the Kakatiyas, ever cared to serve the foreign rulers.

We have, however, been proud, like all other descendants of the 300 Nayaks, of our military (Kshatriya) traditions and the part played by the standard-bearers or the standard-setters of our clans. So, we have all treasured a sacred basket kept on behalf of each group of families in every clan carrying one or two swords, known as Veera Katti ; as the family heirloom. We provide the Racha (Kshatriya) Gochi, *i.e.*, loincloth to our children as they take the vows of Veera Dasus on such occasions. Our grandfathers and grandmothers are their high priests and they inculcate the noble qualities of those Kshatriyas in our children. My brothers and myself were brought up in that tradition and our minds were filled with that lore and our hearts inspired by those examples.

Our great grandfather came to be highly educated in the traditional Indian fashion. He became a Bhakta of the Vaishnavite cult. He grew to be the Collector of Land Revenue in a part of the then Krishna and Guntur Seemas. His father Ankineedu seemed to have decided to settle down in Nidubrolu, my birth-place. Nagayya purchased huge holdings and planned their utilisation in a progressive manner. Thus he left land for public highways (Donkas) and got wells and tanks dug in the area brought under cultivation by him. He built the first tiled building in Nidubrolu.

His grandfather lived in Gudavalli, 10 miles from Nidubrolu. Their ancestors for many generations lived in Gogineni-vari Palem in Krishna District, *i.e.*, the colony of Gogineni family near Shrikakulam, the capital of Satavahanas of the second century A.D. They reached that Divi Taluk from Warangal via Khammam District. But why did they not choose to live in any of the other villages and why did they choose to found their own new and separate village ? It is possible that they cleared the forest and founded their new village in that

undeveloped area. They dug a tank there and endowed some land for its maintenance. Right up to the time of my father, we were bearing the cost of its repairs. Thus those Gogineni peasants were keen on maintaining their social independence and cultural contributions.

Nagayya of Nidubrolu also set up similar social standards of charity and gifts for public service. He took a leading part in the renovation of the religious services of the Vishnu temple in Nidubrolu and the Bhava Narayana temple in Ponnur.

Bharati Devi's ancestral surname is Velugu, *i.e.*, light. How, why and when this enviable title came to be won by her ancestor is not known. There is a village in East Godavari, known Velugutodu, the abode of the Velugu people. In what struggle or pilgrimage or religious festival or struggles an ancestor provided the needed light, we do not know. Certain it is that she has brought light into my life and my career has been lit by shafts of her commonsense, insight into people and love of Dharma. There is a village called Velagateru in Punganur Taluk, Chittoor District, which must have been founded by one of these Velugu or Velaga families.

Her grandfather Kotayya was a go-ahead peasant. So he took shares in Export-Import business carried on by Karamchedu leaders between India and Burma. He was able to go to Madras and deal with foreign traders. Thus he added business skills and knowledge of other lands to his rural activities. Her father Subbayya became a famous agriculturist. He learnt carpentry also. He knew veterinary doctoring. He was an exemplary and highly public-spirited peasant.

These Kammas of Gandhian era have proved to be true inheritors of their ancient Nayak's Kakatiya-Rayala Kshatriya heritage. When the Mahatma decided upon inaugurating the Non-cooperation movement in 1921, it was one of their young women, the late Annapurna who made the first offering of all her jewels to the national movement. When he gave his approval to the No-tax campaign in Andhra, it was Veerayya of Parvata Nayak (Neni) clan who rose to be the leader of Padanandipadu struggles. When Gandhijee started the Salt-Satyagraha, it was the late Nagalla

(ploughs) Krishnayya who bore heroically the brunt of the police-lathi charge in Guntur. The single largest contingent of women Satyagrahis sprang from Chebrolu, the abode of the Kamma culture of Buddhist times and the citadel of the Prime Minister Jayapa Nayaka of Kakatiya regime.

Centuries long Indian social and political history was shaped by the religious and economic struggles that beset the lives of the peasant and artisan and Brahmin masses. As and when certain sections of peasantry found it necessary to take to new trades or inter-district and inter-state business or commerce, they began to slip out of the protective or coercive or restrictive social atmosphere of their main social organism or mother caste or tribe and found it possible or necessary to branch out, as independent, new social cadres. Thus arose the Mutrasus, Mudirajas and Balijes, who took to the trade in food grains, etc. The Ganuga and Perikala cadres were formed out of peasants who made oil-mongering as their principal means of livelihood. The cult of lingayatism separated large number of Reddis, Gowdas, Yadavas, Kammas, Telagas, from their orthodox brethren and gave rise to the new caste, Lingayats. The successors of the Pallavas, who escaped from the vengeance of later ruling classes by taking to sea-fare and naval and fishing occupations formed themselves into Palle-kapus. In this and such other manner, did the remnants of Rashtrakutas, Rattakutas, who failed to regain their social place among the general run of local peasantry migrated to the inaccessible hills and to the unhealthy and unsettled marshy lands of the sea-coast and came to be known as Reddis of the hills or the marshes respectively.

How have the large masses of Reddis of Telanghana, Rayalaseema and Tamilnad come to separate themselves, and when and why, from the general Andhra Karma masses of ancient history is not known to us. Who were they but a part of kisans of Andhra and Karnataka ? Even by the 10th and 11th centuries Reddis, as a separate cadre among peasants have taken shape. But they welcomed inter-marriages with the other peasant cadres but of equal martial and social status. Certain it is that they too formed a part of the Andhra leadership of the 300 Nayaks. When the Kakatiya and Reddi kingdoms broke up, the bulk of them seem to have returned like the other sections to their main-

stay, the land and agricultural occupation, and continued to provide local rural leadership in their respective areas. Telagas too took separate social shape long after the Andhra areas came under the Moslem rule. The North Indian Moslem rulers began to call the homelands of Kakatiya rulers as Telanghana. Was it because it was a land of lakes as distinguished from the Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh waterless expanses? Or was it because, the language was already known to be Telugu (the people of that land came to be known as Telaga or Telugu people). They contributed large number of officers and ranks to the armies of the Moslem and British rulers. Was it because of this that their masses came to be consigned to a weaker social position in many of the regions of Telanghana. So many of them have also taken to every new industrial and commercial profession and thus gave rise to ever new social cadres or castes.

Velamas rose to power after the fall of the Kakatiya kingdom and the retirement of Kammas, Reddis, Telagas from their centuries long practice of political responsibilities. They were content to become the feudatories of the Moslem and British suzerains. The other sectors of Andhra peasants, however, preferred to take up military service only under the Vijayanagar and Nayaka rulers or Rayas. Possibly this vital difference in their preference contributed its share to the growth of unhappy differences between the Telugu group of peasants during these tortuous centuries of Dakshinapath's fall. The rulers of Bastar State now in Madhya Pradesh, have continued to claim their social, and regal heredity from the Kakatiyas. They evaded subjection to the Delhi Moslem rulers, thanks to the inaccessibility of their plateau and the heroism and loyalty of their Maria, Koya Doras.

When one casts one's eye on that vast panorama of Dakshinapath's history since the Satavahana times, one is struck with the remarkable staying power of these peasant masses, as economic and social forces with their characteristic grit, love of land and military prowess and constructive statesmanship. Many a conquering force came upon their land and threatened to subvert their social economy. Yet they managed to absorb them by intermarriages, by immunising them through the creation of ever new capsules of castes, all within their rural society.

As has happened throughout the world, these peasant tribes are too aggressive and military-minded and given to intolerance of a second place in their rural social order in the presence of a sister community. Thus the Jats and Rajputs of North India were ever disputing with each other in their rivalry for the first place. In the same way, the Kammas, Reddis, Telagas and others, all sister-social groups, depending upon agriculture for their main source of livelihood and 'self-employment have been vieing with one another for their social precedence. Unfortunately, this has resulted not in the progress but the weakening of our nation. It was due to this unhealthy propensity of these social cadres and clans that the great Kakatiya kingdom, and later the Vijayanagar and Nayak kingdoms came to grief and alien rule came to be imposed upon the South Indian peoples. It is the same malignancy which is today poisoning the politics of South India, as well as North India. Our political ideologies and party programmes are only being used as external accoutrements for their rivalries by the major sections of these ever-rivalling peasant masses. This was not so aggressive and active so long as the British regime lasted. But thanks to the advent of national freedom and the adult franchise and ever growing pressure on rival political parties to excite these latent forces, the present day Indian social and political life is in danger of being poisoned by these social rivalries.

NIDUBROLU, where our family settled down in the first quarter of the last century (1820 A.D. ) has a meritorious history to its credit, as is the case with most villages between Chebrolu and Bhattiprolu, the centres of ancient Buddhist culture and Stupas. It is at the very gates of the famous capital of Andhra Cholas (10-11 centuries) namely, Dhanyakataka, or the modern Chandole ; at a distance of 4 miles. Its very name indicates that it was the abode of Nayaks, Needus or Naidus besides being a long town. It was known as such as early as the 11th century as is indicated by inscriptions which were found at the Shiva temple. The construction of that temple was begun by Raja Chola Deva, the Andhra Chola king in 1089 A.D. It was consecrated by Vikrama Chola Deva (1118—35) ; Kulottunga was the grandson of the Tamil Chola king and he became the ruler of both the Andhra and Tamilnad, after defeating the other claimant for Kanchi, *i.e.*, the Chalukya king, who was also a grandson of the same Tamil Chola

king. Nidubrolu held such a strategic importance to the Cholas, that Kulottunga twice visited this village (1178-1216). One Yerram Nayaka, store-keeper of Kulottunga Chola rose to be the superintendent of the king's treasury. He was the son of Nimbrolu or Nidubrolu Subba Nayaka of this village. Thus then also Nayaks of this village used to play a prominent role in the governance of the Telgu Cholas or Chodas.

The Vishnu temple of our village is also very ancient and same rulers of Vishnu Kundin dynasty (4th century) who built the Vishnu temple of Kondamudi, a famous Agraharam, within 2 miles of our village must have constructed ours also. Our family has had the privilege of being the principal custodians of this temple for the past 130 years.

Yet another and equally interesting monument of this village is the temple of Delhi Polasamma (Goddess Kali). It is said that the representatives of this area went to Delhi in a deputation two centuries ago to seek the protection of Delhi rulers from some tyrannical acts of Warangal satraps and installed the Devi in commemoration of that visit.

What happened to the original families of both peasants and craftsmen of this village is not known. There used to be Brahmin and Viswa Brahmin families, carrying the surname Nidubrolu or Needumolu but there were also peasants with that surname, as for instance, there were Ninbrolu Yerrapa Nayak and his father Subba Nayak in 12th century. When did they abandon the village and why, are not known to us. Some families came from Warangal and they are called, Oruganti. There were the Kosa-raju, (the last of the Kshatriya) and Nannapaneni, Rayudu and Gondi families, carrying the flavour of the Rayas of Vijayanagar and Anegondi, their ancient capital and Nannecholas. There were weavers' families, called Goli, who must have come from the famous village Goli, in Srikakulam, with its Buddhist Stupa. There were also the Pamulapati peasant families one of which enjoyed the privilege of being the hereditary Munsiff of the village. Their ancestors must have come here about 2 centuries ago from Pamulapadu, a village in Krishna District. It is not known how and when they were offered the Munsiffship.

Our grandfather, Ramanayya of Pamulapati family, was a

well-known agriculturist, like Bharati Devi's father. He adopted new methods of cultivation and improved his holding, in its extent and yields and more than trebled his patrimony. His father, Butchi Rayudu-Rayalu was the son-in-law of my great-grandfather Nagayya of Gangi-neni family. Both these rival leading families valued education. The patronage they offered to Pandits and Brahmins was noteworthy. Ramanayya took great pains in constructing wells for Harijans and choultry for the homeless and a tank for the use of a neighbouring village. Ramanayya and his brother Anki-Needu became the rivals of their cousin, the Munsiff and ever since, that unfortunate rivalry has dogged the lives of the successive generations; which is a common feature of politics of most of our villages.

Ramanayya's son, Ramaswami, was highly philanthropic, like his father. He founded the first library for these parts. He organised purana-kalakshepams. He was educated like his uncle, Ankineedu. He died young and childless. He willed all his property, worth more than a lakh to us, the three nephews of his. His wife Laxmi Devi, mother Ammimma and sister Mangamma took us, the three boys, under their protective wings and educated us and launched us as fairly prosperous peasants with education as second string. That tradition of philanthropy and love of learning and passion for spreading it set up by our elders on both sides has come to be continued to this day. Shri P.B. Naidu, *i.e.*, Butchi Naidu, the son of Anki-Needu has founded and maintained the first grade college in our village in 1951, the first of its kind in rural areas.

The choultry founded by Ramanayya has since come to be utilised as the principal centre by the Indian Peasant Institute founded by us in 1933.

This village has had the advantage of assured supply of water for irrigation from Krishna barrage constructed more than 116 years ago by Sir Arthur Cotton. So Nagayya, our great grandfather, took the lead in bringing more and more land under irrigation and ever since our peasants have had security of agricultural crops, which is yet to be achieved for most parts of our unhappy land. This good fortune has helped the coastal Andhras to forge ahead in cultural and economic pursuits abreast of others.

This has liberated them from the fear of failures of crops and consequent famines, which retards the growth of economic independence of the peasants of such large areas in the uplands. It has also given them opportunities to think of their social and political opportunities and responsibilities. Hence the emergence of the largest number of privately endowed High Schools and Colleges in this deltaic area. It is because of this great advantage that every reform and revolutionary movement that has arisen in our country during this century has found its earliest and largest support in this region. I have myself obtained the most enthusiastic and readiest appreciation and support among the people of these districts for every one of the new ideological moves and organisational ventures, that I have initiated since 1923 because, these masses have been enjoying immunity from the usual insecurity of employment and income which is the fate of most other people of this predominantly agricultural country. It was in such an environment that I was born and brought up as a nationalist peasant youth right up to 1916—20.

3

# *First Year at Oxford—Preparation for University Studies*

What a delightful and uplifting change has come over our country and our people during the past forty years ! On 16-8-1957 we were celebrating the first centenary of the First Indian War of Independence. The Rashtrapathi of the Indian Republic, Rajendra Prasad, presided over it. The Vice-President of the Republic, Dr. Radhakrishnan, reminded us that revolts against British regime began nearly two hundred years ago and referred to the wars waged by the Chiefs of Travancore, Nayaks of Tamilnad and Andhra and the Sanyasins of Bengal. He told that million strong audience that Independent India has helped and encouraged many a colonial people during these past ten years of our freedom to struggle for and gain their independence, contributed towards the liberation of Asia and cooperated in maintaining world peace and easing the tension between the two blocs. Thus, he asked the Indian people to be conscious of this growing world responsibility of theirs, to rise to the heights of their opportunities to fulfil their mission in the modern world. Such was also the sense of mission and responsibility which was being engendered among us, Indian students in Europe, thirty-seven years ago ; but we were only a few thousands and now this consciousness of a mission to be under-

taken and the self-confidence borne out of the achievement of Swaraj are being stimulated among the vast millions of our masses. This is indeed an epochal development, about which so many of us, Indian students in Europe used to dream and the like of which we were witness to in that European society. And today, what was then vouchsafed only to a few thousands has come to be the inspiring everyday-thought of all our masses.

In the same celebration, Prime Minister Nehru administered to that vast concourse of people and through the aid of Radio and the Press, to the masses of India, the thought-provoking and elevating oath—Praman or Raksha Bandhan—"that we would place the interests of the whole of India, before the thousand and odd local needs, grievances, and demands". We need such a Raksha Bandhan and many more such exhortations, until we get into the habit of testing everyone of our local matters of discontent, pressing needs for relief and sentimentally intimate social demands for reform on the anvil of national interest. This was the realisation that most of the Indian students at Oxford and other centres of European universities were gaining in those distant days, thanks to the European social and political environment of national unity and service and all-round freedom. Some may have faltered from that path during all these years and some others may have forgotten that realisation. But I have only been trying to strengthen that feeling, practice that realization and spread that belief among millions of kisan and kalakar masses, in particular. Not that I have succeeded in making even my immediate followers practise it ! Hence the need for yesterday's Raksha Bandhan. Hence my welcome to Nehru's insistence upon it as a fresh lesson to all our masses.

The dominant passion prevalent among almost all the Indian students especially of that post-war era was to realise our unique responsibility towards India and made us look at ourselves and the contemporary issues as between India and England from a highly serious and responsible attitude of international consciousness. We used to think that because we were breathing and living in the almost heavenly atmosphere of complete freedom and social equality of English and European life, we owed a special duty to our masses to help them to rise to such a status. We knew how R.C. Dutt, the two great Bannerjees, Ali Brothers,

Mahatma Gandhi, Arabind Ghosh, Surendranath Banerjee, Moti Lal Nehru, C.R. Das, Prakasam and a host of others who were leading the National Congress were educated in England. We, a few thousands, were lifted out of the hundreds of millions of our people, by the hand of God, as it were, to see the life of people of free Europe and to imbibe their thoughts and spirit of independence and to live and move as equals amongst the whites who were being accepted as the God-ordained rulers of the Oriental peoples and Eastern countries. Therefore, it would be our sacred duty to convey to our masses all that is best in the life and thoughts of those free and independent European people and their civilisation and to help them also to gain the same kind of national freedom and social development. Thus, we became confident of a special mission cast on us. I was peculiarly amenable to that atmosphere, thanks to my six years of active participation in the social reform movements at the very grass roots in our rural India. Sir P.C. Ray implanted the same idea, during my 3 weeks' communion with him on the steamer, that I should cease to think in terms of only our Districts and Provinces and learn to think about and work for the whole of India. To be borne on the waves of oceans and across continents was to be transformed into charmed cadres of freedom fighters. Ramakrishna helped to strengthen this sense of mission. In this way I was being prepared during 1920 to be able to appreciate the full significance of Gandhi's campaign of 1921 for the rural masses of India.

A wonderful thing seemed to be happening to most of us who had then gone to England, after about a couple of months of our stay there. We began to feel free from so many of the inhibitions of our Indian social environment. The ICS Probationers were no longer appearing as supermen as we had thought them to be either before leaving India or on arriving in England. Mahatma Gandhi, whom so many of the students had taken to be only a national leader, began to grow in our minds as the greatest national leader. The National Congress began to be the sole 'love' of the Indian students and even such great orators and national leaders as Annie Besant, Srinivasa Sastri appeared to be enemies of the national cause. We saw the English people in the enjoyment of their unfettered political freedom. We realised the strength and democratic content of their House of Commons. We would imbibe the atmosphere of political

freedom, social uplift and economic prosperity of their masses. We did not need much teaching to feel the contrast between our unfortunate India and that comparatively more prosperous and powerful country and its people. It was but natural for us to feel exalted by our new and irresistible desire to be free, to work for the achievement of free India and to prepare ourselves to work for that achievement. Thus the very air of Europe was politically a liberating, intoxicatingly inspiring influence. Besides, the post-war discussions of national and international problems by the Daily and Weekly Press of England transported us to an entirely uplifting realm of realisation of the existence of the world in all its social and political bonds of unity and forces of conflict. That alone helped us to look at the many local, social problems and conflicts such as the Non-Brahminism of the South, the Hindu-Moslem problem of the North, Casteism, Brahminism, idolatry, Middle class unemployment, from the very urgent national perspective. That 1920 was a year of great political significance for me. In that year, the beloved Tilak died and Mahatma Gandhi took over the undisputed leadership of the Congress. The Non-Brahmin Party which agreed to enter the councils which were being boycotted by the Congress lost its attraction. The British Prime Minister Lloyd George was trying to save the League of Nations. H.G. Wells' book "Outlines of World History" helped us all to see that while the Indian students were priding themselves on being most progressive because of their support for the Indian Nationalist Movement, the best brains of Europe were looking down upon such nationalism as a reactionary menace to the emergence of world government and world citizenship and they were therefore dreaming of and planning for the foundation of a full-fledged world state and its Government. To warn us, as it were about the growing influences in the world making for and against world citizenship, the League of Nations was coming very much to the fore in European politics, while the American elections returned to power the enemies of the League. We were drawn into the vortex of those discussions and we began to take them very seriously indeed, thanks to the infectious and inspiring writings of H.G. Wells, especially his book "The Salvaging of the World", and of Normal Angels' book "The Great Illusion".

From another angle, we were forced to have some view or the other about the growing impact of socialist thought. In

England, the Labour Party was gaining more influence ; its leaders had been in the War Cabinet. The I.L.P. which discussed socialism much more seriously was publishing a number of books on various aspects of socialism. The Fabian Society and its leaders Sidney and Beatrice Webb were very influential in the University circles. My friend Ramakrishna then had great respect for Webb's writings. He admired even more, the writings of a fellow Mathematician, Bertrand Russell. I read with Ramakrishna's help "The Roads to Freedom" by Russell and realised the complexity of the approaches to the solution of the problems of poverty, social depression and political oppression. What should Indians do ? Could they be content with the study of Mill's "Liberty" as so many of the ICS Probationers were inclined to be ? How could they think that if national freedom was won, everything else would look after itself, in the face of all the complex problems with which free England was seen grappling with so much difficulty ? Should they favour socialism and if so, which type of it ? We became aware that it would not be enough to abolish untouchability ; it would be necessary to overcome the malady of gradations of superiority and inferiority built into casteism and achieve simultaneously such social and economic progress, as we saw that the British and the French were enjoying.

But I began to feel that even that might not be enough because the great coal strike of England indicated that the English working classes were not satisfied with their lot and the English democracy was not delivering the goods to the masses. I was told that there were sweated workers whose lot was not much better than that of Indian workers of Bombay. I did see the misery of Jewish and other workers of the East End of London. Once I was in Oxford and began to read and enquire about Socialism, I was able to see that more and more serious-minded professors and journalists began to talk about the epoch-making events and achievements of Soviet Russia and the teachings of Lenin. Ramakrishna and myself used to discuss about these things. I got the impression that for once, both the working classes and peasant masses of Communist Russia had gained political supremacy in that great country. I began to think that if the Labour Party in England could hope to gain power and if the Russian peasants and working classes had gained political supremacy and if Communist leaders and writers like Marx and Lenin could advocate the spread of such a social order all over

the world, I too might dream of a day, an age when in India too our peasants and workers would become the supreme forces, wielding power in our free republic.

I began to go to the Indian Majlis, the Oxford Students Union and Asiatic Club and the Lotus Club, and follow their discussions. It was a revelation to me to see these university students, discussing national and international subjects of contemporary controversial importance with such a high sense of responsibility, self-confidence and freedom. British Cabinet Ministers, American Statesmen, French Premiers and former British Viceroys of India used to take part in those debates and *vie* with the students in espousing their side of the subject for debate and treat those students with dignity and social freedom and sense of equality.

By that year 1920, English women had gained an instalment of the franchise. Mill's dream of equality of status for women was being fulfilled. We wanted a similar status for Indian women too.

There was talk of the abolition of the House of Lords. Socialists wanted it to go. The Liberals wanted its reform. The Lord Bryce Committee suggested its radical reform. So we wondered whether we could not also free ourselves from the incubus of our Indian princedom. We read about the French Revolution. H.A.L. Fisher, Oxford Professor and Minister of Education wrote about the European Revolutions of the Nineteenth century. Soviet Russia's rough treatment meted out to the Czar's family was an exciting though abhorrent precedent. All these were weakening our traditional loyalty to the Indian conception of kingship and the nationalist affection for Indian Princes.

I must consider myself to have been extremely fortunate in the companions and comrades I found myself with at Oxford even as I was assured of a seat by the St. Catherene's Delegacy. All the six of the ICS Probationers, who were chosen from the Madras Province (it is now split up into Madras and Andhra, after the 1953-56 States Reorganisation) were happy to welcome me as their friend. Since then they have all risen high, in the administrative hierarchy of India, during the British regime and subsequently. They used to discuss India's social, economic and political problems

from a patriotic angle and so I found their bi-weekly reunions and discussions extremely interesting and exciting. Mr. Shahbuddin, the most constitutionally-minded of them has come to the Chief Justice of the Pakistan Supreme Court. He used to admire Mr. M.C. Chagla, the noted Indian speaker at Oxford, who has risen to be the Chief Justice of Bombay and now the Foreign Minister in the Government of India. Mr. Vellodi, the quiet, smiling, soft spoken one from Malabar has risen to be the Deputy High Cemmissioner in London of Independent India and subsequently the Secretary of Nehru's Cabinet. Mr. T. Bhaskar Rao retired as Collector and is now a partner in one of the great industrial concerns. Sri V. Ramakrishna is today the most dynamic and constructive industrial leader and architect of South India's heavy industries.

Ramakrishna taught me to understand the elementary principles of the English constitution, the constitutional History of England, France, and U.S.A. and also of Political Science and Economics with the aid of writings of Dicey and Lord Bryce and Nicholson. I read almost all the books he had on these subjects. More than anything else, his patient reading of my compositions on various topics in these subjects, chosen either by himself or by myself and equally patient suggestions for improvement, communicated in such a pleasant manner, helped me to gain self-confidence. I have had subsequently the advantage of good coaching from some of the best tutors at Oxford but none could equal Ramakrishna in the time given to me and the pleasant and patient tutoring provided for me.

It was a long winter—very cold and so depressing. L.V.B. Chowdari was disgusted with it ; so were all the ICS Probationers except Ramakrishna. He was entirely indifferent to such physical phenomenon. He and I used to take long walks along the quiet, winding, rural roads around Botley every evening. We used to be engaged in discussing some one or the other aspect of economic or social problems or the life of either English or Indian people, contrasting it with the other, thinking about the causes for our disabilities, searching for solution for our maladies and panting for improvement of our conditions. We used to refer to the books and the newspaper articles we were reading. I used to look forward to these daily Socratic walks and talks. Every such evening walk was a tonic to me and that way I developed the habit of taking count of every day's activity of mine in relation to my mission.

There were two other fellow students of similar kisan upbringing, Messrs. L.V.B. Chowdari, and V.S. Krishna, who were also attached to Sri V. Ramakrishna and who were welcomed into that charmed circle of the ICS Probationers. Chowdari was specially interested in Telugu Literature, Krishna in English Literature and through their mutual discussions and my quiet attempt to learn from their musings and readings, I tried to improve my literary knowledge. Chowdari found me too much of a book-worm, and was keen on sharpening his wits by contesting against the ICS Probationers in argument. Krishna was the youngest, quietest and most self-absorbed. So we made a good but varied trio of young students, keen on benefiting the most from that Oxford stay.

I was not drawn into the whirlpool—so attractive, yet so dangerous for so many Indian students—of English social life of the university youths, thanks to my Rural Indian adult life and the influence of the study of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda and Rama Tirtha's teachings. I found the companionship and daily discussions with Ramakrishna and others on contemporary Indian, British and other problems, congenial and inspiring enough. Ramakrishna's interest in searching for ways and means for improving the economic conditions and enlivening the social environment of India's rural masses was so much after my own heart and within my ken. In that way I found myself engaged, intensely and excitedly, in looking at India through the new spectacles provided for me, by my growing awareness of the dynamic progress that England and the rest of the Western World was making. I was not yet a full-fledged student of Oxford university but I was already achieving the stature of a self-confident missionary bent upon the achievement of technological progress and social revolution in India. Ramakrishna was naturally happy at that rapid development in my thoughts, study and ability to translate my dreams into plans and put them into intelligent shape in tolerably good English composition. He cautioned me, however, before he left England, not to attempt to speak in the University Union—even though he was confident that I could hold my own in argument with the best of its speakers—for at least one year, so that I could develop not only my thoughts and scholarship but also my ability to express myself in fluent and effective English. I accepted his advice. I began to speak in the union, the Indian Majlis, the Labour Club etc. only in 1922.

# 4

# *My Life in Europe and at Oxford*

I was sent to complete for the ICS and incidentally to become a Barrister and to be called to the Bar. I studied quite assiduously for preparing myself for both, with the able guidance of Ramakrishna. But the unexpected national movement of Mahatma Gandhi for boycotting all British schools and colleges and courts etc. was started in India with a view to achieve "swaraj within a year" and it began to upset all my thoughts and plans. The controversy over the "Boycott of universities" between the well-beloved Nobel Prize winner, Poet Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi reached us in Oxford and one of us, Sri Menon left England to join Gandhijee. He was, however, to return to England and become, in later years, a full-fledged Barrister, one of the national leaders of the Radical Democratic Party of M.N. Roy and to oppose the National Congress. I would have also left England but for the firm influence of Ramakrishna and other ICS Probationers who were pleading with me that those of us who had already come to England at such great cost would and could promote the national interests best by continuing our studies, learning all the best from Europe's accumulated political wisdom and economic progress and returning to India to enrich her culture. They were convinced that even Swaraj India would

need efficient, honest, democratic-minded administrators, lawyers, professors, and other experts, and that patriotic youths like myself could serve our masses better by equipping ourselves well during our studies in Europe. I felt convinced as much by their reasoning as by their sincerity. And the later history of our country, during these ten years of swaraj India has justified their advice.

During the whole of that first year at Oxford, Gandhijee's movement was the biggest influence in my life. The Late Sir M. Ramachandra Rao, one of the National leaders of the Indian Liberals, came to Oxford as a member of the Committee to study the educational facilities available in England for Indian students. He told us how the greatest mass gathering he had ever seen or heard who met Mahatma Gandhi when he came to Vijayawada, the great city on the banks of the river Krishnajee and how he felt that the advent of *swaraj* was inevitable, sooner or later. That convinced us, Indian students at Oxford, that Gandhijee was bound to succeed. And, for the first time, Mahatma Gandhi made bold to appeal for a national fund of rupees one crore—a hundred times as much as was given to Lok Manya Tilak and called it after Tilak. As if to falsify the ridicule poured on it by the British Press in India and to declare to the world India's readiness to follow the Mahatma, that legendary sum was collected well in advance of the target date. Gandhijee also appealed for one crore membership for the National Congress and achieved a considerable degree of success. The reports of his tours and speeches were reaching us every week and the Oxford Indian Majlis fell entirely under his spell. The success of the boycott of the Prince of Wales excited and stimulated us all, and every new day seemed to have an inspiring message. Suddenly the Chauri-Chaura massacre of British and Indian officials and the Moppilla Rebellion took place in quick succession and the Mahatma reacted in an unexpected manner and called off the great Non-Cooperation Movement. Gloom overtook us all at Oxford and in England and our young hearts folded up in sorrow.

So many have written so much in so many books of prose and poetry about the scholastic atmosphere, studies and life of Oxford and Cambridge that it is needless for me to attempt my own poor description of it. I read much about that ancient University and

also about the Indian ancient universities of Amaravati in Andhra, Kanchipuram in Tamilnad, Nalanda in Bihar and Taxila in the then North West Frontier and the comparisons between them. I had also made my brief acquaintance with the university and College buildings of Madras and Calcutta universities and colleges in the Andhra before I left for England. I found much in common between Indian university buildings and those of London. But the Oxford colleges presented to me an entirely different picture, atonce more reminiscent of the ancient Indian temples and their quadrangles, with their aged, brittle-skinned walls, and their obvious pride in their growing age and also much more like the abodes of Mother Saraswati, the Goddess of learning. I fell in love with those college buildings, their ever-smiling lawns in the quadrangles, their vast gardens, their aged and tall avenues, their great halls and the sun-hungry chapels and above all, those Indianesque brick-laid lanes between colleges, as much as I was fascinated by the energetic, cheerful, modern-minded young men and women, rowing on those quietly flowing rivers all round the city. I found there year after year, an excellent communion between the old and the new ; the former preparing the latter and the latter adding to the glamour of the former.

I think I finally decided not to go for the ICS when I read about the monstrous sentence of six years' imprisonment passed on Mahatma Gandhi. Not that I expected him to be set free by the British Judge. But the shock of the greatest of our national leaders having to be so helplessly at the mercy of British imperialism was so great that I could not any longer remain loyal to the hope of my dear father. I had been thinking of such a switch over for sometime past, since the withdrawal of our national movement by Gandhijee. When I decided on this big thing, I had to think of what to do next. There was no senior friend at hand to be consulted. I had to decide by myself.

I was then studying the Fabian pamphlets, Hyndman's book on "The Awakening of Asia", and Bertrand Russell's book on "China". I had completed my study of Morley's Biography of Gladstone and Burke's excellent book "The Present Discontents". Bagehot's book on "British Constitution" became my favourite. I read much about French and American revolutions and loved Thomas Paine and Jefferson, the philosophers of the

American Declaration of Independence. I was under the spell of the writing of Shelley, H.G. Wells, William Morris and Blatchford. So I decided to become a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, to work for national freedom. But would that be enough ? What about my experience of the reactionary forces in our rural India ? Would our peasantry be free from the corruption and autocracy of our administrators ? Could we be free from the political evils against which Burke declaimed and from the capitalist exploitation, against which, socialists and labourites were struggling so hard in that contemporary England ? So I had to go further and decide upon the awakening and organisation of the peasants. If it was right and necessary for British labour to aim at gaining political power through their Democracy, because they formed the majority in England, it must be equally right and necessary for the Indian peasant masses of all castes to hope to gain power. In that simple, direct way I argued it out, thanks to my intimate contacts and talks with British farmers also and decided that I would prepare myself through my studies at Oxford to serve our peasants and develop for them whatever political leadership might be possible.

Having come to that important decision, I began to study with a burning passion to equip myself as well as possible to serve our masses. Every day I used to take up some problem or the other affecting the English or any other European nation and begin to visualise how in India we could face up to it. Looking at things from this angle, I found immense possibilities of learning from the Western World's general atmosphere. Almost everything in their life, thought, writings, movements or organisations appeared to hold a lesson or a warning or an inspiration. They were living at a much higher level of social harmony, cultural equipment and political rights and responsibilities. Their agriculture depended on horse power, whereas ours was dependent on less than bullock-power. Their cattle yielded many times more and better milk. Their industrial equipment was so rich, adequate and immensely beyond our reach. Their commerce was so highly developed. Their sense of discipline, mutual tolerance, business ethics, and organisational capacity appeared to be unattainable for our masses. They were all equal, as between sexes and almost as between classes. Their communications were adequate, speedy and serviceable. Their working classes were all literate, culturally developing and materially progressing. The very life of the

western peoples was an education in itself to us from the East as Bharati Devijee said five years later. Such was my self-education built up with the impact on the West.

It is difficult for me to say, from whom or from what I learnt and benefited most during these precious years at Oxford. The old colleges and their tutors proved to be as valuable teachers as the lecturers in the Examination Hall and the colleges. The university students' union and many other student clubs, for which Oxford has been famous, contributed much to the intellectual and social growth of students. I for one gained more than many from my enthusiastic participation in these clubs, their debates and socials. The Cosmopolitan and Asiatic clubs brought me into touch with the students from China, African countries especially Egypt and the Gold Coast and the Rhodes scholars from the United States, Canada etc. I gained many valuable contacts among them, learnt about their national conditions and thus laid the foundations for my future work for the colonial and coloured peoples Freedom Front. My walks, talks and studies by the side of the meandering paths along the ever-present rivers of Oxford made their own contribution to the growth of my abiding love for that sylvan beauty-centre of the world.

Many professors, lecturers and tutors helped me much during my Oxford career. I can only mention a very few who had made significant contribution to the broadening of my cultural contacts and interests and to the growth of my scholarship ; as for instance Dr. Carlyle and Mr. Lipson, the famous historians, Prof. Adams of Political Science, Mrs. Stock and Butler of the Barnett House of Sociology, Prof. Mcgregor, Todd, Sandrol in Economics. Unlike so many other students who used to grudge the necessity of writing a weekly essay, because of their preoccupations with sports, socials and entertainments, I was requesting Mr. Baker after the first year of my university life, to let me have one more tutor. When he found at the end of the session that I gave satisfaction to both the tutors on two different subjects, Mr. Baker encouragingly asked me if I would need a third tutor. I readily agreed. Thus, right up to the time of my exams, I was able to study three subjects and write these essays of high standard as was said by my tutors, during every week. It was that habit of studying so well with such gusto and writing essays so steadily

that helped me in later years in writing my theses and also in the intellectual part of my public work during all these years.

My constant discussions with V.S. Krishna and L.V.B. Chowdari on various questions which were coming up for consideration in various clubs and tutorials were a source of strength. Krishna was such a clear-headed and quiet student, we used to exchange information and thoughts about most of the books we were reading. In later life, he became the most popular Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University. L.V.B. Chowdari was by temperament a steady, calculating thinker. He was a good student of books on Conservatism, Liberalism and the Renaissance. He used to help me to keep my thoughts within the bounds of realism.

I am glad to say that I was one of the founders of the Oxford Labour Club and also of the monthly students' journal "The New Oxford". L.B. Short was also keen on having a Labour Club to study the labour problems, which assumed such poignant importance in the wake of the failure of the Miners' strike of 1920-21. Miss Stock rose to be its President. Short and Miss Williams became Secretaries and Malcom Macdonald, the son of the then ILP leader and later the High Commissioner of England in India, also became its President. V.S. Krishna was on its committee for a number of years. In spite of my growing tutorial responsibilities, and to my simultaneous preparation in Economics, Political Science and Sociology, I found time to play an active role in almost all the democratic clubs at Oxford. I never bothered about such stupidly exclusive clubs as the Bullingdon Club. I became an active participant in the discussions organised by the Lotus Club, Asiatic Club, Indian Majlis, Students Union.

I realised the need for a platform for the colonial students to meet each other, talk about their respective countries, their social conditions and discuss their plans for the social and political progress of their countries. So I mooted the idea with a number of colonial students and found that it was very popular. So I took the initiative, convened a meeting under the auspices of the Labour Club and we decided upon forming the International Labour Group. We adopted the word "Labour" as being synonymous of all toilers, believing in socialism. One of those colleagues of mine on that club was Miss Stock. It has since been

my privilege to retain her friendship and faith in my ideals and activities. Ours has been a unique comradeship of more than 35 years ; herself working in England in various social, literary and political organisations, but always keeping faith with the colonial people's claim for social justice and national freedom and myself working on steadfastly in India and Burma and elsewhere for our common ideals and for the protection and progress of peasant masses. After Jomo Kenyatta and I had founded the League of Coloured Peoples in 1930-31, she aided him ably in his work in England for Kenya's freedom. When I wanted to form the Colonial and Coloured Peoples' Freedom Front in 1944 with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi and sought her cooperation, she readily responded. When Fenner Brockway, M.P. organised the British Centre Against Imperialism, she was chosen as the sincere and experienced secretary. Such a comradeship is indeed one of the rare possessions of history of any movement and of any age.

The students union has also made its contribution to me, as to so many others. It provided for me the first glamorous platform where I could learn to debate and gain confidence in speaking. Those were days when both scholarship and wit in speaking were as much valued as fluency and felicity of expression. Some of our Indian students vied well with the best of English students. For instance, K.P.S. Menon, T.C. Goswami, Chagla, who were my seniors made their mark in the union debates. Bandarnaike, who became the Prime Minister of Ceylon, also achieved laurels in the union. It is no doubt true that many students relay the jokes of "Punch" in the course of their speeches. Yet the distinction of our Union was that the foremost British and American statesmen used to take pleasure to come to our debates and cross swords with us. I used to take quite a prominent part in the debates held in 1922-23 and again in 1924-25. I was happy to find myself with my turban on in a huge portrait of the Annual Debate held in 1922, during my 1955 visit to Oxford.

Mr. Baker, the Censor of St. Catherines, Dr. Gilbert Slater and Dr. Macgregor made the most notable contributions to my studies. There were two occasions when Mr. Baker lived up to the reputation of Oxford college principals. Because of some misinterpretation of the university rules, I was assured that I

could get admission into the university if I passed Responsions with only one foreign language, that is French. I told Mr. Baker that my father did not send me to Oxford to study yet another language and so, wondered why I should have to pass in that too, when we should have no use for it in India. Nevertheless I agreed to study that and pass in that language too. Later on, the university found out that it could make no exception even for Indians, and so, I had to pass not only in French but also in German. By that time I had passed in all other subjects with distinction and I was upset by that last minute hitch. So I went to Mr. Baker and said that I would rather go to America than study in Oxford under such onerous conditions. He was so much pleased with my performance in the exams for other subjects that he put up a big fight for me and got the exceptional exemption. On the second occasion, I had to make a choice of my special subjects of study. I wanted to take up one political subject and one economic subject. Mr. Baker said that he found Indians lacking in specialised knowledge of currency and banking and also public finance and advised me to take up one of them. Then I said I would take up both the subjects. He warned me that in that case, I could not hope to get a pass, not to speak of a class. I replied, "I do not mind, for, after all it is most important that I should prepare myself in these subjects in which Indians have not specialised". He asked me, "what do you want to do in life, Ranga". I answered with trepidation, "I want to serve our country". He asked, "But how, through the ICS or in what other way ?" I ventured, "By going into the Central Legislature and organising our people for swaraj". He smiled in approval and said, "what about the ICS ?" Ramakrishna and T.B. Rao wanted you to compete for it. I assure you that you will surely get into it. Your examination record is so very good". I said, "I do not want to go into the ICS, Sir, because Mahatma Gandhi is put into jail. So I want to prepare myself to serve our country". He shook hands with me and agreed to my taking up those two economic subjects, though there was so much risk involved. Thereafter he evinced as much interest in my studies as if he was himself the student facing the exams. When eventually I took my research degree of B. Litt (Economics) my two Diplomas with distinction in Political Science and Economics and also in Sociology, he was overjoyed and feted me and my wife, Srimati Bharati Devi at his home. When the time came for

me to leave Oxford and I would not stay any longer to try for the Senior Medley Scholarship, the highest for those times, for which my name was being recommended, he gave me a hearty testimonial in which he said that "Ranga had a distinguished academic career at Oxford", the best that any student could hope for.

Dr. Gilbert Slater had been the first professor of Economics in Madras University before he became a lecturer at Oxford. He was the supervisor for my researches. He devoted much time and thought to helping me to give a proper shape to the four sections of my thesis, namely (1) The Social and Economic Conditions of the Indian Villages in Andhra, (2) The Economic Conditions of the South Indian Cotton Growers (3) The Economics of the Handloom and (4) the History of the cotton mill industry of South India. He had no difficulty with the thoughts underlying my studies for the first three theses, because I examined our rural social conditions from the standpoints of European liberalism and socialism and he thought, my examiners would understand my approach as being progressive. My criticisms of the Land Revenue System and the Government's neglect of the economic well-being of our peasants and agricultural workers, he felt, might not be seriously objected to. My passion for the rapid development of the cotton mill industry was in tune with the Western economic approach and my account of the history and contemporary conditions of that industry and the ways and means to be adopted for its development by Government as well as private enterprise would be treated as a contribution to Indian Economics and Economic History.

But he was extremely doubtful if my thesis in support of the Hand Spinning Industry (Khadi) and Hand Loom Industry would be treated as a sensible and sustainable approach to economics even by the most sympathetic economist of any English university. We had many arguments over these two approaches of mine. Fortunately for me, he had published an excellent volume called "Some South Indian Villages", embodying the results of village economic surveys made with the co-operation of his Madras University students and I was able to appeal to him to refer to the actual conditions prevalent in Rural India, as depicted even in that book.

It was, lucky for me that my thesis on "The Economic Conditions of the Cotton Cultivator" found favour with my supervisor and examiners. In that thesis, I detailed the Famine Relief Measures, devised by Madras Government, from the days of Sir Thomas Munro and also how the destruction of India's Rural Handicrafts was swelling the ranks of the unemployed.

I found considerable ideological support in the books on "unemployment" in England by Sir William Beveridge and the Cambridge Economist, Pigou and in the British systems of decasualisation of Dock-Labour and of Labour Exchanges, to find jobs for the unemployed and unemployment Insurance Schemes and the Trade Boards. These enabled the otherwise unorganisable labour especially in sweated industries, to organise themselves. The British Labour Party's pamphlets on the need for starting relief works for the unemployed strengthened my plea to favour the handicrafts. So I argued with him and Messrs Baker, Todd and even Macgregor that in the special conditions of India and her poverty-ridden masses with only agriculture as their principal stay, the numbers of the unemployed would run into tens of millions. When the British were feeling miserable merely over their one million unemployed, how much more disastrous would it be for India to have tens of millions of the unemployed. And just as it was considered reasonable in England to engage their unemployed upon not-fully economic jobs and activities, so also, it should be treated as reasonable for Indians to demand employment on such crafts as spinning and handloom weaving. But Dr. Slater and Mr. Baker argued that all those crafts had been already tested by History and were found unsuitable and uneconomic and were therefore superseded by the great textile mill-industry. I replied, just as confidently, that both handspinning and weaving would be more humane and economical than stone-breaking on which famished Indian peasants, men and women, were being employed by the British Government. They were not at all happy over my approach. They invited me one day to lunch and warned me that my thesis on the Hand Spinning and Hand Loom weaving would not be accepted by the Examiners and, therefore, I should be content with the submission of the other portions of my "Enormous thesis" as they were pleased to say. I did not agree. Mr. Baker pleaded, "I have been looking forward to my favourite boy taking this great degree of B. Litt. Why do you

want to disappoint me". I was touched with that but replied, "Mr. Baker, I know the Indian economic conditions better than your professors. I have seen the plight of our masses, going first to the famine-test camps, later, famine-relief camps and working in burning sun on the breaking of stones for road-making and earning hardly one-eighth of a rupee after a bone-melting toil of eight to ten hours. I have found kisan men and women of as respectable families as my own working thus and begging for one or two more morsels or spoonfuls of gruel for their disabled dependents. I know that to pay even an anna or two or three per day for work done at home on their spinning wheels or looms is Jesus' own mercy to them. I have met Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi and talked to him about these thoughts of mine and he blessed me for my attempts to prove him right in my Oxford studies also. It does not matter if I do not get the degree. I will go back to Gandhi and he will embrace me". So both of them were convinced of my sincerity and scholarly honesty and allowed me to send all the four portions of my thesis to the examiners. As they had feared, the examiners—who included distinguished economists, historians and administrators—returned the thesis for reconsideration, so far as it dealt with Khaddar and handloom. I declined to abandon my belief in the economic soundness of the wheel and the loom and the great principles of decentralisation and diffusion of industries and self-government in industries which underlay these symbols of Indian rural economy. Thereafter, both Dr. Slater and Mr. Baker joined me in defending my thesis.

All the three of us argued with the examiners that merely because the western technological progress and financial resources had made it possible for the western democracies to find employment for all the unemployed artisans and afford costly unemployment relief to the unemployed, it would not prove that similar replacement of the wheel and the loom by the mills should be automatically hailed as an unmixed blessing when all the other conditions did not obtain. The examiners relented. They asked me if my support for the wheel and the loom was based on my faith in their economic soundness or on political grounds. I replied that if politics alone had mattered, I would have agreed to withdraw those portions of the thesis and to attempt to take my degree on the strength of the other portions. I should say

they rose to the occasion and agreed to accept my thesis and put the impremature of Oxford University on my plea that labour-intensive, decentralised industries like the spinning wheel and handloom have their role to play in the colonial and heavily populated agrarian countries like India. It was thus I came to be accorded the highly prized degree of B. Litt. of Oxford in 1926.

The kernel of my thesis on khaddar was published in an issue of the Indian Economic Journal of that year. It is interesting to note that after my additional thesis on the existence of the enormous problem of rural unemployment and under-employment, amounting to at least forty million peoples' labour for the whole year and the inadvisability of concentrating attention on the educated middle class unemployed alone was published in the Hindu of the same year, the Labour Commissioner for Madras Government, a senior labour-minded ICS Mr. Slater made bold to agree with me in 1927. But he was in no way related to my supervisor Dr. Slater.

Srimati Bharati Devi studied 'art' in the Ruskin School of Art. She was considered to have had considerable innate taste and ability for the subject. Her drawings were valued very highly. In other subjects too, especially in history and rural economics, she was developing her knowledge very rapidly. That was the best year of my long stay at Oxford, because we both could walk along all the paths, make friends with all the trees, books, boats and locks on the rivers and commune with the natural beauties of Oxford.

She had the opportunity of staying for some time in London and Paris, besides visiting a few places in England. She stayed with a number of highly cultured middle-class families both in Oxford and London and was thus able to see the social life of broad English middle-class. Our visits to the Wembley International Exhibition and the British Museum and the Louvre in Paris, Prince Albert Museum, the National Gallery were useful and instructive. She visited a number of centres of constructive work of the Women's Institutes. We stayed together in the Educational Settlements organised in London's East End and studied the social conditions obtaining in their slums. I took her round London's Employment Exchanges, and unemployment

Insurance Offices, work-houses, schools for problem children and disabled children, so that she could get an idea of their social work.

She proved to be very good at learning English. When she left India, she did not know much English but she picked it up rapidly and by the time we left England, she was as good at speaking in English as any graduate. Of course she has improved subsequently her knowledge of the language.

Throughout her stay in Europe, Bharati Devi wore only Indian sarees and they suited her well. She was charming and wherever she went, she was popular. Her beaming smile, her quiet ways, discreet talk and her dignified social bearing made her welcome in both the Indian and English circles. I was very happy that I had taken her with me to Europe because she was able to see what social forces and tendencies then so dominant among the progressive-minded people—socialists, quakers, labourites, university circles—were influencing me. All that knowledge and training helped her to bear all the sufferings and disappointments that we have encountered during all these 40 years.

We were interested in the efforts of the English people to recapture much of what was lost during the past century of industrial revolution. For instance, we found from their attempts to popularise open-air theatricals and Shakespearean plays, justification for our own endeavours in India to encourage our rural but professional dramatic troupes with their historical ornaments, dresses and other make-up. We saw in England's efforts to regain the glamour of ballads, rural songs and poems, further justification for Indian nationalist attempts to revive their local literature as well as Sanskrit and their rural poetry and native humour. Their new urge for community singing, the popularisation of the Welsh people's musical festivals and the development of a taste for music was so much like our own in Rural India. Their movement for "Return to communion with the countryside" was also so pleasing to us who had realised the need for cherishing our Indian rural atmosphere. The British movement for rural libraries, with the help of Carnegie, was only a beginning whereas the Indian rural library movement had already passed its adolescence. In the Women's Institutes and Village Institutes we found a replica of our similar movements in Rural India. It was indeed an

exciting and heartening discovery to find out that the British educationists, adult-education leaders and socialists were trying to achieve the same kind of cultural equipment, in letters, fun and frolic, dress and drama, as we had enjoyed to the full in our villages, thanks to the still surviving institutions of adult education and cultural amenities. We felt it would be tragic if we lost India's wealth of rural civilisation in the very era when Europe was trying hard to regain it. Therefore we began to grow impatient to go back to India and preach the need for the regeneration and modernisation and at any cost, the protection of our traditional cultural mores of Rural India and their availability for all the masses, irrespective of their social or economic conditions.

By 1926, Messrs. M. Satyanarayana later an M.P. and M.B. Needu and myself had started a campaign of "Let us go to villages" and they composed a song and sang it at a conference of kisan tribes held in Vijayawada in 1926. I am glad now to find the NES and BSS trying to carry on this constructive work on the same lines as the Bharat Kisan Sammelan and Bhattachari movement.

I found one great difference between the British social workers and Indian workers ; the former were so systematic, business like, thrifty and careful of public funds, the latter have yet to attain those standards. Once the Europeans undertake such tasks they are determined to see it through, while we are inclined to sleep on the way. But while the former are paid a decent honorarium, the latter are expected to live on air, as it were.

I benefited so much from my talks with many of my English friends, both students and farmers. Among the English students, I came to be specially attached to Mr. L.B. Short, the son of a unitarian Minister at Bolton and Mr. Tom Williams, a South Wales Miner, Miss Stock and her sister Elizabeth, the brilliant daughters of an Oxford Don, Miss Williams, a versatile girl from an upper middle-class family and Mr. Phillip Thompson, a Lancashire Textile worker. Both Tom and Phillip got scholarships to Ruskin College and the Catholic Workers' College respectively. Through them and my visits to their homes in the industrial centres and to their colleges, I could see how working class youths were striving successfully to gain university education. L.B. Short was an affectionate

friend with socialist convictions. His brother and his two sisters also had university education. He married Miss Williams and both of them had a very interesting, if chequered career in the unitarian and Labour politics in later years. Miss Stock came to be the most distinguished graduate, taking a high first class in English Literature. She rose to be the Professor of English in the oldest Indian university ; that of Calcutta. Her sister Elizabeth also became an educationist. Mr. Phillip Thompson has risen to be a highly respected probation officer in London. It is my good fortune that all these and several others have continued till today to be among my best friends.

During the Christmas month of 1920, I went to Edinburgh and gained my experience of Scotland and its people. It was bitterly cold ; I seem to have enjoyed it. Many of the Indian students who were then in Edinburgh were excited over the Non-Cooperation movement. I was shocked, however, to find a good few who were obsessed with their feudal conceptions of the relative status of different castes and tribes, the accents and slangs of people of different districts ; even that great distance in mere physical terms and in social levels of progress between India and Europe did not help them to rise above their incorrigible obsession with parochialism and feudalism of the mind.

I found two excellent friends among the Indian students I met in Scotland ; they were both Andhras. One of them Sri K. Narahari has later gone boldly into the Bhadrachalam forests of East Godavari District, cleared the forests and introduced the highly remunerative tobacco cultivation. Today he is a rich man and thousands of other peasants and tribal people are also rich, because they followed his example. The other one is Dr. K.V. Choudari of Tenali, who has made a success as a scrupulous and honest doctor. Both of them have continued to be patriots and good friends.

We visited the Holyrood Palace of Edinburgh. I was surprised how sentimental so many of our Indian students grew as the guide was narrating the conquest of Scotland. Poor Mary Queen of Scots had won, I must admit, our hearts by her heroism, sufferings as well as follies. Was it because the Scots too suffered at the hands of the English, just like Indians ?

For the first time, I was taken to the Municipal Baths of that city. I felt that it would be splendid if such Baths could be organised in our Indian cities. Alas, we have not yet achieved this convenience. The Japanese have them in all their towns and cities but there is so little privacy in them either as between men or between men and women. I found however that Malayalee political prisoners did not mind this.

On my return to Oxford, I got the sad news from home ; that my father was ill, too ill to be taken to Madras for treatment. The next weekly mail brought the dreadful news of his death. I was overwhelmed with sorrow. Remorse overtook me, because I could not spare time to nurse him and I was too much obsessed with my studies and social work to think of discharging my minimum filial duties towards him. And I was able to appreciate his spirit of freedom and independence, his sense of self-respect and his determined aloofness from village politics, all the more after coming to England and finding how much those qualities were prized by the English people.

L.V.B. Chowdari and I went to Brittany in North of France for the summer of 1921. We stayed in St. Briew, a seaside village. We enjoyed our swimming in the sea and daily hiking on the mountain roads and paths and our walks in the forests and by the singing brooks. Chowdari used to quote many poems or songs from Telugu Literature to indicate the beauties of our environment with its mountains and forests, brooks and rural folk.

The French holiday makers were very bold in their social habits. Used as I was to the extremely hide-bound Indian social standards of respectability, I was not at all impressed with the French, as they showed themselves on the beach. In particular I was not fascinated by their scanty scraps of swimming dress and their exaltation of sex because I had learnt to associate such negation of social manners and exhibition of male-female attractions with the decadent age of Prabandhas in Sanskrit and Telugu Literature of the twelfth to sixteenth centuries. I have since got used to all such exhibition and learnt to take them as one of the hallmarks of continued prosperity and the cult of the Body Beautiful and Omar Khayyam's zest for life.

I spent the Christmas month of 1921 in a lovely Sussex village called Lancing. I enjoyed the walks on those broad affectionate Sussex Downs. I used to spend on them days on end and every curve, elevation, broad mound and even the music of the sheep-bells became my friends. I loved that landscape so much that when I and Mrs. Ranga were touring in Upper Burma in 1939 and I found such Downs there also, we spent a few hours picnicing on them.

In 1922 April, the Indian Conference was held in Swanwick, a village in Durham. We had full-dress political debates for two days on the National Demand of India. Several hundreds of Indian students and businessmen and administrators took part in the debates. T.C. Goswami and several other Indians took the side of the Congress. So did I. My two speeches were very much applauded and that was exciting to me, who had already been highly-strung over the new strength gained by Indians in England, thanks to Gandhijee's leadership. An Indian Member of the Secretary of State's Council and two or three other prominent Indians pleaded for moderation and acceptance of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, as a stop-gap before full provincial autonomy could be gained by 1930. We were not in a mood to heed such counsels. The Jallianwallah tragedy and the British canonisation of the dastardly conduct of General Dyer had lacerated our hearts and hurt our awakened sense of national self-respect. This conference and my participation in it on the side of the Extremists was to prove an important turning point in my career in England, because I realized that I could be an effective speaker in English and that it would be incongruous for me to go into the ICS.

During that Easter I stayed with a farmer's family in a village called Chadlington and took part in their farming and family circles as a paying guest. I could see how English farmers were suffering bitterly because of their merciless exposure to foreign competition. English agriculture was being sacrificed for the sake of cheap food for the dominant urban masses.

The summer of 1922 came to be an important landmark in my life in Europe. I went to the summer school Bangor organised by the Workers Educational Association. Mr. Bibby, a worker,

was its Secretary. I am glad to say that he continued his studies for years and took an M.A. degree from Manchester University. Prof. Henry Clay, and Redford were there to deliver lectures. Political Science and Economic theory, organisation and social services were the special subjects for study. More than two hundred workers' leaders from different parts of Wales, Lancashire and Yorkshire came there as scholars on behalf of their respective Trade Unions and local WEA Centres. Most of them were young people in the thirties and forties. They had no inhibitions or prejudices. They were full of missionary zeal and faith in socialism. I found myself suddenly transposed into an entirely different but stimulating world, so keen on studies with a much more inspiring purpose than that of most Oxford under-graduates. The Welsh miners and workers in the Iron and Steel works were so fond of music that they provided us with plenty of singing almost every evening.

They had no such fancy for the Prince of Wales as the Oxford boys and so, India's boycott of the Prince did not bother them much. They felt that Indians were their fellow-sufferers. They did not take pride in British imperialism or the empire. In fact they were its avowed enemies. So they sympathised with Indians who were fighting for national freedom, just as they were fighting for social justice. So they were all keen on making friends with me and assuring me of their comradeship. This was indeed an eye-opener for me, for till then, I had no idea that such large sections of English people so strongly disapproved of the British policy in India. Moreover, my comradeship with them made me become aware, even more poignantly than before, that it would not be enough to gain swaraj and that even after independence came to be won, there would still be the problems of poverty and lack of power for the peasants and workers, as I was finding that there still were in England. Their daily earnest discussions as to how to achieve social justice, how to abolish the unjust inequality of wealth and incomes and how to gain social democracy kindled in me a passion for achieving similar social objectives for our masses also.

I began to develop a growing sense of respect for those sincere trade-unionists and socialists who were all earning their livelihood by working every day for 7 or 8 hours in their factories,

mines, mills or offices and who were devoting so much of their liesure to their political or trade union services. I could see that, after all, they occupied relatively the same position in their society as our Indian Harijans and depressed classes did and if these British workers could achieve so much of political consciousness, I felt, the Indian masses too could do the same. In this way, those three weeks of my stay worked wonders with me and gave me a new faith—more robust—in the practicability and emergence of social democracy for India. I conceived also the outline of a plan for organising such an educational movement in India for the benefit of our masses. I was beside myself with happiness over the discoveries in the dynamics of social movements and democracy that I was making during that halcyon period.

I made many friends, more easily and firmly during those 3 weeks among those professors and students than I did in one whole year at Oxford. Phillip Thompson was a spinner from Chorley and we were almost of the same age but I was much more advanced in my studies, thoughts and experience of social movements. Never before did I take to a friend so affectionately nor could I convey my thoughts as freely with the confidence of being understood. He has continued to be an excellent listener and every time I have gone to London since 1952, I have found great pleasure in spending a week with him in his delightful home in upper Denham. Elsie Berry was a girl, much younger than us but as keen on studying as Phillip. She was one of the two daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Berry, the wardens of the W.E.A. Hostel at Chorley. She did not understand much of what we were discussing but she felt that we were planning to do some good things for the masses and so she became our friend. I regained contacts with her in 1946, after about a quarter of a century and found that she had become one of the leading social workers of Chorley, which had grown into a city. Her husband's family is well-known in the city and there is a street named after it—Cross St. Both of them are good democrats. They help our friends of the Pan-African Congress at Manchester. They were good enough to publish Prof. Stock's pamphlet on "Thirty years of the Peasant Movement", an appreciation of my ideals and work, in their own "Press". Bharati Devi has come to take special interest in these two friends because of the romantic manner in which we regained them as it were after the lapse of twenty years. One young

Harijan of Nidubrolu, Shri B. Manikya Rao, whom I rescued from the isolation of the then untouchables quarter and put into a school soon after my first return from Europe in 1923, rose to be a technician. He was selected as one of the "Bevin Boys" during the war, while I was in jail and sent to Chorley for higher technical training. One day he happened to go to the Brewears Press to take delivery of his visiting cards and letter-heads. Mrs. Cross who happened to take payment chanced to ask him from what part of India he came and when he told her that he came from South India, she asked him again if he had heard of Ranga. Manikya Rao was naturally happy to tell her that he came from Ranga's own village and that he looked upon him as 'Bapu' or Guru. So Mrs. Cross called her husband and introduced Rao to him and said that Rao would be more precious to her than her own two brothers as he was the spiritual son of Ranga. The next day Rao was their guest and he was shown the photos of all of us taken at Bangor and Chorley in 1922-24. He told me about this experience only on his return to Delhi in 1946, but he forgot their address. So Mrs. Ranga and myself took a chance on writing a letter, and addressed it to the Crosses of a printing press in Chorley. As sure as anything, it reached them and, thus, our friends were restored to us through Sri Manikya Rao.

Alas, Manikya Rao is no more. He died of heart failure in 1955. He proved to be most loyal to our movement. He stood as a candidate for Parliament on behalf of our Krishikar Lok Party in 1952 but was not successful. To the day of his death he had faith in our movement. All I could do for his wife was to enable her to take a teacher's training, so that she could eke out her living.

The Cross family today are evincing much interest in a Harijan girl student, Jean, of my own village whom our friend Dr. Margaret Round has adopted after her mother's death in child-birth in the Salvation Army Maternity Hospital in Nidubrolu. Thus Rao's tradition continues.

Another friend who has maintained contact with me and who has influenced me by his example of quiet social work and successful

struggle at the grass roots of democracy to raise the social status as well as the standards of Welsh workers is Mr. William Evans of Gowerton. He was much older than I. He had much experience of the springs of the South Wales minors and iron and steel workers. He used to prune my plans and hopes and keep me within imaginable distance of realistic plans. He rose to be the chairman of the County Council and a Sheriff. His son is now the clerk in one of the Town Councils of London. I meet them whenever I go to London.

Yet another who worked as an able colleague of mine for years was George Thompson of Bolton. He was once a Parliamentary candidate for the Labour Party. He was the Chairman of the I.L.P. of the city. He was an effective speaker. He rose to be an Alderman of Bolton City Council. He was much older than myself. He took so much interest in my thoughts and plans for social work in India that he maintained a regular correspondence with me. In fact his letters during those bleak years while I was in jail were a source of inspiration. He used to be afraid that I might be burning the candle at both ends and so, he used to caution me. What a great joy it was for me to find him and Mrs. Cross coming from Bolton and Chorley respectively to Manchester to see me in 1946, when I went there after my prolonged war time imprisonment, to address the Pan African Congress ! They invited me to their places.

Prof. Henry Clay too became my personal friend after the W.E.A.'s Bangor session. He appreciated my thesis that in India we still had the quintessence of Guild Socialism in the guilds and caste and tribal panchayats of our people of different arts and crafts and professions. The other lecturers could not believe that what had been superseded in Europe by the onward march of the industrial revolution could possibly be renovated and utilised for progressive purpose even in the twentieth century. Clay expressed faith in such a possibility, as I visualised it and encouraged me to develop my studies on those lines. We both thought that the Guild Socialism of Cole's plans might be found more suitable for India. Clay became by 1930 one of the directors of the Bank of England and when I met him then, he expressed his appreciation of my work in India in pursuance of my ideals and plans which were being nursed when we were together in that Bangor school.

I went on a tour in Lancashire and Wales after the Bangor School, as the guest of a large number of the student-friends of Bangor and had an opportunity of seeing their families and their social environment and studying their economic conditions. Those were the days of prolonged unemployment for large sections of workers. I was introduced to the practical side of their Trade Unions, clubs, and W.E.A. Centres. I was taken to see the mines, iron and steel factories, textile mills, etc. I saw how their polytechnics—called Mechanics' Institutes—were training their workers to become more and more skilled. In that way, I gained a valuable insight into the forces and powers which were responsible for the industrial prosperity and strength of England and also for her progressive movements. For, after all, any amount of reading from books about the life and thoughts of the working classes, about Trade Unionism and socialism, the industrial strength and progress of England, such as I had been helped to do at Oxford, would not be half as good as this practical contact I gained with the everyday life and strivings of the English industrial workers. The writings of Engels, Hammond, Webbs, the Fabians and Cunningham gained a new meaning.

One extraordinary change was coming over me. I had hitherto been keen on village industries and decentralisation and diffusion of industrial concerns. I was passionate about the ancient arts and crafts. But that 1922 tour was slowly kindling a passion in me for heavy industries and highly developed consumers' industries also. I had to go a long way before I could find a harmony between these two trends.

I was able to get into the social and professional life of English farmers from the second month of my stay at Oxford, through my friendship with the families of two well-known farmers of Oxford ; namely, the Howse and Wise families. Ramkrishna was staying with the family of Howse and both Mr. and Mrs. Howse took me under their protecting wings. They used to explain to me the details of their dairy farming and also the economics of their corn and wheat and cattle feed production. The Wise family whose house was only a mile from our "Elms Farm" was concentrating on wheat and corn production and poultry farming. Mrs. Wise, her two grown-up sons and two daughters adopted me as another member of their family. For five years

the Wise family's dwindling fortunes, owing to the Lloyd George Government's abandonment of the "war-time policy of protecting corn and wheat production", weighed on my mind, as if it was my own family's misfortune. Eventually they had to abandon that farm. One of the sons went to Australia, another to New Zealand; one daughter went to Canada and married a farmer. Another settled down in another county after marrying a farmer. I used to ask Mr. Howse for an explanation of the failure of the Wise family. He told me that no Government could be trusted to look after farmers during peace-time because, there would always be imports from abroad to depress farm-prices. One day he exclaimed, "if I had not accepted Mrs. Howse's advice to concentrate on dairy farming and lessen our dependence on wheat, we would have gone broke." That was the time when prices were also falling in India. I asked him, "Why do your farmers allow Government to deceive them like this ; to offer higher prices during the war and abandon you afterwards? You are all educated people. Even your workers have their Labour Party". He bemoaned the fact that the English farmers' union was as yet a very weak and powerless organisation.

In this way, I used to have talks on almost every aspect of English agriculture and farmers' life. I was struck with the tendency of farmers' daughters to get themselves trained for urban professions and sons to go into verious industries or trades. So few of the youths or farming families were taking to agriculture. I was to learn later on that even in 1952, after all the protection and prosperity afforded by war-time state measures, the same tendency was powerfully at work in Canada, the United States and England. I made fast friends with Mr. Howse's eldest son, Eddie, as he decided to stick to the farm and develop dairy farming on modern lines ; I was so happy to find his niece also in dairy work in 1955. After all some girls do find it worthwhile to remain on the land. On all these questions I used to compare notes with Ramakrishna while he was at Oxford and later with Mr. Wise, the farmer who was trying to develop a workshop of his own on his farm. I was friendly with a number of the agricultural workers of these two farms. That fraternisation of mine with workers had an interesting sequel. I was touring in Oxford county in 1946, alongwith other Farmers-Delegates to the First World Conference of Farmers in London. One of the leaders of the County Farmers'

Union approached me and asked me if I had stayed in Botley, at the Elms Farm somewhere about 1922-24. I said 'yes'. Then he extended his hand and shook hands with me and said that he thought he could recognise me as the young student who befriended him when he was working on the farm as a labourer. He proceeded to tell me that he had saved up his earning, leased a small farm and became a farmer on his own. Then the world war came, with its boom for farming. So he was able to purchase his own farm and join the Farmers' Union. He was so glad to meet me again, and that too, as a farmers' leader because the promise he found in me in those distant years, as a young man, had come to be fulfilled. I was naturally happy at that unexpected reunion. There were several other such friends I had gained during my stay in Europe but unfortunately I could not maintain consistent correspondence, and so, I lost touch with them.

I have maintained my friendship with the Howse family. The elders died but two of their sons have remained in farm business, one has become an agricultural engineer and the fourth one has entered business. The farmer-sons are active in the Farmers' Union. They had admired my activities in the International Federation of Agricultural Producers. They have prospered well during the world war. Mrs. Howse who died in 1953 at the ripe age of 74, when she was still able to drive her own car, said the last time I saw her in 1952, "Prof. Ranga, it needed a world war to persuade our Government to remember the existence of farmers. I used to tell my husband, organisation is the only salvation of farmers, you remember what Mr. Ranga used to say in 1926 ; so Prof. Ranga, I am glad you are helping the Indian farmers".

After that tour, I went to the Labour Research Department's summer school in Scarborough. I met there almost all the then prominent socialist writers and workers. G.D.H. Cole and Hobson whose books on "Guild Socialism" I began to admire, H.N. Brailsford, whose sympathetic activities on India were so popular among us, Page Arnot and R.P. Dutt, the future leaders of the communist party and then the editors of the Labour Monthly, Miss Ellen Wilkinson, who was to become a cabinet minister in the Labour Government and several other lecturers became my friends. I was both a lecturer and a student. I was taken from the

shyly socialist trend of studies in Bangor to the boldly leftist politics of the Labour Party. We discussed many subjects, including the fate of the League of Nations and the future of the USSR and the prospects for the second (socialist) International. It was during that fortnight that I got detailed information about the then Labour Party's attitude towards Soviet Russia. They were still under the impression that peasants were being accepted in the USSR as equal partners in the State with the proletariat. There was then no awareness of the fact that the Russian peasants were being subjugated by the coercive grain levies and military procurement of agricultural products by the Soviet armies and the communist party. I found that whereas in Bangor, the lecturers favoured colonial freedom in a constitutionally slow manner and the Trade Unions favoured immediate liberation of all colonies, at Scarborough, both the lecturers and Labourites were busy discussing how the liberation of colonial peoples could be promoted by the Western Socialists. We all took it for granted that very soon India would become independent. Was not the mighty Soviet Russia bent upon helping the Indian struggle for freedom ? All that was very stimulating to me. But I was very much troubled by the atmosphere of subdued criticism of Mahatma Gandhi as being a social reactionary, an agent of Indian capitalists and an enemy of economic progress. I began to fear that the Socialists were not bothered about peasants at all, that they were taking them as a social element which was destined to be eliminated. Brought up in an altogether different industrially oriented social background, it was perhaps natural for them to be concerned more with the workers and their problems. I did not find any place in their talks or thoughts for such predominantly agrarian economies as that of India. They could think only of European economy. So I felt that I could not get any help from them for the solution of India's questions. I talked to Mr. Brailsford, the oldest of the lecturers, about these misgivings of mine. He sympathised with my reactions. He agreed that I was right in my faith in Mahatma Gandhi. He said that these younger lecturers were unable to understand the mind and needs of such peasant countries as India. Marxism, about which so much was being taught and talked in that school, did not have all the answers to the problems of India and the peasants. He agreed with me and Prof. Clay that India could achieve progress through rediscovering Indian traditions of the ancient craft guilds and by

the reorganisation of guilds. in the light of the conceptions of Guild Socialism, from out of their remnants of the castes with which several professions had come to be associated.

I had many talks with Mr. Cole, who later rose to be the Professor of Economics at Oxford University, on how the present-day Indian castes of various professional peoples could be transformed into the bases for the achievement of Guild Socialism. Brailsford used to join us in some of these talks. We were all convinced that all possibilities for giving this progressive turn to what otherwise had come to be a stumbling block to progress, namely castes, should be explored. These talks encouraged me very much.

One evening Mr. Brailsford said that the solution for India's peasant problem might be found in what the Danish peasants have done ; that is, to buttress themselves by cooperatively re-organising the credit, farm supplies and marketing as well as the processing of agricultural products. I told him how I too thought so, on reading about the cooperative movement from writings about Robert Owen and the Rochdale Pioneers, and books by the Webbs, Horace Plunkett and Phillip Gibbs and also after meeting the leaders of the British Cooperative movement. I had already visited a number of cooperative stores in Wales. I was a regular member of the Oxford Cooperative Store. He said, "but the English movement has concentrated mostly on consumers. It has not succeeded with producers". Then I wondered whether I should go to Denmark, the home of agricultural cooperation. He encouraged that idea. He promised to give me letters of introduction to the leaders of the socialist, cooperative and Trade Union movements of not only Denmark but also France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany. Cole too approved of that idea and asked me to study the working of the labour cooperatives of Italy, which were undertaking public works on contract.

Thus I ventured on that memorable European tour, all by myself but armed with Brailsford's letters. I remember one pregnant phrase in his letters, that he found in me "not merely the usual nationalist but also a constructive-minded socialist believing in Gandhi's approach, and a genuine internationalist" I was grateful to him. I am glad that I maintained my intimate

friendship with this truly great humanist right up to the day of his death in 1958.

While in England, I came to read, hear and think more and more of the United States of America. H.G. Wells criticised Woodrow Wilson very bitterly in his "Outline of Workd History". But many Indians at Oxford had great admiration for him and said that under the then circumstances of the world, he could not have succeeded any better. I was anxious to read about him. I got a biography and read it with growing interest. Then I read and re-read his book "The New Freedom" and developed much respect for him and for the nation which chose such a man with those noble ideals as its President for two consecutive terms. I read much about the French leaders Clemenceau, Poincare, Briand, the British Prime Ministers Lloyd George and Bonar Law. Somehow, I was not pleased with them. Gardener's and Spender's character-sketches of many of the European and British statesmen were then appearing in the Press etc. and I read them very carefully. I did not find one great European of the post-war years to equal either Wilson or Abraham Lincoln of the United States. The great liberals of Europe of the nineteenth century were found inspiring and I have read many books about them. Moreover, Mr. Cole's criticism of the American capitalists' treatment of their labour and the adverse criticisms made by British Labour Leaders who visited post-war America were a warning to me against American Capitalism. The activities of the Ku-Klux-Klan against the Negroes cast doubts in my mind as to the soundness of the American social foundations. Yet I was not forgetful of not too-dissimilar behaviour of so many of our Indian caste Hindus, whenever similar sexual relations were discovered between the Harijans and their people. So, on the whole I began to develop a keen interest in American affairs.

England's domestic politics of these three years of my continuous stay in Europe was also an educative influence in the development of my thoughts. For instance, the Irish struggle for Independence reached its climax within a year after I reached England and during 1921-22, it was partially resolved by the creation of the Irish Free State. I saw, like all other Indian students at Oxford, how a revolutionary, armed revolt was proving successful against the armed might of England and her empire. We did not fully realise how weak England had grown as a result of world

war I and how tired were the English people of that centuries old Irish rebellion. We felt much admiration for De Valera, Griffiths and Collins, when at last Irish freedom was won. But when it proved to be an apple of discord among the noble Irish patriots and their leaders and when the governing Griffith died of heart failure and the romantic Michael Collins was killed in an ambush and when De Valera was obliged to fight again in the wilderness, but this time against his own former comrades, we were afraid lest similar mishaps might be the legacy of the eventual withdrawal of the British from India and so, felt comforted with the thought that if we followed Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent struggle, possibly the British might not succeed in playing as much mischief as in Ireland. Alas, the partition of India caused similar but worse calamities in 1947-48.

Anyhow the triumph of Ireland proved to be a ray of hope for us.

The Turkish revolt against the Treaty of Sevres and Lloyd George's and Greek imperialist adventures in Smyrna uplifted us again during 1922-23 just when we needed it, as it took place soon after the incarceration of Gandhijee. The Turks triumphed over both the Greeks and British on the battle-fields and later, in the diplomatic arena, at the Lausanne Conference. The proud British and haughty Lord Curzon were made to take their hats off to the grear Turkish leaders, Ata Turk Kemal Pasha and the diplomat-general Ismet Pasha.

Thus De Valera and Ata Turk served as beacon-lights to the Indian youths, then in Europe. The Labour Party was then favouring the cause of India's freedom. Lala Lajpat Rai came to Oxford also during his post-war tour of Europe and he was welcomed by the labour leaders and played a prominent role in the Independent Labour Party. He exhorted us all to remain true to India and consider ourselves as the vanguard of India's struggle for freedom, and therefore to play our role as Ambassadors of India in Europe and uphold her demand for self-determination. That had a great influence over all of us, so we helped the Labour Party in the General Elections of 1923. When it formed the main opposition party, we rejoiced in the fall of Lloyd George's ministry because he had acclaimed the hated Indian Civil Service as the Steel Frame of British Imperialism and

imprisoned thousandsof India's patriots. We also liked the defeat of Mr. Winston Churchill in the Dundee bye-election as he had made himself notorious even by that time as the stoutest enemy of India's fight for freedom.

One of the special advantages enjoyed by the students of Oxford and Cambridge Universities is their tradition of touring over the continent during every long summer vacation. This helps them to develop a continental attitude and learn to think and read about the problems of Europe as a whole. I have had my 'fill' of this privilege and by the time I completed the first span of my university career, I would feel confident of my European-mindedness and had built up a wide circle of friendships in many countries and in many of their progressive movements. All this was to prove a great asset to me in decades to come. Apart from everything else, it created a sense of self-confidence in me. It helped me not to feel merely nationalistic in spite of my burning passion for the freedom of India. It made me think of internationalism, as one of the most basic political approaches, befitting every cultured and progressive patriot of India.

When I attended the meetings of the League of Nations Assembly, and when I met the leaders of that Assembly and also of the International Labour Office (ILO), I felt as if I were dealing with the leaders of a familiar international world of thoughts and movements. And that was naturally an uplifting experience. Fortunately Mahatma Gandhi's discussions with Tagore on the relative places of nationalism and internationalism, during those fiery weeks of the Non-Cooperation movement and my study of Tagore's book "Nationalism" were helpful to me in appreciating the world outlook of the League of Nations. My talks with the ILO officials, notably with the Director Albert Thomas, made me dream of a day when such an international organisation could come to be organised for the protection of peasants also.

I was absorbed in reading about English and European history and revolutions, political and constitutional and studying about English and European Liberal, Social and Socialist movements and parties, with the help of Home University Library

publications etc. I was coming more and more under the influence of Gandhijee's thoughts, as they were reaching me through the "Young India" and the Telugu Daily and weekly papers. Gandhijee's concentration on our rural, social and economic problems, and his insistence upon the improvement of the lot of our peasants were altogether after my own heart. I studied Ruskin's famous book "Unto this Last", because Gandhijee said it influenced his thoughts and I felt so much inspired, especially because Ruskin laid much greater stress on arts and crafts and the millions of craftsmen employed in them than on mere money making. What beautiful English Prose it was. I wonder which pleased me more, his humanism or his style.

Gandhijee's failure to win Swaraj within one year proved a great disappointment to all of us in England but we could not blame him for that. The uncharitable criticisms of the Gandhian programme, made by the British daily press, hurt us very much. The ridicule that so many English thinkers used to heap upon Gandhian economics was goading us to think of a rational justification for the Indian national economic programme. But none of our senior students could help me to feel confident about the up-to-date appropriateness of our national economic programme, although I was confident that rural India needed only such a programme.

## European Study Tour

Before I left for Europe, I spent a fortnight in London studying the working of the Labour Employment Exchanges, unemployment insurance and Dock Yard Decasualisation schemes, the various welfare organisations as well as the General workers union. I was also helped to understand the activities of London County Council and the Borough Councils and the role played by the Committee System on one side and the permanent civil service on the other in their management. I interviewed a large number of Labour leaders. I witnessed the working of the House of Commons from the Gallery. Thus, while on previous visits to that great city, I had an opportunity of getting an idea of the social life of the workers and middle classes, this time I was able to get a fairly good idea of the tremendous amount of voluntary social service rendered by thousands of selfless public workers through

numerous voluntary organisations and also of the manner in which their public men were leading and guiding the members of their various statutory and representative bodies leading up to Parliament.

The whole of English history seemed to be marching before me as I was going from corridor to corridor, hall to hall and watching the statues, portraits and frescoes in the alcoves in that church-like mosaic Parliament Building. How decorative, yet majestic it was. I saw its reflection in the Thames and admired it more at night-time. It was the temple of domocracy. It was the epitome of the steady growth of democracy. I read so much about the history of English Parliamentarianism, from Burke to Bagehot, from Pitt to Place, from Wilkes to Bright and Cobden, from Chartists to Suffragettes, from Gladstone to Parnell and Disraeli, from Lloyd George to George Lansbury and loved the way in which these noble reformers had rehearsed for the benefit of the whole world, their struggles for the protection of factory labour, the Bill of Rights, for the abolition of night working for women and children and for the abolition of slavery and slum, for the freedom of the Press, Platform and thought and writing, for the rights of all toilers to hire, to work, to be housed and to study and to vote. I was then entertaining the hope like so many British Socialists that even Socialism could be ushered into England through the leadership of that Parliament. I was therefore full of high emotions during those visits of mine to that great House. Indeed I have been feeling so happy and highly elated every time I have gone into this House, subsequently, as I would feel whenever I go into a great, ancient Indian temple or an English Church or visit the beautiful Taj Mahal or the noble Jumma Masjid. And every time I go to England, I make it a point to step into this House and pay my homage to that noble order of fighters and advocates of democracy whose consecrated spirit ennobles that House and through it, all the Parliaments all over the country.

I stayed in the famous Toynbee Hall in the East End of London during this visit and its great warden Mr. J.J. Mallan, the leader of the Trade Boards which were statutorily established for protecting the sweated labour of London, guided me a great deal in my studies. Its secretary, Mr. Catchpool, then a young man, used to admire me for my faith in democracy and socialism and

passion for study. He used to say, "Ranga is like an American ; he is so active, ever so busy" ! And what a pleasant surprise it was for me to meet him, all so unexpectedly in the Quaker's Centre in Delhi in 1954 ; that is, 34 years after our London companionship in that Toynbee Hall. The world is after all not so big and not so far apart for kindred souls.

I went first to Paris and stayed there for a week and continued the same kind of studies with this difference, that I was not as good in speaking in French as in English. M. Paul Faure, the famous socialist and editor of the Daily "Humanite" was my guide. I got confused over the complexity of their political parties, their various political programmes, which seemed not to differ so much from each other but for their passionate personal differences. I was so much impressed with the organisational strength of their trade unions (CGT) and their faith in Syndicalist socialism. I could see that they were more politically-minded than the British Trade Unions. It is interesting to note that the French politics—in parliament and Trade unionism—continues to be very much the same even to this year 1958.

The week I spent in Denmark was inspiring and satisfying. I found the answers I needed for my problems for the peasants' future. Almost every aspect of peasants' contacts with other sectors of society was covered with either fully or partially by the cooperatives, organised by peasants themselves. Most of the peasants were small-holders. They had freed themselves from serfdom only two centuries ago ; yet they had gained so much strength in economic and social spheres with the help of their cooperatives. What was the main secret of their success ? I learnt that it lay in the successful working of their numerous Folk Schools. The first Folk School was founded by a far-sighted social revolutionary and Clergyman Grundtwig. In those schools were being trained during the winter course of 2 to 4 months, thousands of peasant youths, boys and girls, for citizenship. Besides religious teaching, education in History and Geography, Economics and Political Science, Civic institutions ; the practical side of scientific agriculture was provided. The students gained from their collective but purposive hostel life and religious background and teaching just the needed esprit-de-corps, which is so much like what was gained by the youths of the aristocracy through

their public schools and universities. It was those youths who began to organise, man and lead their growing number of cooperative activities. This success of the Danish peasantry stimulated my hopes for the future of India's peasants. In fact I was no exception. This example of Danish Folk schools had already been followed by the peasants' leaders of all the other Scandinavian countries, Holland, Sweden and Norway and also Belgium and Germany, as I was soon to learn on going to Germany. It was then that I formulated my plans for starting similar schools in India, to serve as the seed-beds for the training and schooling of future peasant leaders.

I was fortunate to visit Denmark again in 1946 September, as the Alternate Leader of Indian delegation to the second session of the World Food and Agriculture Organisation. On the opening day of that session (2-9-1946) India's first Cabinet was sworn in and on that day I was praying for the beginning of peasants' efforts to gain effective political power and economic strength. This time I visited the Church and Memorial of Rev. Grundtwig and offered my homage to him. What an inspiring column was erected for the triumph of the peasants' revolution and abolition of their serfdom in the very centre of that beautiful city of Copenhagen ! What peasants' cooperation and Folk schools could do by way of technological progress was indicated by the Agricultural Museum in Copenhagen. My good old friend the late Hogsburgh Holme, who had befriended me in my 1922 visit, was found to be the proud leader of that powerful peasants' cooperative movement of Denmark and both of us, members of the Executive Committee of the IFAP, cooperated with each other in the FAO session.

I was in Geneva just when the Assembly of the League of Nations was in session. I knew Prof. Gilbert Murray of my own Oxford University and Lord Robert Cecil whom I met at one of the union debates. They got me the card to the visitors' gallery. I heard the delegates of United Kingdom, France and Italy speaking. As I sat there, I began to think of the peoples of all countries of the world as of one family but at war or peace or armed truce with one another as had been the case with the Kurus and Pandavas of Mahabharata. That Assembly was not much different from the great Assembly they must have had in Indra-

prastha on the occasion of the Raja Suya celebration or on that of the fateful gambling by the Chess Board. I was struck with the incongruity of India's membership in the League, as if she was as Independent as France and England. I could understand the weakness caused to that Assembly by the refusal of the United States to join it. I was glad that Japan, an Asian power, was so much respected at the League, although the position of China was so depressing. How could that League ever grow into a really effective world authority so long as so many American nations did not join it, so long as Germany and U.S.S.R. were kept out and each and every tiny State was given the same weight in vote as the biggest state ? I was aware of the views of Emil Burns and Norman Angel and of the faith of the venerable Gilbert Murray that even that truncated League was an advance over the pre-war state of naked anarchy, in the international arena. But I was inclined to agree with Wells that it must be radically reconstructed before it could yield any substantial results towards world peace.

Geneva is such an attractive city, what with her never-to-be forgotten lake and its night-time garlands of lights, the snowclad hill tops on the Alps and the ever-green parks and walks. If one wants to forget the day's chores and regain capacity to enjoy life, one ought to go to Geneva. So I have always felt about her.

I visited the International Labour Office headquarters also. I was pleased with the ideals and programmes of the ILO. It was succeeding in building up a facade of conventions to protect the rights of workers and ensure the observance of minimum standards of employment, wages and living for the working classes. I was, however, disappointed to learn that only industrial workers were to be catered for and only their representatives were being invited. In fact, uptill now there is no adequate representation on the national delegations sent to it for agricultural workers, although some efforts have come to be made since 1945 to study their conditions and develop a convention or two, largely owing to the pressure of Members of Parliament, like me, in different national legislatures. I have evinced genuine interest in the work of the ILO since that 1922 visit and remained in contact with the ILO Branch office in Delhi and found a good comrade in its Director,

Dr. P.P. Pillai. I went as one of India's delegates to the San Francisco session of 1948 and attended, as a fraternal observer, another of its sittings at Geneva in 1957. Due to my pressure the Indian Labour Delegation has come to include, though occasionally, a representative of agricultural labour. Now there is a permanent Committee at the ILO to study agricultural labour conditions also.

I was then wondering how soon such an international organisation could come to be created for peasants too. It took the second world war and the threat of a post-war food famine for the United Nations to found the FAO in 1943-45, as a Governmental Organisation, to serve the interests of both producers and consumers of food.

I read much about the exemplary democracy of Switzerland. Lord Bryce's "Modern Democracies" appeared during that year (1921-22) and I began to feel that a democracy like that of Switzerland would be most suitable to India, considering our traditions of village Panchayats. But having known the dissatisfaction of the three linguistic peoples embraced by the Madras State, I could not believe that the Swiss example would be suitable to India in every case. I envied the Swiss nation, because though small, it was not only able to be free but also become the centre of the world. What about my great country, with its vast population ! When would she become free ? Geneva provided inspiring thoughts for me and raised intriguing questions in my mind.

By the time I reached Italy, the Fascists were waging their reactionary war against peasants' cooperatives. I went to Ravenna and Milan and saw how their cooperatives were helping the former agricultural workers to take on lease the landlord's lands, to obtain credit, purchase cattle and cattle feed and to construct godowns and to market their produce to great advantage. The very middle-class people of Milan who shot down Mussolini in 1943 and hung his body in such an unceremonious manner had been busy in 1922 setting fire to the buildings and other properties of the Coops and beating up the leaders of trade unions and cooperatives. Some of those Black-Shirts met me one evening in Milan and warned me that if I did not leave the city

by next morning I would be beaten. When I asked them why, they referred to my press statements eulogising the achievements of the tenants' Coops. Of course I did not leave Milan for another 3 days but nothing untoward happened to me. I was in Rome and Florence too and visited a number of Coops; villages, and peasants' homes. I could see that the cooperatives had gained much power, thanks to the encouragement given by the Liberal Ministry, and that aroused the enmity of the Fascists. My guide in that study tour was the late Signor Serrati, the famous editor of the Daily "Avanti" of Milan and I gained much from his talks and thoughts. Unfortunately Italy fell into the hands of Mussolini only a few weeks after I had left Italy; my friends Serrati and Matteoti were murdered and a large number of the leaders of the Coops were forced to make peace with Fascism. Eventually the Fascists and former cooperators produced, between themselves, the theory of Corporate State—an admixture of Guild Socialism, Nationalism of the Fascist type and totalitarianism of the Communist version.

What a beautiful countryside I found in Italy, bathed as fully by sunshine as South India is in winter! And how dusty and dirty were the towns! I remembered how much I enjoyed the spicy macaroni, and juicy grapes—bunches after bunches. The beauty of Italians—men and women—was proverbial, their statuesque bodies were so pleasing. I have ever since found great pleasure whenever I visited Italy and Rome lounging at the Fountain of Nymphs and listening to the Non-Stop Orchestra, sipping the coffee and watching the unending march of beautiful couples, handsome boys and girls in that ancient city of Rome.

When I reached Germany—Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, etc.—the demon of inflation began to show its head. The cooperative societies were losing heavily because of that new economic phenomenon. The Socialists and Liberals who were in the ministry were powerless to check it. I was much impressed with the great Social Democratic Party and its achievements. It was in power in successive post-war Governments. It gave enthusiastic support to the cooperative movement. It not only believed in industrial democracy but was also instrumental in establishing the unique Economic Parliament in the Reichtag established under the Weimar Constitution. I learnt from Brailsford, Cole and others that the future

progress of democracy would have to be on such German lines. The late Mr. Arthur Henderson, the British Labour leader, was advocating the establishment of such an Economic Parliament for England also. So I devoted much time for the study of the thoughts and plans of the Social Democratic Party and the late Mr. Bernstein, a prominent member of Parliament, was very helpful to me in that.

I liked the German people. Their Mangolian features especially their broad foreheads reminded me of some of the Chinese I saw in Calcutta and I felt that possibly their ancestors must have had something common with the Mangolian nations. I developed great affection for this nation because I had read about Max Mueller's love of the Vedas and Sanskrit literature. V.S. Krishna who was then studying German in Berlin took me to see their famous Opera and I admired the concert performed with their characteristic genius in music. Krishna talked so much about the genius of Goethe, Schillar and Heine that I tried to read their poetry in English translation. Somehow Heine's poetry became my favourite. I was attracted by Goethe's personality possibly because of his unbounded appreciation of our great poet Kalidasa and his play "Shakuntala".

On my return to London, I met Brailsford again in his house. His wife admired me for having made that two months' tour, all by myself, without losing myself even in those great cities of pleasure and pomp, Paris and Rome, and concentrating on the search after the right solution for my problem of the Indian peasants. Brailsford told her how I was the first Indian, in his experience, to take upon himself the mission of discovering a democratic and socialist way of progress for India's peasantry to be followed after the achievement of national independence. I narrated to him my experiences in all those four countries. He observed that the Italian happenings indicated the danger to the Cooperatives, if and when they grow too powerful. He agreed with me that the Danish Folk School seemed to hold one of the keys to future progress. I said the Italian cooperatives of workers for undertaking public works like road-making, bridge works and also for jointly leasing out lands of others but cultivating them separately might also prove good examples for the landless agricultural workers. He was glad to hear that I was convinced that

cooperative credit, farm supplies and marketing would be most useful to peasants. As I had heard and read so much about Marxism, Marxists and the internecine quarrel and political schism between the Socialists and Communists, in every one of those continental countries that I visited during the previous two months, I expressed my doubts whether the salvation of the Indian peasantry could at all be ensured through the Socialists and Communists of the Western persuasion, as nowhere did I find them as keen on organising the peasantry as they were about the proletariat. Brailsford agreed with me but observed that Socialism would be a corrective to undiluted or aggressive nationalism, as otherwise, such nationalism could degenerate into Fascism. I told him that I had read Tagore's book on "Nationalism" and had seen Fascism's vandalism against Agrarian Coops. He presented me with a few of his writings. I liked the one on "Godwin, Shelley and Morris". I met once again Page Arnot and R. Palme Dutt and discussed with them my impressions of the tour and my fears that Marxism might not be so useful in my work for Indian peasants. They appeared to be puzzled by my attitude. They asked me to read the writings of Lenin and gave me a few books and pamphlets on Marxism.

When I had returned to Oxford for the winter term of 1922, I felt as if I had grown three to four years older in study, knowledge, thought-power and ability to plan and pursue a line of action for the benefit of our peasants. I gave a couple of talks to the students and another to the International Labour Group on my impressions of the European tour and indicated that the agrarian peoples of Asia and Africa might have to develop their own political and economic thought and line of action. I shed the previous year's obsession with labour alone—which was not so unnatural to Western European Socialists—and began to think of a type of Socialism which would be consistent with peasants' and co-operatives and a kind of peasants' and workers' alliance which would seek to draw its strength and inspiration from village as well as town, from the fields as well as factories. I no longer had such blind faith in Marx or Lenin ; I was becoming conscious of the inadequacies of Western Democracies also. I became also aware of the need for me to study in some detail, in the light of my studies at Oxford and on the Continent, the social and economic organisational set-up, living conditions and thoughts of the Indian people

in their villages and towns ; my growing knowledge of the life and thoughts of slum-dwellers of different European countries helped me to sympathise with the sufferings and needs of the Indian proletariat, about whom Dr. P.P. Pillai was then writing eloquently. I wanted to do my best to study their conditions too and help them in their trade unionism. So when the time came in 1923-24 to choose the subjects for my research for the B. Litt. and also for the Social Science Diploma, I offered to study the social and economic conditions of some Indian villages and the Economics of the Cotton Growers, Hand Spinners, Handloom Weavers, and Spinning and Weaving Mill Industry of South India. Mr. Baker who had noted the high and rapid development in my intellectual awareness of the social forces in the contemporary Europe, especially after my European tour, did not entertain any more fears regarding my ultimate academic success and encouraged me to go ahead. He told me how proud he was that I had done so well in the exams. and how gladly the Vice-Chancellor and the university professor of Economics would agree to let me choose my own subjects for research. Thus the first phase of my Oxford career had won for me high laurels from the examiners as well as the Censor. I left Oxford for India in 1923 with the same sense of high adventure as I had left home for Oxford three years earlier.

John Drinkwater and Sir William Orpen were publishing by instalments their history of English Literature and Art and the three of us at Elms Lodge, V.S. Krishna, L.V.B. Chowdary and myself, began to study it with special interest. So we used to have interesting discussions, with that History as our basis. I confess that I had developed so much affection for Telugu poetry with its varied metres which were so musical that I could not take to English poetry with equal enthusiasm. But western art interested me most, possibly because I knew nothing, as yet, about Indian art.

Thanks to Orpen's guidance, I made it a point to visit the Art Galleries in all the European cities that I visited, notably in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Oxford, Edinburgh and on the continent, the Louvre etc. in Paris, and the famous Galleries of Florence, Naples, Rome, Geneva, Berlin. The paintings of Rubens, Van Dyk, Leighton used to attract me much. Gradually

my interest in English architecture began to grow and the more I saw of the country churches, the Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's of London, The Majestic St. Peter's and St. Stephen's at Rome and the saintly Notre Dame de Paris, the more fascinated I became with India's ancient temples and their architecture, because I realised how much we had neglected to appreciate their greater antiquity, more sombre religiosity and nobler humility despite their stature.

Whenever and wherever I have seen the Churches and their lovely glass window-paintings and inspiring frescoes with their angelic tapestral paintings, during all these four decades, whether it be in England, continent, USSR or America, I could not help comparing and contrasting them to the venerable and friendly colleges and churches at Oxford, so deep was the impression made by them on my mind and so typical of Europe's best in culture and religiosity they appeared to me to be. How I used to enjoy the chiming of the Church Bells of an Oxford Sunday morning. It was a delectable experience to lie down in my bed on a Sunday morning in that Botley village and allow myself to be transported to heaven, as it were, on the sweet chimes of those Church Bells of dear old Oxford. (Years later I came to read Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and see its Film and felt with a pang the appropriateness of the pathos and hope sounded by the Church Bells.) Somehow the western music outside the Church choirs and bells could not inspire me as much as the South Indian music of the Thyagaraja compositions. The Jazz could excite one, so could the confusing but rhythmic dance music of Indian animism. I have found as great difficulty in getting into the very spirit and rhythm of western singing as perhaps most Europeans find in feeling at home with Indian singing. It is so, not because of any want of attempt on my part to lend my ear and heart to it. It might perhaps be so because I could not attune myself properly to its cadences and to the emotional strains of the Europeans. The orchestral, instrumental music of the west has held a fascination for me and to this day I love to hear it, whether it be in church, concert hall, opera or even on the radio. India has much to gain from the western organisation of an orchestra. Yes, I have found no equal to the Welsh Eistedfodd Choir music, which I was privileged to hear when I visited Wales in 1922.

How could I adequately describe the impression of awe and inspiration created on my mind by the exquisite statues of beautiful and Athenean-clad women and those swelling bridges of Paris on the disciplined Seine, by the vista from the Victor Emmannual Square, by the planned and pruned Versailles Gardens, by the Versailles Hall of Glasses, by the golden glitter and grandeur of fresco paintings on the ceilings of the churches of St. Peters and St. Stephen's of Rome ! Until I saw the magnificent temples of Kanchi, Madura, Sree Rangam, Rameswaram, I was under the impression that St. Pater's was the most imposing temple of God. If one were to compare them one could not but admit their incomparable uniqueness. I was to learn, many years later, that the gold used in those great churches of Rome came from the Inca's gold hoards, through the Spanish raiders and wonder how a raider's loot could lend beauty to temples of God.

Paris and Rome impressed me by their historical importance. I was attracted by the contribution of Paris to the nineteenth century revolutionary atmosphere. The Tuileries, Bastille, Tomb of Napoleon, Place de Luxumberg, Pont de Alexandre, the Latin Quarter and Arc de Triumphe, Quai D'orsay, Notre Dame, all of Paris and the Palace at Versailles in all its gaudy luxury had for me as inspiring messages as the British House of Commons, the Westminster Abbey, and Trafalgar Square. And Paris of the thirties proved to be as exciting, as I could conjure up her picture, as it must have been in the days of the Revolution, the Nepoleans and the Commune, thanks to my reading of Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities" and Victor Hugoe's novels and the great film "Orphans of Storm". Bharati Devijee who was able to spend a week in Paris with me as her guide, fell in love with the green avenues, the vast bois and smiling Seine. She admired the vivacity of the French on the stage and in the Opera as well as among the audience. She did not like the gaudiness of Versailles.

Rome made me think of Potanna's immortal poem about the vainglory of pompous kings and emperors. That first impression came to be deepened on subsequent visits to the numerous ruins of that ancient city. The Oxford studies prepared me to think of Rome as the great city of even justice and administrative efficiency. But I could not find much evidence of those ancient admirable qualities in contemporary Italians. I visited the Inter-

national Institute of Agriculture, during my first sojourn in Italy and felt that was a better contribution of Romanesque Italy than the Fascist Regime that plagued Italians for the following seventeen years. A year later, when I visited Delhi, I was strongly reminded of Rome and its cemeteries and ruined glories and felt that civilisations have had the genius of leaving their marks through their vast and melancholy ruins, and noble thoughts, woven round and round certain centres ! Why successive rulers are attracted to the same centres to build and rebuild on or around past ruins in their vain efforts to excel each others' achievements in brick and mortar is a matter for psychiatrists ! Even today our Swaraj India's rulers too succumb to the same temptation to swing round this enlarged Indraprastha of too many tombs and ruins !

One evening (6-9-1957) I received the British High Commissioner, Rt. Hon. Malcolm Macdonald, on behalf of the Indian Foreign Affairs Association of which I am the founder-President, at our FAA special Reception. Introducing him I said that he was an Oxford friend of 35 years' standing. "I was one of the founders of the Oxford Labour Club and Malcolm Macdonald rose to be its Secretary and President. He was as prominent then as he is today among all the British diplomats. We were all then Socialists. Socialism was in his family and today we live in this independent India which is trying to achieve a society based on freedom and social justice and he is the representative of the Welfare State of United Kingdom". Prof. A.G. Stock was the Secretary, when he was the President and later rose to be the President of the Club. This is indeed a happy historical coincidence.

Indian students at Oxford were happy when his father, the Late Ramsay Macdonald, became the leader of the opposition in British Parliament because he favoured the Indianisation of the Civil Service, as a member of the First Public Service Commission and he wrote a book on "India" espousing her cause for self-government and he was then the most distinguished British Socialist Leader. We were happier when he became the first Socialist Premier of England in 1924 and expected much from that bosom friend of the noble Keir Hardie, the founder of the Independent Labour Party. I attended the ILP's annual conference held

at York in 1925 as a fraternal delegate. At that juncture the Labour Ministry permitted the beginning of the Ordinance Raj in the post-1920 India. It was a bitter disappointment to all Indian nationalists. I met him in the session and sent a written question as to how he could justify Lord Olivier's support for the Viceroy's regime of repression in Bengal. Later I met him in a special interview and tackled him on that question. Many of the Yorkshire, Lancashire and South Wales delegates whom I had addressed on the Indian question at special meetings and among whom I had a number of old friends of the W.E.A. sessions and reunions also pressed him in the committee meeting and open session to adopt a more liberal policy towards India.

To our surprise, he trotted out the untenable explanation that after all the Labour Party was holding the reins of power for the first time and most of the press was doubting its capacity to hold together the British possessions and therefore the Labour Government should not be in a hurry to start liquidating the Empire. Since India was more ripened for self-government than any other possession, he would soon begin to indicate how soon the British Government would grant her provincial autonomy. I warned him that India would not only be most disappointed with the Labour Ministry but would lose all hope in the British people if that Ordinance Raj should continue to be associated even with the Socialist Ministry. I am glad to say that most of the delegates supported my stand.

I was to note later on how that fatal inclination to look well in the eyes of British Conservatism and ruling classes continued to weaken him in his dealings with India, during his second tenure as Socialist Prime Minister of England. Though I met him again in 1930 at the time of the First Round Table Conference, I could not bring myself to entertain any hopes in his statesmanship and his final debacle of 1931 in letting down his own Labour Party, just as he let down India, did not shock me so much, thanks to my 1925 revealing talks with him at York.

What he had failed so miserly to do, his junior colleague in the second Labour Ministry and the first Socialist Premier of the Labour Majority Government, Mr. Clement Attlee has done in 1947; and has piloted the Independence of India Bill through Parliament. The crown of India was placed on the British Queen

Victoria through an Act of Parliament in 1858 sponsored by Disraeli, the commoner who hankered after crowns. The same Parliament surrendered that claim for the crown of India ninety years afterwards at the instance of another commoner, Attlee who was however of more progressive persuasion in the Socialist Era. It is now ten days ago, Malaya has become independent and six months back Ghana achieved her independence too. Nigeria is soon to be independent. Tunisia, Morocco, Indo-China, Ceylon, Burma, the Philippines and even a number of French African Colonies have all become free. It is certainly a happy augury of the mid-twentieth century socialist era that the distinguished son of that disappointing Socialist premier Ramsay Macdonald should be able to say, despite the growls of another equally disappointing imperialist premier, Winston Churchill, that Asians and Africans "must feel very satisfied that in your lifetime so many peoples across Southern Asia from the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean, have won their political freedom. It is given to few generations of men to see their ambitions realized on such a gigantic scale. This Asian event in modern history has altered considerably the balance of influences in the world. And at the centre of the revolution stands India". I recalled to my mind as he was saying all this, our discussions at Oxford in the International Labour Group that I organised and enjoyed a sense of satisfaction that our dreams and hopes are coming to be realised, though our nations of Africa and Asia have had to wade through suffocating streams of imperialist repression and intellectual arrogance.

France is willing in 1960 to grant freedom to Algeria, after a regular blood bath, as her contribution to Algeria's freedom movement. Great Britain has shut up in jail my friend Jomo Kenyatta and thousands of his fellow-fighters for freedom and vainly hopes to sit on top of that cauldron of Kenya, just because of the imperialist ambitions of the white settlers. I have had to convey our anxiety about these two trouble spots to the Government of France and Great Britain through their ambassadors on behalf of our non-Governmental Indian Foreign Affairs Association, to reinforce the valiant efforts of the Government of India to persuade their Governments not to delay what is anyhow inevitable, that is, the recognition of national independence of Algeria and Kenya. The French Secretary of State M. Maurice Faure was entertained by our Prime Minister at a Banquet in 1957 and I had again the opportunity of repeating to him, what I had said

to his predecessor in 1952 at Quai d'Orsay, that France could gain more in this Age of United Nations by recognizing the freedom of her colonial peoples and strengthen the world cause of parliamentary democracy than by vainly wasting her man-power and money in keeping them down. Why do I live in hope ? Because of the dreams, hopes and plans made at Oxford by Malcolm, A.G. Stock, Short, Chen etc. in 1922-26. Because of the efforts of the League of Coloured Peoples, organised by Jomo Kenyatta, myself and Dr. Moody in 1930 in London. Also because of the Colonial and Coloured Peoples Freedom Front outlined in 1945-46 by myself, Peter Abraham, Jomo, George Padmore, A.G. Stock, Semakula Mulumba, Koinange, Fenner Brockway etc. Except for Rhodesia, the whole of Africa has become free. Even our dreams and C.C.P.F.T. Front can claim to have made their contribution—so successful and inspiring—to the emergence of this epoch-making Afro-Asian revolution.

On 5-9-1957 the Ghana Ministers of Finance and Industries and Diplomatic Representative in India received us at their Reception and the Prime Minister Nehru and many of us were proud to meet them, though they represented the tiny population of less than five millions. As I was watching the diplomatic representatives of different nations coming to greet those African leaders, I was wondering as to how this miracle has happened that this nation of real and full-blooded Africans which did not have to go through any prolonged or too painful struggle for the achievement of her national freedom, is today an independent nation ? It is because of the three-generations-long struggles of India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon in Asia, Egypt, Syria and Turkey on the west Asia and the persistent anti-imperialist campaigns of Socialists and Liberal statesmen of England and France and also because of the Lenin-inspired Communist challenge to the cult of imperialism and the soul-stirring Satyagraha Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi from 1920 onwards that the Parliamentary democracies of England and France were obliged to hearken to the voice of national freedom. I felt a sense of gratitude to all these comrades of ours, Brailsford, Laski, Brockway, Stock, Wells, Bernard Shaw, Paul Houseman, the Quakers, Paul Faure for their great contribution to the achievement of this Asian-Afro revolution. A feeling of justification of our lives during the past 3 decades coursed through me, as I recollected those happy memories of the twenties to the fifties when my noble colleagues, George Padmore and

Dorothy, Makonnen and his band of workers of the "Pan Africa", Dr. Moody and the League kept the light burning so patiently.

Is the world safe, even now, for the freedom of small nations ? Is its atmosphere congenial for the attainment of freedom ? How can we be sure that the ill-fated but disgusting Anglo-French invasion of Egypt of October 1956 and USA's adventures of 1958 in Lebanon and Jordan will not be repeated elsewhere by some other powers ? Where is the guarantee against the irritation by other powers of the barbaric invasion of Hungary by the USSR ? When and by what means are the satellites of the USSR to regain their national freedom of action ? Who can say when all the other nations and peoples of Africa can persuade their European and Afrikaner masters to accept majority rule ? How can the United Nations persuade South Africa to abandon her mad policy and campaign of "Racial Discrimination" ? When will the Rhodesian Africans attain equal status and power with the whites ? Who can reason with Soviet China to withdraw from Indian Himalayas and respect Panch Shila morality ? Therefore, I feel that there is nearly as much need today for the youths all over the world, as there was when I was at Oxford in the twenties, to dream, discuss and plan for the achievement of national independence and "Human Rights" of all peoples all over the world under every kind of political or national dispensation. This was my message delivered on behalf of India, to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, held in Delhi on the 10th and 11th December, 1957. This calls for an eternal vigilance (as the old adage says, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance)". It evokes our deepest emotions. It justifies our noblest endeavours and sacrifices. Hence my support for the movement for World Government and Rule of Law as between nations. I am glad to be able to feel today as hopeful as I had ever been during those dreamy and youthful Oxford years. Herein lies my zest in life.

5

# *Popular Movements during 1933—36*

I met Subhash Babu twice at Karachi in 1931 and had prolonged talks on the need for economic and social progress. We found a large area of agreement between ourselves. He was keen on the Kisan movement, which I was developing in South India, and we both explored the possibilities for developing it in North India. He was interested in the potentialities of the anti-zamindari movement I had started at Venkatagiri, and approved my demand for the abolition of all intermediaries between Government and peasants. What a good friend he was! How charming a conversationalist!

It was during that session of National Congress that I met the leadership of the Seva Dal Movement such as Dr. Hardikar and the late B. Sambamurti and formed the idea of organising it in the peasant movement also.

## Pleaded for Moratorium during Economic Depression 1930—34

That 1931 Congress session was presided over by Sardar Patel, a peasant and hero of the Bardoli kisan satyagraha.

I conveyed to Gandhijee that I was more than satisfied with my experience of that Congress. He advised me to work in close

cooperation with both Jawahar and Subhash because both of them loved the people and would have a large share in shaping the country's future.

Karachi was then a very fascinating modern city. Its mayor was a Parsi patriot. The enterprising Andhra journalist Kotam raju Punnayya went there in the twenties and rose to be the courageous editor of the powerful "Sind Observer" and continued to serve our national cause till his death. He sought me out and we became good friends and he continued to remind me of his admiration of my work in England in 1930 and in Central Assembly. It is such appreciation from such distinguished friends that sustains the morale of freedom-fighters.

I was encouraged by a large number of old Congress workers of Andhra to attend that Session of the Congress which was meeting to consider the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the recommendation of the Working Committee to send Congress representatives to the Second Round Table Conference. I was elected a delegate, but the powers that be, could not assure me that I would be elected to the All India Congress Committee, so great was the pressure from the jail-returned heroes for that distinction. Nevertheless I decided to attend that session.

That session met just when the British Government decided to hang the patriot Bhagat Singh. Mahatma Gandhi's plea to stay that aweful execution and show mercy to the patriot was not heeded. Such is the evil genius of imperialist masters that as they seemed to be yielding to forces of progress they thwarted them by such horrible acts. The Indian Communist Party began to take some shape after the Meerut trials, and wanted to exploit Bhagat Singh's martyrdom and Gandhijee's decision to cooperate with the RTC at that juncture. Subhash Chandra Bose opposed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact strenuously and was keen on turning the Congress into a Republican Party.

That sea-journey from Bombay to Karachi was quite interesting because we had hundreds of Congressmen going together on the same steamer. We had plenty of opportunity of meeting and talking to each other on the burning questions of the day. There was an atmosphere of triumph and approaching freedom and also

the mere presence of such veterans, fresh from their jail experiences, was so exhilarating. There was plenty of gossip over tho internal differences among Congress leaders in different provinces. On our return journey, I came by train *via* the sandy deserts of Sindh and got an idea of the immensity of desert problems.

That Session proved a high water-mark for Gandhian political approach. It was during that session that Gandhijee remarked, "Gandhi may die, but Gandhism will not die." I heartily agreed with that cryptic and historic statement. I was particularly pleased with the charter of Fundamental Rights formulated on the lines of Nehru Report and Gandhijee's ultimatum to Lord Irwin before starting the Salt Satyagraha. I could not appreciate Subhash Babu's demand that we should vote in favour of RTC only if the British would agree in advance to our demand for complete independence, because I was convinced of Gandhijee's approach.

In Lahore, I went to the Lajpat Rai Bhawan and paid my homage to that great leader. I recalled my meeting with him in Oxford and thought once again of my earlier resolve to start the same kind of political training centre in Andhra that he had run in 1920 in Lahore. My visit to the famous fort and mosque built by Prince Jahangir made me think once again how recent was the fall of India from such a high State. Iwent to the Gurudwara Sahib, in that neighbourhood. I saw Maharaja Ranjit Singh's massive gun and felt confident that once again even our emaciated masses would rise against the British and achieve successes, if only their leaders would be as brave as the Sikh Gurus and Ranjit Singh but more statesman-like and work unitedly. I had for my companion an excellent Gandhian of Anakapalli, Sri Veeraraju.

The full effects of the world-wide economic depression began to be felt by Indian peasants and artisans by the middle of 1931, although agricultural prices began to fall from the beginning of 1930. The pressure of Banks upon rural money-lenders and merchants and big land-holders for the repayment of their loans became oppressive and the number of applications to courts for temporary imprisonment of debtors for failure to pay debts increased alarmingly. Many a decent peasant was forced to sell

his holding for a song in that aweful rush of land into the market and so many peasant families found themselves bankrupt for no fault of their own. Gold began to flood the market. Everywhere there was unmerited misery.

The late Gudavalli Ramabrahmam, then an ardent Congressman and an enthusiast of the peasant movement, organised the Andhra Peasants Protection Conference in Tenali, the seat of the most successful Congress picketing campaign, and I presided over it in May-June 1931. I wrote and published the speech in English specially for the purpose of influencing the Courts. I sent the speech to all the judges together with the prayer that a practical moratorium should be granted to our peasants in view of that terrible crisis. I requested them to see that the agricultural implements, cattle and foodgrains needed for peasants' family maintenance, and household utensils, women's jewellery and such other small properties as are exempted from attachment as per the Civil Procedure Code should strictly be safeguarded and that personal warrants should not be issued. Moreover I pleaded that the Courts should exercise their power to grant time for paying up the decreed amounts or even to avoid giving decrees.

To strengthen the morale of the peasants, I told them that they ought not to become helpless victims of a worldwide financial crisis, and therefore should abandon the age-old tradition of paying up every rupee borrowed at the demand of the creditors in such a calamitous emergency. I appealed to them to discharge their primary responsibility to save their families and their source of living and freedom, that is, the inherited holding, before they thought of their creditors.

That Conference was the first in the whole of India to put forward the revolutionary demand for a moratorium for all agricultural debts and my arguments in favour of it found an echo in every peasant's heart. Soon that demand became very popular and powerful all over the Madras Presidency. Though the Government did not agree to it, the Courts gave their ear to our pleading.

The Conference was followed by many District and Taluk Ryots Conferences all over Andhra, led by myself and many others of the kisan-minded Congressmen or the politically conscious

kisans who began to line up with me. Thus spread that peasants' protection movement of 1931. The new word Moratorium gained currency and the whole of the countryside began to wake up.

That movement for a Moratorium was carried on right up to 1937-38, Congress ministerial period. The Andhra Peasants' Protection Committee passed on that demand to the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Agricultural Workers founded by, some of us in 1935, and that conveyed it to the All India Kisan Congress Sammelan of 1936. Thus it became an all-India demand. It had, however, to wait till the advent of Congress ministries in 1937-38 to be accepted and implemented for the protection of the indebted peasants ; thanks to the courageous initiative of Sri C. Rajagopalachari, the Prime Minister of Madras. Unfortunately by that time, nearly three-fourths of the smaller peasants had lost much of their holdings and more than half the land of middle-class peasants had also changed, because of implaceable pressure of falling prices and the mounting burden of debts. Still, the 1931 Tenali Conference had inaugurated the modern era of the awakening peasantry of India.

**Opposition to Enhancement of Land Tax**

Simultaneously with that campaign for a moratorium, I was obliged to organise the resistance of the peasants of two Godavari and Krishna Districts to the unjust imposition of a $18\frac{3}{4}\%$ enhancement of land revenue. The Resettlement Economic Enquiry Committee of Madras Legislative Council, of which I was the Secretary, reported unanimously against such an enhancement. So I challenged the Government to place both my report and their decision before a High Court Judge, just as the Bombay Government had done three years previously in the case of Bardoli resettlements. Government refused to listen. So I launched an intensive campaign against that arbitrary decision. Sri K. Madhusudana Rao of Vijayawada rendered great help to me, both as a personal secretary and good organiser. A number of kisan-minded Congressmen like *G. Brahmayya of Divi, the late D. Narayana Raju of West Godavari, V. Satyanarayana of Rajahmundry also took up the cause of the peasants. We all worked hard for months in organising Village Kisan Committees and in recruiting volunteers. A few

*He is now the Chairman of Andhra Legislative Council (1965).

of those followers of Gandhijee who had taken part in Bardoli Kisan Satyagraha, such as Kaka Kalelkar and Dr. J. C. Kumarappa, were invited to tour our Districts and give their messages. Thus, we prepared the field for starting the No-Tax Satyagraha. Luckily this campaign found favour with the Andhra Congress leadership, then headed by the late Desoddharaka and A. Kaleswara Rao, who later became the speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly. Even such renowned Moderates as the N. Subbarao, once General Secretary of Congress and Sir Ramachandra Rao supported our movement. So the Government of India had to take a serious view of our potentialities and issue an ordinance against any action that we might take to launch a No-Tax Satyagraha.*

It was during this campaign that I found myself recognised, both by the urban and rural masses, as a dynamic organiser and an effective speaker in Telugu. It was a joy to see how the masses responded to appeals to help themselves, and to know that my resignation from the college and our family's readiness to share their troubles had put confidence into them. Bharati Devi was also in great demand in all the meetings held during that campaign and the response of the masses used to be specially enthusiastic. Thus was laid the ground-work for our later solid strength among the rural folk and urban people of these awakened Districts of Andhra.

**Beginning of the Fight against Zamindari System**

Soon after my return from Karachi Congress session, I took up the cause of the zamindari Ryots of Andhra. The zamindari system of the South was like the Talukdari system of U.P. and the zamindari and malguzari system of Bengal, Bihar and Central Provinces. But peasants of the Madras province had regained through the Estate Land Act of 1908, which was sponsored by Forbes, permanency of tenure, rights of sale, mortgage and

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*While our fight against that pitiful 18¾ % enhancement evoked such strong resentment and frightful agitation, the Andhra Ministry of the Congress is able to impose 100% to 300% enhancement. The Andhra Swatantra Party's appeal led by Latchanna against this oppressive imposition was upheld by Supreme Court and it was declared unlawful.

gift etc. over their lands. Such rights were not as yet enjoyed by most of the peasants of U.P., Bihar, Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. Hence the comparatively greater helplessness and political and economic backwardness of North Indian peasants. The zamindari Ryots of Madras Province used to be content to demand only reduction of rents, greater rights over forests and reduction of grazing fees and survey and settlement of their lands and better irrigation facilities. They used to think that their zamindars were the projections of the British Government, and allowed them to exercise in practice powers which belonged only to the police and courts of the British Government. I found during my enquiries that peasants were being tried by zamindars and their rents were being augmented, special cesses were being imposed only by zamindars and were accepted by peasants. Indeed, the zamindars used to keep up such a show as would befit only independent rulers. I urged our peasants to rise against the whole system of zamindarism, to question the right of zamindars to exercise the authority of Government over forests, unoccupied waste lands and of levying assessment on land. I taught them to question the need for such a functionless, exploitative intermediary system of land tenures.

The late Ramdas, Sri Biswanath Das, who later became the Congress Chief Minister of Orissa but was then still leading the zamindari peasants, rendered valuable services in checking the vagaries of zamindars and raising the morale of peasants. They agreed with my bolder and more advanced line of attack and strengthened the new programme of working for the abolition of the zamindari system as a whole.

The Nellore District Ryots' Conference, which met at Alluru in Kovvur Taluk in the summer of 1931 appointed a zamindari Ryots Enquiry Committee with myself as the President and the late Sri N.V. Rama Naidu, the Editor of Zamin Ryotur, Telugu Kisan Weekly, as the Secretary and P.V. Subha Reddi, M. Sitarama Reddi as members. When our Committee began its enquiries, it was difficult to find peasants bold enough to give evidence, so great was the fearful hold of the *zamindari zhulum* on the people of the country-side. The Katikineni brothers—themselves the scions of the ancient Venkatagiri Zamindari family—came forward to give us shelter at Venkatagiri and encouraged some

peasants to come forward to state their grievances. That zamindar had his land revenue control over one-fourth to one-third of that sprawling Nellore District and was looked upon by local people as an arm of the British Government, and so was able to exercise powers in excess of what he was entitled to under the Estates Land Act. Most of the peasants used to look upon his fort as that of Government, the Maharajah as an independent Maharajah and the honours conferred by him or fines imposed by him as of royalty. So our Enquiry Committee's visit to those villages in Venkatagiri and Sulurpetah Taluks created a stir in the mental and social atmosphere of that area and its people. The Maharajah's friends did not like this, and tried to create many impediments in our way by means of their hand-in-glove relations with the Police and Revenue Officials. All that strengthened our hold on the peasants, and created such a favourable atmosphere that the politically awakened sections of them came forward to organise the Andhra State Zamindari Ryots Conference in Venkatagiri town itself to demonstrate their sense of freedom.

Many peasants heard that several influential friends of the zamindars had tried in vain to dissuade me from undertaking that politically risky mission, and that I had remained firm in my resolve to delve into the secrets of the zamindari misrule and help the peasants' cause. Until then, very few political workers could dare the zamindars because of the zamindari influence over legislatures, newspapers, public platforms, intellectuals, poets and pandits. Some of the wide-awake peasants realised how much I risked in ranging myself against such powerful forces. So they grew very enthusiastic about our enquiry and very soon it turned out to be an active instrument to awaken the peasants and inspire them to feel free and important.

It was in that atmosphere that the state conference met at Venkatagiri. It was attended by the famous Parliamentarian, the late Satyamurti, and the late Desoddharaka, who was the founder editor of *Andhra Patrika* and Sri Biswanath Das. The friends of the zamindar persuaded the District Magistrate and Police Superintendent to ban our meetings and ask us not to go ahead with our celebrations. That enraged the Congress leaders so much that they agreed to go ahead with our conferences and decided in favour of the abolition of this zamindari system which had shown itself as the ally of the British Power.

The political conferences went off with great eclat, according to programme. The Zamindari Ryots Conference was held in our conference compound without any public demonstrations and we notified the fact, on the next morning, to the District authorities and asked them to take whatever action they wished to. Thus, we avoided any inconvenience to the general public who came as visitors, while actually defying the Government ban. The Madras Press gave full publicity to our conferences and condemned the Government ban. The Legislative Council, which was then in session, took serious notice of the Government's unholy anxiety to strengthen the zamindars. Thus the authorities were forced to abstain from taking any action against us.

In that conference, my proposal to demand the abolition of the zamindari system by legislative means was adopted unanimously. Thus we set the pace for the rest of India and I was able to get that demand accepted in the course of the following decade by the All India Kisan Congress, and by 1946, by the Congress as a whole. Today (1966) India has gone far beyond the achievement of that demand ; the zamindari system and all its associate systems of intermediaries stand abolished. That conference thus proved to be an epoch-making event ; and Sri N.V. Naidu's inspiring song, "we do not want the zamindari system" became the clarion call to all the Kisans, in the South as also in the North.

Soon after that successful conference the agents of the zamindari administration began to harass the peasants over the enjoyment of their customary rights over the forests. The peasants resented that repressive policy and sought my advice. We took counsel and decided to launch Venkatagiri forest satyagraha movement.

I went to Madras and met the representatives of the press and told them about the issues involved in that proposed *satyagraha*. The Swarajya, an English Daily, was of great assistance at that stage. The North Indian Press was also coming to realise the all-India significance of our movement.

But-most of the Congress leaders of Bihar, Bengal, U.P. and C.P. were themselves big or small zamindars and were not there-

fore able to appreciate the troubles and poignant sufferings of kisans. So there was not the same keenness to arouse kisans against the zamindari system. It was only after the formation of the Congress Socialist Party and the publication of my book "Economic conditions of zamindari Ryots," that the Bihar kisans began to be roused by Swamijee and others against their economic plight ; that was in 1935.

The Peasants Associations of Krishna and Godavari Districts were calling me to go to Machilipatam to meet the Member of the Revenue Board and present their case against the Resettlement enhancement of tax. So I advised the Venkatagiri peasants to be prepared to go ahead, even if I were delayed at Machilipatam.

At Machilipatam, there was a tremendous concourse of peasants—which was considered by the late M. Krishna Rao, Veteran Editor of the *Krishna Patrika*, as a unique experience of that city. It hailed me as its foremost spokesman. I presented the peasants' case to the Board Member. Nobody introduced us to him.

I had to hasten baek to Venkatagiri, where the satyagraha was to commence four days later, and so I rushed to Bezwada, gave final instructions to the No-Tax campaigners and made suggestions for running the volunteers' camps and went to the station to catch the Grand Trunk Express. As I was about to board the train, I was arrested and produced before the local Magistrate, Sri Shiv Shankar, ICS. I was asked to give security for one year for not making any seditious speeches. I refused to give that security and so, I was lodged in the local sub-jail, pending the trial. Just as I was being taken into the cell, the late Suryanarayana Pantulu, the aged leader of the Peddavadlapudi Irrigation Society, came crying and embraced me and assured me that though Government was sending me to jail, the society would stand by my leadership. I was not fated however to see him again because he died before I was released.

**Venkatagiri Kisan Satyagraha**

The Venkatagiri satyagraha campaign commenced as scheduled. Some of my kisan friends who had gained experience in Congress satyagraha campaigns of Krishna went there to guide

them during the first week. But a great disappointment was caused to me and to the kisans by a statement published by Shri B. Gopala Reddi, the then President of the District Congress, who later became the Chief Minister, disavowing all responsibility for the kisan satyagraha. And that statement was reprinted in thousands by the zamindari agents and distributed all over the Venkatagiri villages. That was an unexpected and unworthy blow.

The Venkatagiri satyagraha went on for a few months. The peasants of Mopuru area stood the test wonderfully and Sri P. Govinda Reddi of Tirthampadu displayed marvellous abilities of leadership and heroism. It was a wonder how those thousands of cattle were penned up in the villages for months when the zamindari officials prevented their emergence outside the village boundaries. Auctioning of cattle, spoilation of gardens, and burning down of hayricks by the authorities did not daunt those kisans. Government was obliged to intervene and arrange a truce between the zamindari administration and peasants. The peasants gained or regained many of their rights over the neighbouring forests. More than anything else, they gained a new self-confidence and developed self-reliance and their association was recognised by the zamindar. They also demonstrated their faith in my leadership and thus laid the foundations of my growing influence among Indian kisans.

I was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 500/- by the Magistrate, who was my junior at Oxford. He paid the compliment that my speeches, with their powerful declamations of the British Government, reminded him of Burke's eloquent speeches. He acknowledged my spirit of service to the peasants and expressed his admiration for my sacrifices, after having had as good a training at Oxford as himself. In later decades, we were to become good friends, for he served as an honest and efficient Secretary of the Planning and Irrigation Ministry when I was working as the Tribune of the masses, pressing for the development of the irrigation and hydel projects for the benefit of our peasants. Our friendship proved to be so useful in pushing up the Nagarjuna Sagar Project, on some of the most critical occasions.

## First Time to Jail

I wrote about jail life in my book "Life and Thoughts of a

Political Prisoner" and will content myself with repeating two intimate experiences.

Bharati Devi was very serious, as she stood on the Railway platform, to see me off. Other friends were affected by her mood and therefore presented an atmosphere of gloom. I asked her to smile and let the moon dawn on the sky. She could not but laugh and everyone else brightened and thus all were happy, just as the train steamed out of the station.

She took up the cause of the Venkatagiri ryots after I was sent to jail. She was seriously hurt in the face by stone-throwing by zamindari partisans while addressing a peasants' gathering in Venkatagiri.

She also toured for more than a month in Godavari and Krishna Districts, accompanied by patriotic kisan, M. Chukkamma, organised the Kisan Sammelan, and roused kisan women to stand by satyagraha, if and when it would be declared. The Government could capture her only after 10 weeks of her guerilla campaign and then sentenced her to one year's rigorous imprisonment. The Magistrate complimented her, in the course of his judgment, upon her great organising abilities, social influence and dynamic flair for public speaking. Both of us were kept in Vellore jail, but were separated by the two jail walls.

**My Election to AICC—"Jawahar's Attitude"**

A foretaste of what was to dog my steps during the next twenty years of my work came in the provincial Congress Committee's elections of 1931. The Committee met at Visakhapatam. It was to elect the new office-bearers. There was a powerful and popular move to elect a new set of leaders. I had no prejudices or opinions for or against anyone, but found that the members who were in favour of the change were also keen on electing me to the All India Congress Committee, and therefore, I was understood to have favoured the change. But many jail-returned members of my own District were keen on going to the AICC and so resented my candidature. Many others of the jail-returned members of all castes of all Districts ranged themselves together behind me to indicate their welcome to me. So I was elected with a thumping majority. Unfortunately in that melee, quite a number of promi-

nent Congressmen got defeated and their resentment was heaped on my head, for no fault of my own.

I was able to take part only in one meeting of the AICC before I was imprisoned. It met in Bombay to put the final touches to the Karachi Charter of fundamental rights and to select Mahatma Gandhi as the sole representative of the Congress. I took an active part in the discussions on the charter and pleaded for the protection of the zamindari peasants and produced the recent information I had got, during the enquiry in Nellore District, about the oppression of the Zamindari Ryots. The Congress leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, who was piloting the charter on behalf of the working committee, were not yet ready to study the peasants' needs in such detail, and resented my pressure and plea that the zamindari system should be opposed as much as the British Government. Moreover too many of the AICC members who hailed from U.P., Bihar, Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan were themselves zamindars and they could not appreciate my move. Mahatma Gandhi, as an AICC Member, was happy and congratulated me on my valiant plea for peasants but cautioned me that we must wait a long time before the peasants could be adequately protected. He hinted that it would be useful to gain the friendship of Nehru and others. I gained a good friend in Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, then the favourite heroine of Bombay. She backed me in all my amendments. We were to cooperate with each other in a comradely manner on many later but trying occasions. Many Socialists who assembled at that session offered me their appreciation and friendship.

## My Contribution to Village Panchayat Movement

The movement for establishing village panchayats in our villages claimed much of my time and attention during 1933—35. For this I collaborated with Sri P.V. Narasimha Rao, and spared a good deal of time for the advancement of the cause of village panchayats. I had evinced a great faith in village panchayats, long before I had gone to Oxford, thanks to the propaganda carried on by the 'Andhra Patrika' in their favour. The late C. Sankaran Nair used to say that Republican Institutions were known to the Indians of the Buddhist era and Annie Besant maintained that village Republics played a notable role in the

days of the Cholas of the ninth to eleventh centuries in South India, and so I was anxious to see that our villages were provided with the panchayat forum like Parish Government which I had seen rendering civic services to England. Between 1927—30 I helped the late Alamuru Satyanarayana in his efforts, not only to organise Panchayats but also to develop, under their auspices, what all the present National extension service schemes of rural reconstruction are trying to achieve. Sri K. Gangaraju, the then President of the T. Gudem Taluk Board, B. Satyanarayana and the late Sanivarapu Subbarao organised a special training camp in 1929 for the Panchayat Board Presidents, enthusiasts for adult education and the cooperative movement, at T. Gudem and I was one of the lecturers in that seminar. I toured the Alamuru Firka of Ramachandrapur Taluk in connection with the Economic Enquiry Committee's work and also along with Dr. J.C. Kumarappa in 1931. I then studied in detail the various aspects of rural reconstruction work that both village panchayats and cooperative societies were organising and how the civic life of the villager was raised to a higher level. So I pressed all I learnt into the service of the panchayat movement of Guntur and Krishna Districts. Sri P.V.N. Rao proved to be a dynamic, self-sacrificing public worker, with great faith in the potentialities of the Village Panchayats. He was ably aided by such colleagues as Sri Sitaramayya of Paruchuru and Pitchiah Varma of Donepudi.

Fortunately for that movement, the late N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, who rose to be the Defence Minister of free India, happened to be then Registrar General of Village Panchayats and he had genuine faith in their potentialities. He agreed with me that unless the usual red tape was cut by using the extraordinary powers provided in the Act, we could not make the rapid progress needed to provide a good number of villages with their statutory Panchayat Boards and thus enable them to develop their organised civic life.

In the usual course of the law, the initiative had to come from a prescribed minimum number of villagers for the formation of a Panchayat Board, then the usual enquiries had to be made by the Revenue Officials whether the villagers were keen on the establishment of a Board. Thereafter notification had to be made to ask for objections and after enquiring and disposing of objec-

tions, if any, the formal notification had to be published agreeing to the establishment of the Board. Thereafter an equally prolonged procedure had to be satisfied before the number of members of the Board could be settled ; election procedure was satisfied and a regularly elected board could take office. Generally it used to take one to three years for all these steps to be taken. According to the abbreviated procedure that we agreed upon, all our panchayat association had to do was to get a large cross-section of villagers to ask for panchayat, with of course the consent of local village officials, and then, when the petition came back again from Madras to the Tahsildar's Office, to persuade the Tahsildar, the clerk concerned and village officials to O.K. the proposal and then return it to the Registrar-General to affix his sanction for the proposal. Once the village concerned was granted a Panchayat Board, we used to submit the name of one of the village officials, either the Munsiff or the Karnam or a third person about whom the officials had agreed and get him appointed as the special officer to manage the affairs of the Panchayat, pending the completion of the usual procedure for holding the elections. Once the special officer was thus appointed, the funds from out of Local Cess collections, would accrue to the Panchayat. So we were free thereafter to prepare and submit proposals together with estimates for the construction of roads, culverts, tanks, wells, school-buildings and their repairs, and ask for Government grants either for the whole estimated sums or up to 50%. It was in this dynamic and almost revolutionary manner that we succeeded in establishing more than 500 new Panchayat Boards during the short period of 3 years, in addition to energising the existing 200 panchayats. We also succeeded in developing village reconstruction or quickening the earlier programme of Government's grants to schemes of village development.

We organised Taluk and District Panchayat Conferences as well as seminars where the Presidents of the Panchayat Boards were taught how to prepare plans and estimates for various schemes of village development, submit them in the most acceptable manner to the Revenue Officers, District Board and Engineering Departments, get them endorsed by them all with suitable alterations and send them up to the Registrar's Office. These seminars helped to quicken the pace of our constructive work

because we used to help the presidents to make suitable improvements in their plans and schemes, in the light of the experience gained by other Presidents with their schemes. We were then pleading for a higher allotment of the Cess funds as well as Government funds, for village panchayat works. We asked for final check measurement and passing of their works after execution. We wanted the services of technically trained personnel to be made available from the District Boards for enabling Panchayats to survey proposals for roads, culverts, schools, etc., to get plans and estimates made for their work. Though we could not get that Government to concede any of these demands we persisted in our reconstruction work and achieved much progress.

Sri P.V.N. Rao utilised his own car and gave funds liberally, worked day and night for more than three years and won not only the hearts of the villagers and their leaders but also the enthusiastic cooperation of most of the clerks and officials in all the relevant offices, through his faithful service to this noble cause. I am glad to find that the foundations that we had then laid were so sound that the Panchayat movement of Andhra came to gain much from their study of our work and their progress upon these foundations. A large number of the humbler ranks of Congress workers played a notable part in this basically constructive work, and the valuable help and leadership offered by village officials and traditional rural leaders could not be exaggerated. The late N. Satyanarayana and B. Viyyanna continued their propaganda work for this movement right up to the advent of national freedom.

## Majority Rule Unsuited to Village Life

Village factiousness, caste-ridden conceptions of gradations of status and superiority and political prejudices and differences began to find vent through Panchayat Board elections. Till then, those unhealthy forces had no opportunity either to combine together and poison the village social atmosphere in such a powerful manner, or to pose as the statutorily recognisable elements of leadership and power. After these Panchayat Boards came to be organised, their Presidents and members had to be recognised by Government as the accredited leaders of the local Civic Authority, and so those social forces which could not succeed in getting

proper representation on the Board began to feel most miserable and left out. There has thus grown the new political struggle by all active social forces to get to the top, not to be left out and at-least to be associated with the majority. Casteism and cash nexus, vote-catching manoeuvres and power wielding schemes have come to over-burden the civic life of our Panchayat Boards.

I had long understood the evil potentialities of such Panchayat politics from my careful study of the working of the Union Board politics of my own village and the neighbouring Boards and Municipalities in our Districts. So I had been wondering how to over-come these evils. I had these possibilities in my mind, when I was studying the working of local Boards in England, France, Italy and Switzerland during my European tours and I was carefully watching how the West was overcoming them. I found in their committee system, especially in the London County Council, quite a good alternative to the all-powerful, majority-led President in our Boards and Councils. I thought that the British practice of giving adequate representation to the minorities on all committees and welcoming leaders of minorities to work as the Chairmen of a fair number of committees was highly commendable and conducive to a healthy spirit of cooperation between the majority and the minority. On returning to India and studying the working of Panchayats during the Chola period, I discovered that the British practice of settling the priority order of Parliamentary resolutions and Bills by drawing lots was also prevalent in the ancient Panchayats at elections, as illustrated in the inscription on the Temple Wall of Uttara Melur in Tamilnad. So I proposed, in my second volume of the "Economic Organisations of Indian Villages" published in 1928 and also in my Telugu book on "Local Self-Government" published in 1926 and an English pamphlet in 1947, that the system of electing a panel of candidates for members and office-bearers through adult franchise and choosing the actual members as well as office-bearers from among the panels through drawing lots should be introduced, to incorporate in it the virtues of both free election and drawing lots. The bitter experience of the past twenty-five years of elections gained by our Panchayat Boards and other Institutions of Local Authorities has convinced me that Panchayat Boards can only be a source of disunity, unless our civic leaders counteract the

evils of majority rule by changing their attitude to the minorities. One step would be to adopt this method of choosing the final civic authorities by lot from an elected panel. Once again (1959) I outlined this idea in an article to the P.B.N. College Magazine of our village and sent its reprints to Jaiprakashjee and the Central Ministers. I am glad to note that Sri Jaiprakash Narayan has been impressed with this suggestion and begun to advocate since 1959 a similar reorientation of the democratic elections of these Panchayat Boards.

This Panchayat movement has been gathering strength in all the North Indian states ever since the advent of Swaraj. There too these Boards are meeting with the same unfortunate experiences. But the Congress bosses of the present Government are busy, turning this Panchayat movement also into a handmaiden to promote their political control over villages. Democracy by majority rule is being perverted by factions, castes and their groupings, political parties and their own factions into an insufferable social oppression of the Panchayat minorities, not to speak of the neglect of the discharge of minimum civic responsibilities of the Boards. The Congress Governments, the bosses of the ruling party and its MLAs are trying to turn these panchayats into their instruments to serve their party ends.

Moreover, so little freedom is given to them by the administration and so much are they hide-bound by Governmental grants, subsidies and controls that they are converted into mere tools of the Government. They are merely apologia for decentralisation. Panchayats are now being invested with punitive, and compulsory powers to order peasants as to how to plan their crop economy, raise crops, store, sell and distribute foodgrains etc. It is also being proposed that even the functions of Land Revenue Collections, Postal work, distribution of manures, Government subsidies should be entrusted to Panchayats. We, who have had such intimate knowledage of how Panchayats, under majority rule and governmental compulsion, have come to poison village social life are hesitant about this belated and politically oriented enthusiasm of Congress rulers. After a quarter of century of our work in villages and for panchayats movement, Nehru and Congress ministries have turned towards our villagers only to disintegrate them. It is therefore to be regretted that the Demi-Gods of the

Planning Commission, should be so dogmatically planning without experience of living under such panchayat majority-rule, to seize lands from even small-holders and hand them over to the Panchayats, thanks to the Gram Dan cult of Vinobhajee. Is there any wonder that I have had to raise my voice in 1957 against this suicidal move and thus brave both Jawaharlaljee and Vinobhajee and pay the consquent political price ?

**Peasants Vs. Landlords in Politics**

On my release from jail in November, 1932, I found that the Venkatagiri peasants were in jubilant mood because of their partial success in the Forests Satyagraha and even more so, because of their release from the age-long belief that the Zamindar was their natural master. They gave a royal welcome to me during that week's tour in their area in connection with the elections to the District and Taluk Boards. The contest was between the nominees of the Zamindari party and the peasant's party. In spite of their traditional influences, the power of the Zamindari administration and money, the Zamindari party was defeated and our peasant party was able to capture the Taluk Boards of Venkatagiri and Sulurpettah. and the local leaders of our movement—actual kisans—became their Presidents and Vice-Presidents. That was indeed a triumph for the kisan cause.

One of the most important factors which contributed to our triumph was the song composed by the late Sri N.V. Naidu, the incomparable propagandist and peasant's poet, who was also the Secretary of the Enquiry Committee. The burden of the song might be translated : "Vote only for the peasant's candidates, your interests will be safeguarded only by a peasant's representative". Some of its stanzas are very inspiring, as for instance, "what have we to do with caste ; to work hard and plough the land is our caste ; the times to come are for peasants ; and so please never sleep but get ready to play your part"—and so on. A fine batch of peasant-youths went from village to village, sang that song all along the streets, at all the meetings and exhorted our peasants to stand together and vote for our peasant candidates. That song won many votes and more hearts for us and was to render us great service again in the 1951-52 General Elections when KLP set up its candidates for the Assembly and Lok Sabha and competed with other, more powerful national political parties.

## Gandhijee Blesses the Peasant Movement

Some of the Congress leaders were not happy over this political triumph of our peasant movement. So three of them tried, through a hush-hush campaign, to warn Congress Workers from joining our ranks by saying that Mahatma Gandhi was opposed to our campaign against the zamindari system. The only way open to me to counteract that vicious move was to obtain the blessings of Gandhiji for our movement. So I waited until he visited Venkatagiri in January 1934. We held that meeting in the Katikineni house and Bharati Devi represented the hostesses in Purdah. A large number of kisans who had taken part in the Forest Satyagraha and who received lathi charges etc. met him and narrated their sufferings from the zamindari system. We were able to convince him that the British Government and the Zamindari party identified themselves with each other. Gandhiji gave us a patient hearing, thought about our slogan "Down with the zamindari system" and then said, "Yes, you are entitled to work for its abolition. But are you prepared to offer satyagraha ?" Our peasants said "yes". He exclaimed, "That is good. Ranga, you can go ahead with these peasants".

That exclamation of Mahatmajee was to stand as guarantee for our later ever-expanding all-India movement for the abolition of zamindari system in all the provinces ; such was his spiritual strength, when dynamic and able leaders were harnessed to it.

## Enquiry into Zamindari System Culminates in Mass Movement

Fortunately for the Venkatagiri peasants, Sri N.V. Naidu, the Katikineni brothers and V. Raghavaiah, chose not to go to jail but to work for their protection and so, the Zamindari party could not harm the interests of our peasants in spite of the tortur-ous litigation initiated by them.

Invitations began to pour in from every zamindari area for conducting similar economic enquiries into their conditions, suffer-ings and needs. Sri Santhanam, then the Editor of the "Indian Express", encouraged me to go ahead with that work of capturing area after area for the nationalist movement, because, till then most of those areas were sealed off from the Congress influence.

The third Andhra Zamindari Ryots Conference was held in Eluru under my presidentship. I prepared the draft Charter of Rights of the Zamindari Ryots in the light of enquiries I had made in Venkatagiri and Bobbili estates, and it was screened very carefully by the able and experienced secretaries Sri R. M. Sarma and N.V. Naidu, and adopted by the Conference. It had two principal features. First, we demanded the abolition of the zamindari system ; second, pending the achievement of that desired abolition, we asked for the zamindari ryots to be placed on the same footing as the Ryotwari Ryots, that is, to bring them in direct contact with Government and to lower the zamindari rent to the level of Ryotwari Land Revenue rates ; to introduce survey of lands and settlement of land revenue, to grant remissions whenever crops failed, to repair tanks and other irrigation sources. It will surprise people of this post-independence era to learn that in most of the zamindari areas, peasants had to pay rents on lands whose areas were not known, as there were no survey operations. The Conference appointed an All-Andhra Zamindari Ryots Enquiry Committee with myself as the Chairman and N.V. Naidu and R.M. Sarma as other members. We toured through almost all the Estates, met thousands of peasants, interviewed local leaders, delved deep into the zamindari records, inspected irrigation channels, tanks etc. and passed through forests, embracing grazing areas.

It was indeed an exciting, if nerve-racking, experience. In several places, attempts were made to beat me, and if possible to break my limbs. In many places public insults were offered, unutterable abuses were hurled loudly by hired crowds or drunkards. Many of the local peasant leaders and workers were waylaid, beaten, insulted, and their houses or cattlesheds were set on fire and their standing crops damaged. In some places, I had to tour incognito. In Bobbili estate, my troubles were too unbearable, since most of the local peasants were terror-stricken by the Zamindari party, and the Rajah Saheb was then the Chief Minister also. One Karnam in Munagala Estate had to leave his village because of zamindari violence heaped on him as he gave shelter to Naidu. To give evidence before us needed heroism on the part of peasants.

Many a local Congressman of the district level gave us some help by way of shelter or information as to whom to

approach. The late Gandhi Krishnamurti, Nyapati Narayanamurti of Srikakulam, Gidugu Ramamurti, the famous Telugu scholar, Sri Sala Sitaramswami of Bobbili and Gorrepati Venkata Subbayya of Divi, gave us such help. As fortune would have it, this G.V. Subbayya has remained loyal to me ever since and been the President of the Andhra Kisan Sammelan since 1943 and also served as the first President of the Andhra unit of the Swatantra Party (1959-60). Ours has thus been a noble comradeship of the Gandhian vintage.

After five months of incessant touring and hard work in the farthest villages and areas, which had not been touched till then by the Congress leaders, we completed our enquiries and prepared our report. Fortunately, various chapters of it were being published in the English dailies, 'Swarajya" and "Indian Express', edited by Khasa and Santhanam as and when we completed our enquiries in different Estates of the larger type, and thus the public mind was being prepared to sympathise with the victims of the Zamindari system. The full report was published in November, 1933, in book form under the title "Economic Conditions of Zamindari Ryots", with the financial help of Sri Yerneni Laxminarayana of Vijayawada. I was able to present it to Mahatmajee in January, 1934. He congratulated me on the report as well as having brought the extensive zamindari areas within the orbit of Congress policies. With the publication of the report, the movement against the zamindari system attained all India publicity and political stature. The daily papers of Calcutta, Allahabad and Bombay took note of this movement and drew the attention of the public and Government to the insufferable conditions of peasants in the Estates. Thus was added new chapter to the activities of Indian nationalists who had till then done little for the zamindari Ryots.

It was very disappointing to me that when many of us of the Kisan Sammelan were sent to jail and Congress was engaged in 1932-33 Satyagraha struggle, the Kisans of two Godavaris and Krishna submitted to the decision of the Government to enhance the land revenue by $18\frac{3}{4}\%$ but to collect it by stages, that is, one anna more in 1932, two annas more in 1933 and three annas more in 1934 and thereafter the whole of the enhancement. Government was able to collect one anna more while we were all in jail. On my release, I took up this matter and began to organise a

peasant's protest against the enhancement. The Kisan agitation reached such a momentum that Government felt its impact.

I initiated a few novel methods of propaganda. The demands of kisans, as adopted by their provincial conference, were given the shape of resolution and circulated among all the District and Taluk Kisan Sammelans (which we used to call Ryot Sangham) and they were asked to endorse them, either in their Committee meetings or in their public conferences and communicate them to Government and press. We decided to ask the village Panchayats and cooperative societies and their conferences also to do the same. We sent them to all the Revenue Officials of all ranks from our provincial sammelan and asked them to note how many organisations would support them and then report to Government the depth of the support for our demands.

**Peasant Week**

We then initiated the practice of organising a "Peasant Week" and "Peasant Marches" to all the Revenue Offices at all the levels from Taluk to District. The first one was organised in March, 1933, hardly a few months after my release, and it met with fair success in a few Districts. My brothers and Achanta Nagayya. my boyhood friend, led the first March in Guntur. The second "Week" and "March' were organised in the first week of November and the demonstrations proved to be impressive, popular and powerful. My brother Venkatapayya played a notable role in making a signal success of the peasants' March to Guntur Collectorate on November seventh, what with his ability to sing peasant songs, about our slogans and inspire peasants of all the villages, all along the 25 miles long route to Guntur from Appikatala, to come in their bullock-carts and form an impressive caravan. My younger brothers G.L. Narayana, G.V. Subbayya and N.V. Subbayya, the veteran kisan leader A. Nagayya of Appikatala, Bharati Devi, the late Lavu Ankamma, and others did great work. That peasant March opened the eyes of the citizens of Guntur to this new force among our rural people and this great and irresistible political element, *the Revolutionary peasant on the March.* Both G.V. Appayya and late N. Mallayya and others under the leadership of the late K. Venkata Chalapathi, the veteran kisan leader then past sixty years of age, led the March in Masulipatam.

The late Sir M. Ramachandra Rao of the RTC fame and N. Subbarao, the Veteran Congress leader of East Godavari, led the Marches in Bhimavaram and Rajahmundry respectively. Thus the peasants' March became a highly powerful and popular public weapon through which our peasants could reach Government in peaceful manner and present their demands effectively. Individually peasants were often found to be semi-dumb and ineffective. Unitedly they could be bold and vocal. But they had to be provided with proper leadership and clear-cut and expressive demands dealing with their well-understood, felt needs, and then they could all become eloquent, and consciously effective both individually and collectively. This is exactly what the peasants' march provided for them. Thus that November 7th of 1933 proved to be a milestone in the march of the Indian Peasant Movement. It also established my position all over Andhra as the foremost spokesman and leader of peasants. Srimati Kamladevi, who visited Andhra during this Peasant March Week, appreciated the success of these novel methods of organisation and enlightenment introduced into India's public life, especially among the rural masses. That pleased us.

The Government responded well to the first round of peasant marches in March-April by suspending the collection of the additional two anna imposition so far as Godavari and Krishna Districts were concerned. It went further and suspended collection of 12½% of the land tax in all other Districts also. The second round of peasant Marches yielded another success, in that the Government continued the suspension of 12% of the usual land revenue in all Districts and suspension of the whole 18¾% enhancements, which was to be collected from the Godavari and Krishna Districts in 1934. Thus, the peasants of the whole of the Madras Province, that is of 23 Districts, came to be benefited. So they began to call me "Tax Reduction Ranga." But in what a contrast does the present Congress ministry behave ! More than fifty peasant marches took place, headed by a five thousand-strong March in Hyderabad to the Secretariat in 1962 under the leadership of Sardar Latchanna and Bharati Devi. They protested against the 100% to 300% of enhancement of Land Tax. The Communists too organised their marches. The Kisan Sammelans' 750 Satyagrahis went to jail in support of Kisans ; Communists too sent theirs. Yet, the Congress Government refused to

give up this cruel imposition until it was struck down! Peasants wonder whether Swaraj could mean only such irresponsible governance.

## Harijan Uplift Activities

During the summer 1933, Mahatma Gandhi went on a 21-day fast as a protest against the failure of Congressmen to win for Harijans at least some civic rights and liberate them from untouchability. I welcomed that noble lead. I was already prepared to help Andhra to give the maximum possible response to Gandhijee's inspiring sacrifice. I became the President of the District Harijan Sevak Sangh of Guntur, organised Taluk branches, trained and appointed a few wholetime Harijan propagandists and built up an efficient network of anti-untouchability organisations. I organised and led the first Harijan Seva Dal in India in February and March, 1933, with ten Harijans. We toured through scores of villages in Repalle and Tenali Taluks, camped in both the Harijan and other quarters in every village, carried on processions shouting slogans and singing songs, and organised a number of public meetings, besides street corner exhortations, all in favour of removing untouchability and treating Harijans as equal and honourable citizens in every sense of the term. We encountered some opposition in the first few days from a few orthodox leaders, including priests. But soon the kisans decided to stand by me and heed my exhortation to accord equal civic rights to Harijans. Both the caste-Hindu and Harijan members of the Seva Dal were requested by influential peasants to camp in the houses of the caste-Hindus. Some of the most ancient kisan families came forward to be our hosts and after the first week, ours became a royal march through the countryside. Everywhere the Harijan members of the Seva Dal were accorded high honours and even inter-dining with Harijans was practised. In most places wells and tanks were thrown open to Harijans. In a few places, temples too were opened to them.

## Impact of Gandhijee's Fasts

The 1932 Poona fast of Mahatma Gandhi and the Poona Pact and the decades-long, nation-wide campaign of Gandhijee against untouchability including the Vaikam Temple Entry Satyagraha paved the way for the success of our Seva Dal. My personal influence played its part in that unprecedented wave of

liberalism on the part of the caste-Hindus towards Harijans. That first phase of success added much to the prestige of the Seva Dal, and the consequent snowball effect created a stir in Andhra.

So, when Gandhijee's second prolonged fast overtook the country, I was prepared to put in the maximum possible effort and achieve the highest success in answer to Gandhijee's call. Mr. Prasad Rao, sincere Ashramite and associate of the late Sri G. Sitarama Sastri, the renowned Congress leader, worked as the Secretary of the Sangh. We both toured, as if we were possessed, during those dreadfully hot days of May in all the Taluks of Guntur District ; reached some of the remotest villages, roused both the kisans and Harijans and thus addressed more than 1,00,000 people. Hundreds of wells and tanks in dozens of villages were opened to Harijans. We were able to invoke and obtain the aid of hundreds of sincere public workers and draw many more social workers into that campaign. I was able to spare a week within the prescribed period of Bapu's fast for a similar intensive campaign in Krishna District ; Sri K. Madhu Sudhan Rao, who had been my colleague in the 1931 peasants No-Tax campaign, came forward to help me, and the late Doctor Ghahnta-sala S. Sarma, the sincere social worker of Vijayawada, Sri Jiyyar Das, who was later to become a legislator were members of our Seva Dal. Thus, our campaign set the pace for the whole of the Andhra and it achieved the maximum results.

**Government Lands for Harijans**

In yet two other directions, I was able to forge ahead in serving Harijans. I have been anxious to get the unoccupied Government lands sanctioned for Harijans, so that some of them at least could get that permanent source of employment and social security. Since 1923, my brother G.V. Appayya, A. Nagayya and myself worked in this direction in Guntur District and we succeeded in getting some of the Porambokes—Government waste lands—granted to Harijans. I had the satisfaction that Harijan Christians had about 5,000 acres out of the 60,000 acres of land for which I succeeded in getting irrigation facilities in the Pedda Vadlapudi-Paturu Projects during 1926-32, When I found that at Vov-veru in Nellore District, as much as 2,000 acres of Government land was likely to be irrigated and the bigger local land-holders were

trying to grab it for themselves or their favourites, I hastened to that place accompanied by the then law student of Benaras University, Sri V. Kurmayya, who was later to become the Harijan Minister in Madras Government, organised local Harijans, worked up local kisan support and pleaded with Government for the sanction of all that land for Harijans. I met with success in that campaign.

**Harijans Also to Work for Harijan Uplift**

Up to that time, Mahatma Gandhi had insisted that the anti-untouchability work should be carried on mostly, if not solely, by the so-called touchables. I was not content with that position; I started the practice of introducing Harijan propagandists to lecture, sing and preach among the general public about the duty of society towards Harijans both as Hindus and citizens. The late Kamatam Shanmugam of Venkatagiri, who later became a legislator, and Shri Nutakki Venkateswarlu proved to be eloquent and powerful propagandists and Hari Kathaks. The Harijan graduates of our peasant institute such as Shri Ajanappa, who later became an M.P., also began to take to public work, as whole-timers.

I gained yet another invaluable opportunity to tour, live and work in the Harijan areas of our villages during those weeks of the Seva Dal March and the tour during the Harijan fast. I found then a perceptible change coming over the social life and economic outlook of our Harijans, that is between 1920-34. Housing conditions were slowly improving, sanitary environment was not so bad and the production of vegetables all around their houses and kitchen gardens for domestic use was becoming popular. The pall of fatalistic depression was thawing. Yet, their general conditions, social and economic, were sub-human and miserable. The thought of their plight gives me such unhappiness.

**Agricultural Labour and Labour Commission.**

Most of the Harijans happen to be agricultural workers and so, I have always felt that their economic progress is bound up with the uplift of agricultural labour. The Royal Commission on Labour was appointed in 1928-29 by British Government as a part answer to the growing influence of nationalism and socialism

among Indian industrial labour. I wanted the Commission to pay special attention to argricultural labour, in the hope that Harijans might be assisted to rise above their subnormal socio-economic standards. I was struck with the one-sided evidence being submitted to it, as if India's labour problem was confined to that of Industrial Labour alone. So, I submitted a long memorandum as my written evidence and drew pertinent attention to the vast but neglected problem of agricultural labour. I stressed the need for extending to agricultural labour such legislation as the Workmen's Compensation Act, the Trade Unions Act with suitable modifications, and also for further legislation to achieve decasualisation, to organise labour exchanges and ensure proper payment of wages. I suggested the organisation of statutory Trade Boards to enable the otherwise unorganisable agricultural labour and also such sweated workers as there were in the Beedi and leather industries to organise themselves and obtain some protection.

Later I had the opportunity of working for their welfare in the Central Assembly, and have persevered in making Government as well as the International Labour Office (I.L.O.) study the possibilities of affording some protection to agricultural labour. I did my best with some success to get the Minimum Wages Act extended to agricultural labour also. In fact I came to be known as the most persistent champion of agricultural labour in the Central Legislature and also on the I.L.O. and Indian Tripartite Labour Conferences. I have been proud of that work.

**Pleaded for Adult Franchise**

I have also felt that adult franchise is another effective means to uplift the Harijans and other backward peoples. So I have pleaded for it ever since 1923. The Motilal Nehru Committee which drafted a constitution for free India, was the achievement of the National United Front that arose from the nation-wide agitation against the all white Simon Commission. Liberals and Moslem Leaguers cooperated with it. I saw a great chance in it to get the principle of adult franchise accepted by Indian leadership. So I met some of its members, and sent my note on adult franchise, together with my articles published in the" Triveni", the English monthly of Madras, on the "Rise of Human Values" and "Adult Franchise" for consideration by the committee. I had long held the view that one of the most potent political means that

could be adopted for the liquidation of untouchability would be the extension of the vote to all adults, including the Harijans. I was most happy to find that the Committee had actually come to the same view and favoured the introduction of adult franchise in the proposed future Constitution of India.

I maintained in another article in "Triveni" on the "Governor" that even in Swaraj India, there would be need for the institution of 'Governorsnip' to help the parliamentary democracy to work on an even keel. Dr. Pattabhi, one of the senior national leaders of South India, was inclined to ridicule that suggestion, though later on, he was glad to become a Governor himself in Swaraj India.

The Nehru Committee favoured the idea of joint electorates, as an advance over the separate electorates. I agreed, but pleaded in my articles published in many dailies of Madras and elsewhere during that period, that we should be prepared to agree to the reservation of certain seats for the Harijans, although it might be a departure from the British practice. It was because of this conviction that I could not appreciate Mahatmajee's case in opposition to it at the first Round Table Conference and did feel a sense of great relief when he agreed later on to concede it in the Poona act. It was owing to the failure of our national leaders at that time, during the Round Table Conference (RTC) and later on, to agree to concede a few more reserved seats to the Moslems and others, that India came to be eventually split up into India and Pakistan. In the light of the emergence of this un-ending dispute over Kashmir and other international troubles between Pakistan and India, one wonders whether our leadership was wise in quarrelling over the quantum of reservation.

## Poona and Patna A.I.C.C.'s

### Congress Attitude towards Legislatures

The political movement was at a low ebb during 1933. The Congress continued to remain under the Government ban. When Mahatma Gandhi was released temporarily to complete his fast, Congress workers were assembled at Poona under the Chairmanship of Sri M.S. Aney, the veteran Congress Leader of Vidarbha; to consider their future course of action. It had always been difficult for Congressmen to change over from one nation-wide

programme to another. It took nearly four years after the Non-Cooperation Movement before Congress could allow the Swaraj Party to lead its legislative wing. Similarly the Poona Conference was only the beginning of the new move of Congressmen to try to utilise the Legislative forum again to advance the nation's cause of freedom. We had to wait until the Patna Conference of the AICC in June-July, 1934, before we could formally decide in favour of the Legislative forum. During that prolonged period of one year, the experiment of individual satyagraha came to be tried out and found wanting. The late Satyamurti, and Bhulabhai Desai struggled hard to prepare the ground, despite much opposition from the orthodox sections, for the Patna decision.

At Poona, the most noteworthy experience of all Congressmen who gathered at the session was the much-sought-after *darshan* of the Mahatma. I, for one, was happy to draw inspiration from that embodiment of whatever I could conceive to be the human virtues and failings of a God in the shape of a man. He emerged triumphant, through that epoch-making Poona fast, undertaken while in prison, as the greatest benefactor and protector of crores of Harijans, and prevented the British from exploiting them in the same way as they had been playing with the other minority communities. He was able to prove the superiority of moral force over imperialism. He demonstrated that Indian nationalism could not be suppressed by all the wiles, violence and arrogance of even British Imperialism. He achieved a greater triumph by persuading Hindu orthodoxy to assert that untouchability is no part of Hinduism.

Another interesting experience of Indian nationalism also took shape during that Poona session. Those Congressmen who began to think it was time for Indian nationalism to absorb the main tenets of Gandhian socialism met, on my invitation, in the Gokhale Hall, and Srimati Kamladevi presided. Sri A. K. Rao, B. Gopala Reddi, and many others took part in that session. We set up a constitution-formulating committee, including Kamladevi and myself. That Committee prepared a draft, which came to be utilised at the Patna session of the Congress Socialist Conference during the following year.

## Grandmother Passes Away

The Shiva Ratri of 1933 gave me two experiences. When I was leaving on that early March morning to preside over the District Kisan Conference at Kotappakonda in Narasaropet Taluk, my grandmother Ammimma was in her sick-bed and mother Mangamma warned me that she had been making a supreme effort to live till that sacred day. My heart quailed, as I had agreed to be at Kotappakonda. Seeing my suffering Ammimma asked me to go to the Conference and said, "If I could leave today, I would go to Lord Shiva, who is there at Kotappakonda also and so you could not be separated from me ; and do go to Lord Shiva at Kotappakonda, serve our peasants' cause and be in communion with both of us". I was inspired with her deep faith in our Indian Dharma. She was one of the noblest souls that Rural India could produce.

## Peasants' Charter of Demands

At the Conference, we formulated the charter of minimum demands, to be presented to Government through the District Collector by the peasant's march. We decided upon the peasants' march, the first of its kind in India, during the Congress era. The late Kakumanu Laxmayya, president of Krishna District Congress, presided over that conference and gave whole-hearted support to the kisan programme. Apart from Sri N. N. Murti, he was the first Congressman, holding such a responsible position, to identify himself so completely with the kisan movement. thanks to his comradeship with K.M.S. Rao.

On the same day, we held the District Panchayats Conference also and Sri P.V.N. Rao played the leading role, in demanding greater financial support from Government for village Panchayats. The Presidents of the Panchayats, who gathered there, approved the character of the peasants' demands also. The pamphlets published by the late S.G. Acharya, who had grown to be the most influential Andhra journalist of his times, proved to be of great use for both conferences.

As soon as the Conferences were over, I hastened back to Nidubrolu by the fastest train possible. At one place, I woke up sudenly and was about to rush out of the carriage, in that run-

ning train when one of my companions restrained me and when I fully gained consciousness I realised my mistake. Later on, when I returned to the village, I found that grandmother Ammimma breathed her last just about the time when I woke up in the train so suddenly. I was told that she smiled at all those present, mentioned the name of Lord Shiva and closed her eyes quietly and contentedly. Such was her faith in God. She was past 80 years of age when she died. She must have been very beautiful when young and even when I was only between 4-5 years of age and my grandfather was still alive, she looked like a handsome goddess, with her mirror-studded bodice and pearl-necklaces. And what a noble-hearted woman she was and how proud she used to feel that I had imbibed so many of her liberal and noble sentiments !

## Gandhijee's Tour in Andhra

Mahatma Gandhi's All-Andhra Harijan tour came off in December, 1933, and January, 1934. It was managed by Sri M.B. Needu, then the Secretary of the Andhra Harijan Sevak Sangh. Gandhijee toured for only one day in Guntur District. I met him in the train at Tenali, on his way to Guntur and travelled in his car from Gunter to Repalle. He welcomed me with words of kindness and a beaming smile and invited me into his car. It was an unmanageable assemblage of people at Guntur and we had great difficulty in bringing him into his car from the pedestal and then getting him and the car out of the mob that surrounded him. When someone's hand hit him on his clean-shaven head, we were so much shocked. He only smiled. It was indeed a sight for the Gods to see the streams of people, rushing up for his darshan all along the 40-mile-long route. Every village was in a festive mood, what with the festoons, flower garlands and lusty shouts of the universal slogan of triumph and joy, "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai". Prof. N.R. Malkani was also in the car, as his personal secretary, and Gandhijee introduced me as "Professor to Professor" and laughed heartily.

Our first trial of having to ward off the tempestuous overflow of the people's love for Mahatmajee came at Chebrolu. It is an important Congress village, whose history goes back to the Buddhistic Satavahana times. From it had gone to jail the largest single group of women satyagrahis in Andhra. Male

satyagrahis too were in large numbers. But the organisers of the tour did not provide for a halt for Bapu even at such a place. What was I to do? I prepared Bapu's mind in advance about the Congress significance of the village before we reached the village and thus made him agree to spare a few minutes for it, by letting the car stop to enable the ladies and other satyagrahis to garland him. Everything went off well until some of the lady satyagrahis insisted upon touching Bapu's feet. But that was too distasteful to him. So the car began to move and one of the ladies slipped and fell down, though she did not sustain any injuries. I felt unhappy over that.

Anyhow it was well that I persuaded him to stop there, because, the satyagrahis felt so much inspired that they were able to organise 12 years thereafter the Andhra Women's Political Training Camp.

**The Birth of Indian Peasants' Institute**

We reached our village without any other incident and the receptions at Munipalle, P. Tadiparru pleased him, because the ladies offered their homage so gracefully and the men were so disciplined. At Nidubrolu, Bapu performed the opening ceremony of the Rama Needu Peasant Institute, the inauguration of the "Kisan publications" under the editorship of brothers G. L. Narayana, N. V. Subbayya, and its first book in Telugu "Harijan Nayak" written by myself. Mother Mangamma sat at his feet during the one-hour's function on our beautifully-built pedestal by the side of the memorable avenue of Zamboo, or Neredu, my friend since childhood. Bharatidevi presented him with a heavy purse of money collected from the women of our village and also her own bangles. Bapu returned to her, his memento, the small bag on which she had darned his picture. The late Sri C.S.R. Aanjaneyulu, the famous film star and many others presented their purses. Bapu's speech, lasting for half an hour, dealt with the significance of the Indian Peasant Institute which was being opened by him in Nidubrolu. He also admired the role that kisan women were playing in national life and referred to the contribution of the Chebrolu women and Bharatidevi.

The scenic effect of that pedestal on his mind was great; he was much pleased with the umbrella-like spread of the Indian trees, Neredu (in Telugu), Zambu Phal (in Sanskrit). When he expressed his pleasure with that environment, I ventured to tell him that I used to climb and caress everyone of these branches, when I was a boy. He smiled and said, "how I envy you"

It was my good fortune that I was able to persuade my two brothers and my uncle Shri P.B. Naidu to convert our ancestral "choultry" into the peasant institute, to be named after the two good kisan brothers, Ramanayya and Ankineedu and the son of the former, Ramaswami, as the Rama-Needu Vidyalayam. Bapu appreciated the idea of transforming that ancestral charity into the much-needed modern Peasant Institute and congratulated me upon my decision to serve as the Hon. Principal of the Institute. "How romantic", he mused, "to find a full-fledged Oxford professor, placing his family property and his own services at the disposal of this Institute." He exclaimed, "I congratulate the Institute, I congratulate myself and Ranga." My joy knew no bounds. Mother Mangamma felt that all her sufferings for the sake of our brothers were more than compensated by Bapu's blessings and congratulations.

From my village, we proceeded to go to Tallapalem, a Harijan village where we had a famous family which had produced Ayurvedic doctors for many generations. Unfortunately, the rural cart-track unexpectedly became unfit for cars, because of rains during the early morning. So Bapu had to decide whether to go there or not. He preferred to go walking to avoid disappointing the only Harijan village in our programme. So he walked over that $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles distance. Hundreds of people walked with him. It looked like a repetition of the famous Dandi March. Bharatidevi hurt herself on the hard and needle-like black-earth cones and Bapu was grieved at the sight of that bleeding toe. We all walked as if we were in the company of a living God. At Tallapalem, he made a fine, feeling speech addressing those thousands of Harijans and asked them to work for their own social uplift.

Ever since, that 1½ miles-long path has become very dear to us all in the neighbourhood. Thanks to the persistent efforts of the Harijan Kisans of that village, a metalled road has been constructed. It is fittingly called the "Gandhi Marg", and can be seen from the train, as it approaches the NIDUBROLU Station from the North. Whenever my train passes by it, I recall that golden experience of 1933.

By the evening we reached Repalle, after spending midday at the Vinayasharam of Swami Sitaram. The Ashram was dedicated to Bapu. There were many functions at the Ashram but two pleased him most namely, the conference of Rural Women and inauguration of the prophets' Centre, Swamijee and Sree Basavayya and his wife its founders were disciples of Bapu and were specially interested in constructive work. Subsequently I wrote an appreciation in Telugu of the services of these three good public workers.

The Repalle gathering was too tempestuous because the people from both sides of the Krishna river gathered and wanted to have Bapu's darshan. With much difficulty, the local organisers helped Bapu to entrain the special train. Tenali had her fill of Bapu. The next morning, myself and Bharatidevi accompanied Bapu from Itanagarapadu to the station. We were able to arrange introductions and interviews for many humble Congress and kisan workers and Harijan Sevaks, especially for the women satyagrahis of Chebrolu. Bapu was pleased to find so many young men and women, taking active interest in constructive work. He realised how Bharatidevi was able to inspire women and get them into the national movement. He asked her about the Congress Women's Movement in Guntur District and also about the causes for the success of the women's camp at Tenali and was much pleased with her sober and steady approach to our social issues. He invited her to follow him on his tour but was disappointed when she declined the honour, saying that her local work was also useful and important and needed her more. When she agreed to go to Venkatagiri, he was immensely pleased.

I knew that millions of our people considered such contacts with the Mahatma as of greater significance in their lives than any other experience. So, throughout that day, I was trying to see

that more and more people had his darshan, and ran the risk of annoying him or encroaching on his all-too-brief period of rest. Bapu understood my motive and responded cheerfully to my call. So when at last he boarded the train the next morning, he turned to Bharatidevi and asked her with that charming smile, "Does he drive you also as mercilessly as he drove me yesterday ?" and patted me on my back. In the same relentless manner, I have tried to enable more and more people in different States of India to obtain during our tours in 1959-65, the darshan and blessing of Rajajee, the oldest colleague of Bapu, second only to him in wisdom and practising of 'Dharma'.

We met him again at Venkatagiri. We lodged him in the house of the Katikineni brothers ; the same house where I was sheltered during the peasant movement in 1931 and where we held our banned Zamindari Ryots Conference. Bapu was overwhelmed by the charming reception and services offered by the ladies of that cultured kisan family, under the guidance of Bharatidevi. The speech of Bapu, delivered on that green maidan was, a ringing exhortation to peasants to stand up for their rights and support their kisan sammelan—a vindication of my stand against zamindars.

Shrimati Ponaka Kanakamma, the veteran Congress satyagrahi and the founder of the Kasturba Vidyalaya at Nellore and a jail-mate of Bharatidevi, was with Bapu during that Nellore tour and she too had many good talks with him. Bapu had a pleasant morning walk, in the company of Bharatidevi and Kanakamma, by the side of the Railway Station, while awaiting the train. As he entered the train, Bapu took leave of all the workers and blessed Kanakamma and Devijee and turned round to me and said, "Ranga, congratulations for your wife, I have fallen in love with Bharati. She is an excellant daughter of mine. She will look after Andhra women. I have now no worries about the Andhra peasants : they are in your care". It was through such contacts, congratulations, exhortations, darshans and smiles—that Bapu used to win the hearts of millions of ardent workers and cool-headed political leaders.

# 6

# *My Work Among Hand-Loom Weavers 1935-1955*

During this period of United Front and the emergence of the Kisan movement on the all India plane, yet another movement, that is, of the hand-loom weavers which had been begun by me in 1925 but was in a moribund state, came to take an all Andhra shape through my efforts and those of the educated youths of weavers. In 1936, the first effort was made by Sri Srikantham, the Late Pendyam Venkatramulu and others to create an All India platform for the weavers' Congress but that organisation could not take any definite shape, since the needed spade work in other States could not be made. Sri Pendyam Venkatramulu, a sincere Congressman who had gone to jail, offered his services to build up the Andhra organisation of weavers. He had a great flair for organisational and publicity work and worked hard under my guidance for over six years and built up an effective network of weavers' Congress Committees all over Andhra. Simultaneously with this, especially during 1938-40, a number of Weavers' Cooperatives were being organised, on the initiative of the Government, through subsidies offered towards initial managent expenses from the Rs. 10 lakhs annual all-India Handloom cess fund. Sri P. Kotayya of my village, a graduate of the Peasant Institute and a Diploma-holder of the Madras

Textile Institute, helped me to develop a liaison between the leadership of the Cooperatives with the weavers' congress. Thus had begun what had grown by now to be the most powerful leadership of the Andhra weavers. By 1940, the leaders of the weavers' cooperatives decided, on the advice of Sree P. Kotayya, T. Ramakantharao, Veerabhadrarao, K. Basavaraju, to capture the leadership of the Madras Presidency Handloom Cooperative Society ; the Apex organisation. They requested me to be their candidate. Fortunately my prestige and popularity as the author of the first scientific study of the weavers' conditions, namely, "The Economics of the Hand-Loom", as one of the Congress leaders and as the foremost popular ideologist and organiser of the peasants and weavers and their organisational resources helped me to secure success over the almost overwhelming influences of the Government, and the Justice Party. I could function for only 4 months as the President of that Apex Weavers' Cooperative and that too, while attending to so many other more important national responsibilities. Nevertheless we were able to organise a Training Course for the Secretaries of the Primary Cooperatives. We modernised the sale arrangements for handloom fabrics. We doubled the sale emporiums and made arrangements for subsidies to such emporiums to be started by local weavers' cooperatives. I appointed Sri P. Kotayya as Designer for the State and Sri G. Mallayya, a distinguished artist, as Hon. Designer. We took steps to start a number of Dyeing and Printing centres. We got sample-books prepared for obtaining orders from Government and foreign firms for large quantities of various varieties of sarees, etc. In these and various other directions, foundations were laid for what has now come to be the varied activities of the All India Handloom Board. In all this constructive and dynamic work of organisation, Shri P. Kotayya, Ramakantharao, M. Somappa gave me much assistance.

When I had to go to jail in April 1940, I delegated my powers to Sri M. Somappa, who was till then comparatively unknown on the State level and that choice proved to be a discovery of first-rate leadership, because, he not only acquitted himself well in that capacity but also made it the springboard for his later well-deserved national leadership of our ten million weavers. He became the first president of the Board of Directors of the First Cooperative Spinning Mill of the weavers.

We organised special classes for weavers' youths in sessions of the Indian Peasant Institute. Later on we ran separate training classes, schools and seminars for weavers under the auspices of the Weavers Congress. We also organised weavers Marches in a number of districts.

During the war, Bharatidevijee and all the Kisan congress workers gave their whole-hearted support for the weavers' movement. She became the Hon. President of the State Weavers Congress.

As in the case of the Kisan movement, so in the case of the weavers' movement too, the C.S.P. and C.P.I. started as scoffers and ended as rivals to the patrotic weavers' leaders, through their vain attempts to capture the organisations. They had no faith in the possibility of resuscitating the Hand-Loom weaving industry and they considered the cottage industries as being under the sentence of death by the verdict of Marxian history. They had no patience with the Gandhian theory of decentralised, self-governing, cooperatively-organised self-employed Cottage-industrial artisans (Kalakars) and they used to ridicule my efforts to organise them. When they found that I was succeeding in developing a dynamic political force out of these masses, they decided to capture these organisations and destroy the unity among these workers just as they tried to play mischief with the Kisan movement. During the war, they pursued these methods with some success. But Devijee, Kotayya and others put up a valiant fight against their disruptive tactics.

Unfortunately a large number of narrow-minded Congressmen too refused to cooperate with us in these efforts under the impression that weavers who were working on mill-yarn did not deserve their sympathy. Gandhijee was more practical and humane and so did not object to my work. In fact, Bapujee encouraged Principal Sreeman Narayan Aggarwal, the author of the Gandhian plan, to cooperate with me in developing this movement. They both liked so much the ideological justification I provided in my Presidential address before the Second All India Hand-Loom Weavers Congress held in Nagpur in 1945 that Shri Sreeman Narayan got that thesis published by the Hind Kitabs under the title 'Why Four Crore Artisans Hail Gandhian Plan''. Ever since the

all India weavers' movement has grown to be a powerful champion of not only weavers but also all other self-employed artisans masses.

After I came to be elected as the Vice-President of the Indian Oilseeds Committee in 1947-52, I took active steps to help the four million oil-gunny workers to organise their cooperatives and class associations. The Congress ministries have been following unsatisfactory policies regarding these artisans. Whenever thre is a conflict of interests between such highly organised industry as the Textiles, it is unable to afford the fullest protection needed by artisans. For instance, weavers want reservation of certain weaves of Dhoties and Saries but the Governs ment is unwilling to afford this much-needed protection. On the other hand, it is now pursuing the anti-Gandhian policy of encouraging power-looms in rivalry to hand-looms.

Unfortunately many of the weaver leaders and others have come to be so much interested in the plums of power and favours of the Congress and positions of responsibility in the cooperatives, that the general movement for the protection of fundamental rights and demands of weavers, oil-mongers are not being as fully voiced as is necessary.

# 7

# *My Election to Lok Sabha—1957*

In accordance with the decision taken by the Union Government, Telanghana with its population of a crore was merged with the Andhra and the new state was called the Andhra Pradesh, with a population of over three crores and with Hyderabad as its capital. Parliament decided that there was no need to have elections for the Assembly from the former Andhra, since the general election had been held only two years previously and it would be unnecessary trouble for the public and candidates to go through another costly electioneering. So, the 1957 general election was held only for Parliament in the Andhra as a whole, and for the Assembly also in the Telanghana only.

In the selection of candidates for the Lok Sabha from the former Andhra, the KLP section was represented only by myself and Shri Latchanna in the Congress Election Committee, whereas Sri Gopala Reddi, the defeated Chief Minister, who had been with Sri Latchanna earlier, found himself back again in his former lair of Shri Sanjeeva Reddi. I tried in vain to persuade the committee to look at the whole of that selection business as the concern of all Congressmen and not merely of rival groups, and found myself, inevitably, sponsoring quite a number of names of people who had been associated directly or indirectly with the KLP and Praja Party sections of the Congress. Such was the power of

groupism that apart from myself, only one other, strongly sponsored by us, namely Shri K. Bali Reddi, for long the General Secretary of the Andhra Kisan Sammelan, came to be listed and that too provisionally by the Andhra Committee. Two others who belonged to the category of Sanjayas and *Naradas*, and who were for all practical purposes on their side but who were for some reasons not so much favoured by them, came to be accepted after being sponsored by us also, when we agreed to two others strongly supported by them.

The AICC leaders did not pay any heed to our protest that contrary to the spirit of the United Congress and the merger of the KLP, the PCC ministerial section of the Congress dominated the Election Committee and wanted to practically monopolise the selections and the KLP and Praja Party sections and others associated with them were not given proper representation. They wanted to forget the political conditions under which the 1954-55 United Congress was formed and the gentlemen's understanding that the interest of the KLP section would be honourably safeguarded. We protested in vain against this blatantly unfair treatment.

When it came to my selection to the Lok Sabha, the DCC bracketed my name with that of Devijee and wanted either of us to be selected. The provincial ministerial section was keen on my candidature, whereas the AICC representatives pressed me to set up Devijee. In view of the known disinclination of Devijee to stand for the Lok Sabha and to place herself at the mercy of doubtful cooperation of Congress bosses and the desire of the KLP section that I should demonstrate that the voting public would be with me any time I wanted to face elections, I decided to reluctantly. Of course, the AICC leaders agreed to my candidature.

Long before the finalisation of the selection of candidates by the AICC leaders, I learnt through reliable sources that several of the Congress leaders of Guntur District were intriguing, with the connivance of some of their State leaders, to get me selected for the Tenali Constituency and afterwards politically ambush me through their local communist allies by getting an independent to stand against me and achieve my electoral defeat,

thereby striking a mortal blow to the prestige and popularity of the whole of the KLP section and of our Andhra masses. I did not wish to move to the safer and adjacent constituency and insisted upon facing all such internal intrigues within the Congress, and defeating the prospective communist candidate in disguise and proving my capacity to carry the majority of the voters with me. Yet I tried my best to conciliate the local Congress leaders and MLAs. So I met them all and patiently listened to their grievances against the KLP section and tried to pacify them.

It became clear, two weeks after I began the unofficial election campaign, that the dominant leader of the PCC ministerialists was clearly avoiding any open breach with me but was assiduously trying to induce the local communists to set up their candidate. Almost up to the time of filing nominations the communist party had not decided upon contesting in my constituency as they felt that my success was a foregone conclusion and they did not wish to lose the goodwill of the Andhra people as a whole by unnecessarily harassing me. For fear that the communist sponsored candidate may withdraw even at the last minute, the ministerialists persuaded one of themselves—a bosom friend of their domineering leader—to file his nomination. Eventually the communist supported candidate, belonging to the less politically-minded section of kisans who had so little contact with public life, and whose main recommendation was his social title, was maintained and supported by the underground section of the ministerialist Congress.

During the election campaign, only two of the ministerialist MLAs openly supported my candidature, and one of them was my colleague on the All India Handloom Congress and a graduate of the peasant institute, namely, Sri P. Kottaya. The other supported me but was defeated in his own major town of Tenali at the last moment, by their underground, which was being directed by his domineering District leader. When that leader was obliged to address a public meeting at Bapatla he was factious enough to say that "Prof Ranga's defeat cannot be taken as a defeat of Jawaharlaljee. If he were to come to be defeated, he would have to thank his own friends." When he had to address the Tenali meeting two days previous to the

election, he never mentioned my name. It became a generally prevalent joke over the whole of the constituency and elsewhere that "Rangajee got only the symbol from the Congress and nothing else." In fact every social section of the voters was approached surreptitiously with the complaint that in some other constituency a candidate of their caste, standing on behalf of the Congress, was not being supported by the KLP section, and so Ranga should not be favoured by them. In this manner the Brahmins, Telagas, Vaisyas, Reddis and Moslems were sought to be alienated from me. Over and above all this underground work, there were the communists and their electoral allies the PSP, who exerted themselves to the utmost with their assured 25% of the votes against me, as they rightly considered me as their biggest opponent on the ideological and organisational fronts.

During the whole of that 10-week-long campaign, not one Congress minister, either of the State or of the Union, cared to touch my constituency and appeal to the people in support of my candidature. The PCC ministerialists did get Jawaharlaljee and a few other Union Ministers to Andhra to support their candidates but my constituency was kept outside their purview. Jawaharlaljee was in Vijayawada and only the river Krishna separated him from my constituency, but he did not bother to come and strengthen me. Union Finance Minister came to Guntur town—six miles from my constituency to support another candidate but would not touch mine. But I had no regrets as I depended mostly on the masses and workers of the KLP persuasion and those small section of Congressmen who had been loyal to the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. It was an inspiring experience to find the bulk of villagers so enthusiastic about my candidature, so keen on my success and so pleased with my visit to their villages, hamlets and even their homes. From most villages I received gifts towards the election expenses, most of which had to be incurred in towns and on transport facilities.

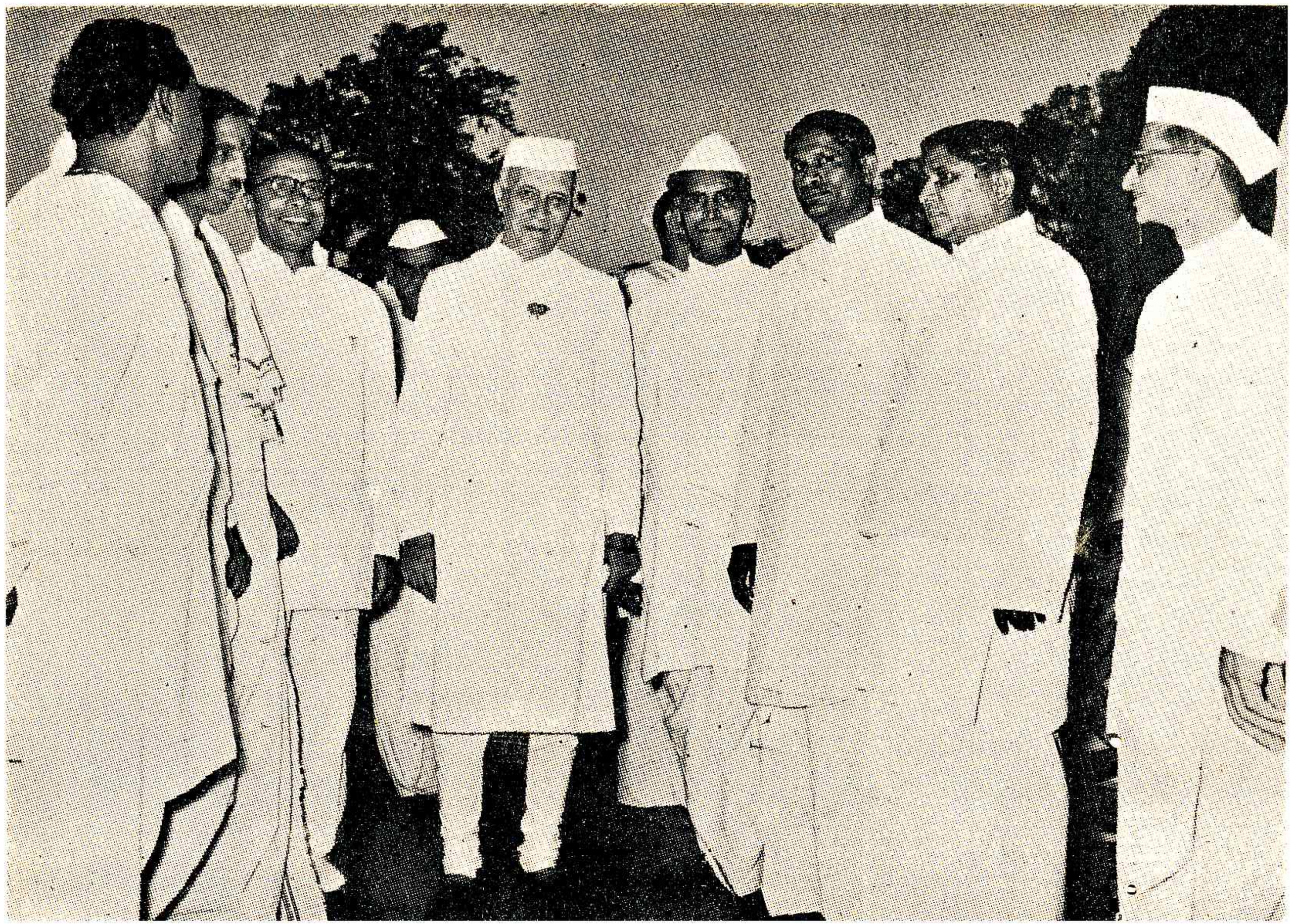
Kisans and artisans, especially weavers and Harijans and other depressed classes who were non-communist-minded, were all solidly behind me. They collected small sums from among themselves and paid for their local electioneering ; I managed to visit almost every village and hamlet and addressed every group or section of voters, sometimes more than once. People were glad

of the election, as I had that excellent opportunity to reach everyone of their areas and have the darshan of their men and women and convey the message of the KMP Raj so personally and directly. It was an exhausting, if exhilarating, campaign for me, for I had to work for more than 16 hours a day for all those ten weeks and address six to ten meetings, as many more talks and take part in many more entertainments. Besides, I had to visit the other three parliamentary constituencies in Guntur District and tour for many days in support of the Congress candidates. I am glad my health stood that terrific test.

I am grateful to the KLP workers and so many orthodox Gandhians and also the public who gave such a patient and interested hearing to our political expositions.

I took care to see that everyone of the workers, led by the incomparable speakers in Telugu, P. Koteswara Rao, Vijaya Raj Kumar, Veerachari who campaigned for me tried to rivet the attention of the people upon our political ideal of K.M.P. Raj and our economic approach in favour of the peasant family economy and peasant proprietorship. The KLP section of them went even further and spread the message of the Kisan Sammelan and assured the electorate that I would be going again to parliament principally to protect and promote the interests of kisans, artisans and rural masses. All of them referred repeatedly to my talks with Bapu in 1944 and his blessings to our ideal KMP Raj. Everywhere our propagandists campaigned against the Communists and their conscious or unconscious fellow travellers in and outside the Congress. The people were reminded of Communists' opposition to peasants, their economy and their self-employed status. So, when I came to be elected by a majority of over 27,000 despite all those terrific odds and the minority—voting in five out of the seven towns of my constituency—and the subterfuge of the Congress underground bosses, I felt glad that my principal stand regarding peasant and artisan economy and land and rural problems was wholeheartedly endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the rural masses of my constituency, in a symbolic manner, on behalf of the whole Andhra rural public.

I took care to warn our peasants in a celebration held in Kuchipudi, within a month after our election success, against the attempts being made by the Planning Cemmission presided over



In Prime Minister's party in May 1957 with some members of Parliament from Andhra Pradesh

by Jawaharlaljee, to impose cooperative farming upon our peasants. Shri K. Raghuramayya, the other successful M. P., who later became a Minister of State, tried to reassure that meeting that Jawaharlaljee could and would never allow such an anti-kisan manoeuvre to be implemented. The Telugu press wondered how I could dream of the Congress working against the fundamental basis of our peasants, namely, their self-employment and ownership of their holdings. Before the year was over, the real designs of the Planning Commission against peasant economy were embodied in the Gram Dan scheme of Yelwal Conference, convened by Vinobhajee and attended by Jawaharlaljee, Rashtrapathi Rajendra Prasad, Congress President Dhebar, Jai Prakash Narain and representatives of the C.P.I., P.S.P. I had known for long that the Planning Commission as well as Jawaharlaljee were keen on moving in that direction, *i.e.*, against free peasants.

I had been warning them from the Kisan platforms that his way would lead the country into economic ruin and social slavery. Many Congressmen who only cared for political power and opportunities were keen on exploiting my differences with Jawaharlaljee on these vital matters to advance their own positions in Andhra State politics. Their hopes were belied when I began to champion the peasants' cause in my vigorous K.L.P. manner and expected the Congress to remain loyal to Gandhian assurances to peasants. Hence their underground opposition to me in the hope of endearing themselves to Jawaharlaljee by ensuring my defeat.

8

# *Work in Central Assembly (1935-46)*

During that first Central Assembly of 1935-46, which was formed, I had the privilege of working under the leadership of the late Sri Bhulabhai Desai. When he was elected as the leader of the Congress Party, he was not as well-known as any of the front rank Congress leaders like Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari or the late Sri Satyamurti. However Bhulabhai did not take long before he established himself as the greatest orator of the Central Assembly. His memory was so sharp that he could deliver an hour's speech on the most delicate issues, without recourse to any notes with all the authority and accuracy of a professor. His eloquence was so unique and his manner of speaking was so pleasant that he kept his audience spellbound. The opposing Ministers were always breathless and at a loss as to how to answer his case. We on the opposition benches, irrespective of Party affiliations, always felt elated and inspired by his major speeches. The irony of the politics of that House was such that the late Mr. Jinnah managed to speak after Bhulabhai Desai and he tried to make a few points in a rhetorically telling fashion. Since he spoke generally in opposition to the Government of the day, we were pleased with his speeches. But in quite an unexpected manner, the Government Members used to derive some satisfaction at the way that Jinnah's speeches brought down the tempo of Parliamentary eloquence, although they were hard put to it to answer his debating points.

Sri Govind Vallabh Pant was our Deputy Leader. His speeches on the Budgets and financial isssues were very much appreciated by all and he proved to be a bugbear to successive Finance Ministers. His was an eloquence flowing as quietly and overwhelmingly as the Ganges and it used to create an effect, without appearing to do so, all so unique.

The greatest points in debate, at Question-time and in repartee, were scored by that terrific debater, the late Sri Satyamurti. He was industrious, dynamic, and possessed an unrivalled debating skill. His points were always neatly arranged and released like bullets from a machine-gun, in a merciless manner. He lived fully in the moment of his speech and he was ever ready to join issue with the best or the most redoubtable champion of the Government. It was indeed a sight to watch him in debating duel with the late Sri Girija Shanker Bajpai or N.N. Sircar. Even a 'white-man' sitting on the Treasury Benches could not equal him in debating skill. Indeed, he was the greatest and most spirited Parliamentarian of his day, not only in India but also in the Commonwealth.

Yet another veteran patriot was Sri M.S. Aney, the leader of the Nationalist Party. Watching him, beginning his speech, with his difficult voice and supari-laden mouth, one would never suspect that he could make an effective speaker. Yet he always succeeded in making few more telling points in debate, rivalling as it were with Jinnah's rhetorical points in thus impressing the House. As luck would have it, he was with us in Parliament in 1959-67. Though he is past 80 years of age, he is just as vigilant as ever.

We had two good speakers from Bombay ; Sir H. Modi and Sir Cowasjee Jahangir. The former was a pleasant and powerful, speaker with great debating skills and store of wit and humour. Even today in his eighties, he is invariably in good humour. Sir Cawasjee used to impress us with his consistent faith in the politics of moderation and the economics of capitalism. He was a good Parliamentarian and like a good sport he used to take in good spirit, so many ill-humoured sallees from our Congress benches. Both believed in the political approach of Sir

Pherozeshah Mehta and G.K. Gokhale, the pre-war national leaders.

The Speaker's position was of extreme political importance in those days. On his rulings alone depended the number of occasions when the opposition could gain Parliamentary triumphs and political advantages against the alien Government. Vithalbhai Patel as the first Indian elected to that eminent position successfully demonstrated how vital could be the role of the Speaker. So we tried our best to capture that position but owing to the last minute decision of Jinnah to support the Governmental candidate the late Sir Abdur Rahim, we were defeated. Sir Abdur Rahim proved to be a quiet but firm supporter of the Government. The Standing Orders and Rules of Procedure of the Assembly were comparatively ineffective in these post-Independence years of weak opposition. They however invariably turned into the most potent and dangerous weapons by Satyamurti, that magician of the Assembly. At any and every turn of national affairs and on every provocation in the debates, we used to invoke their aid to bring the Government into disrepute. And on almost every crucial occasion, the Speaker was found to be out of sympathy with the opposition. Adjournment Motions were a terror to that Government and Non-Official Resolutions were a danger and on most occasions, the war of nerves used to end in the discomfiture of the Government. Of all the Ministers N.N. Sircar alone could withstand that strain and one other Sir James Grigg had the guts to retaliate with some gusto. Quite a number of us were more than a match to the Executive Councillors as the then ministers were called—and we always scored over them in every major debate. The struggle used to be so keen that everyone of us used to be present in the House most of the time, as if we were guarding the fort in a military fashion.

There were many occasions when we of the Congress had to decide on crucial issues. For instance, the question of attending the Viceregal functions, including his addresses to the Central Legislature, came up for discussion. In the first instance, we had no difficulty in deciding upon boycotting them because the then Viceroy Lord Willingdon had insulted the Congress and Gandhijee by refusing an interview to Gandhijee in 1932, on his return from the Round Table Conference and broke the Gandhi-Irwin Pact

in such an unceremonious fashion. But when Lord Linlithgow succeeded him, interviewed Mahatma Gandhi and initiated his programme of agricultural development and the Rupees one crore grant for rural development, we were divided in our attitude. But eventually those of us who wanted the Congress M.L.As. to be kept beyond the social influences of the I.C.S. Officials and Viceregal circles succeeded in persuading the party to stick to the earlier decision of social boycott against Officials. When the Insurance Amendment Bill was under discussion, we were very particular that Indian concerns should be given the much needed protection but Sir James Grigg was opposed to that. N.N. Sircar, the Law Minister, who was piloting that bill offered to protect Indian concerns and sought our support. After much debate, we agreed to stand by him and thus promoted the national interest.

On every occasion when the question of Indians abroad, especially in South Africa, was discussed, the whole of the opposition worked, spoke and voted together and thus demonstrated the unity of India. The same unity was maintained whenever a demand arose for protecting any of our nascent Indian industries. Invariably amendment favoured by Mr. Jinnah had to be accepted by us, with a view to defeat the Government by gaining the support of his party and had to withdraw or allow our amendment to be defeated on every important occasion. Bhulabhai used to be furious, like all of us, at that necessity ; yet he was great enough to yield to Jinnah's individualism, the better to demonstrate national opposition to the Government's manoeuvres.

The late N.M. Joshi, Shri V.V. Giri and myself worked together on all labour matters and this proved to be a formidable combination against Government. The Trades Disputes Act Amendment Bill, Payment of Wages Bill, Coal Mines Act Amendment Bill, the discussion on the I.L.O. Reports and conventions and the annual debates on the Labour Demands gave ample opportunities to expose the anti-labour attitudes of the Government. We pleaded for protection of plantation labour. We fought hard to stop contract labour on the Railways and the Ports. We persuaded the Government to press conciliation machinery into service whenever labour disputes threatened to break out. We worked for the opening and strengthening of the Labour Exchanges. I was particularly keen on extending labour legislation to agricultural labour.

Within the very first year of my membership I was ranked as one of the front rank speakers in the Assembly and the Finance Minister, Labour and Agriculture Ministers encountered the stiffest and most scholarly opposition from me, as apart from the Leader and Deputy Leader and Satyamurti. The special correspondent of the Manchester Guardian described me as the Maxton of the Indian Assembly. The late K.T. Shah, special correspondent of the Bombay Chronicle, described one of my powerful speeches on the Budget as "an eloquent expose of Gandhian socialism". Sir Frederik James, the eloquent leader of the Anglo-Indian Party, writing in his review of the work of the first year of the Assembly, said that I was a "remarkable person, with great forensic abilities, eloquently espousing the cause of peasants and workers of India". Sir James Grigg, relentless critic of all of us, was obliged to refer to me as "the only one man in that party, who sincerely tries to speak for the masses of this country." Unfortunately for me, I was not a persona grata with the Speaker, because I was found on most occasions in the forefront of the boisterous but parliamentary demonstrations against Government's undemocratic refusal to accept Assembly's decisions. He was always on the look out to find an occasion to tackle me. But he could not succeed. For instance, I was discovered once saying, in undertones, that the Ministers' attitude was atrocious. The Speaker pounced upon me and asked me what I was saying. I quickly retorted that I was saying something to myself. Non-plussed, he remarked, "The Hon. Member might speak to himself less audibly."

On occasions, we used to find the rich people on the Congress side making common cause with their brethern on the Government side. On one such occasion, when an agreement proved to be so useful to European capitalists, I castigated our Congress capitalists rather severely by observing "that a leopard might change its spots, but not so the rich". No wonder I could never be a favourite with capitalists. In fact, I was obliged to champion the workers who went on strike in one of the Birla's Textile Mills in Delhi. During the negotiations, I had to express my disappointment with the management. So, it annoyed the Managing Editor of the Hindustan Times, the powerful Birla Daily of Delhi.

The Assembly had a fine Library. Dr. Kunzru, Aney and myself used to be the voracious readers. Aney complimented me

on my love of books. Bajpai was glad that I would always put him on his mettle by reading thoroughly all the latest reports of the Government on the subject. But I found Satyamurti to be much more thorough, although the Press would not give him so much credit for his erudition as for his rhetorical gifts. The librarian, the late Mr. Mookherjee, was most helpful to us all, because he himself was a good reader. All we had to do was to mention the subject we were keen on and he would place all the books and reports at our disposal. To have such a Librarian is to win one-fifth of the battle in the debate.

I won a reputation for presenting the case for any popular demand in a powerful and persuasive manner both in the House and in the Committee discussions. So Sardar Patel used to send me such representations of peasants as came to him and the very first such representation for relief for Guzerat peasants during the 1935-36 floods gave me so much self-confidence. Gandhijee was very much pleased with my successful work for extending the benefits of the Salt clause of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact to all the peasants and agricultural workers in all the coastal and other salt-producing areas. My suggestions for the construction of an open-air Museum, for motorable road to the Nagarjuna Konda and for the proper protection of Bhattiprolu and other Buddhist archaeological centres were implemented by Government. But my bills for the Peasant Union Act and for the amendment of the Civil Procedure Code to protect peasants' holdings from attachment for Civil decrees and also to protect them from Civil Debtors' Jail and for the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act met with official opposition. I must say, in fairness to Civil Services at the Centre, that once they were convinced that one would represent only cases of genuine grievances, they used to give the fairest consideration to our suggestions. So I came to feel confident of redressing genuine grievances of the people. I can testify to the contribution made by Satyamurti in toning up the Secretariat.

I took the initiative in forming the peasant group of M.L.As. Dr. Khan Saheb agreed to be the President. Neither Bhulabhai Desai nor Sardar Patel liked this initiative but Gandhijee supported me and the group was able to influence the trend of opinions and discussions of large sections of members on both sides of the House.

Contrary to the general opinion that great speakers generally qualify themselves to places in the Ministries, many of my colleagues who never distinguished themselves by even a couple of effective speeches in the Central Assembly rose to be ministers and even Chief Ministers in Bihar, Madras, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, U.P. and Bombay, when they left us in 1937 to become M.L.As in the Provincial Assemblies. Indeed, the post-Independence Assemblies have set up the record of raising to the highest positions several members whose forte is certainly not their ability to speak, plead and educate either their fellow members or the public through their parliamentary achievements in their respective Assemblies.

One of the interesting things, frought with great future significance, that I was fortunate to do was to be one of a group of three (the other two members being S.K.D. Palliwal and Mohanlal Saxena) to climb to the top of the Assembly Hall and remove the Union Jack (Flag) as a protest against its flying over the Chamber of elected members. The Speaker was powerless, so was the Government to do anything against us, because neither by the rules nor by any specific resolution did the Assembly ever authorise the hoisting of an alien flag over its own Chamber. Gandhijee was requested by the Viceroy to persuade us to regret our action. We strongly refused to repent our action. Thus did we herald about eight years in advance what was to happen, in an official manner, in 1947. That Assembly was powerless to discuss the foreign policy of India. The only External Affairs that we could refer to, were the tribal matters. On that subject, Dr. Khan Saheb was our authority and he used to make some of the most powerful speeches, condemning the annual orgies of arson, bombing and pitiless military campaigns that the Government used to wage against the Tribal peoples. Dr. Gilbert Slater, my old supervisor at Oxford and Brailsford, raised his voice of protest against that unprovoked bombing of tribal villages and I organised a national campaign for one year against that policy.

It is strange however that since Independence, the so called tribal raids had not occurred and Pakistan has not found it necessary to repeat what the British used to do. On the other hand, just what we used to urge in those days, as being the right solution, is now being practised by Pakistan Government, by organising economic betterment schemes and by constructing the multi-purpose Hydel-cum-Irrigation Waisak Dam works in the very heart of the tribal area.

It was during that Assembly's tenure that the Congress Party had decided to boycott its Sessions as a protest against the British Government's decision to drag India into the vortex of the Second World War without as much as consulting the Assembly. Thus, we boycotted the Assembly for more than four years during the war. It was during that period that the war-time special laws were passed, legalising the Ordinances. The Assembly was converted into almost a farce. Eventually the Congress Party went into the Assembly again in 1944 November, just to recover some strength after its nerve-racking campaign of non-cooperation and jail-going and to protect the people from further repression and war-time exploitation. Alas ! this time we did not have Satyamurthi, as he died in 1943 because of paralysis, etc., brought on by the unkind incarceration in Amraoti Jail. He never became a minister but he achieved much more than the mightiest minister could have done. The Assembly certainly became the poorer by his death.

Sri Bhulabhai Desai committed his gravest political error by trying to reach an agreement with Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan over the communal and political issues, so that they could present a united demand to the British for the formation of an Interim National Government. Some of us felt that it would be wrong to do any such thing, while the National leaders were still detained in the Ahmednagar Fort and without their consent. So that plan fell through. After a few months, the national leaders were released from jail and the British were obliged to deal with them on an entirely different and higher level. In the process, Bhulabhaijee lost the confidence of the national leadership and that hurt him. So, when the next General Elections came, he did not stand at all for the Assembly and thus his great and glorious career, as the first rank Parliamentarian, came to an end. His aid was however sought to offer defense for the heroes of the Indian National Army, when they were brought for trial in the Red Fort. He strained all his nerves to fight the British charge of mutiny, waging war against the Crown, etc., brought against the I.N.A. heroes. His final argument in defence of the right of an enslaved nation to rebel and fight the alien government was hailed by one and all as a master-piece of eloquence, seasoned advocacy and irrefutable argument. Once again he became the hero of the moment. But, his will to live slackened and his wearied body breathed its last. The nation and Assembly lost their greatest Parliamentary tribune.

9

# *Role of Parliamentary Committees*

One of the chief pillars of democratic institutions is the functioning of Committees, either Standing or Advisory, to prepare, discuss and advise the Government of the day as to the line of policy or programme it has to decide upon from time to time. The British rulers of India were true to their democratic Parliamentary traditions atleast in appointing Advisory or Consultative Committees, and attach each of them to every one of the ministries at the Centre. One of the unwise things done under the Nehru regime was to give up that practice.

I was fortunate to have been elected by the Central Assembly to the Public Accounts Committee and also to the Agriculture Committee. Even during the period of the Provisional Parliament, I was elected to the Standing Finance Committee*, and also the Committees associated with Food and Agriculture, Industry and Supply Ministries, as well as the newly constituted Estimates Committees. An M.P. who has had some experience of Parliamentary work could render valuable assistance to the Ministry concerned, promote many good causes and present much mischief by playing his role on those Committees. These Committees are now styled as Informal Consultative Committees. Even now one can play a

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*Now Estimates Committee.

useful role by being a member—no longer elected but suggested by his Parliamentary Party or Group—of any of the Consultative Committees, associated with the Ministry, though he cannot speak as authoritatively as in the former days of the elected Committees.

The Estimates Committee is doing really useful work in probing carefully into the financial and administrative set up and the functioning of each of the Ministries and in suggesting ways and means by which economy can be effected and more efficient administration ensured. Of course the powerful Public Accounts Committee continues to do its useful work of advising and admonishing all the Departments in the light of the omissions and commissions of the past. The pity is that the Ministers have not been paying as great a heed to their recommendations as could be wished for in view of their unjustifiable indifference, induced by the swollen finances made available and expenditures sanctioned by the planned economy. Nevertheless, these two Committees* play an important role in toning and controlling the ministries and I have had many years of experience of their work. It is good that the Rajya Sabha is being invited to elect its representatives to these Committees. It is necessary that all the Committees should be empowered to reach decisions and their chairmen shared by ruling and opposition parties to enable them to make their best contribution.

Besides these Parliamentary Committees and semi-Parliamentary Councils, there are a number of powerful Boards or Committees that are appointed by the Ministries to advise them on various administrative-cum-policy-making aspects of the governance. I had the opportunity of working on the Textile

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*With the progressive expansion of the public sector enterprises, new units with a total investment of Rs. 2,500 crores, it was thought that P.A.C. and E.C. could not do proper justice in keeping a careful watch on their activities so as to ensure avoidance of wastage and infuse maximum efficiency. Therefore, a Third Committee, i.e., Public Undertakings Committee, was constituted in September 1964 with 10 Members from the Lok Sabha and 5 members from the Rajya Sabha. I have been associated with this Committee since its inception. During the short span of 5 years the Committee has succeeded in making useful recommendations to Government through Parliament. The P.U. Committee has confirmed the belief of many people that public enterprises were functioning so unsatisfactorily. Red-tapism has to be cut down. Bureaucratic tendency has to be replaced by purely commercial outlook. Several public projects should be denationalised. There is need for autonomy for management.

Research Fund Committee, Textile Advisory Committee, Handloom Board, Cottage Industries Board, Agricultural Machinery Committee, Agricultural Information Committee, Indian Council of Agricultural Research and its Sub-Committee, Planning Panel and Educational Committee, Agricultural Educational Sub-Committee, National Railway Users Advisory Council etc.

Moreover, there are also a number of statutorily established commodity Committees*, which derive their funds from special cesses imposed for the purpose and which finance a number of *ad hoc* research schemes and maintain Research Stations. I have favoured the development of such commodity Committees because they can do much useful work, give an opportunity for the concerned growers representatives to get together and concert measures for the technical, scientific and organisational improvement of the economy of their various crops. The pity is that the Government has not yet accepted my plea that besides the cess proceeds, it should contribute an equal amount towards funds of these Committees. I was elected as the founder-Vice-President of the Indian Central Oil-Seeds Committee and during my tenure of five years, I was able to demonstrate what could be done by way of stepping up research and its application if only the Committee and its non-official and official leadership could be dynamic and powerful. I initiated the development of cooperatives among the three million oil-mongers. G. U. Rao, the last of its Vice-Presidents, also served the growers' cause for five years.

The F.A.O. advised all the member Governments to organise a national FAO liaison Committee to advise and strengthen the local Government in its activities in the F.A.O. and also to sponsor new schemes on behalf of the farmers for international counsel and schemes and action. It was after three years of our agitation that the Government of India constituted the National FAO Liaison Commission and I was elected to it by Parliament

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*Committees for Cotton, Sugar, Rice, were dissolved by Shri C. Subramanyam, Union Food and Agriculture Minister. When this question came up before Parliament in 1965 I strongly protested against this step of the Government. Former Food Minister, A.P. Jain, supported my contention that it took 3 years to develop those Committees. All the Commodity Committees were doing useful work and therefore they should not be disbanded. However, it had no effect on the Food Minister and he dissolved the Committees in spite of stiff opposition. I consider this to be another step towards totalitarianism.

from 1950 up to 1957. The Minister for Agriculture presided over it and in his absence, I was elected to preside over its Sessions. I used to meet the leaders of similar Commissions of U.K. and U.S.A. whenever I went there and discuss how their Commissions were working. I found that despite all my efforts, our Commission could not take much initiative, due to the conservative attitude of the Ministry.

We were able to develop the Indian Association of Agricultural Statisticians and Rajendra Prasad, the then Minister for Agriculture, was elected the first President and in recognition of my pioneering work in agricultural statistics, I was elected the Vice-President. During the two years of my office, I was able to induce the Association and its able band of economists to undertake some pilot studies in costs of cultivation. I could also rersuade State Governments to undertake the collection of Statistics about Rural Prices and Wages and to develop the Index of Agricultural prices, incomes and wages in certain States.

The Congress Party in Parliament has developed the practice of nominating a number of Committees of its M.Ps. to be associated with every Ministry. These Committees are able to do some useful work, though not too effectively. The Congress party has been good enough to invite me when I was with it in 1955-59 to join as many Committees as possible and make my contribution. And I have found that the Ministers were keen on giving friendly response to all our suggestions. I was asked by Jawaharlaljee to be the convener of the Committee on External Affairs. This Committee does no more than ask a number of questions to elicit either laconic or detailed replies from the Prime Minister who is also the Minister for External Affairs*. In fact there is a highly representative Consultative Council of External Affairs on which all parties are powerfully represented. It also did nothing

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*After Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru's demise when Lal Bahadur Shastri was elected as the Prime Minister, he also took over the Foreign Ministry. However, after a couple of months he relinquished charge of the Foreign Ministry and appointed a full time Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the present Prime Minister, has followed the example of her late predecessor. This has vindicated my stand since 1947 in favour of a full-time Foreign Minister to do justice to the work instead of the Prime Minister keeping the portfolio to himself.

more than helping Jawaharlaljee to explain his standpoint on the current international developments. The fact that there was a great deal of common ground between all parties on foreign policy had helped the Committee and Council to work smoothly till 1959. Thereafter, I began to question fundamentalism of his non-alignment policy.

On the whole, it must be said that the Parliament can certainly afford to have more Committees and give them more powers and endow them with greater representative membership and it can thus try to control, guide and assist the Ministries more effectively. As in the past in India, England and U.S.A, so in the present, these Committees can serve very useful purposes of not only training members of Parliament in democratic means of controlling and advising ministers but also in gaining considerable influence for the benefit of the public over the administration and thus supplementing the work of the ministers without in any way weakening their sense of responsibility. Such Committees can also keep Parliament informed about the pitfalls and failures of the ministries, in time, with courage and experience. It has been my experience that an effective, experienced and courageous member can influence Government, its ministers and many of their decisions, of course within the four corners of the overall cabinet decisions. The opposition parties have jointly demanded after 1967 general elections greater power and non-official chairmen for these Committees.

10

# *From Peasant Institute to All India Kisan Congress 1934-36*

The most outstanding new development in 1934 was the first Session of the Indian Peasant Institute in the Rama-Needu Vidyalaya in April. It ran for six weeks. We invited almost all the prominent social and political leaders of Andhra to deliver lectures to our students on social and economic problems facing the country. I was its founder principal, brother G.L. Narayana the Resident Master and Bharatidevijee, the warden of our Hostel and brother G. V. Appayya and cousin N. V. Subbayya were the Bhajan leaders. There were seventy-five students drawn from all castes and all Andhra Districts. Some of the local Congress leaders cooperated in recruiting the students and some others did their worst to prevent students from going to the Institute. Most of the Caste Hindu students hailed from middle-class peasant families, while there were quite a number of Harijan boys from all over Andhra. Shri N.V. Subbayya, the Editor of the Kisan Publications, aided me ably in selecting songs for the "Ryot Bhajanavali" in Telugu and the daily Bhajan with the help of those songs helped to attune the students with the revolutionary peasant approach to Indian nationalism that we were trying to develop and spread through the Institute. The Desoddharaka rendered great help to us by publishing extensive reports of my daily speeches and the lectures delivered by our visiting lecturers, in the Andhra Patrika. In fact, the Patrika helped us to spread the

message of our movement and the Institute to the whole of political-minded Andhra public during the whole course of our subsequent annual and biennial sessions by giving the widest publicity to our lectures and teachings. Thus the institute became the most powerful centre for spreading adult education in public work.

Sri P. Nageswara Rao of Inturu, our neighbouring village, who had offered his services to our movement in 1933 and had been working also as a journalist, served as the Secretary of the Institute and also press correspondent and rendered great help to our movement. He continued to serve me and the Institute till 1936 at great sacrifice. Later he became the editor of our "Vahini" weekly and rose to be the Editor of the famous Daily, the "Andhra Patrika".

Some of the students of that first batch rose to be very prominent public workers in the Andhra politics. For instance Sri K. Obulu Reddi became General Secretary of the Provincial Congress and also a Minister of the Andhra Pradesh. Sri D. S. Reddi has been a prominent leader in Srikakulam District. Sri Pragada Kotayya has now become a legislator and one of the leaders of the Handloom Weavers. Sri G. Sreeman Narayana is a lecturer and Principal of the local P.B.N. College, Sri K. Papayya is an exemplary social worker in the Harijan Seva ; G. V. Subbayya became the President of the District Board. We made one bold experiment, that is, we introduced inter-dining among all the students of all castes and religions. A few high caste boys hesitated and wanted to ask their parents' permission. We told them quite definitely that they should inform their parents of our decision. Some of our own villagers were unwilling to extend their cooperation if we insisted upon inter-dining. Fortunately the whole of my family, that is, brothers, P. B. Naidu, Bhartidevijee were particular that Harijans should be treated like all others and all caste-distinctions should be ignored and the Institute should set an example, at its very inception, for Gandhian non-caste-mindedness. Eventually we triumphed and not one student chose to leave the Institute and the villagers decided to offer their cooperation.

Another hurdle was created by the Government. For one year past, *i.e.*, from April 1933, Government paid me the tribute of

associating with me a special Duty C.I.D. Inspector and a Police Head Constable to dog my steps, to report verbatim on my speeches and otherwise watch my movements. Twice were attempts made by local authorities to arrest me in connection with the peasant agitation. They were nettled by my six weeks principalship of the Institute. When I was lecturing for 4 to 5 hours a day on almost all important political topics and the special Branch could not get any report of my talks, unless they were admitted into the institute. The Government put up the poseur. That I would risk the banning of the session, if I refused to allow them to take down notes. But I would only allow them to listen to my speeches but not to take down notes or make reports; when they found that I was prepared to risk everything, Government yielded. So the Institute went ahead with its work without being bothered by any Government ban. It speaks highly of the reputation of the Institute, the popularity of the peasant movement and my methods of carrying on public work and of the students' latent revolutionary spirit that so many of them chose to come to our session in spite of that contingent risk of the Government ban on its work. Moreover those who were to be trained by me could not hope to obtain any jobs in Government service, since our Institute and myself were bete-noirs to Government. The Congress leaders did not choose to bless our Institute and some of them were even opposed to it and so there were no prospects even in Congress circles for our students.

The first Session was inaugurated by Sri K. Santanam, the Editor of the Indian Express, and the function was presided over by Desabhakta K. Venkatappayya. I was so happy on that occasion to present my Telugu book in 2 Vols., "Modern Political Institutions", to Sri K. Venkatappayya which was published in Kakinada by the Balantrapu Satyanarayan. It was dedicated to that veteran patriot Venkatappayya. Sree Unnava, the founder of Sarda Niketan, the residential college for girls at Guntur, Sitarama Sastri, the founder of the Vinayashram also came and blessed the Institute at the inauguration of its meritorious career. It has held its sessions in Rayalaseema in 1936–1937, in Madanapalle (Chittoor Dist.) in 1938, in Vizagapatam and Srikakulam in 1938 and 1939, in Cuddapah and Guntur Districts in 1940 and 1941, in Krishna in 1947–48, and again in Khammam in Hyderahad in 1949, in Challapalli in 1952

and in Rangagram in 1947 and in Tiruttani in 1953, and again in Madanapalli in 1965 besides its annual or biannual sessions in NIDUBROLU throughout this period. Several of the graduates of the Institute organised preparatory schools in almost all the Districts and conducted Weekly or Week-end sessions for many years. I used to visit all the preparatory schools and spend 2 to 3 days in each of them and give the message of the Kisan movement. Recently the Training camps of the Congress., K.L.P. and the Seva Dals and B.S.S. have also invited me and my colleagues to lecture on the political and economic significance of the ideal of KMP Raj, blessed by Gandhijee and evolved out of the researches of the Peasant Institute.

Brother Venkatappaiah suggested the utilisation of the traditional methods of spreading enlightenment among our public, such as the Burrakatha, Jangam Katha, Veera Katha and Mono-Acting and I have always been wondering how their traditional bards could be pressed into service for popularising our movement. Sri N.V. Rama Naidu, N.V. Subbayya also cooperated with us in training a number of the traditional bards to sing and popularise our songs, poems, ballads, which we got specially composed. This device proved extremely popular from 1935 onwards. Later on, Communists who had studied our successful methods of popular enlightenment, developed them by special efforts and made effective use of them and subsequently the Congress too came to utilise them enthusiastically.

I was also able to initiate the practice of honouring writers and poets who devoted their writings to political and social problems. The late Garimella Satyanarayana, the author of the famous song "We do not want whites' Government" of the 1920 movement, Adivi Bapi Raju and Sree Swami Siva Sankara, Gurram Mallayya, and several others were thus honoured in our Peasant Institute. This encouraged many other writers to devote themselves to writing poetry on political themes. Three poets, namely, the Late Kavi Brahma Etukuri Venkata Narasayya, Sree Venkata Kavi, Palnati Kavi Veerabhadrachari were thus specially encouraged to contribute valuable poems on the plight and problems of peasants. The famous kisan poet, Settipalli, began to compose one, two or three inspiring songs every year from 1934 to 1939 and present them to the Institute and peasant Bhajanavali and his songs set the pace, as it were, to the inspired hearts of

our peasant youths. Alas, he died suddenly in 1939 at the tender age of 26. All we could do was to publish all his poems, songs and my In Memorium to him in English and Telugu with an introduction by A.G. Stock.

The peasant Marches of 1934, 1935 were specially distinguished by their success throughout Andhra and the whole of Tamilnad and Malabar and South Kanara came to organise them with great eclat. The Tahsildars and District Collectors were all asked by Government to remain in their headquarters on the day indicated by the local Peasant Sammelan to receive the peasants who would come in their March and give them a patient hearing and report to Government about the full proceedings. It became a well-established institution of the peasant movement, whose influence, regularity and discipline were recognised by Government. Nevertheless the Provincial Congress authorities failed to take to it kindly.

I undertook extensive tours throughout Andhra, Tamilnad and Malabar during 1934, 1935, 1936 and also 1937. My first tour in Malabar in 1934 proved to be so inspiring to the local workers. Sri Shankaran Nambudripad, who had later become the premier of the Communist Cabinet of Kerala, was then in charge of my tour. I was staggered by the terrible poverty of the masses, the social depression of Harijans and the economic weakness of peasants ; I gave great strength to the Congress movement against untouchability and to Kisan movement against the Zanmi system. Sri Nambudripad was happy to make use of my annual tours right up to 1940 in order to strengthen the peasant movement but since he had already chosen to become a Communist, all that strength flowed into the veins of the nascent Communist Party. In Tamilnad, it was eventually the Congress and not the peasant organisation which benefited most from my annual tours.

Even as the 1934 General Elections for the Assembly were in full swing Rayalaseema was threatened with the periodical famine. I was at that time awefully concerned over the serious state of ill-health of Bharatidevijee. Doctors gave so little hope about her recovery. It was on that suffering heart that the news of the famine made its terrible impact. So I penned a press statement under the title "The Advent of the Devil of Famine"

and it was such a moving appeal for succour to the long suffering peasants and other people of Rayalaseema that it stirred the people all over Andhra to do something to help those sufferers. Devijee suffered terribly for over a month from that typhoid and its after-effects. But as soon as she gained some strength, she permitted me to go to Rayalaseema, study the famine situation and organise famine-relief. Sri K. Obulu Reddi, the Institute's graduate, accompanied me in that fortnight's incessant tour through the affected areas of Kurnool, Bellary, Anantapur and Cuddapah. The local Congress leaders were glad to cooperate with me, especially because I had been elected with a thumping majority as the accredited Congress member of the Central Legislature. The "Hindu", the most powerful English Daily of Madras, took special notice of my carefully drafted factual statements on the condition of the crops and the people. It mentioned my phrase "there is nothing green or growing" in its editorial and endorsed my plea that if the provincial finances were not enough the centre should be approached for assistance. My previous experience of organising the public side of famine-relief work in the Ongole Famine of 1926 proved to be extremely useful in that 1935 Rayalaseema Famine. Much of the most important help could be rendered to the sufferers only by Government as it had adequate funds and also trained staff to administer relief. My stand was eventually adopted by the Congress leaders of Rayalaseema.

I pleaded with Government not to depend upon the unreliable and inaccurate traditional indications of state of crops and also not to insist upon the completion of the prolonged tests to find out whether there was real famine or not. I pressed for the opening of relief-works in the fully famine-ridden areas and local Boards works in areas afflicted with scarcity of work and to throw open the grazing areas in the neighbouring forest and import paddy straw and distribute it freely to save the famished cattle. I asked Government to open cheap Grain Shops and import, if need be, by special trains, food grains from the coastal Districts. The suspension of land revenue collections and distribution on a liberal scale, taccavi and cooperative loans at cheap rates of interest were also pressed for. Just these measures are taken in the Bihar, Orissa famines of 1966-67.

What was of much greater import was my suggestion that an All India Famine (Flood and Drought) Insurance Fund should

be again established, as before 1920, with contributions from provinces and the Centre in order to enable the Central Government to go to the rescue of the Provincial Governments. The Madras Press supported this plea. Unfortunately nothing has yet been done to implement this suggestion or to make any satisfactory provision for insuring millions of peasants who suffer every year in some part or the other from such famines. Hence the continued need for search for funds during these post-Swaraj famines.

As we were returning from that arduous tour with our hearts overburdened with the thoughts of the sufferings of millions of famished peasants, our car met with an accident, very close to the missionary compound of Cumbhum, the native town of Sri Olulu Reddi. Sri Reddi received very bad cuts on his forehead and narrowly missed losing his left eye. He stood that dreadful shock with admirable composure, though he was so young. Sri Hari Sarvothama Rao, veteran patriot, suffered a nervous shake-up and I was injured on my nose. It took Sri Reddi more than a month to recover. Thus we sealed our services and affection for Rayalaseema with that bout of our own suffering in the cause of its five million masses.

I was specially busy during the next five months, both at Delhi in the Central Assembly and in the Andhra, working for famine-relief. I became so much obsessed with that need of Rayalaseema people for help that once the Minister Sri Frank Noyce (known then as Member of the Executive Council) had to remark in a feeling manner that "we appreciate Prof. Ranga's anxiety to help Rayalaseema peasants. But he must allow us to proceed to answer other questions also". Fortunately the late Gopalaswami Ayyangar became the Famine Commissioner by that time and he cooperated with me wholeheartedly in extracting maximum possible help from the Centre. For instance, the Central Government moved fodder from the coastal Districts either freely or at nominal charges. It advanced large sums from the Famine Trust. I took advantage of that crisis to press home the decades' long demand for taking up the Tungabhadra Project, as a famine-protection work. The Central Government agreed to use its good offices to bring about an agreement between the Governments of Madras, Mysore and Hyderabad. Thus had commenced the quickened process of consultations at expert and State levels which culminated in 1941-43 in the beginning of the construction

of the great multi-purpose Tungabhadra Project. It has been one of my great satisfactions that I was able to persist in my campaign for that project during all these years and persuade the peasant movement of South India to strengthen that demand and reinforce the efforts of the Rayalaseema leaders like Shri Koti Reddi K. Obulu Reddi, until it has fructified in that great project which bids fair to save large portions of Anantapur Kunool, Bellary, Raichur Districts from the age-long periodicity of famines. ' It has become much easier since the advent of Swaraj for many junior public workers either to press for such developments or to get them adopted by Congress Ministries. It is much easier for them, when they have become ministers, to work for such schemes and see them developed. It was however a herculean task in those years of intense political struggle with British Government, to keep up one's confidence in our ability to achieve such powerful, costly schemes, and to help the masses to retain so much faith in our ability to achieve them. It needed abundant self-confidence as well as faith in the masses. I am glad to say we displayed all that and our efforts have come to be crowned with success, thanks to the advent of some dynamic ministers from Rayalaseema also.

I am glad to say that the Lower Bhavani project for which also our peasant movement had organised public agitation has come to be fully developed by the Swaraj Ministry of Madras, and the long-suffering peasants especially of Salem are now being protected from famine. The peasants protection Committee continued to work for the protection of peasants from the ravages of economic depression. It created a favourable atmosphere in favour of the idea of moratorium but the Government was not ready to undertake such a radical measure of relief. I had quite an argument with some of the economists as to the feasibility of enforcing moratorium. They maintained that the only time it was utilised by the British was during the War. They were not prepared in 1930, 1933 to accept my plea that the World depression was as great an emergency as War. But when they found Rooseveltian administration adopting not only moratorium but also the price-support programme, they began to agree with my plan for the protection of our peasants. My speech at the Madras Session of the South Indian Cooperative Union, pleading for both moratorium and price-supports, was appreciated

by the Conference, Madras economists and even by the Governmental daily, "the Mail".

I took up this matter in the Central Assembly. We moved resolutions favouring these demands. The Government was opposed to both. Yet, Sir Girijashankar Bajpai had to admit that my plea for protecting rice-producers from the unfair competition of Siamese rice imports had much strength in it; gradually I was able to get almost all the Congress, Nationalist and Junna Party's MLAs to support our peasants' plea. We gave no peace to Government, whatwith our questions, my supplementary questions, cut motions on Budget Demands and Private Members' resolutions and amendments to Governments' proposals on concerned matters. My speeches on the need for import duty on Siamese rice imports were found to be convincing and effective. Government yielded, though after a prolonged cogitation of nine months and agreed to impose import duty of half a rupee per maund of broken rice. But that time, the price of paddy stood at Rs. 2-8-0 to Rs. 3-8-0 per bag of two maunds. This protective duty helped it to rise upto Rs. 4-0-0 to Rs. 4-8-0 and that was found to be a great blessing by our peasants all over India. A similar protection was given to wheat growers too. The result was that the corner was turned for our peasants. Slowly but steadily the price of paddy went on rising up to Rs. 6-8-0 per bag by 1939. I used to maintain that the rice producers were losing heavily, rice production was uneconomical and consequently agricultural wages were at less than subsistence level.

I pleaded with all the earnestness I could command for the need for fixing minimum prices for rice, wheat, jute, cotton; Government spokesmen never questioned the reasonableness of our demand but pleaded inability to fix such prices. Only in regard to jute, the Bengal Government tried to ensure some protection for the Jute growers. The U.P. and Bihar Governments also agreed to protect the cane-grower, while ensuring a minimum of assured production of cane. We have had to wait till 1955 for the fixation of floor prices for wheat, rice, cotton also.

I found that it was not enough to depend upon the Congress Party alone to protect and promote the interests of peasants. The leadership of the Congress Party was not specially interested in peasants, nor was it ready to appreciate my endeavours. At

the same time, I discovered that quite a number of members among the other parties and even among nominated MLAs were ready to back up my efforts. So we organised the Peasants Group of MLAs and Dr. Khan Saheb of the NWFP agreed to be its first President. Thus was brought into existence for the first time an all India Legislative Peasants Front. Some of my speeches delivered in the Central Assembly during the first two years (1935-36) were included in the book "Modern Indian Peasant". I pleaded eloquently for the extension of postal facilities in rural areas I worked strenuously for the improvement of the conditions of travel for third class passengers on railways. I wanted protection of plantation labour, factory labour and pleaded for consideration of the problems of agricultural labour. It was due to my endeavours that a survey of conditions of forced labour was undertaken, and an effort was made through Provincial legislation to put an end to forced labour. I offered powerful support to Sri Giri and the late N. M. Joshi, the redoubtable champion of Indian Labour, whenever labour questions came up for discussion in the Assembly. My one hour long speech on the need for further liberalising the payment of Wages Bill and equally long and powerful speech on the Trades Disputes Act Amendment Bill were hailed by Socialists and others as sincere and able championship of industrial labour's cause. My hour-long speech on the failure of the Central Budget to deal with the basic social problems of the masses and the need for the Central Government to spare funds for the development of social welfare was appreciated by Prof. K. T. Shah. I proved to be such a trenchant critic of the Government from the Socialist-cum-peasant angle.

Sri M. S. Aney, the leader of the Nationalist Party and Sri G. B. Pant, Deputy Leader of the Congress party, were very much pleased with my contribution to the debates and extended their continued encouragement. In recognition of my parliamentary work I was elected in 1936 a member of the most important Committee on Public Accounts, together with Messrs. Satyamurti and B. Das. I was very active, outside the legislature. I took the initiative in organising the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Agricultural Workers and my draft for the charter of their demands was approved by the Federation at a Session in which Sri Giri, Kaleswara Rao and the late Desoddhaka were present. Sri Desoddhaka agreed to be its President. Thereafter,

we proceeded to convene the All India Peasant workers Conference at Madras, during the AICC Session in October 1935. Sri Giri proposad that I should preside over it. And my speech was hailed by Socialists also as it indicated the principles of social justice. Srimati Kamaladevi inaugurated the Conference but cautioned us to win the cooperation of the Kisan leaders of the Congress and socialist political persuasion of Bihar and U.P. As ill-luck would have it, the late Swami Safeanand Saraswati and others issued a press statement, questioning the wisdom of our efforts to organise an all-India platform for peasants, without first of all building up the provincial units. The Communists were coming to realise how the peasant movement, under my leadership, was tending to gain political and economic momentum and so, they too were keen on entering it and permeating it with a view to eventually breaking it up. So they also demanded their share in the leadership. Thus an all inclusive organising committee was formed with myself as the president. When I went to Allahabad, Cuttak, Benaras and Calcutta and contacted the Congress Socialists, I realised how unwilling they were to look at the question of organising peasants from purely peasant point of view and how keen was their desire to capture this growing platform. Their leaders could be convinced of my non-political approach to that problem of organising the all India platform for peasants to safeguard and promote their social interests only when I agreed to become a joint convener with their nominee, for another all India peasants' workers conference at Meerut, at the time of their party's Conference. I knew that mostly Congress Socialists could gather there and that they had to be convinced of the timeliness of the need for developing the Kisan platform. Eventually we met in January 1936 at Meerut and I was the only purely peasant-sammelan-minded representative, and all the others were members of the Congress Socialist Party. Srimati Kamaladevi, who presided, gave me quiet support and sympathy. We had prolonged but friendly discussions and eventually agreed that it was time that an All India Kisan Conference should be convened and that it should meet at Lucknow at the time of the Congress Session.

The Lucknow Kisan Session met and the Socialists suggested Swamijee's name for chairmanship and I cheerfully agreed,

because thereby the chief opponent of the idea of the all India platform for peasants could be won over to our cause ; Socialists. thus became the convinced adherents of the conference. Sri Indulal Yagnik, who had been publishing a few type-script Kisan bulletins from Bombay, also came to the Conference at my invitation. I prepared the draft of the charter of Minimum Demands of Kisans and the late Mehar Ali alone was generous enough to express much appreciation for my work on the preparation of the charter and the emergence of the Conference idea. The Conference passed the charter, agreed upon a draft constitution and appointed a panel of Secretaries, with myself, Swamijee and Jaiprakash Narain.

II

# *Training Political Workers of Rayalaseema and Kalinga (1935-40)*

To-day (30.1.1958) is the tenth anniversary of the Parinirvana of Bapujee. My mind is full of him and I naturally think of some of the constructive and good things I have come to do under his influence. One of those things is the effort, I made, to pick up youths and junior public workers in the comparatively backward Districts of Andhra and train them to undertake public work in a notable manner. I found in 1925 in the five Districts of Rayalaseema and two Districts of Kalinga Desa, *i.e.* Visakapatam and Srikakulam, such a paucity of public workers, when compared to the other Districts. I came to realise, while touring intensively and repeatedly in the two Godavaris, Guntur, Krishna Districts during 1928-29 in connection with the investigations conducted for the Resettlement Economic Enquiry Committee, that these advanced Districts were also hopelessly understaffed with the junior and middle-cadres of leadership for public work. I was surprised to find it mentioned repeatedly in the Telugu Press that the prevalent disunity among Andhra Congress leadership was due to the presence of many leaders. How was one to reconcile these two facts ? I knew that there was so little discipline among the leadership and that the standards of mutual service, and faith were too low and that most of the public workers belonged to one or two traditionally dominant castes. So I wanted to do something constructive to remedy these defects. I discussed this problem with Gandhijee. I told him about the good work done by the Folk Schools of the Scandinavian countries. I said that one of the urgent things to do was to recruit as many young people as possible for public work and train them well and charge them with the

mission of being "the true servants of the people" in the words of Bapu. He agreed with my ideas. The result was the foundation of the Indian Peasant Institute in the Rama-Needu Vidyalayam of NIDUBROLU in 1933 and its inauguration by Bapu in that December.

I took special care to get as many students as possible from the under-developed areas and communities of all Districts of Andhra for the seasonal and the annual sessions of the institute. Devijee and myself spared a good portion of our income from lands and my Assembly allowances to finance these sessions. I must have trained several hundreds of youths of every District of Rayalaseema and Kalinga by 1940. The other Districts which were more advanced got more students trained. To make it easier for the youths of those Districts who were much poorer I took the Institute to their Districts and conducted its sessions in many places. I encouraged the former graduates of the institute to organise week-end, and week-long schools in their turn. I made it a point to go there and personally deliver a series of lectures. In this manner, the Institute became a powerful lever, for stimulating the youths of those Districts, to undertaking the onerous responsibility of leadership. Devijee inspired the Satyagraha-veterans of Chebrolu to organise a special political school for women in 1945 and Shrimati Rajya Laxmi Devi was its organiser. More than 50 girls were trained in it during that session of 3 weeks. Both of us gave 12 lectures in that session. Rajya Laxmi Devi has since risen to be the Editor of Telugu Desamn and one of the leaders of Hyderabad Zone. A number of others have become local leaders of women movement.

We began organising Taluk, District-level conferences of Kisans, youths, students, Backward classes, weavers, Harijans and encouraged the youths who had been thus trained to become the Chairmen of Reception Committees, Presidents or Speakers at these Conferences. I presented myself as one of the Speakers, introduced those workers to the local audiences and also other workers, as future leaders on probation, who were worthy of their confidence. To several of those public workers, I had to give small sums to supplement their meagre personal or public resources. The sale proceeds of the books published by the Peasant Publications used to be kept by many of them to cover a portion of their out of pocket expenses. I used to tour frequently and periodically in the most economical manner, and dress in

a simple way in order to lessen the burden of my leadership and also to set an example in Gandhian living. Gradually our diplomas, and introductions given in such conferences and general blessings of Bapujee and myself, conveyed through the convocations of the institute came to be valued so much by the rural masses that these public workers, youthful graduates and other associates of the organisations that I had inaugurated found a ready-made platform in our rural areas. Peasants were ready to welcome them and give them opportunities to serve the people and gain their leadership. Such facilities were not available in such a co-operative manner before 1930 even for such highly trained and recognised public workers. Bapu was naturally gratified, when I made my report in 1940 of this development.

The special feature of this happy development is that most of these new leaders and workers were recruited from castes, and areas which had not till then been tapped by the nationalist movement. Indeed, rural people had thus been given their biggest opportunity to throw up the largest number of youths for being trained as leaders and Kisan castes, including Harijans, Tribal peoples were helped to gain such training for their own youths and thus become self-reliant for social work, political service and public leadership. I have believed that political leadership and public service would have to be integrated with the masses at every level of their social development and only then could democracy become real to them and its leadership would grow to be reliable, honest and serviceable. Therefore, peasants, artisans, proletariat should be enabled to pick and choose their leaders from among themselves, and it is the duty of the leaders of their organisations to help that process and give them needed training. Bapu came to be proud of this, as being my best contribution to our nation.

Unfortunately this had come to have a disability too; until I went to any part of our rural areas and roused the local Kisans, Harijans etc., the other political parties could not succeed in gaining the ear of the Kisans and rousing their youths and inducing some of them to come into public life and brave its rigours and sacrifices. But once I gained some recruits for public work, gave them some rudimentary training and primary footing on the platform and leadership, they were quick to reach and befriend them and persuade them to work with them and join their groups, while all the time pretending to be working under my over-all leadership.

This processs of contacting, permeating and eventually capturing such graduates of the Institute and colleagues of mine on the Kisan and other platforms among the Rural people was very much facilitated by the "United Front" cameraderie that Congressmen entered into, along with all other nationalists and I had no opportunity to warn anyone against such permeation. Both the C.S.P. and C.P.I. the former working openly and the latter secretly made great in-roads into these growing cadres of leaders that I had been assiduously building up between 1934-40. Hence the presence today in all the Andhra Districts of my earstwhile students and colleagues in the seniormost ranks of leadership of all political parties and mass organisations of Andhra. After all, even the leaders of Defence Forces are obliged to make allowance for such mishaps, when they have to make, as I had to, emergency recruitment and give short period training in leadership during military emergencies. The wonder of it all is that such a large percentage of the leaders have proved to be competent public workers in whatever party they have come to choose to work. Hence my gratitude to Gandhijee for having encouraged me to provide this most basic equipment for the public life of Andhra.

I paid special attention to the development of the Public platform for the Rayalaseema's rural people. We organised for instance, (*i*) the Rayalaseema Ryots Conference, (*ii*) R.S. Economic Developments Conference, (*iii*) R.S. Forest Ryots Conference, (*iv*) R.S. Teachers Conference, (*v*) R.S. Peasants Institute, (*vi*) R.S. Students Conference, (*vii*) R.S. Youth Conference, (*viii*) R.S. Progressive writers Conference, (*ix*) R.S. Cotton Growers Conference, (*x*) R.S. Oil-seeds Conference, (*xi*) R.S. Famine Relief Conference, (*xii*) R S. Irrigation Development Conference and many other platforms, including those for women, Panchayat Boards, Co-operative Societies. We held these conferences every one or two years and elected their office-bearers and standing committees ; we organised Marches to these conferences. We celebrated the Kisan Days, Harijan Days etc. once or twice a year. During my annual tours in Andhra, thousands of kisan youths used to take part enthusiastically and gain their first political baptism and decide to spare a part of their time and money for public causes. In this way, thousands of Kisans, and their youth were induced to play some role or the other on the ever-widening and deepening field of public work. Each of these conferences held at the Taluk,

District or zonal levels was initiated, stimulated, strengthened and inspired by some one or the other graduate of the Institute, or of my associates. Each conference carried my support and message.

All this effort was repeated in the Kalinga area too, with as much persistence and zeal, because I knew that these two Districts, which were so over-whelmingly under the Zamindari system of exploitation, needed most support.

In this manner I was able to build up, what has come to be, the backbone of the rural people's leadership of all Anhra, more especially of Rayalaseema and Kalinga. All this breath-taking process, bordering on a campaign to build up new leadership on almost a mass-scale, did not please the time-honoured orthodox leaders of the Congress. They saw in it an effective challenge to their hegemony. They could no longer hope to gain "monopoly advantages" for their own leadership. They saw that the real leadership of the masses was passing from their urban moorings into the rural thresholds.

I used to render annual accounts of these efforts and their results—happy and otherwise—to Bapu. We used to discuss the prospects for their future services. He was ever ready to pat me on my back. The great pity is that in most parts of North India this important task of building up rural leadership was not undertaken as systematically and on as large a scale by anyone or any organisation ; hence the backwardness of the politics of their peasants. As we were walking, Bapu exclaimed "Sebash, Ranga", as I told him that "the real need of our masses was for more and more leaders, who would also be equally good servants and as in the Defence Forces, so in public life, we would need at least one trained leader for a group of 25 families." Unfortunately we do not have Bapu in our midst to infuse into the growing ranks of Village Level Workers requisite spirit of public morality and exemplary discipline and behaviour.

A number of those youthful leaders have come to attack me, rival with me, thwart my plans or defeat me on several occasions, because they did not feel that my methods of public service or my political and economic principles and approaches would help them to discharge their missions, and amissions. But that came to happen only after 1940.

# 12

# *Agricultural Labour's Place in Kisan Work (1936-40)*

By founding the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Agricultural workers and formulating the charter of their minimum demands in 1935, we forestalled the CPI's move to split the ranks of these two sections of agriculturists and set them one against the other. As I had said earlier, so far as I was concerned, I commenced my work among Indian agriculturists in 1923 alone with the conviction that there need be no irreconcilable conflict of interests between these two sections. It was in pursuance of that faith, I was able to formulate and submit in 1928-29, to the Royal Commission on Labour (Lord Wheatly) the charter of demands of agricultural labour.

During 1936-38, the Andhra Communists tried to organise strikes on the agricultural front in Nellore, Guntur, Krishna and Godavari Districts, under the leadership of Sri P. Sundarayya, who has now become the leader of the Left Communists, and J. Ramalingayya who has since broken with the CPI. I disagreed with their approach. I felt that approach of conflict was inappropriate, and pleaded that the proper thing to do was to press Government to prescribe and enforce minimum wages, establish "Trade Boards" on the British model with equal representation for the peasant-proprietors and agricultural labour. The Communists did not wish to work for the unity of all peasantry, harmonising the relations between different sections of them. They wanted to pursue the Leninist tactics of splitting up peasantry, castigate those peasants who had more than an economic or basic holding as "Kulaks" and convert all others, that is, the middle and poor peasants, into agricultural proletariat, after the Rusian fashion. Naturally the Kisan Congressites and CPI

came to loggerheads. This too contributed to the eventual break-down of the United Front in the Kisan movement.

During this period, I was able to obtain the cooperation of the late K.G. Sivaswami. a veteran member of the Servants of India Society. He was very much interested in Rural Economic Surveys and was therefore drawn into our circle of investigators. He found that the Trichinopoly, Tanzore and Madrass Districts, the Ryotwari Pattadars were big landlords, with hundreds of acres of land in their holdings and were cultivating their lands only with tenants-at-will or with hundreds of hired workers. We were all aghast at the appalling poverty of these actual cultivators and, therefore, we pleaded that legislation should be passed to protect those tenants, assure them security of tenure for at least five years, reduce the rents and establish Rent-Fixation Land Tribunals and also minimum wages for labour, etc.

The Congress Ministry of 1937-39 did not pursue any far-sighted policy of tackling this urgent problem of Tamilnad agriculture. The Mirasidars, as the landlords were known, were allowed to get all the benefit of the Debt Relief Act, while the actual cultivators were given no relief. This exasperated Sri Sivaswami so much that he began to look to the Communist mechanism of strikes as a possible solution. The advent of war and its ordinance Raj and the "Peoples War" slogan and the incarceration of almost all our Kisan Congressites induced him to join forces with the communists and to try to organise agricultural labour, not as a complementary unit among agricultural class but as a rival to the peasant proprietors. Thus he came to drift away from us. He had, nevertheless, continued to do very useful work until death took him away, by publishing a series of informative books on the economic conditions of agriculturists of South India.

Another friend, who had started to cooperate with us on the Zamindari Ryots front in 1930 and who had also pursued similarly disruptive policies by trying to set up agricultural workers against peasant proprietors, is Sri V. Reghavayya of Nellore. He commenced his work for agriculturists by trying to organise the Yanadis, one of the then "Criminal Tribes", an agricultural labour tribe. He wanted to liberate them from being classified and exploited as a "Criminal Tribe". Because of his

anger at the caste-Hindu peasant proprietors who were also the beneficiaries of the depressed state of these people and because of his then leanings towards CPI political and industrial methods, he too began to organise agricultural labour strikes. Imperceptibly he drifted into an unspoken alliance with Sri Sundarayya. He began to castigate my approaches as "class collaboration", as if agricultural labour and peasant proprietors were two antogonistic and different classes. I made it clear that there was nothing to prevent a large proportion of the agricultural workers from becoming peasant proprietors or protected tenants, if only Government would place at their disposal the vast unoccupied but cultivable lands, which were then half as large as the cultivated and occupied lands and suitable tenancy legislation was passed. I was convinced that a good portion of them could come to be absorbed by industries and commerce of the growing towns and the rest could be helped by suitable extension of labour legislation to protect their interests. He would not be satisfied. So I wrote my thesis on this question and embodied it in my book "Kisan Hand Book" published in 1938. Not being content with that, I organised Agricultural Labour Congress Committees in all the Circars Districts and popularised the charter of minimum demands and also our faith in the unity of all agriculturists. In pursuance of our faith, I successfully tried to get the Government to grant more than a thousand acres of newly irrigated Government land in Vovveru in Nellore District. That land is worth now Rs. 5 000 per acre. We demanded that all the Government unoccupied lands should be reserved to be allotted to Harijans and other agricultural workers and we achieved a large measure of success in this direction, especially during the war, thanks to the "Grow More Food" campaign. I pleaded in the Central Assembly that all the marginal land along the Railways should also be similarly granted to the local landless agriculturists and this policy came to be adopted during the war. During the control period and during and after the war, when scarcity of food grains afflicted our rural masses also, our Kisan Congressites persuaded peasant proprietors to set apart a portion of the food grains for distribution at specially low and concessional prices to their local agricultural workers during the lean months for employment and also for local food supplies.

We have also taken much interest in organising Tenants' Cooperatives of Harijans for the cultivation of Lanka lands along

the flood banks of Krishna and Godavari rivers. More than a hundred societies were thus functioning during and after the War. Unfortunately most of them did not develop genuine cooperative management of farming. Their office-bearers proved to be less keen on helping their members to gain real experience in managing agricultural operations. The late N. Satyaavayana, Veteran Cooperator, proved to be an able colleague of mine in this aspect of service.

I knew how urgent was the need of our agricultural workers for house-sites and better housing quarters, worthy of being called houses. So I have encouraged our Kisan Congressites to help them to occupy such village commons as were available, and organise small housing colonies. Sri Lalchanna, who became the President of the Baruva Panchayat, built one such colony on modern lines with good roads, etc. Sri Jiyyar Das, a Harijan leader, founded a number of such villages in Guntur District for Harijans. For Yanadis of Garikipadu, a special village was built in my name. In Chittor District, Rajagopal Naidu, M.L A., built a few more such colonies. In this manner, we have striven either directly or indirectly with or without Governmental help and mostly through local collections to build a number of villages or hamlets for these people and thus set an example to other public workers. Till today, the Swaraj Government has not yet come to grips with this most essential need of our agricultural workers.

A few millions of our workers were depressed for ages by being styled as "Criminal Tribes" and subjected to the rigours of of the inhuman "Criminal Tribes Act". My amendment bill was not welcomed by the Assembly. Sri Raghavayya and several of us have agitated against it for over two decades. In the end, Swaraj Government repealed that act. By that one stroke all these millions have been literated and raised, as it were, into regular human beings, capable of earning as good wages as other workers and freed from the evil attentions of the police and unscrupulous village elders. They are now called Vimukta Jatis. We knew that the removal of the blight of untouchability would also contribute directly to raising the bargaining capacity of our Harijans, who formed the majority among agricultural workers. So I worked most zealously on this anti-untouchability campaign. I

have the satisfaction of having put more heart and dynamic effort into this work than most others similarly placed in leading positions within the Congress. Everyone of the graduates of the Institute and also of my associates was encouraged to do his best to free these large masses from untouchability. During my frequent tours, I used to insist upon visiting the Harijan areas, upon inter-dining and inviting them into the fullest cooperation in all our conferences. Every one of our colleagues used to follow this example on most occasions. Thus by 1945 Kisan Congressites came to be hailed as the most sincere and effective friends and servants of Harijans and Gandhijee too appreciated our role. The 1940-44 national movements, socis-economic conditions induced by war and the demands made by war-time constructions, war recruitment reinforced our efforts and the economic position of Harijans began to improve perceptibly.

The Andhra Communists also took my advice to heart and pursued my methods of service with their characteristic zeal and fraternized with the Harijans during the war-period and thus made their own contribution to this development. Having found that the landed Kisans were politically awakened, enough to be disgusted with their "people's war" slogans, the Communists made friends with the politically dormant Harijans and did their utmost to gain support from them for their party. In this, they achieved notable success, as later events were to show.

The War-time rise in wages of agricultural workers was welcomed by Kisan Congressites. We were keen on stabilising that stepped up wage level. During the whole of our prolonged campaign for remunerative and minimum level of prices, to be fixed by Government, as the basis for their food procurement and price control policies during the "Controls Regime", we have taken care to insist that the wage-levels should be raised suitably so as to assure workers a higher and more humane standard of living. I have always argued with peasant proprietors and Government that the best means for increasing agricultural efficiency and production—apart from such equally important consideration as the social regeneration and uplift of rural masses—would be to raise the wage-levels of agricultural workers. We have tried to convince peasant proprietors that they would stand to gain by pleading for and paying higher wages and then demanding suitable level of agricultural prices, so that both these

sections of peasantry could be benefited. But unfortunately the communists tried to misrepresent our stand and to prejudice some of the leaders of agricultural workers against me and the Kisan Congress. They took advantage of my incarceration to spread falsehoods against us. Devijee, G. L. Narayana, G. V. Subbayya and their fellow workers tried their best to counteract this false propaganda but they could not overcome the CPI campaign, strengthened as it was by so many Christian missionaries and Government.

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# *United Front of Indian Nationalism 1936-40*

The five-year period of 1936-40 was the era of 'Popular Front' organised by the Communists and Socialists all over the world for the ostensible purpose of arresting the spread of Fascism and thwarting the imperialist designs of Mussolini and Hitler. Both Pandit Jawaharlal and Subash Chandra Bose were in Europe and in touch with the European currents of thought during this period and though both were sincere and strong anti-imperialists, they came to adopt different lines of action, so far as India's struggle for Independence was concerned.

The sympathies of India were with Panditjee, when he lost his beloved wife, India's patriotic daughter, Shrimati Kamala Nehru. He was elected the President of the National Congress Session of Lucknow 1936 December. His "Autobiography" was published about the same time and it created great sympathy and support for him and his thoughts and also India's cause for freedom, it was such a brilliant piece of literature and propaganda.

Jawaharlal encouraged the Socialistic-minded friends of his in U.P. and Bihar to form themselves into a separate group within the Congress. He paved the way through his correspondence with Gandhijee, on the ideological background of the Congress and those letters were published under the title of "Whither India". Those of us who had been Socialists ever since 1922 and who had

worked for so long among peasants and proletariat naturally hailed that book as an additional source of strength to our work among the masses. The Congress Socialist Party came into existence in Patna in April 1934 at the time of the A.I.C.C. Session and began to gather around itself all those who were impressed with the reports of the achievements of Soviet Russia.

The Communists who had been trying through their underground manoeuvres to gather recruits from our younger nationalists found a more effective rival in the CSP and, therefore, condemned its name, ideology and programme. But they received in the meanwhile the Soviet directive to seek united front with all anti-imperialist progressive forces in every country in order to mobilise public opinion against Fascism. So, they decided before the end of 1934 upon joining the CSP and exploiting its platform.

Panditjee too was moving in the direction of the United Front of all nationalist and anti-imperialist forces, because of his horror of Fascism and his anxiety to strengthen the Leftist forces within the Congress. He took the first definite stand in this direction by including three of the leaders of the CSP in the Congress Working Committee of 1936, that is, Jaiprakash Narain, Acharya Narendra Deva, Achyut Patwardhan. I was neither a CSP nor a Communist. I came from South India and was working among peasants. So I was beyond the pale of both the growing new political forces. Nevertheless I was moving in the direction of all India politics of dynamic import, because, unlike all others, I was shaping the peasant movement into an all India political force, which none could ignore and all had to deal with. Instead of welcoming this new force, all the Western-orientated forcesa nd parties, namely, CSP and CP, did their worst to prevent the growth of the all India peasant movement. On the other hand, the orthodox Congressmen did not realise the need for separate platform for Kisans. They felt that the Congress was in itself the supreme Kisan organisation. They were afraid that if once the Kisan Congress became popular, even as a class, non-political organisation, the National Congress would lose much of its power and mass appeal. So, they kept themselves sullenly aloof from my efforts to form the All India Kisan Congress.

But by the time the Second Session of the All India Kisan

Congress was held in Faizpur in December 1936 under my presidentship, both the Communists and CSP realised the futility of opposing me and began to vie with each other for control of this powerful platform and were unhappy that all those of my way of thinking came to hold the key positions on this new popular platform, next only to the Congress in its potentialities.

Pandit Nehru welcomed the participation of Communists in the AICC and Com. Dange, the Communist leader and several other communists became members of the AICC. The CSP held its places in the Congress Working Committee and communists began their nation-wide move to bore into and permeate the CSP and also the Congress organisations at all levels. Thus, the "popular Front" was ushered in on all platforms. I was obliged to work in cooperation with the CSP and CP throughout these five years, and in harmony with the Congress leadership. I had had to decide at a very early stage how far this united front could be implemented in the actual working of the Kisan Congress. I could see from Jaiprakash Narain's book "Why Socialism" how greatly he was opposed to cottage industries and how strongly Marxist he was, while I was so keen on protecting the Kalakars and their cottage industries and I had developed such faith in Gandhian approach to politics. I could not at all agree with communists because of their fear of peasantry and their Marxist anti-Indian outlook. I found in Swami Sahajanand Saraswati a kindred spirit, who was 100% Kisan-minded and who did not accept Marxism. Sri Indulal Yagnik was such an individualist as not to lose himself so easily either among the CSP or the CP. So, we three learnt to work together and prevented the Kisan Congress from becoming the hand-maiden of either of the contending political parties, namely the CSP and CP.

It was not so easy to maintain this independence of the Kisan Congress at the District and Provincial levels. Except in Andhra and Bihar, there were not many independent-minded Kisan workers, who were devoted only to the Kisan cause and over whom neither the CSP nor the CP could claim or exercise dominance. Thus, in most of those provinces and Districts the Kisan Congress platform came to be dominated either by the CSP or by the CP. Since I and Swamijee, the two principal mass leaders, were found working in close comradeship both on the AICC and AIKC, these few 100% Kisan-minded local leaders had no

other go but to accept the leadership of the locally dominant political party. All this did not happen at any one stage but by 1939-40, this became an established fact.

In the Andhra, neither of the parties could gain any supremacy and both had to accept the leadership of the Kisan Congressites whom I had trained in the Peasant Institute and placed in the midst of the masses as my trusted lieutenants. The annual streams of Kisan and Kalakar and Harijan youths who were being trained in the Peasant Institute were manning the increasing number of Kisan Congress Organisations which were branching out from the Districts to Taluks and even to villages. Seeing that they could not cope with us unless they too competed with us for recruits among the youth, the CP organised rival political schools in 1937 and 1938 and 1939 and the CSP ran their smaller camps also. They attempted to permeate the minds of our own students by sending some of their youths to the Peasant Institute's Sessions at NIDUBROLU (1937 and 1938), Madanapalle (1938), Tunikipadu (1939), Idupulapadu (1940) and even Ichapur (1939) and other Sessions; when nothing availed, they attempted to capture the Andhra Provincial Kisan Congress itself.

That effort proved to be their political blunder. For, till then—1940, we were content to leave some of the key positions also to be held by the C.P. and C.S.P. comrades. The General Secretaryship was held by a prominent CP from 1948 to 1940. The President, the late Sri K.S.N. Murti, was a strong kisan congressite, extremely loyal to Mahatma Gandhi and myself. The Communists were however becoming impatient with their obligations towards the National United Front and were keen on capturing, solely for themselves, as many popular platforms as possible, as they were expecting a showdown between themselves and the National Congress. So, all unknown to ourselves, they whipped up all their own Comrades and also those Kisan Congressites who had been won over as fellow travellers and tried to capture a majority at our annual election of the office-bearers, held at Palasa, during the annual Session of the A.I.K.S. unfortunately for them, they lost the election by a very narrow margin and our Kisan Congressties were shocked into the realisation of the danger of the united Front.

On the all India Kisan front too, I could see, especially at the Palsa Session, how that United Front had become untenable. I had many earlier warnings of the dangers of such a united front. For instance, my tour in Punjab in 1948, was acclaimed a great success by the Congress and the Press. But because I gave precedence to peasants in the slogan I popularised, *i.e.*, Kisan Mazdoor Raj, they killed its publicity. They would not allow fair elections in Bengal and persisted in their undemocratic efforts to keep out both the CSP and followers of Sowmendranath Tagore. They behaved just as badly in Punjab. In U.P. and Bihar, they were in a minority but were creating too much trouble to the dominant C.S.P. group. And on the all India platform, they carried on their insidious canvassing, especially for the support of Swamijee and eventually succeeded in winning his support, thanks to his ideological unreadiness to realise the incompatibility of their Marxsim with India's Kisanism and also to his irrepressible anti-Gandhian attitude. It became clear by 1940 that it would not be long before this platform too would come to be dominated by Communists. Srimati Bhartidevi, and G. L. Narayana who took up the leadership, after I was imprisoned in 1940 had to weather many a crisis and conflict with the CP and its fellow-travellers on the Kisan platform. The entry of USSR into the War and the consequent adoption of the people's war solgan by the Indian CP gave them the opportunity to force the issue between Kisan Congressites and C.P. and then Devijee made it clear that there could no longer be any united Front between Kisan Congressites and CP, since the patriotic Kisan Congress could not have any truck with the champions of "people's war slogan". Thus ended the United Front" on the Kisan Congress platform.

But that United Front did incalculable harm to Indian peasants' cause. Instead of being able to develop their own independent class organisation with the help of 100% Kisan-minded organisers, propagandists and leaders, the Kisan Congress became the plaything and war front as between the rival political parties and the comparatively weaker group of Kisan Congressites. When in the end, the break came, the Kisan Congress was left in shambles, with most of its well-known local leaders ranged against each other and pulled by rival political forces. It was indeed a tragedy.

The political area, too, suffered just as grievously, if not as

disastrously. Rapidly but sedulously did the C.P.I. permeate the CSP and when the real test came in 1940, it was found that the whole of the CSP of Andhra, Tamilnad, Malabar and Punjab was riddled with the C.P.I. and they were all transformed, overnight, into C.P.I. units. On the Congress Committees too the C.P.I. tried its best to foment, develop and exacerbate factionalism among different groups, and exploiting the ever-present group rivalries for power. They induced the minority groups to try to attain majority with the support of themselves and the C.S.P. all the time using the C.S.P. as an effective cover. Thus in most provinces, there were hotly contested elections for P.C.C and D C.C. leadership during 1938 and 1939. The indecisive role played by Panditjee helped them to some extent and, I am afraid, the "united Front" maintained by us, the Kisan Congressites added to their strength. When I stood for the Presidentship of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee (A.P.C.C.) the C.S.P. and C.P I. members of the P.C.C. exploited the situation most effectively and intensified the bitterness between the majority group and my supporters. When their candidate Sri P. Sundarayya, who is now their topmost C.P. Marxist leader, stood for General Secretaryship and got much fewer votes than I did, they did not hesitate to accuse us of lack of faith in the United Front. Similar was the experience of many Congressmen in other provinces. That United Front received the greatest impetus during the two years of Panditjee's Presidentship. He went to the farthest limit of forbearance, when he put up with the decision of All India Trade Union Congress and Kisan Congress to hoist simultaneously both the National Flag and Red Flag and when he permitted Congressmen and CSP to hoist both the flags, and to flourish them both in processions and also to speak in different tones from the same platforms. So many of us were then glad to follow his lead, from our own different platforms. Throughout all that period of apparent unity but real confusion, Sardar Patel and Rajajee stood like a rock in his opposition to that phase of "United Front".

That "United Front" era reached its acme when Subash Babu was elected the second time, despite the opposition of all the "old Guard", minus Gandhijee. During his first period of Presidentship Subash Babu continued Jawaharlaljee's policy and the C.S.P. throve and gained further strength, only to be sapped dry in its turn by the C.P.I. Sri M.R. Masani, who was elected the

chairman of the C S.P. conference held in Lahore realised this mischief and so, boldly opposed the continuation of the "United Front" between the C.S.P. and C.P.I. but his proved to be a minority voice during 1938. When Subash Babu stood for Presidentship for the second time, in opposition to the Sardar's group, it was not clear whether the C.P.I. really supported his candidature. But when he was elected and his election was opposed by Gandhijee, the C.P.I. quickly plumped for him and did its worst to intensify the differences and widen the gulf between the so-called Rightists and Leftists. Sri Jaiprakash Narain and myself tried our best each in his own way to counteract their moves, prevent the situation from worsening and bring about some conciliation. But we were thwarted by the C.P.I. at every turn and we had no other choice but to remain united with the so-called Left. I felt, like so many other genuine Congressmen, that Mahatma Gandhi was not fair to Subash Babu and the rank and file of anti-imperialists who felt dissatisfied with the Working Committee's halting moves for developing or continuing the process of cooperation with the British Government through the Congress ministries, when he so suddenly declared himself dissatisfied with the re-election of Subash Babu. Every other step taken by him in pursuance of that initial mistaken stand continued to exasperate us. It used to be hinted that Bapujee had his fears that the re-election of Subash Babu would make the Congress open to be suspected by the British of Nazi sympathies, in view of Subash Babu's earlier close contacts with the Nazis and Fascists and the alleged correspondence between him and the Nazi leaders. But he never said anything about any such unbelievable suspicions. It was drawing too largely upon our faith in him to be asked to throw Subash Babu overboard, after he was duly elected. Unfortunately Jawaharlaljee's role was a dubious one ; neither in support of Subash nor in opposion to Sardar Patel. So I suffered terribly because my implicit faith in Bapu's sense of justice and complete impartiality as between the contending groups was being jeopardised by his inexplicable but implaccable insistence upon Subash reposing his confidence once again in the outgoing Working Committee, which was castigated by him by his most unfortunate and indiscreet statement. So was the faith of many other Congressmen shaken up during that painful period of six months. Jaiprakash Narain, myself and others made the last move of going to Jawaharlaljee at the time of the Calcutta A.I.C.C. and

requesting him to find some compromise and thus save the situation. He pleaded his inability to achieve anything. Then we requested Subash Babu to yield to the maximum degree to the demands of Mahatma Gandhi. But when in the end he said that his request to let him nominate at least 2 or 3 of his own choice, was turned down, we had no other choice but to stand by him, in his decision to resign from the Presidentship of the Congress.

No one was pleased more by that decision than the C.P.I. and none but the Communists and their fellow travellers ravelled more in the ensuing disturbances at the A.I.C.C. Pandal. But when Subash Babu proceeded to form the Forward Bloc, Communists were the first to criticise his move.

As for myself I admired Subash Babu's heroic and sporting offer to resign from the Presidentship, without rancour and regret. I agreed with his dicision to form his own political platform and helped him in coining the name "Forward Bloc", reminding one of the brave Daily the "Forward" founded by his great leader C.R. Das. We both agreed that since the Kisan Congressites were a distinct group on the left with our own ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Raj and since Subash Babu's followers were mostly of the urban middle classes, we should continue to remain separate entity. We were also agreed to work in close co-operation with each other.

The Communists took full advantage of that situation. To save ourselves from that aweful predicament of having to take our stand definitely, on the so-called left side, which was rapidly coming under the domination of the C.P.I., we conceived the idea of the left consolidation committee, so that, the Royists, Socialists, C.S.P., C.P.I., Independent Communists Kisan Congressites, Mazdoor Sabhaites could all be brought together and the C.P.I. could be put in its proper place. Jaiprakash Narain and others were also thinking independently on the same lines So we all met at Bombay at the time of the A.I.C.C., under the Chairmanship of Subash Babu and formulated a programme of action and founded the Left Consolidation Committee. That proved to be the highest water-mark of Leftism but it did not please either the CPI or the CSP since neither of them could any longer dominate the arena.

The inaugural function of the Forward Bloc met at the Cowasjee Jahangir Hall under the Presidentship of Subash Babu. He was so broadminded and comradely as to ask me to make the inaugural speech, although I did not belong to the Bloc. He was extremely pleased with my speech, expounding the need for such independent political leadership, to supplement the national leadership of the Congress.

Only a few months later, the Second World War broke out. Subash Babu who had been warning us of its inevitability and imminence and the need for the Congress to make up its mind not to have any truck with British participation in such a war appeared to have been fully vindicated and the prestige of the Congress leadership which ignored his advice and warning and which seemed to have pursued a vindictive policy towards him slumped very heavily. The Communists were not slow to exploit this situation, especially as Subash Babu was making the greatest effort to harass the Congress ministries and demanding full-fledged opposition to the British war effort. In the meanwhile the Congress Working Committee decided upon the resignation of Congress ministries on the ostensible ground that the British Government forced the Indian Government also to declare war on Germany, without so much as a prior consultation with the Congress. That did not satisfy us of the Left Consolidation Committee. We demanded the declaration of nation wide struggle against British Government for the achievement of Independence. Mahatma Gandhi would not agree with us. He went on harping on the prevalence of too much spirit of violence. We did not like that. We failed to comprehend his real meaning, that is, that the Communists were influencing our attitudes and actions and were trying to turn the situation in their own favour, so that, at the proper moment, they could strike the effective blows and win power for themselves. I was feeling thoroughly exasperated by his repeated references to the atmosphere of violence. So I asked him why he should object to the L.C.C. trying to start peaceful Satyagraha, on its own responsibility, without committing the Congress. He wondered how I could feel so confident of running our satyagraha in a non-violent manner, who all would take part in it and what were the guarantees that the parties who were in the L.C.C. would be as sincerely non-violent as myself. Then I assured him that the CPI had assured us of its conviction

and determination to let the Satyagraha campaign run in a non-violent manner. He wanted me to make sure. So I took the late Sri Ajay Ghosh, one of the top leaders of the C.P.I. to him at Wardha. We had a prolonged discussion as to how the satyagraha, that the L.C.C. wished to conduct, would be carried on. In the end, we found that the C.P.I. would keep it non-violent only as far as it would be possible and would not completely abjure all thoughts and possibilities of violence. That was an eye-opener to me. On the next day, Mahatmajee asked me if I was satisfied, in the light of C.P.I. attitude and approach that the projected satyagraha could be run only non-violently. I had to admit my doubts. He smiled and appreciated my sincerity and asked me what I would like to do. I told him that I would advise Subash Babu either to give up the idea of an independent Satyagraha campaign under the aegis of the L.C.C. or to start it without the comradeship of the C.P.I. He appreciated that position. Then I hastened to go to Calcutta and apprised Subash Babu about those Wardha talks and thoughts and suggested that we should give up all ideas of independent Satyagraha. He found it difficult to agree with me. He was prepared to take all risks and go ahead. At that stage, a pamphlet, entitled "The Proletarian Path", published secretly by the C.P.I. fell into his hands. According to that, the L.C.C. should be encouraged to start the satyagraha, that the Kisan Congressite and Forward Bloc and C.S.P. should be induced to rush into jails. But the great majority of the top-ranking leaders of the C.P I. should remain outside. The Congress should however be forced by the pressure of the L.C C. Satyagraha etc. to start its own campaign and allow its leadership also to be imprisoned. The C.P.I. thesis said, that when the war reached a particular tempo and Soviet Russia found the right moment to join it and march its Red Army into India, the C.P.I. comrades both within and without the Army should make common cause with it and capture power in India and dominate the State. When Subash Babu found out that the C.P.I. was responsible for bringing out that thesis, he realised the danger of our L.C.C.'s move and told the C.P.I. that there could no longer be any united front. Thus the United Front came to an end and the L.C.C. was dissolved. As for me, I made it clear to Subhash Babu and C.P.I. and others, soon after my interview with Gandhijee, that I could no longer be a party to the L.C.C. A few weeks earlier, Jaiprakash Narain also took the

same stand and marched into jail. Up to January 1940, we were under the impression that we were independently coming to the same conclusions as the C.P.I., whereas actually it was the CPI, through its press and its hold over so many of the mass organisations which were influencing us all. All I could do, by myself, was not to remain neutral at Tripuri, but to strengthen Subash Babu, whereas the C.S.P. made itself so much hated by its neutrality. Thereafter I sought ways and means of strengthening non-communist forces within the Left. Even up to the time of the Ramgarh Congress and Anti-compromise conference Subash Babu was unwilling to give up his plan of starting independent Satyagraha Campaign, encourged as he was by the impetuous Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. But I differed from them and so, refused to take part in the Anti Compromise Conference after the opening session was over. Thus, by the time the Internment Order was served on me on the 30th April, 1940, I liberated myself from the L.C.C. and also from all political contacts with Communists and also with the anti-Compromise Committee. Thus, the popular Front or the United Front which was started by Nehru and hailed by all of us of the Left lost all its attraction for me and hold over the Andhra Kisan Congressites by April 1940 ; that is, after having done its mischief over that prolonged period of four years.

In 1938, one of the fellow travellers wrote a short biography of mine in Telugu, and the introduction to that volume was written by the then Communist-cum-Congress Youth, the late A.S. Raju. The Communists hoped thereby to win over a number of my followers as their friends.

But in 1939, they came out in their true colours at the provincial Kisan conference, by scrupulously avoiding any reference to the contribution made by myself, Devijee, G.L. Narayana and the graduates of the peasant institute to the development of Kisan Movement in the report submitted by the Communist-minded General Secretary. This opened the eyes of Kisan Congressites and Sri P.T. Reddi led their attack on the Communist machinations. He taunted them how till 1936, Communist leaders of Andhra were consistently opposing, obstructing and ridiculing the Kisan movement and how they openly ridiculed the very idea of achieving anything revolutionary through Kisan movement. The late Vallabha Rao exposed the fact that the

Communists opposed secretly my candidature for Central Assemly in 1934.

I tried to compare and contrast the teachings of Lenin and Gandhijee and show how Gandhijee's teachings and methods of work were more suitable to India, in my teachings in the Institute and my articles in Telugu papers. This enraged the communists, especially Sri A. S. Raju, who was then the most aggressive communist youth and he complained that I was utilising the United Front only to strengthen Gandhism. Thus, despite the United Front, I and my followers were doing our best to prevent the growth of Communist influence among our workers.

There exists between urban and rural people in their opportunities and abilities and awareness to realise, an awful time-lag, stretching to more than ten years, as to what was happening in Soviet Russia and the outside world's ability to realise the significance of Soviet happenings. The English and American thinkers and political leaders were themselves so slow in realising the full-significance of Soviet suppression of peasants, rural people and the never-ending caravans of uprooted peasants on their way to the forced labour camps in Siberia. When their reports began to be published, we in Asia were unwilling to believe them because of our prejudices against them and our opposition to their imperialism and double-talk regarding freedom and social justice. The Webbs' book "Soviet Communism" helped us to feel more enthusiastic about the Soviet achievements. The travel talks of poet Tagore, published in the Modern Review and Jawaharlaljee's book on his impressions led us to believe that a glorious new civilisation was being developed in the Soviet land. So, we, who were working for the welfare of Indian Kisans, did not know for certain what was being done for or against Soviet peasants. I did feel unhappy over the suppression of civil liberties and the evils of dictatorship and so sounded a powerful warning against the Soviet political dictatorship in my Telugu book "Modern Political Institutions" written in Vellore jail in 1932. But when I was publishing the "Peasant Song Book" in 1934, I referred to Soviet Russia as the land of glorious experiments in building a new and progressive society, litttle knowing how their peasants were actually being suppressed up till then. And "The United Front" was able to blind-fold so many of us

to the reports of oppression of peasants that were trickling down from the West. It was only after the break-down of the United Front that we began to re-examine what all literature was available on the Soviets and their attitude and treatment of peasants and reorientate our attitude towards their so-called granite Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist foundations. All the time Mahatma Gandhi was in a better position, because he could be sure that the communists who did not mind what means were adopted to achieve their ends, could not be achieving any lasting good or happiness of the peasant masses. It was when I realised the full measure of the Soviet oppression of their peasantry, that I saw the full significance of the Communist writings against peasants from Marx down to the Kalinin, Stalin, Leneotov. So, I collected all relevant information from their own writings and prepared and published my book "Kisans and Communists" in 1945. In a way, it was a companion volume to the 1938 publication "Kisans and Congress."

One of my unfortunate experiences was thrust upon me by ruling Congress Group at the time of the District Board elections of 1936. Till then, the District Board of my District was headed by one of the traditionally powerful families. The President Sri J. Kuppuswami was a popular but wealthy Kisan and he had led the Board for more than nine years. I was not myself keen on entering local Board politics and I advised the local Congress not to bother about District Board affairs. But the ruling group attributed motives to me ; that because Sri Kuppuswami supported me in the General Assembly elections—as if that support was not for the Congress as such—I was unwilling to help the Congress to capture the Board. So I was forced to do my best just to disprove their malicious propaganda, and to work for the success of Congress candidates in that election. Such was their malignant manoeuvres, just to weaken our leadership and spite us ! Why ? Because they were defeated in 1934 in their endeavours to prevent me from going to the Central Assembly, and gaining popularity in and outside Andhra. They could not persuade Gandhijee to condemn the anti-Zmindari movement I was leading. Yet, they could not insult me through their committees, as I was keeping myself outside the range of those committees. So they planned and proposed this trap of District Board Elections and sought to hurl blows after blows upon us. Fortunately for us, neither myself nor Devijee nor brother G. L. Narayana bothered much

about those local politics and so, they could not weaken our morale. In spite of those blows, I and G.L. Narajana did try to guide the members of the District Board by preparing a detailed, practical and dynamic programme of how to win people's cooperation, both directly and through Panchyat Board, in starting more schools—elementary and high schools—improving the housing of agricultural workers, building roads, tanks and culverts and in avoiding wastage. The plan was published in the weekly "Vahini'. To my regret I found that so few District Board Presidents were keen on such a dynamic programme.

A concerted move was made in 1933 by the big landholders among the Ryotwari Pattadars to organise a peasant union for the whole of the then Madras State in order to protect their vested interests. I did not approve of that. So I refused to cooperate with the conference held at Madras by the upper strata and their leaders, among the Ryotwari Pattadars. Is it not therefore dishonest of communists that they should accuse me in 1955-65 decade as the spokesman of the rich-peasants just because I have opposed land ceilings and cooperative farming and controls ?

In 1935 we succeeded to organise "the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Agricultural Workers". It formulated the charter of Minimum Demands and that has proved to be the model for all later Kisan, Agricultural labour, weavers and other organisations. It popularised the faith of Kisan Congressites of the absolute need for peasants and agricultural workers to cooperate with each other and work together for their mutual benefit and also their utter dependence upon each other. Ever afterwards, this idea has been the kernel of the philosophy of the peasant movement. Ever since 1923, I had been trying to get this truth accepted by our peasants. During all the peasant marches we were popularising this concept. In the pledge to be taken by every member of the Kisan Congress, this was clearly stated from 1931 onwards. But I came across some obstruction on the A.I.K.C. platform from some of the Bihar comrades to this conception. Through my persistent pleading and Jaiprakashjee's assistance, I was able to get it accepted by the A.I.K.C. at its Gaya session (1938).

The session of the Andhra Kisan Congress held in the

Peasants' Institute of Nidubolu in 1936 was a mile-stone in the history of our peasant movement. It put its seal of approval on the charter of Minimum Demands of Peasants and Agricultural Workers, formulated by the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Agricultural Workers. It enunciated for the first time the principles according to which the tenants of even the ryotwari peasant proprietors should be protected, regarding the security of tenure and fixation of rents. It also warned peasants that unless Congress authorities agreed to select their candidates for rural constituencies from among the panel of candidates submitted by Kisan Congress, there could be no guarantee that the members of District Boards and Legislatures would care to work for the protection aud promotion of their interests. Till today this demand remains unfulfilled. But the stand of the conference regarding tenants of peasant proprietors in the Roytwari and the then Zamindari areas, has come to be adopted by the Planning Commission and by most of the State Governments. I resisted strongly the communist manoeuvre to divide Kisans into three categories, the poor, the middle and rich peasants and to confine the activities of the Kisan Congress only to the peasants of poor and middle categories. I knew the danger of such a division and I was determined to keep all peasants together. It was only later I was able to realise fully how through such a manoeuvre, the Soviet leaders destroyed the hegemony of Soviet peasants.

It was during that period of the United Front, I was persuaded to stand twice but in vain for the presidentship of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee ; once against the late Sri Prakasam, another time against Sri Pattabhi, both veteran Congress leaders. I would not have agreed, if some of the equally respected and veteran leaders and many sincere Congressmen of the Gandhian persuasion who were so much disappointed with the factional attitudes of the ruling group had not pressed me. I knew I could only be defeated but I wanted to signify my effective protest against the undemocratic, uncongress like tactics pursued by the ruling groups. But the C.P.I. masquerading as the C.S P. and working through the Left Congressmen exploited these contests to the fullest extent to bore into our ranks, gain the sympathies of a good number of my own followers and thus widen their sphere of influence. So I recoiled from their partnership and made it clear to Bapujee that I would no longer stand in such a contest. Subash Babu continued to

support and appreciate me, even though I could not join the Forward Bloc or the Anti-compromise Committee, because he had faith in me. I was glad to learn long afterwards, from some of the top-most leaders of the Indian National Government and Army that he, who had grown into Netajee by that time, entertained the same faith in me and advised those who were to go to South India eventually to trust me. Soon after the news of my arrest and conviction were known to the public through the Press, the stream of people in Bengal, Bihar and U.P. began to defy the law, and court imprisonment and that led Gandhijee to feel that the independent Satyagraha struggle that I had talked of starting in co operation with other Left-wingers had been inaugurated through the spark of defiance hurled by me against the Government. He therefore felt that I had actually inaugurated the struggle, after consulting with Subash Babu. So he hastened to issue that unfair direction to me. Unfortunately he did not give sufficient consideration to my stand against the British Government or to other facts like my refusal to join the Anti-compromise Committee or to become a party to starting any independent campaign. So, when so many friends from different parts of India protested against his unfair and ill-tempered criticism and wondered why he wanted me to bend not so much before him as before the British Government's arbitrary and insulting internment order, he seemed to have repented and resiled from his stand and softened the blow by saying some kind words about my courage, scholarship and national leadership that I had attained, etc. He was also good enough to say that he had more in common with me than with Jaiprakashjee and that he valued my comradeship.

Fortunately Subash Babu stood by me and wrote a strong editorial in his "Forward Bloc" supporting my defiance of the British Government, criticising the Rightists' glee over that unwanted quarrel—never a breach between myself and Gandhijee and explaining to Gandhijee that it was not myself but the Rightists who were defying him ; and it was the Anti-compromise Committee to which I did not belong and not myself who had begun the struggle. Srimati Bharatidevi, Shyam Babu and all our Kisan Congressites stood by me so loyally during that very trying 8 weeks' long period. It was not the power of the British that used to worry us in those days but the power of Gandhijee.

But when we felt our stand to be entirely correct and found Gandhijee mistaken, we had the moral courage to stand up even to him.

Incidentally, both the Rightists and Communists gloated much during that period over what appeared to be a complete break between myself and Gandhijee. But they counted without their hosts. My deep faith in Gandhijee as a man and as an ideologist and his genuine love and faith in me, as a loyal colleague and sincere Kisan leader, helped us to come together all the closer, thanks to that episode from 1944.

# 14

# *Nationalists Unite Against Communists 1944-46*

When I was released from jail in 1944, the political air in Andhra especially was thick with Communists' propaganda in favour of their people's war slogan. Communists achieved a great propaganda hit by organising the Session of their All India Kisan Sabha in Vijayawada in May 1944 and gathering a huge audience, brought from many villages in almost every District. They distributed many pamphlets, published so many books and almost monopolised the public sphere for propaganda, thanks to their dynamism, plethora of paid workers and high sense of discipline. Only one Congress leader, Sri A.K. Rao of Vijayawada, had the courage to raise his voice of protest against their campaign of calumny against Congress, as the socially reactionary and politically pro-fascist party. Their campaign against myself was most virulent, since they had to attempt to poison the minds of the Kisans, both landed and landless, and turn them away from their faith in me and the Kisan Congress. Devijee, Gorrepati, G.L. Narayana, N.V. Naidu were making valiant efforts to reply to them but they could not achieve success because almost all the Congress and Kisan workers were then in jail and others who were outside jails simply lost confidence in themselves.

As soon as I came out, I took up the challenge on behalf of Congress and Kisan movements against the "People's War" movement of Communists and joined issue with them on every political

and Kisan platform in Andhra and elsewhere. My interviews with Gandhijee, in which he blessed the ideal of democratic K.M.P. Raj and extended his support for the Kisans, weavers, students, youth movements strengthened my campaign all over India, since these interviews, published so widely, dispelled all doubts in the minds of students and youths as to Gandhijee's attitude towards their movements. Bapujee too realised, on his own initiative, the need for recasting his constructive programme and extending its ambit to ambrace all the movements of age-groups and classes.

I made common cause with all those Andhra Congressmen of the old groups in developing this campaign against the unpatriotic activities of Communists. We all formed in Andhra, the Congress Assemblies, since Congress Committees had been declared illegal and began to carry on the constructive work as well as anti-communist political propaganda under their auspices.

It was unfortunate that even under such a pressure for united action, the old-type Congress leaders would not readily agree to give their support to the Kisan, Kalakar organisations. They insisted that Gandhijee should give them clear directions to support our organisations, So they went to him for clarification and Bapujee advised them strongly to extend their co-operation to the Kisan and Kalakar organisations. They were not so happy when he announced his agreement with the ideal of democratic K.M.P. Raj, because it was clothed with the necessary political thesis prepared by myself and hailed first by all Kisan Congressites.

When, however, the Hindustan Mazdoor Seva Sangh, of which Sardar was the founder-president and Gulzarilal Nanda was the General Secretary and which was the ideological centre for the famous Ahmedabad Mazdoor Sangh, started by Gandhijee himself, made this ideal as its own, even the diehards of Andhra had to accept it with a smile ; such was the triumph of our non-violent work of permeation and persuasion in the Congress.

The leaders of the Congress Assembly, including my long-time political opponents within the Congress, at last agreed to

co-operate with us in organising the Kisan Congress session in Govada to rival the Vijayawada session of 1944 and the Tenali session of 1945 April organised by Communists. Thanks to that reunion and consequent united efforts, the Govada Conference was attended by about 40,000 Kisans. I presided over it, Sri Bhaktavatsalam later the Chief Minister of Madras State, inaugurated it and Sri A.K. Rao gave a special speech. The whole proceedings of the Conference were devoted to exposing the unpatriotic and anti-Kisan activities and tactics of the Communists and to expounding the Kisans' demand for remunerative prices and for the removal or relaxation of the Controls. It proved to be such a success ; the very preparations made for its success by Kisans of all villages in Tenali and Repalle Taluks were so mass-wise and created so much enthusiasm that Communists got considerably perturbed. So they organised a violent attack upon a number of our Congress and Kisan leaders and seriously injured them in Amrutaluru, as they were returning to their respective villages late that night. Sri Sitaramayya of Ammataluru and others received serious injuries and had to be admitted into the Tenali hospital. Instead of weakening our campaign, this exhibition of Communist violence strengthened us and weakened Communists considerably. In fact this violent attack fanned the furry of the masses against them and underlined our accusation that they believed only in violence and not in democratic discussion and persuasion.

In addition to setting the tone for the Kisan movement in this manner, I took vigorous steps with the help of Sri Sundara Rao, Ammayya, the students' leader who had been released from jail, to rehabilitate the students' congress, at first in the Andhra and later on, all over India. My small book "Students' Role in National Revolution" provided the necessary inspiring thesis for the students and they began their dynamic campaign against the Communist-led Students' Federation. The Masulipatam Conference of Andhra students held in December 1944 was attended by thousands of students and youths. We were able to demonstrate, through that conference and its exciting proceedings, that at last we gained the upper hand among the students' population. And thereafter, we continued to maintain our lead over Communits on this front. Sri D. Sekrekar, its General Secretary, did much, by touring all over India and organising all the provin-

cial units in North India*. Both the socialists and orthodox Congressmen co-operated with all of us, on this platform of the All India Students Congress.

Similarly Youth Congress was alsc recognised and it took cudgels against Communist organisations and began to organise Seva Dals and Political Training Camps. The leaders of the students' movement in Bombay and Bengal met Bapujee, obtained his advice and blessings and began to be enthusiastic about the formation of the All India Organisation. So, the All India students Conference met in Bombay in March 1945 and adopted, on the proposal of Sri Sundara Rao, the ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj as the ideal to be attained through Gandhian means and methods. By summer 1945, we were able to organise "Citizenship Colleges" in Bombay, Lahore, Calcutta, Nagpur and Madras. Sri S.K. Patil, the powerful and energetic Congress leader of Bombay, also took up the fight against Communists "People's War" campaign and carried on a ceaseless propaganda in Bombay, Maharashtra States and supported my work in Bombay among students. Sri Ramachandran, Prabodh Chandra who later became Chief Minister and minister respectively organised the Punjab students, gave much assistance to the citizenship colleges and organised a number of meetings for me in Punjab to enable me to expound our K.M.P. Raj ideal.

I prepared a detailed syllabus for the use of all these Citizenship Colleges, students' Political Camps and Kisan schools and it was published, later in 1946, by the Madras Students Congress under the title "K.M.P. Raj". The 1945 NIDUBROLU Session of the Peasant Institute attracted more than 250 peasant and weaver youths, and students from colleges and High Schools.

Brother G.V. Appayya took the lead in getting a number of plays written in the traditionally populat styles—known as Jangama Katha—and also poems, songs, exposing the unpatriotic activities and anti-national thoughts of Communists and in training a number of Kisan youths in reciting, and relaying these plays, songs and poems, in their peripatetic tours in Andhra

*He has later started the "United Asia" magazine to contact and educate the Youths of all countries in the ideals of nationalism and KMP Raj ideal.

villages. Soon, many Kisan and Kalakar workers and leaders developed considerable literature on these lines, and trained a number of troupes of players and singers and arranged their tours through villages. All these were means of propaganda and public enlightenment which I had urged to be utilised during my lectures in the Institute and tours. But the Communists made the fullest use of them in our absence during the war. Congressmen and Kisan workers had come to turn the tables on Communists by perfecting these very instruments of public enlightenment so widely and cruelly used by Communists against the Congress and all of us while we were in jails.

Communists produced so much literature and tried to acclimatise the Soviet and Communist slogans to Andhra political arena. They went to the extent of claiming Andhra Social revolutionaries of the early decades as the Communists in embryonic stage and so, called the famous Veeresalingam as Comrade Veresalingam and published a book to that effect. To counteract their propaganda, Sri Sivayya of Emani published a Telugu novel "Camrade Mangamma" exposing the social foibles, and perverse socio economic theories, political and social practices of some communist leaders. I found that book in popular use by the time of my release.

We tried to popularise a number of books in English and local languages dealing with problems of democratic countries and organise new libraries and develop old libraries to make all those books available to Congressmen and other patriotic Indians. Books by the late Mehrali, Masani, myself were thus popularised to counteract the influence of the flood of cheap communist literature. The Communists joined issue with us on every front. Even the Weavers Congress was threatened with disruption and we had to take drastic action against those who were proved to be carrying on Communistic work and expel them from our organisations.

The All India Trade Union platform was also exploited by Communists during the War. I pleaded with Sri Giri, and Sri Nanda that it would be futile to try to gain a majority in that A.I.Trade Union Congress, which was so much under the control of Communists. I said that so long as the office was being dominated by Communists, the membership lists, elections at the workshop

levels and State levels would be so gerrymanded that the nationalists would have no chance, even if majority of workers would choose to follow the Congress lead. But they would not listen to me but insisted upon attempting to capture the A.I.T.U.C. through the usual methods. But the Royalists had already formed their rival Federation because of their realisation of the unscrupulous methods of Communists. We had to wait till 1946-47 before Namdajee and Giri would also agree with the rest of us. In the end, we formed the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) and began organising patriotic workers into their own independent platform, with the result that by 1948 the INTUC became the principal all India labour platform, which had to be recognised by the I.L.O. also.

It was during this nation-wide fight against Communist political offensive, we were able to tell the public how Communists hoped for the Red Army to march into India through the N.W. Frontier and to capture power from the weakened British Empire and hand it over to the C.P.I. to establish their proletarian dictatorship. We discovered plenty of C.P.I. literature to prove their aims and machinations. In spite of all they did, their General Secretary Shri P.C Joshi dared to claim in his correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi, that the Communists did not violate the congress ideals and that their role alone was patriotic and it was the Congress which deviated from the patriotic path. Eventually Mahatma Gandhi came to be convinced, on Joshi's own correspondence, about the incompatibility of communist methods and ideology, as displayed in their unpatriotic activities during the war with the Congress ideals and methods and so, was able to advise Congressmen to keep out Communists. So we felt that our 16 months of vigorous and painstaking work against the C.P.I. was justified by the conclusion drawn by Bapujee.

I was able to tour Punjab, Bombay, Bengal, Orissa, Tamilnad, Kerala, Hyderabad and Madhya Pradesh during this period and address numerous conferences of Students, Youths, Kisans and Kalakars. The Conference held in Lahore was attended by 25,000, the Bengal Youth Congress held in Calcutta was attended by 15,000 and everywhere the ideal of K.M.P. Raj was acclaimed as the political and social goal of all patriots and masses.

During this period, Shri Indulal Yagnik and Swami

Sahajanand fell out with Communists. The former resigned from the presidentship of the Communist-controlled A.I.K.C. and the latter also did the same a few months later. The queer thing is that when Swamijee exposed the Communists and dismissed them from the Executive, the Communists claimed that Swamijee had no longer any control over the A.I.K.C. and proceeded to elect another President. Both of them wanted to reach an understanding with Gandhijee on the Kisan question and Indulaljee met him in this connection but was asked by Gandhijee to meet me and settle their relations with the Kisan Sammelan (Congress). Accordingly they met me at Bombay on the occasion of the A.I.C.C. in 1946 but we found that it would be best to carry on the Kisan work independently, as those of us of the A.I.K. Congress could not be sure that they would keep to the Gandhian line of work.

At Gandhijee's suggestion to both of us, Sardar Patel and myself had heart to heart talks on two occasions at his Bombay flat, over the constructive programme I was developing and as to how the Kisan Congress could be reorganised. Since then I began to enjoy the confidence of both Gandhijee and Sardarjee. I was asked by Gandhijee to meet him frequently and consult with him regarding the mass organisations working within the ambit of constructive programme. Bapujee began to advise the leaders and workers of these movements to meet me and refer to me their correspondence with him on these matters, as he felt that I knew his mind and could be relied upon to play the role of his unofficial minister or counsellor. I am glad to say that I continued to enjoy this coveted status right up to the day of his death, of course only in so far as the Kisan, Student and Youth mass-wise activities were concerned. It was because of that privilege I enjoyed to tender him information, advice and get into intimate consultation with him that I was able to place before him in some details the sufferings of the masses from the 'Control Raj' and its incidental by-products of official corruption and black marketing and Communist mischief of witch-hunting any one and everyone by accusing him of black-marketing.

When eventually I was elected the President of the A.P.C.C., in 1946, I was able to utilise fully and in a dynamic manner, the Congress resources in men and influence with the press and platform to combat the menace of communist propaganda and also the rising evil of communist violence.

# *Influence of Left Literature During 1930-40*

During that period of United Front, Leftist literature was a craze among us all. The publications of the 'Left Book Club' of London, Soviet Literature and also the books of John Strachy and Jawaharlaljee, Edgar Snow, Maxim Gorky, G.D.H. Cole were extremely popular. Literature on China, especially the writings of Lin Yutang, Pearl Buck and Edgar Snow notably (Red Star over China) had a vogue all their own. "Ten days That Shook the World", "Soviet Youth", "Soviet Woman" and especially "Soviet Communism" by the Webbs had a lasting influence. John Gunther's gossipy but informative books "Inside Asia", "Inside Europe" and "Inside Latin America" strengthened the democratic as well as anti-imperialist causes. Upton Sinclair's books, notably the Cooperatives, inspired us all. I tried my best to study all the available literature about the great Rooseveltian experiments in democratic rebuilding of the capitalist Western Society through the New Deal. I was attracted by what his regime did to protect and salvage agriculture and agriculturist from the dire effects of economic depression ; through the declaration of moratorium, price-support policy, etc. For the first time I found myself in disagreement with the partial and inadequate reaction of British Socialist writers to the 'New Deal'. My views coincided with most of what G.D.H. Cole said in "What Marx Really Meant" and was impressed with his "Twelve studies of the Soviet" and also the Penguin's "The God that failed".

The extent to which that swing towards Soviet-oriented Leftism had influenced us could be seen from the changing contents of the different editions of the "Peasant Songs" or the "Ryotu Bhajanavali" published by myself.

Nevertheless I did try to remain loyal to my Gandhian and peasant moorings. My Presidential speech at the Faizpur Kisan Congress in December 1936 reflected the influence of both these dominant influences on my political attitude. It was therefore hailed by both the Gandhians and Socialists and was published prominently in "Contemporary India," a journal of international repute published from Lahore. It was considered to be complimentary to Nehru's thesis, entitled "Whither India". Extracts from it were quoted in the Penguin's topical book on "India" by Doctor Shelvankar in 1940. My earlier thesis of 1935 was published in the equally influential English quarterly "Triveni" of Madras. The "Sainik", the popular Hindi Daily of Agra, came out with a special Kisan supplement under my editorship, indicating the role of Kisan movement in the Leftist politics of India. Throughout these publications, I was wondering how far we could take our Kisans in that almost breath-taking Soviet Leftism which was also favourd by poet Tagore's Travelogue and Jawaharlal's book on "Soviet Russia". I was also indicating the limits beyond which Indian Kisans might not go, because our knowledge of what was actually happening in Soviet Russia was so one-sided and so meagre. I suspected, as much from my studies as by my intuitive discernment and reading in between the lines of the writings of Pat Sloan and Cole, Webb and Solokhov, that peasants were having a raw deal in Russia. Hence my consistent pressure upon all the Indian Leftists that peasants must be given their due dominant place in all our schemes. Hence also my earlier slogan "Kisan Mazdoor Raj" and the later ideal of "Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj".

I was however convinced that the U.S.S.R.'s experiments with Planned Economy were in the right direction and was fascinated by the sweep of their "Five Year Plan". Sri Giri, who later became a Central Cabinet Minister and Governor, and I began to advocate the adoption of planned economy but the British Government would not think of it for want of funds. I was able to demand, through my speeches in the Assembly, that as Dr. H. Dalton had demonstrated in his book "Deficit Budgets" (and

J.M. Keynes' "Theories about public expenditure and need for encouraging spending proportionately", India could be helped to achieve at least partial solution of her unemployment problem, about which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's Committee had published its revealing report. We wanted Government to initiate the development of such basic industries as Iron and Steel, Machine-tools, Locomotive and Wagon manufacturing, by adopting a cautious policy of welcoming foreign capital and enterprise, as Soviet Russia had done. My book "Kisan Speaks" of 1937 was hailed by I.L.O. authorities, British Labour Party circles as a definite contribution in outlining what India could be helped to achieve. My chapters on "Crop-Planning", "Cottage Industries", "Anti-corruption, "Irrigation", "Development", "Anti-Illiteracy", Campaigns" were specially appreciated in India and abroad.

Throughout that crucial period, we were starved for information about the true state of Russian Kisan. I had to wait until 1942 44 to obtain and study objective literature on that aspect. Then only I could come to know how that Soviet peasantry were so mercilessly suppressed and deprived of any effective voice of place in the Soviet regime. I was so keen to study the Soviet conditions at first hand that I joined the Indian Parliamentary delegation to the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia in 1955. The observations I made and the criticisms noted and fears expressed by me in my report to the Indian Parliamentary Group and published by them were fully vindicated by the then Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, Mr. Krushchev. In fact, all the criticisms that so many of us had been making between 1940 and 1955 against the cruel and autocratic Soviet regime and its heartless and continuous suppression of peasantry during the prolonged Stalin era were more than exposed and deplored by Khrushchev in the 20th Soviet Communist Congress of 1956.

Subash Babu took the initiative in forming the National Planning Committee and invited Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru to be its Chairman. Prof. K.T. Shah, the eminent economist, became its Secretary Shah appreciated my plans outlined in "Kisan Speaks". But Jawaharlaljee was too keen on the development of heavy industries and rapid industrialization and had not yet begun to realise the importance of agriculture, cottage and medium-scale industries. So he would not so readily appreciate the thoughts of myself, the late Doctor J.C. Kumarappa and such of us as believ-

ed in Gandhian approach. Only two of my papers on "Land Tax Reform" and "Agricultural Labour" were given careful consideration by National Planning Committee. J.C. Kumarappa had to resign from that committee. Strangely enough, Jawaharlal had to accept the advice of Gandhijee after the achievement of freedom and invite both of us into active cooperation in the Economic Programme Committee. He welcomed me as the convener of the Sub-Committee on Agriculture and Dr. Kumarappa as the convener of the Sub-Committee on Cottage Industries. Eventually he gracefully accepted our reports and later commended their implementation by the National Planning Commission.

16

# *Palasa Conference (March 1940)*

The Palasa session of the All India Kisan Congress was the biggest mass demonstration organised by the Andhra Kisan Movement up to 1940. More than a lakh of kisans, from all over Andhra, especially the Zamindari-ridden Vizag and Srikakulam districts, gathered there. Bharatidevi was held by the tens of thousands of Kisan women as their Mother. The late Shyam Sunder Rao, and Shri G. Latchanna, D. S. Reddy and Hari Krishna Chowdari distinguished themselves by their organising abilities. Naturally, the Communists were displeased with its success, as also the local Congress leaders who did not cooperate with us. However, the C.S.P. and Forward Blockists were impressed and pleased with our independent mass backing.

It was on this occasion that the Andhra Communists tried their best in vain to defeat us in the Kisan Congress. They wanted so much to demonstrate that they held the upper hand in the Kisan movement. This diabolical move of theirs proved their undoing as it alerted all our kisan workers against the dangers of fraternising with the Communists. From that time onwards and for that reason, among others, the Communists' United Front became distasteful to our Kisan Congressites.

The Zamindars of Vizag and Srikakulam did their worst to prevent peasants from going to our conference because they

feared that once their peasants were inspired and stimulated by the atmosphere of the all-India session they might be emboldened to start satyagraha against their oppressions. We took that as a challenge and saw to it that a chain of peasant marches were organised to bring peasants to the session. Thus it turned out to be a great concourse of Kisans.

During the session, the local police who were in league with the zamindars tried to pick up quarrels with our organisers and marchers for an excuse to ban the session. They failed because our people did not give them any such excuse. In the end, they banned the proposed procession with an effigy of the Zamindari system and its eventual cremation, but our excited Kisan masses defied the ban and took out the procession and burnt the effigy. The police held their patience in the face of that overwhelming mass fury. Bharatidevi and myself left Palasa soon after the conference. And two days afterwards, when the Mandasa Zamindari peasants returned to their villages, the police picked up a quarrel with them, foisted a trumped-up charge of illegally removing timber from the forests without proper permits and tried to arrest some of our local peasant leaders. But our peasants refused to allow the arrest of their leaders and in the fracas that ensued, the Kisan heroine Gunnamma taunted the sub-collector with breach of faith. Thereupon she was shot at by the police thrice. With all her fury she pounced upon the police officer and gave up the struggle only as she breathed her last. Many more Kisans were thus cruelly shot dead and others seriously injured. Not being satisfied with that horrible deed, Government brought against me and two score other peasants false charges of inciting them to revolt. Fortunately the prosecution case collapsed hopelessly. Yet a number of peasants had to suffer incarceration for two or three years. Such was the vengeance of Zamindars which was inflicted upon our innocent and ignorant peasants. All that repression did not break the spirit of resistance of our Kisans. When Bharatidevi went there to pay her homage at the anniversary of the martyrdom of Veera (heroic) Gunnamma, more than a hundred thousand peasants joined her. Every time I have gone there ever since, thousands of them have come to express their loyalty to Gunnamma's cause. The abolition of the Zamindari system is a vindication of Gunnamma's martyrdom.

During all the general elections that have taken place ever since, the Kisan candidates including Sardar Latchauna who were set up by us, whether in the name of the Krishikar-Lok Party (K.L.P.) or United Congress or Swatantra Party, have been supported wholeheartedly by the Kisans of the Mandasa area under Narayana's leadership.

# 17

# *A Peep into Our Family Life*

Just as my life took an important turn in 1930, on my leaving the paid job in Madras College, so also, it took an equally significant turn in 1946-47, when India gained practical control of national destinies. So the role played by Devijee during that important period of 16 years in our family life is of a special significance.

We wanted to live an exemplary private as well as public life. We have succeeded to a large degree, as it depended so much upon us two alone, but we suffered much in the process.

I have already said how Devijee and myself took certain decision in 1930 alone just before I resigned my post in the Madras College and threw ourselves into the national movement as wholetime public workers. We have known that in India there is no arrangement—either social convention or organisational facility—by which public workers would be paid enough to cover their ordinary and simple needs of life, except in the case of the Servants of India Society founded by the late G.K. Gokhale and Servants of People Society founded by the late Lala Lajpat Rai. So we had to so simplify our standard of living and plan the scope of our public life in such a way that we could live within what we could hope to get from the moderate holding of land that I inherited. The 1930-34 economic depression made us halve whatever attenuated standard of living that we decided upon after embracing rural life, *i.e.*, from Rs. 250 to Rs. 125

per mensem and when it is remembered that we used to spend Rs. 1,500 per mensem when we were in Madras, it could easily be imagined how great must have been the strain on Devijee to go on simplifying our family economy down to that level of Rs. 125 within a couple of years. We decided to leave our ancestral house in the heart of the village NIDUBROLU and shift into our portion of what had originally been built for a cattle shed but on a sound basis in our garden outside the village two furlongs from the nearest living abode of anyone. It was a bold move. It was disapproved of by all my elders. I wanted to be free from the daily scenes and suffocating atmosphere of village politics at least to this extent. Devijee agreed to venture to live in that lonely place. As it was a garden, surrounded on two sides by paddy fields, there were plenty of snakes, scorpions, mosqitoes and the usual world of insects, frogs and wild birds. To live in that place was as much a pleasure as pain ; much more so to her than to me as she was obliged to live there most of the time, while I could get out of it whenever I toured in the country. There was no metalled road right up till 1945. During rainy season, there used to be heavy mud and it was a painful experience to go to and from that place. Several times I fell into that mud when travelling at night time ; Sri Jaiprakash Narain came there once during rainy season and felt that he had enough of that place ; we called this place "Gobhumi".

We had only a small room in the Western Varandah, which served as the only private place available for Devijee. During summer, this room was so hot in that Guntur heat that we used to feel suffocated for hours on end. The hall—expansive and clean—was the rendezvous for all our workers and guests, besides ourselves. We had a so-called kitchen in a thatched shed, with bamboo curbin to serve as make-believe walls. To have given up the mansions in Madras, and also the grand ancestral house in village proper and to have agreed to live in these uncomfortable and inadequate and embarrassingly public sheds and halls-cum-room and to have succeeded to live like that from 1930 till 1945 was indeed a heroic task that Devijee had performed. It was a Gandhian *tapas* in simplicity.

Fortunately we had no trouble from thieves. That inmunity must have been due to the pity and sympathy, felt for her even

by those who were in the habit of house-breaking.

Devijee was hereditarily brave in facing cobras and other snakes. Her father, the late V. Subbayya, had it in him to stop a cobra in its march by shouting that it should stop and then he used to kill it. Devijee also used to ferret out a cobra and kill it. But this immunity lasted only till 1948. In 1948 she was bitten by some poisonous snake early in the morning and she has been suffering ever since from its evil effects and so she has grown nervous about snakes. Our kitchen's roof of palmyra leaves used to harbour nests of poisonous wasps and Devijee was their favourite victim, so much so that several doctors feared that her illness was caused by their poison also. National leaders like the late Desabhakta K. Venkatappayya, Desoddharaka Nageswara Rao, Prakasam and Sri Jaiprakash, Indulal Yagnik, Brothers J. C. and Bharatan Kumarappa, V. V. Giri visited this very simple abode of Devijee and wondered at her sincere austerity and sacrifice of all comforts she was used to in European and Delhi society.

The thousands of graduates of the Institute and many more of the public workers of South India who were our colleagues in the Kisan, Kalakar, proletarian, students and youth organisations and national movement were received, fed and feasted in that small place, and Devijee used to look after us all and at the same time take active part in our discussions, often endless and exasperating.

Her old father was good enough to agree to my importunities and come to live with us for a few years before he died in 1941. He used to wonder what appeared to be like my callousness in leaving her all alone in that jungle-like place for weeks and months on end and tour all over the country without bothering to find any funds for the upkeep of "GOBHUMI". He sympathised with our determination to live in Gandhian simplicity and also within our means. He appreciated my passion for serving the public and admired his daughter's capacity for self sacrifice, self-reliance and nobility. So he threw in his lot with us and shared our sufferings and worries during the last years of his life.

We gave up non-vegetarianism and remained strict vegetarians. It was not only cheap but also convenient to be vegetarians

to welcome Brahmin guests. Vegetarianism made it cheaper for our hosts all over the country to entertain us and to manage to give the usual feasts arranged in our honour ; Khadi clothes, though more costly per yard, were on the whole more economical, since we did not need so many "changes", as would be the case with mill clothes. And moreover, ostentation was outside the Khadi atmosphere. In this I did not suffer, because Khadi satisfied me in every way. Devijee had such fine taste in choosing sarees and she contributed much to the enrichment of designs of Khadi sarees by herself suggesting new designs and advising weavers' leaders to prepare necessary weaves. Thus her saree designs came to be known after her name and those sarees found greater sales. And she had such a pleasant bearing that she used to look to me both dignified and pleasing and so, my aesthetic fancies were fully satisfied with her Khadi sarees. What she must have suffered during summer in those heavy clothes I do not know.

We continued to travel only in third class in trains and were using the buses, whenever necessary, and thus economised carefully and I maintained mass-contacts in this way also during our frequent journeys. It was however an uncomfortable experience even for me, not to speak of her, to be in the midst of the usually ovecrowded third class Railway carriages. It became excruciatingly painful, during and after the war, more especially for her. I did my best, in the light of all this suffering, to move the Government through my persistent agitation in and outside Assembly to improve the amenities for third-class passengers. I cooperated with other friends especially Sanjeeva Rayanim in forming Railway Passengers Associations all over the country and succeeded in getting representation for them on the Railway Advisory Councils, which are now known as "Railway Users Councils".

By 1935, Devijee plucked up sufficient courage to undertake the management of the cultivation operations upon our holding. Only those educated people who have had to go back to villages and face the challenge of the villager's piquant idiom and pungent expressions and their man-made and man-wise atmosphere can get an idea of what it must have been for her to learn to deal with all those whose cooperation would be indispensable in this work, without losing her refinements and cultural attainments which

are so indispensable in this urban-minded public life. There was the stress of the ever widening deficit in our family budget. She undertook to repay the heavy debt, that came to my share along with the management of the farm. She tried to sell away our lands and clear off the debts, as otherwise, the 12% to 18% interest alone would very soon land us in insolvency. But the land values slumped so much from Rs 3,000 per acre to Rs. 750 that we would have had to lose all our lands. So, she called our creditors, explained our parlous condition and persuaded them to reduce the rate of interest to 6% and thus brought down that annual charge on us. She disposed most of her jewels and made part-payment to some of the importunate creditors.

It was at that crucial stage that the 1934 general elections to the Central Assembly came and I had to find funds to finance my electioneering, I could not find a creditor willing to advance the huge sums needed. In fact, that obvious disability of mine was quoted pertinently against me by these political opponents who did not want me to be selected as Congress candidate. Luckily sister Laxmi Devi came to my rescue, all on her own initiative. She borrowed a large sum at her own risk and advanced it to me. That had impressed Devijee so much that she had been devoted to her ever since. It took me six years to clear off that new debt. Once I was elected to the Central Assembly, Devijee was relieved of the burden of financing my tours and our other activities in public life. We discussed and took certain decisions; that whatever I could save from my allowances from the Assembly after financing my establishment in Delhi and paying the instalments on my election-debts should be mostly devoted to our public work and whatever she could save from our farming, since my maintenance would no longer be a charge on it, should be devoted to the clearance of our family debts and to the development of "Go Bhumi" and maintenance and manuring of our holdings. This too was a self-sacrificing decision for her, for, as a widely-travelled and highly cultured woman, it would have been justifiable if she had demanded a good portion of my savings to enable her to regain what might be her normal conveniences and comforts. I am glad to say that we have managed generally to stick to those norms.

It was in 1943 summer that Devijee got exasperated by that never-ending and painful life of stresses and sufferings, what with

the worries caused by the over-suspicious police, underground workers, communist intrigues, and my endless incarceration. She wrote to me her plaintive appeal whether it would be wrong for her to think of building an upstairs, adjacent to and as an extension of our "Go Bhumi" to escape from that bone-melting heat and to gain some privacy for herself. Before I could make up my mind and reply to her from my Jail in Madhya Pradesh—it used to take a month for letters and their replies to reach their destinations after going through censorship in two provinces—her health gave way and she was laid up with nervous breakdown. I hastened to send her my agreement with her proposals. The rebuilt Go Bhumi could be ready only by 1951. She waived the usual Indian formality of House-Warming function as it would have cost us so much. In all this, she has had our overall objective of setting an example to the other rural folk, becaus it is such traditional ceremonies which contribute so largely to the chronic indebtedness of our peasantry.

As if those responsibilities were not enough, Devijee and brother G.L. Narayana agreed to contribute 25% of their net incomes from lands during the period of my incarceration to the Kisan and other aspects of our national movement. So many others failed to fulfil this demand but they discharged their duty. The "Vahini" weekly at Madras got into debts and was losing heavily. They agreed to clear off these debts also.

We were living in the most economical manner in Delhi and Simla during the Assembly Sessions. For several sessions I used to stay alone in Coronation Hotel in Delhi just to economise. I did not mind that austere life but so many of my collegues in the Kisan and other national movements who had to be my guests for a time used to complain about my impossible simplicity. Several of the I.C.S. colleagues in the Assembly and the English Ministers of the Viceroy used to wonder how an oxford man that I was, could put up with so much of voluntary poverty. Bapu was told by some about this way of life of mine. So he asked me several times if I needed any financial help. When I told him that I had more than enough, thanks to Devijee's economy and our Gandhian way of life and scruples, he used to feel happy. We used to feel at such moments of witnessing his satisfaction with our simple life and financial scruples, that all our sufferings were

more than justified. It is usual in our Indian society for families without children to be expected to look after their relatives and spare a good portion of their affections for their children. Fortunately for us, none of our relatives ever tried to trouble us with such embarrassments, so conscious and appreciative they were of our public responsibilities. Devijee never weakened towards such customary duties, nor did she regret her need to have to spare every cent for public life.

Devijee helped Suseela Devi, her sister's daughter and Pushpa and Bujji, her brothers' daughters to study in our local High School by keeping them in "Go Bhumi" and guiding them in their studies. But never did they expect, nor did Devijee provide them, with costly presents. My brothers had a number of children of their own and we did not try to satisfy even the minimum of social conventions by attempting to give them any presents, nor did they expect such from us. We have felt grateful to these closest relatives for their spirit of understanding and helpfulness. But all this meant a strain on Devijee's sense of family responsibilities. Some Kisan families of Ghantasala, Govada, Burripalem have been making presents of Khadi clothes to both of us, almost as annual gifts, as they say to lighten our burdens. In fact, several Kisans offer such personal gifts of Khadi during our tours. We are very much touched by such display of public's sincere affection.

I know how difficult it is for our peasants to spare any money for public work, because of the never-satisfied wants of their families and the growing poverty of their dependents; so I have been averse to making any collections from them, except on rare occasions and for inescapable needs such as Conference, a session of the Institute, or subscription for our weeklies "Zamin Ryot" and "Vahini". But as the tempo of our movements was rising, our local workers began to collect small sums and offer them to me as "purses" at every Conference of Kisans, weavers and youths and students. I used to earmark them for the locally necessary or important unit of our organisations and give them away to local office-bearers. When thus our public began to realise how their money was being given back to their own local organisations, they grew more and more ready and enthusiastic to contribute to such purses. This method prevented any chance of wastage in distri-

bution and mismanagement and I was relieved of the burden of keeping special accounts. Thus these "purses" offered in Nellore, Chittooor and "other Zamindari Ryots" areas proved to be a valuable source of income to the "Zamin Ryot" in its initial stages. The other weekly "Vahini" also obtained much support in this manner. I was able to finance thus several local units of the weavers and students Congress. The Rice-Millers of MIBUBROLU have always offered big gifts of rice, whenever sessions of Peasants, Institute were held there ; and the villagers made their own considerable contributions and lightened our family's responsibilities. Devijee also used to devote such purses presented to her for similar purposes. The fact that we both lived so scrupulously on our own resources and insisted upon spending the least from public funds on our tours and devoted almost all the public collections, besides our own savings for our public responsibilities had strengthened, the faith of our public in our work and financial integrity and so the readiness of the public to contribute to these purses has gone on growing. We have ever been grateful to them for such faith in us.

Unfortunately we do not seem to have succeeded as well in persuadi..g by our example and teachings as large a proportion of our disciples and colleagues, as we could have wished for, to live as scrupulously and to be as economical and respectful of public funds.

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# *Timeless Search After Beauty and Brahma*

My tours were not all so energy-consuming or devoid of cultural education and satisfaction. Just as I used to take special pleasure, while touring in Europe, in visiting the locally famous churches, Assembly or Parliamentary Halls, Art Galleries and Museums and places of scenic beauty, I was keen on visiting similar places of beauty, culture or historical interest in the places I visited in India during my peripatetic annual or seasonal tours. Perhaps it was because I realised the value of such communions while in Europe, I became so keen on knowing more about the cultural vestiges of our own civilisation. What Jawaharlaljee said in his "Discovery of India" is true of most of the English educated youths of India right up to 1947, because they have not been taught about Indian history, cultural achievements, polity and thoughts, half as well as they were made to study about European civilisation. I was somewhat fortunate in that I had been guided in my studies by Mother Mangamma Anjaneyulu, Venkayya and helped by the political atmosphere of nationalist renaissance created by the Nationalist movement of 1908-1924 and I was able to imbibe the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, Ram Tirtha, Tilak and Gandhijee. Nevertheless, I knew so little about the archi-

tectural, artistic and other cultural achievements of Indian civilisation before I left for England and I could get so few books, right up to 1930, to enlighten me about India's and Asia's contributions to world's fund of thought, cultural attainments and civilisation in general. It was Havell's books on India's Arts and Crafts and architectural achievments which stimulated my interest in the oriental aspects of world culture. Until I saw in 1931 the beautiful frescoes on the Lepakshi temple ceilings, I used to think that the Moghal miniatures which I saw in the Albert Museum, London, were the highest Indian achievements in painting. Somehow I did not have much admiration for Ravi Varma's Prints. When eventually I was fortunate to visit the Ajanta caves in 1937 and saw the originals of the copies I had already seen in the Albert Museum in the company of Devijee, I felt I need not have lost my soul so completely to Michael Angelo's frescos in the Roman Churches, glorious and soul stirring as they are. I was happy to read about the romantic life and achievements of that noble Italian sculptor. Devijee copied out a number of the paintings of the Ajanta from the printed copies we were getting from Telugu journals and expressed her admiration at the delicacy of their features, poses, coiffeures and sense of personal decoration. She loved their slanting eyes and arrowed eye-brows and whispering eye-lashes and wondered at the creative capacity and feeling for beauty of those crowds of painters who wanted to perpetuate the beauty of their artistic creations rather than inscribing their names. It is now twenty years since I have seen those immortal paintings but they present themselves before my mind's eye, even today, with their indelible freshness, oriental beauty and charm of the Apsaras or Damsels of Devas.

The School of Ajanta was international in its cultural motifis, beauty of colours, curves, connoiseurship of features, poses, dresses and delicacy of expression. I saw some similar paintings recently at Sigiriya in Ceylon, of equal beauty and charm. I have seen prototypes of those delightful damsels, their dresses and shy-self absorption in their own immortal charm in the women of Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Burma, Malabar, Indian hills and forests and on the Himalayan heights. If European art is international, so was Indian Art, as it grew to be Asian and as it imprinted itself on the rocky surfaces of Ajanta, under the brushes and pencils of Buddhist artists of all Asian nations.

I admired the achievements of the Moghuls and I felt grateful to the Mohammedan rulers for what they have left behind them by way of mosques, mausoleums, forts and fountains and their lovely parks. The Rajasthan Rajputs added the Indian touch to the Moghul motifs and constructed their dazzling lakes studded in the emerald-green neighbourhoods. If the Taj and Jamma Masjid are their world famous beauties, their thin but milky-white minarets in our countryside are also a contribution to our landscape. How often do I enjoy the sight of the moon-like domes of the Jumma Masjid, as I stand at the Connaught Circle or anywhere in Parliament Street in New Delhi. How can one be adequately grateful to Sir Leutens, planner and builder of New Delhi for having helped the new British city to unfold itself under the soft-moon of that Moghal culture. It was only after my recent tours in Central Asian Soviet Republics, Turkey, Egypt, that I could realise what a significant contribution Indian architects have made to the otherwise Egyptian mummy-like domes of Moslem Mosques of the outside world. The brilliant golden sikhars, the fawnlike leaves and flowers of the decorative linings of our Moslem structures, the sun-beloved lattices in stone, marble and teak, and so many other special beautifying features, make every Indian mosque or mausoleum such a piece of beauty.

What can equal the majestic stature, scenic wealth and architectural-cum artistic excellence of South Indian temples right up to Bhuvaneswar ! Anand Kumaraswami has expressed in his words of beauty about their cultural excellence what most of us so ineffectually feel. Each temple is a veritable museum or a reference library of India's culture at different ages. I saw the imposing colonnades of lions at Rameswar, Madura, Sreerangam and Kanchipuran and admired the dynamism, latent in the life of all active beings, as was indicated by these leaping avatars of irresistible energy. Again and again I gazed at the ever-rising sky-high gopurams of Kapaleswar and Tiruvottuyar in Madras, Trichinoply and Srirangam, Kanchipuram of Kamakshi, Madura of Meenakshi every time I visited those famous places of Indian history. I admired the Viswa Karmas who planned, executed and moulded those songs in stone of creative efforts to emulate the beauty, grandeur and energising pleasure, displayed by creation in every moment of its self-

expression. I always felt sympathy for the patient, painstaking toilers who raised those rocks to those heights at the cost of so many lives and so may lakhs of labour days of toil and limitless dreams. My own Andhra Pradesh had had its own contribution to make to that rich heritage of architectural creations. The Hanamkonda, Warangal, Ramappa temples of Kakatedya Era and Hampi and Nellore, Penugonda and Tadpatrji, Ontimitta, Simhachalam temples indicate how far our Viswabrahmins of the Rayas of Vijayanagar era have brought the Chola-Pandya traditions of architecture to the Andhras and how Indian civilisation has achieved its unity in the diversity of motifs, moulds, stories and the religions cults. The Hoysalas of Mysore built the marvellous temples of Helebid and Malkote after the fashion of Kakateeya architecture. I did admire the beauty of the Grecian statues, the grandeur of Roman statues and the latest Epstien's problem statues. But these hundreds of Nandis, thousands of dancing damsels, elephants, lions, horses and countless statuettes on the thousands of decorative panels to be found on so many of these temples—in their museum-like plenitude—had made me spell-bound. I am ever athirst for such moments to see, admire and learn from their unfathomable well-springs of thoughts and beauty. I saw the idols of Rajya Laxmi Devi of Mangalagiri, the pearl-like Saraswati of Vivekananda College at Madras, the scintillating idol of Shree Rama at Vonti Mitta, the black-ebony-like reclining Ranga of Sree Rangam and Sree Ranga Patam of Mysore, the unearthly sweetness of Bhavanarayana of Ponnuru and Buddha of Saranath and the indescribable charm of Kamakshi and Meenakshi and Kanya Kumari and wondered at the creative genius of the Viswakarmas who designed, moulded, sculpted and finished these peerless beauties. Recently in 1965, films were produced—"Mahasilpi Jaggana" in Kannada and Telugu, "Geet Gaya Patharon Ne" in Hindi and earlier (1954) Buddha's life on stones, which have helped our people to appreciate something of their beauty and the life of their devoted sculptors. Did I see their like, if not their equals, anywhere in the West ?, I wonder. I think one would learn to appreciate their inestimable beauty, only when one sees the shapeless, stone-imbedded idols, with their blood red patches of garments, to be found in so many of the famous temples of North India, after the destruction wrought by the iconoclastic Moslem rulers over seven centuries.

I have not however been able to appreciate the cave-like,

almost air-tight, suffocation and blinding dimness of the insides of so many of our temples. Even mother Mangamma, who had seen all the famous temples of South India, exclaimed her relief and pleasure, when she was taken into the stately, airy, solemn and bright St. Thome Cathedral of Madras. The Belur temple of the Ramakrishna Math and Sree Narayan Temple of New Delhi are a great improvement.

I have visited recently (27.1.1958) the Warangal Thousand Pillar temple and Fort area and Ramappa temple, both of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of the famous Kakateeya empire of South India. The mirror like polish on the Nandis at Thousand Pillared temple at Ramappa and their jubilant energy are as attractive today as if they were finished only yesterday and their beauty is so dew-like. The four magnificent, highly carved granite Thoranas or granite Gates of that Kakateeya era beggar description and can be equalled for their intricate and artistic carving and courage of design and stature only by the famous Thoranas of Sanchi. Indeed I felt as if the same artistic, sculptural and engineering, tradition of Viswakarmas which produced the Sanchi beauties must have yielded these majestic Kakateeya Four Arc 'de' Triumphe. And it is clear from the inscriptions of the Chola period that there must have been considerable nobility of architects and planners of those days since the viswakarmas and dancers and artists who had been attracted from the Godavari and Krishna areas of the erstwhile pallavas being settled around the Chola temples of Tanzore, Madura, Melkote, Kanchipuram, etc. Certainly the Hampi, Penugonda, Tadpatri, Vellore, Melkote school of architecture learnt much from that of Kakateeya-Warangal Viswakarmas.

The bronze statues of the famous emperor of Vizianagar, Krishna Deva Raya, and his consorts which are found in the Tirupati temple are splendid specimen of sculpture of those days. How one feels oneself in kindness and boundless love by gazing at the full visage of Venkateswar, while under Abhisheka ! The beautiful head of probably Gajapati Deva, the great emperor who trained his daughter Rudramadevi so well and organised his policy so effectively that she could rule for 35 years after his death, which is found in the warangal fort speaks highly of the workmanship of the architects and sculptors of Kakateeya times.

Though they are centuries old, they are so fresh and full of life and certainly excel in their grandeur and artistic achievement the gigantic statue of Stalin that I saw in 1955 at the head of the Don-Volga canal, near Stalingrad. Americans are naturally proud of their recent statues, carved from out of their hill-tops but their sweep of design and structural grandeur and artistic chiselling cannot equal the ever-fresh beauty and divine objective displayed in the monoliths of seven pagodas or the encaved Three Murti of Elephanta or the great Serpent at Lepakshi or the Reclining Buddha in Bangkok, Pollunnuwada or Ajanta or the seated Buddha at Kamakura, or the Sravana Belagola of Mysore. I have to express my debt of gratitude to the famous Andhra artists and art critics like Doctor Satyanarayana, and the late Adivi Bapiraju, both poets and artists, for what I learnt from their critical appreciation in their writings, of our artistic heritage. Devijee, an artist, in her own right, and L V.B. Chowdari, an enthusiastic connoisseur and collector and Satyanarayana and Chitra, the artists, have been of great help in developing and sustaining my interest in appreciation of the glories of Indian artistic achievements. It was however Bapu and Indian housewife who have taught me to realise that real beauty resides and genuine pleasure emanates from the simple, clean and maidenly huts and houses of our peasants, especially in Kerala, Bengal, Andhra, Assam, studded as they are in the midst of umbrella-like coconut and Palmyra, smiling Banana, the flame of forest, the nobles-oblige bows of bamboo and ever-smiling morgosa or mango with the music of cuckoos, Bul-Buls, Papeeha and Myna.

I often wondered as to what it is that attracts successive generations of people to some of these places, hallowed by past history and keeps the later civilisations tethered to them. Take Mahenjadaro, Athens, Rome, Alexandria, Delhi, London, Paris, Warangal, Kanchi, Srikakulam. Why did successive empires come to build or rebuild their capitals in or near or around the same old ruins ? Why did ten or more cities come to be built around the ancient area of Indra Prastha and why do we even today hang around this sprawling graveyard of millenniums, which is now called Delhi ? Indeed, why do the savants and students yearn to go to Athens just to think of Socrates, Pericles, Plato and Aristotle and to Rome to visualise the guady and ghostly life of the boastful emperors and blood-thirsty audiences seated in those

collegiums ? Why have Indians been going to Kurukshetra for so many thousands of years only to think of the fratricidal destruction of the Kuru-Pandavas and offer their homage to those dead heroes and their own dead ? I have found no satisfying answer. But I have found great interest and inspiration in these and such other thoughts about the evanascent, ever fragrant, and smouldering, and never fully satisfied yearnings of millions of anxious seekers after the very essence, and ultimate aim of all human life in all its aspects. What is it that pleases the best of men ? Not merely strength, greatness, riches, power, pomp, lust, fame, following, longevity or even self-immolation. The noblest of them have risen above their passion for any or all these objectives and yearned for something that could help others to surmount their tribulations and achieve less of suffering and more of happiness and find their own happiness as forming a part of the general happiness of all. I have looked upon all these temples, churches, mosques, reading rooms, libraries, universities, etc., as just the reminders to all of us of that secret of success and happiness, the service of humanity and all living beings. In attracting more and more people towards this objective, Indian builders, artists, architects and sculptors have made a unique contribution all their own and every time I see any of these noble evidences of their work, I feel devotional towards them.

At one time, like so many others, I also used to wonder at the idea of Indian sculptors in providing so many hands or heads for the statues of so many of our deities. But as I grew to understand the various Bhangimas or poses of the dancers of the Bharata Natya, I understood that it was not an unnatural representation. One day, a Moslem friend of ours began to shake the light in front of our beautiful Nataraja statuettee presented to the Go Bhumi by the Stock sisters and draw our attention to the fact that at any one particular stage, only two out of the four hands could be seen, in the otherwise darkened room and either of the dance poses was as perfect as one could wish for. Recently I found a photograph in the international photographic Exhibition held in Delhi in 1957, in which more than twenty legs, in differept ballet-dance poses, of a famous ballerina, were so adroitly shown. Thus, my appreciation of these statuettes came to be heightened with the help of Christian and Moslem friends. I saw a unique bronze flying Apsara and a fascinating

Devi—were they clad in tight Nylons—in the home of a colleague who prides upon his lack of faith in God and he was as devoted to them as ignorant villagers to their idols. Why ? Who knows ?

"Nataraja" statuettes are of different poses. Each of them is a perfect work of art and beauty. The like of them could be seen, with a touch of imagination, in the display of Russian ballet by their best ballerinas. The very conception of the cosmic unity, vibration, energy and will-power and its complete independence of all our ordinary and morbid impulses of hatred and attachment, as displayed in that Nataraja is at once so scientific and breath-takingly imaginative. I had the pleasure of seeing the famous idols at Chidambara and Tanzore ; we have a fascinating statuette of Nataraja in "Go Bhumi" and two inspiring and soothing statuettes of Buddha, one in bronze, another in ivory, both from Burma and the bronze heads of Krishna and Rukmini and they lend a glamour all their own to our home.

As I had been going round our country and seeing these and so many more vestiges of our million-year-old civilisation, my faith in the teachings of Vedanta was deepening and my understanding of it was developing. The practice of Dharma, observance of truth, respect for life as such and love of service and faith in freedom and sacredness of all beings are more sacred than world's goods and grandeur, such is their essence. Most of the forts and palaces of the great Moghuls as well as the Indian Rajahs and Maharajahs have been reduced to dust. The riches of thousands of temples were looted and their glorious structures were levelled to earth. But the thoughts of God and divinity of man and the hopes of millions of toilers as were embedded in so many of these immortal works of engineers, architects, sculptors, painters and other Viswakarmas have defied the Vandalism of strings of conquerors, intolerant iconoclasts and vainglorious butterfly-like rulers and their courtesans and have come down the ages undimmed and undefiled with their message of the immutability of man's striving after beauty, truth and happiness. In this endeavour, India's record is one of the noblest, oldest and for evercontinuous and breathes of hope.

# 19

# *Tour Experiences*

I used to undertake all-round annual tour through the Andhra Districts between 1933-1967. I used to devote a week to each district. Generally I did not go to the same village more than twice within four years. I could reach four to ten villages in a day and my touring day began at 7 A.M. and lasted up to midnight ; sometimes up to 1 P.M. in the next morning. The meetings were often mass gatherings of several hundreds or thousands and most meetings used to be preceded by a procession over one or two miles in and outside a village and generally a meeting would last from one to three hours. I had to speak from half an hour to one hour. Right up to 1939, the presence and assistance of "mike" was not indispensable. I always managed to encourage local and regional or village leaders to learn to speak during these meetings. There were always welcome addresses, eulogising my services and those of my colleagues and the Kisan movement detailing the grievances and needs of local people and their avowed ideals. In all the processions, there were some musical parties, either voluntary or paid, with or without the horrible but locally indispensable brass bands and the enjoyable *sannayee* pantomime. I did find this life arduous. It was also exciting and exhilarating to be so constantly in the midst of such enthusiastic, passionate

and powerful throngs of people. It was agonising to think of people's sufferings, biting poverty, obvious helplessness and my own piteous powerlessness to succour them from their economic and social weakness. I looked upon every one of these meetings as platforms for adult education and I tried my best to impart as much useful knowledge of contemporary events as possible and tried to persuade them to develop their organisations.

Those meetings proved to be a source of strength, power and inspiration to the masses. I could see that by the time I visited an area, a village or group of villages, the people had gained much in their spiritual strength, mental stature and social self-confidence through the propaganda, local discussions and decisions to take part in my meeting that were taking place over 5 to 10 days previously. So they were grateful to me for having helped them to realise their own inner spiritual stamina and self-confidence. I was able to contact during those tours the intellectuals among peasants either unemployed or engaged in some kind of public work, and always succeeded in persuading most of them to join our movement. Every tour served the purpose of raising the tempo of our movement and the political consciousness of our peasants. It was this realisation that encouraged me to undertake the otherwise tiresome and costly annual tours.

From 1935 onwards, I began to tour in other parts of India. In spring 1935 I toured in the Punjab, reached Layalpur, Jullundur, Lahore, Amritsar and their rural environs and found that my ignorance of the Punjabi language was no bar to communication between myself and the Punjabi peasants. In that winter I toured in Tamilnad and Malabar and discovered that my name was already familiarised to them by the press, local Congress and Kisan workers as the champion of the peasants.

I was happy to be able to stay in the Lajpatrai Bhawan in Lahore for a few days and I could imbibe the inspiring atmosphere of learning and social work that prevailed among the members of the Servants of the People Society founded by the late Lala Lajpatrai ; notably the self-effacing social worker Sri Mohanlal. I discovered then that it was he who had reviewed so favourably my first English publication 'Economic Organisation of Indian Villages', 1926. He pointed out the good results of the Anti-

untouchability work of the Arya Samaj of which Lajpatrai was a great leader.

In 1936, I toured once again in the villages of Andhra, Tamilnad, Malabar, Karnatak and Punjab. I was able to contact the C.S.P. and Congress Leaders and several of those shy but sincere Kisan workers who were far down the ladder of leadership. I met the local Congress leaders of Bengal, Orissa and U.P. during the last months of 1935 and first months of 1936 and sought their co-operation in forming the All India Kisan Sammelan. The Faizpur Kisan Congress witnessed the great peasant march through Maharashtra, and I had the honour of welcoming those marchers and introducing them to Jawaharlaljee who was the Congress President. I said, "These Marchers came to the Congress from peasant and proletarian homes as Gangajee and Jamuna flow into the ocean and it is for the Congress to decide what social uplift and political strength could be gained for them. That is a challenge to you, the Congress President".

Once again in 1938, we organised a peasant march at Haripura in Gujarat and thus made dent in Sardar's fort, and Subash Babu welcomed our kisan marchers. I presided over the Tamilnad Kisan Conference in 1938 in Rajapalayam and Subash Babu sent a special message.

In 1937, 1938, 1939 tours the same experiences were repeated but I was able to reach other areas, namely Rajasthan, Hyderabad, Mysore, Orissa, East Bengal, Assam, Bihar, U.P. and Madhya Pradesh. The tour in Cawnpore District in 1937, when I was the president of the All India Kisan Congress, was specially noteworthy because Bharatidevijee too accompanied me and addressed a few largely-attended Kisan women's conferences. She was thus impressed with the potentialities of my tours in non-Andhra areas also and ever since has agreed to spare much of our resources and time for these tours. It was during this tour that peasants began to call me, what was to become my popular image among Kisans, the Kisan Rashtrapati and the Father of the Kisan movement.

Srimati Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, the famous heroine of the Bombay struggle of 1930, invited me to tour in South Kanara in 1938. She was in Andhra in 1933 when we organised the first peasant March and appreciated my new methods of mass organisa-

tion. We toured together for five days. Everywhere she introduced me as the best champion of Kisans. She placed all her great influence at the disposal of the Kisan movement. Ever since she had remained a good and loyal friend of the Kisan and Kalakar movements and of myself. It was raining hard during that tour. The Karnataka landscape is more beautiful during rains. We had the darshan of the famous monolith, Gomateswara. How beautiful and grand it was! I had to wait till my 1957 Bangaloré visit to have the darshan of the bigger monolith at Sravanabelagola, one of the wonders of the world of religious architecture and Devijee also ascended that difficult hill and had Lord Mahavira's darshan. Both these statues are so beautiful and inspiring. They look so fresh in their stony but ever-live skin and muscle and so divine in their contemplated compassion.

The Tamilian Kisans had a peculiarly disciplined way of gathering together and presenting their welcome addresses and garlands during their meetings. The leaders of each village would go to the rostrum in a solemn but enthusiastic manner, as if they were racing to reach their military target and stand to attention, obtain my greeting, garland me and then withdraw in equally solemn and disciplined manner. Even during the meetings, they used to maintain silence, with deep attention to the speeches and conduct the meeting in a religiously solemn manner. I found that this is a general characteristic of Tamilian masses. Even in all our recent tours (1959-66) Rajajee and myself were greeted in such a solemn, disciplined and enthusiastic manner by tens of thousands.

The Punjabi Sikhs and Jats of Jullundur and Rohtak districts used to present an inspiring spectacle of arrayed turbans, flowing beards, red and golden visages and eyes alight with faith. To be hailed as their leader, as Jathedar N. Nagoke used to do and to be upheld as their philosopher gave me immense self-confidence and renewed my faith in my own cause. Many of those Kisan leaders were good enough to meet me again in recent tours of mine in 1959-65 and assured me of their whole-hearted support in my present campaign for Swatantra Kisans. How happy they felt when they found Rajajee giving me so much support ; saying that "I am Viswa Mitra training and tuning your Ranga, just as Ramachandra was trained".

The Kisans of Bengal were very much oppressed by the landlords. Their poverty was writ large on their slender physique and poor clothes. Their huts, built with a quaint beauty, like that of the narrow thatched houses of Kerala peasants, were so rickety. As in Kerala, so in Bengal the villages were surrounded by sylvan beauty of the coconut, banana and paddy. The proceedings of our Kisan conferences in Bengal were enlivened by the highly emotional overtones of the songs, sung in such a swinging fashion. Who can rival in the whole of India, the magical and motherly welcome that Bengali housewives give, through the graceful turn of their veil and large twinkling eyes ?

The Maharashtra Kisans resemble those of our Rayalaseema, in their medium height, gaunt features, tightly twisted dhoties and brief upper cloths. When they march, they are like Tamilians. Whenever they shouted the slogans, they made me think of how the phalanxes of Shivaji must have thundered as they fell upon the Mughal imperial forces. They had to war more with the unkind weather than with landlords. Their principal troubles were the high rates of interest charged by money-lenders and too high land revenue.

That is how I used to justify to Gandhijee my growing insistence, as I toured repeatedly in these States, upon placing an inspiring ideal before them. These kisans whose ancestors fought against Alexander, the Mohammedan and Mughal invaders and who sustained the independence of India for centuries and who rallied to the call to arms, given by leaders like Shivajee, Rana Pratap, Ranjit Singh in the North and Kakateeya and Vijayanagar rulers and Nayaks of South would not be content to see that Swaraj India goes under the sway of sahukars, priests, Civil servants and professionals.

What was that ideal to be ? Till 1935 I reached up to the demand for a "Kisan Mazdoor Raj." I had to wait for another ten years before I could visualise and formulate the ideal of Democratic Kisan Mazdoor, Kalakar, Buddijeevi Raj.

Major sections of Kisans of Andhra, Maharashtra, Karnatka, Punjab and Tamilnad were the absolute owners of their holdings. For centuries, they enjoyed the status of being peasant proprietors. Their troubles arose out of non-availability and consequent costliness of credit, high land revenue and lack of irrigation

facilities. They were highly self-respecting and martial in their activities and family traditions. They were moved more by the ideal of Swaraj and the demand for their proper role in it than by any class-wise economic demand.

My meetings and speeches during these tours were not merely 'get-together' processions and agitational demonstrations. I used to take particular care to speak in simple figures of speech and popular terms about the aims and objects of the Kisan and Kalakar movements, the role of peasants in the national movement, the needs of peasants and artisans and their demands and also the place of their movement in the larger movement of national freedom. I used to persuade the other speakers also to pack their speeches more with facts and analysis of the contemporary national and international forces and events than with mere appeals to their passions, so that, by the time our meetings were over, the audience would gain some knowledge and a few facts to remember and think about. Thus, I turned my tours into veritable campaigns of adult education on political, economic and social issues.

This account of my pre-war tours comes fittingly to a close with the never to be forgotten three weeks' tour of Burma in 1939, in the company of Srimati Bharatidevi. This tour, more than any other, impressed her fully and made her feel confident of my ability to do good service in such tours in any country in the world. We enjoyed our visits to the beautiful and impressive pagodas in Rangoon, Pegu, and Molmein. Their flight of steps, golden canopies, sky-high sikhars and their sweet images of compassionate. yogic Buddhas vied with Roman Churches in their severity, grandeur and beauty. What a happy contrast were those Buddhist monks to our impecunious pandas.

Our tour in Burma was sponsored by the Do Bama organisation of the Thakins and the Burma Indian Association. We were taken to most of the important areas, including the oil-fields, and we reached both villages and towns. Our passages on the river Irrawaddy were enjoyable and our road-journeys up and down the upper Burma were indeed stimulating. Everywhere our English speeches had to be translated into Hindi and Burmese, and yet the thousands of people who gathered seemed to be quite happy

with that time-consuming experience. My speeches and appeals to the Burmese to rise against imperialism and my analysis of the forces of economic exploitation of Burma by imperialism made the Rangoon Daily Gazette fulminate repeatedly against me and call upon the Government to arrest me. But it was highly appreciative of the dignity and quiet eloquence of Devijee, when it referred to her speeches.

We were the guests of the late Dr. Thein Maung, formerly my colleague in the Central Assembly and also an Ex-Minister, and his wife and daughter were charming to Devijee. Dr. Ba Maw, the then most popular English speaker and Chief Minister, presided over one of the stormy meetings that I addressed in Rangoon and paid glowing tributes to my work in that Burmese tour, and that further infuriated the British Press. Mr. Rauf, who has been Swaraj India's ambassador in Japan and Canada, then a leading lawyer in Rangoon, presided over another overcrowded gathering. While introducing me to the audience he congratulated India upon possessing not only the topmost leaders like Mahatmajee, Jawaharlal and Subash Babu but also such a galaxy of able, responsible and powerful leaders of national eminence. I presided over the All Burma Labour Conference. It formulated the charter of Minimum Demands and established a progressive and flexible socio-economic basis for cooperation between Indian and Burmese Labour—The Burmese Government as well as the Burmese Press congratulated me on that statesmanlike achievement.

Devijee's participation in that prolonged but inspiring tour, packed as it was with such exciting events and mass gatherings and press conferences, proved to be of great use to her during the subsequent three most fearful years when she had to shoulder the responsibility of leading both the Andhra Kisan Congress and All India Kisan Congress and protect the interests of Kisans both against British tyranny of war-time controls and repression and communist manoeuvres to dominate the Kisans and Kisan Congress.

These hectic but well-planned tours roused the masses, kindled in them a new passion for self-realisation and self-improvement. Everywhere, as they looked up to me as their

topmost national leader, I turned round and assured them that my parents were like them : peasants, but self-respecting descendants of ancient peasant warriors of India. I exhorted them to feel confident that all their youths and children could not only do as much as I had done, but could attain real political power in our society. Through these tours and through such exhortations both Devijee and myself reinforced the powerful and soul-uplifting 40-year-long propaganda and political educational work carried on by Gandhijee. Thus those tours were as great a contribution to the rural masses and Kisans as the books I have written and the Parliamentary work I have carried on since 1934.

## 'Kisan Marches' Everywhere

The other weapon that I had fashioned and developed into a potent political force ; the "Peasant March" came to be utilised on a large scale by Swami Sahajanand in Bihar and other kisan congressites of U. P. during 1938. In one of them, more than 100,000 took part in Patna and in another, Sri Bishambar, P. Tripathi of Unnao led a March of nearly 100 thousand peasants to Lucknow. The Haripura Kisan March brought home to Sardar Patel that Kisans of Gujarat were also class-conscious besides being sincere Congressmen. It is my good fortune to have won over one of the colleagues of the Sardar in the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928, namely, Shri Khushalbhai Patel and he is now one of the stalwarts of the Swatantra and Kisan movements of Gujarat. The Congress High Command came to be very much perturbed by these Marches and tried in vain to discourage them and decided in the end to pay special attention to the principal demands voiced by our Marches.

## 1,000-mile-long Kisan March

It was in continuation of that movement that we decided upon leading the peasants in their March of over 1,000 miles from Ichchapur to Madras, taking the torch of awakening, agitation and public education through the largest number of villages from one end of Andhra to another. In every district, the Local Kisan Congress organised feeder 'Marches', covering those areas which could not be touched by the principal 'March' and meeting the

main body of Marchers at a few principal places for special demonstrations. I inaugurated this March at Ichchapur in 1938 and Bharatidevi and myself met them at a few centres. The late K.S N. Murti, the President of the Andhra Kisan Congress was with the Marchers throughout that period. I prepared a small pamphlet, containing the principal needs, grievances and demands of peasants of all Districts, that were conveyed to the Marchers, and it was presented to the Chief Minister Sri Rajagopalachari. My brothers G. L. Narayana, Appayya, N. V. Subbayya, Subbayya, Nagaiah and several Kisan graduates of the institute, notably G. Latchanna, Shyam Sunder Rao, K. Obulu Reddi, D. S. Reddi, Mahánanda, Gorrepati, came into great prominence during that March. Settipalli's revolutionary songs, sung by Appa Rao, N. V. Subbayya and Timma Reddi inspired the Marchers and the public.

It was soon after that my Oxford friend and colleague on the International Labour Group of Oxford 1922-26, Miss Dinah Stock, M.A., (Oxon), came to India by way of U.S.S.R., and China and spent about a month, studying the Kisan movement at close quarters. She was our guest at Nidubrolu and the Peasant Institute and visited a number of villages in the company of Devijee. I took her to Mahtma Gandhi at Sevagram. She accompanied me during my Punjab tour and Master Kabuli Singh and Mr. and Mrs. B.P.L Bedi of Lahore were impressed with her sincerity and genuine anti-imperialistic support for India's cause for freedom. She was able to write later on, in the light of her studies and tour in India, an appreciative chapter on "Peasant Marches" for my book "Kisan Hand Book". Eighteen years later she was good enough to write a small brochure, in appreciation of my 30 years' of service for peasants. Between 1948-1965, she was in India and Pakistan and worked as Professor of English in Calcutta, Dacca, Rajasthan Universities and gave us much moral support.

## Adult Education Movement

I was one of the founders of the Indian Adult Education Society in 1936, in Delhi at the first All India Conference on Adult Education. I was then elected one of the Secretaries and later as a Vice-President and ever since I have been associated with that society.

I had been associated with adult education, without realising its significance, ever since I developed an active interest in education, that is, since 1914. I drew much inspiration from the Andhra Library Movement of the 1916-20 period when Sri Ayyanki Venkata Rammanayya was making it a dynamic and popular movement and I did my best to start Rural Libraries in all our neighbouring villages. At Oxford in 1920-26 I was, actively associated with the Workers Educational Association, the Adult Education Society, and the Labour colleges. So, I did my best on my return from England to strengthen the Rural Library Movement of Andhra, the Night Schools, the Anti-illiteracy campaigns and other Adult Education Efforts which were then gaining momentum, thanks to the pent-up nationalist urges of the educated and the pull of the national freedom movement.

It was during that period of 1926-39 that the YMCA, student and youth Movements played an important role in developing this adult educati on wing of the general social work. While the YMCA confined itself to the social aspect of adult education, the student and youth movements saw its political possibilities also, and so devoted much of their resources to the organisation of village and town libraries and reading rooms, Study Circles and anti-illiteracy centres. When I was in Madras College and even after I had become a wholetime public worker, I devoted much of my time to the development of the different aspects of this movement. I could see that if we meant to help the socially depressed, we must not only make them all literate, but also provide means to make them truly educated.

It was because of that urge that many of us, including myself and Sri. A.K. Rao, later the speaker of Andhra Assembly, grew so keen on writing authoritative and original standard works in our own language, Andhra and the late Sanivarapu Subbarao offered to organise a publishing concern. I wrote more than twelve books while in Vellore Jail in 1931-32 and again 1943-44 but only four of them, (*i*) Harijan Nayak, (*ii*) Modern Political Institutions, (*iii*) Kisans and Communists (*iv*) Pakistan, were published. Later on, thanks to the initiative of Sri P. Nagabhushanam, the Andhra Library Associations also published a number of excellent books by the late G. Jogaraju, a retired

Agricultural Officer, on various aspects of scientific agriculture and horticulture. The late Sreeramulu wrote more than 10 books on cattle and Ayurvedic Veterinary Science. My friend and the great protagonist of Hindi, Shri M. Satyanarayana, M. P., has so far published twelve volumes of the Andhra Encyclopedia—a unique achievement for Telugu. Shri M. Jagganna Sastri of Tanuku has published more than 20 books, including some translations on various political issues for the benefit of rural people. My own books, (1) Revolutionary Peasants and (2) Peasant and Cooperative Farming, and Rajajee's writings on "Swatantra Movement" and "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata" were also translated into Telugu by Shri Vijayaraj Kumar. In a few cities, efforts had been made since 1930 to organise a series of lectures on public questions and to invite eminent men to speak. One such well-known institution is the "Spring Lectures" of Poona and another, the "Sahitya Academy" of Vetapalem. I was invited to speak under the Poona foundation in 1939 and at Vetapalem in 1938 and 1957. It was indeed an honour.

This movement was able to win in Andhra the support of a large number of Congressmen up to 1945, owing to the organising ability of Sri P. Nagabhushanam who has been rendering such devoted service to this cause. But it did not receive any official support, either during the Congress ministerial period or after it. But in Mysore it fared better ; that Government took kindly interest in it and gave liberal grants to the State Adult Education Society and welcomed the participation of its teachers in the movement. So when I went to Bangalore and Mysore in 1945, I found to my pleasant surprise that there were already an appreciable number of useful and popular publications from the society, which were specially intended to benefit the adults who were gaining their literacy in the Adult Education Centres.

I was therefore keen on establishing a liaison between the Madras Government and the Andhra, Tamilnad and other South Indian Adult Education Societies. I succeeded in 1946 in persuading the Education Minister Sri Avinashilingam Chettiar, my erstwhile collegue in the Central Legislature, to invite the cooperation of Sri G. Harisarvothama Rao, the veteran Andhra patriot and the doyen of the Adult Education Movement of South India. Thus began the new development of this movement, in close cooperation with the South Indian States' Governments, through

the flow of their funds, and the services of their teachers in the growing number of night schools, libraries, publications, etc. When I was invited in 1954 to preside over the South Indian Adult Education Conference, held in Tirupati, I was pleased to see how the movement, which a few of us had nurtured twenty years earlier with a few hundreds of rupees, had acquired such satisfactory proportions with so many welcome branches of activity.

This great and most essential movement has failed to fulfil even one per cent of the needs of our nation. Illiteracy is still stalking the land and the wastage of literacy of the few literates is continuing apace. Why has India, even during the past seventeen years of Independence, failed to achieve even a part of what Soviet Russia achieved during her first peaceful decade and what Communist China too has achieved ? Why is it that this movement is not being supported by as many students and youths and as enthusiastically as before 1947 ? Certainly the State Governments are spending large sums in financing in part the activities of the various institutions embraced by it. The former Madras Government had a 'Library Act' by 1946. A number of public libraries are being organised, with the aid of funds provided in accordance with that Act and thus quite a number of village panchayat libraries are becoming independent of local subscriptions. Our ancient village Library has thus been taken over by this Authority. The NBS Centres are also trying to stimulate popular interest in the organisation and running of night schools and libraries. Yet, the problem of illiteracy continues to be staggering ! Why ? The teachers from whom the Government expects so much contribution by way of extra-hours of work in night schools and adult education centres are admittedly the poorest paid. In spite of all this huge expenditures under the 3 plans, their salaries are woefully low and all they can do is to eke out extra income by offering private tuition, if any asked for it, so as to maintain themselves. So what more contribution can be expected of them. Unfortunately the public spirited students and youths, who used to feel that they had no chance of employment during the British regime, are now-a-days looking out for paid work with the growing social departments of the Swaraj Government and are not eager to work as volunteers. Moreover, too many of the national leaders are too

much engrossed with power politics and ministerial activities to think it worth their while to win the support of students and youths for this most essential but neglected movement.

I have continued to devote as much time as in the past to the spread and support of this movement. The Indian Peasant Institute and its branches, the famous library "Saraswati Niketan," of Vetapalem and the Rural Library Association of Andhra have claimed my affection and support. We have recently been devoting much time to the resuscitation in our villages of ancient or traditional institutions like study circles, public recitations of the ancient and modern standard literary master-pieces, etc.

It was to place this movement on a permanent footing that the late Sri S. Subbarao. Garimella Satyanarayana and Sri Bh. Satyanaryana, and myself founded the Andhra Adult Education Society in 1934. It worked well till 1947, that is, till the death of Sri S. Subbarao. As generally happens all over the world, and more so in India, once the principal architect of an association dies or retires, the organisation loses its vitality. In England, the W.E.A. progressed step by step even after Dr. Mansfield and its other founders died. But our experience has not been so fortunate. I wanted to bring this movement to the notice of all the educated all over India and so I wrote the books "All India Adult Education Movement" and the special plan for "Adult Education for South India" and Sri Subbarao published them in English. They had splendid press reviews and gained many supporters for the movement, not only in India but also in Burma, Malaya and Ceylon. Many State Governments distributed copies of them among their educational officers. Mrs. Ranga felt gratified that her labours and mine were not in vain, when she was felicitated in 1939 by Burmese educationalist for our work in this direction, and when they asked for our autographs on their copies of my book in the Rangoon and Molmein public libraries. I received much personal satisfaction, when the Government of India decided to help the Andhra University to open its "Extension Lectures Course" in my own village in 1954, and the lectures were delivered in the very Rama Needu Vidyalaya where thousands of our Kisan and Kalakar youths have received their adult education in politics and economics ever since 1934. I had

the honour of inaugurating that Extension Course. I am happy to be cooperating with UNESCO in its endeavours to develop this movement in India and S.E. Asia.

## Publications

I wrote some of my important books in English about the Kisan movement during that five-year period (1936-40). Through the initiative of Devijee, I started publishing the Telugu Weekly "Vahini" from Madras in 1936. "Modern Indian Peasant", embodying some of my Assembly speeches and a few studies including the per capita income of agriculturists, was published in 1936, the "Kisan Speaks" which included my plans for organising anti-illiteracy and anti-corruption campaigns and panchayat, local development works etc. in 1938. The "History of the Kisan Movement", "Congress and Kisans" and "Kisan Hand Book" were all published in 1938. I published both in English and Telugu, an "In Memorium Volume" about the gifted Kisan poet-revolutionary, the late Settipalli in 1939. Sri P. Nageswarao, editor of the Vahini, edited all these publications and saw them through the press. I translated the "Peasant Songs" with Dinah Stock's introduction and they were published in "Contemporary India". Dr. Butler of the International Labour Office (ILO) Dr. Gilbert Slater of Oxford University and the Indian Press welcomed them as constructive contribution to the solution of the problems of the Indian masses. Sri S.K.D. Palliwal, the gifted editor of the Hindi Daily of Agra, "Sainik", published the "Kisan Special" under my editorship in 1938. All these books and supplements popularised the ideals of the peasant movement. The case of the zamindari peasants for the abolition of zamindari landlordism was presented in the most irrefutable manner in my English book "Economic Conditions of Zamindari Ryots (1934). I contributed annual running accounts about the peasant movement to the "Indian Annual Recorder". On their invitation I contributed two authoritative articles to the "Manchester Guardian" in 1936 and to the American 'Asia' Magazine in 1938 and thus brought our movement to the notice of England and U S.A. My English books "Outlines of National Revolution" and "Kisan and Communists" were translated into Telugu and published in 1946. Through them, I tried to warn peasants and nationalists against the machinations of Communists by giving detailed information about the anti-national and anti-peasant thoughts, theories and activities of Communists in Soviet Russia and elsewhere.

# 20

# *Communion with Some Indian Scientists*

Dr. Bhabha met us, in the Consultative Committee of M.Ps. in 1957, to axplain how the first Atomic Electrical Power Plant would be established in a few years at Ahmedabad, and how it would produce and supply power to that city on more or less economic terms. As he was doling out facts and figures with such facility to indicate how it would be economical for that city to have atomic power because it would cost her more to haul up coal all the way from Jharia Coalfields, etc., in Bihar I wondered at his aptitude for business also.

It was in 1955 that I saw in Pt. Nehru's house an attractive and feeling drawing of the late Sarojini Naidu ; one day before the departure of our Parliamentary Delegation to U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia. I asked Shrimati Indira, Jawaharlaljee's daughter, as to who drew it. She told me that Dr. Bhabha did it. When I expressed surprise at that, she added, "don't you know, he is a wonderful player on the Veena also. He was here only a few days back. Oh, he is very versatile". I was therefore specially happy to find him in the same plane on our journey from Bombay to Cairo. At the Cairo airport, we had a pleasant chat on various things. What a handsome person he was ! Even that slight tremor on one side of his face provided an interesting feature to his personality. The world of science suffered a grievous loss when he died in an aircrash.

The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research was developed into two Departments, one for Atomic Research and another for Scientific Research. The first head of that combined department was the late Dr. Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, the distinguished scientist of the pre-partition Punjab. He was a dynamo, as it were and so full of drive and determined action. He helped Swaraj India to fulfil her plan of establishing the great chain of Central Research Institutes. I had the honour of being a member of the Planning Committee for the Electro-Chemical Research Institute at Karaikudi. He had the genius of first exciting the romantic fancy, later, business interest and lastly scientific fervour of the late Dr. Alagappa Chettiar to become the founder of that Institute and persuading him to endow Rs. twenty lakhs and hundreds of acres of land. Thereafter he gave no respite to that otherwise too busy and harassed businessman, until the Institute came to be firmly established in the great new building at Karaikudi. He could be merciless and business-like in getting done the promised national work even from such benefactors like Dr. Alagappa, without in any way displaying any sense of gratitude.

Many a distinguished scientist used to wonder at the success he made as an administrator and builder in the Delhi Secretariat, because they felt that he was no greater than any of them, as a scientist. I could not form any opinion about his stature as a scientist. But I heard one of his lectures on India's place in the new elements and minerals and I found that he could explain some obtuse questions so well that laymen like me could have the satisfaction that they were understanding such things. He was such a fine speaker.

Much greater speaker and more fascinating, equally vivacious personality is that of Dr. C. V. Raman. I first met him in the Pachiappa's College in 1928 when I had to introduce him to our students' union, as one of the greatest Indians who achieved fame through the discovery of the Raman Effect. I confess I did not understand anything about that Raman Effect. Anyhow we seem to be willing nowadays to accept as gospel truth whatever is said to be established as Scientific discovery. We seem to bow before these new scriptures of science, especially in the light of the achievements of the Atom. I was struck with his grand stature, his torrential eloquence and his attractive turban on that well-shaped big head.

We travelled together for a whole day from Bombay to Madras, sometime in 1950. We both have grown older, himself as a scientist and myself as a Parliamentarian and Congressman since that earlier Pachiappas meeting. He kept me on a difficult track to follow the sequence of the varied, interesting and volatile thoughts that he flooded me with through his fascinating talks. I was carried away by his attractive voice. His occasional attempts to keep the carriage doors shut, as if he was afraid of someone falling off, reminded me that he was also an ordinary mortal with the usual idiosyncrasies. He displayed a marvellous capacity to make me feel that I was understanding what he was explaining about the Raman Effect and also other scientific truths like the Einstein's discovery of Relativity. I knew that if I had been asked by someone else to say what I had understood, I would not be able to explain but I felt at that moment that I understood those truths, so great was his capacity to make abstract truths appear so easily intelligible. By the way, his son was in jail with us because of his communist activities. He had the peculiarities of the father but not a touch of his genius.

Like most scientists or other experts, he had his bundle of complaints against his fellow scientists and like a true Indian, he made no secret of it. One great scientist—Ramanujam, the Mathematician—was alone known not to have complained about anyone. His shining example inspired us all when we were in our teens.

I was impressed with the persistent efforts of the late Muthuranga Mudaliar, the leader of Tamilnad, to draw the attention of Parliament that the Government of India was being partial in not according the requisite full recognition and financial support to Dr. Raman's Institute at Bangalore. So I joined hands with Mudaliar and successfully pressed the Government to accord him the maximum possible assistance. We both felt much gratification with that success in rendering honour to that great scientist.

India has been grateful to the Tatas for having donated so liberally to the Bangalore Institute of Science and thus led the way for the later chain of National Institutes.

I met Dr. M.S. Krishnan, the Director of National Physical Laboratory at Delhi, during one of the meetings of the Karaikude

Institute. I found him to be a Sanskrit Scholar. But he is so much unlike Dr. Raman. While Raman is a great Orator, Krishnan is comparatively a silent scientist. He had distinguished himself, in typical fashion of the Indian Chela of Upanishadic age, by demonstrating the scientific excellence and importance of his Guru's discovery, *i.e.*, Raman Effect.

In the field of Leather Research, take Seshachalam, Research graduate of Leeds and his colleague, Sivayya, both good friends from 1921 onwards, made notable contributions and manufacture of chrome leather is their achievement. Recently Dr. Nayudamma, the son of a Kisan of Yelavarru, near NIDUBROLU, has risen to be the Director of the National Leather Research Institute at Madras at the early age of 35 and has been acclaimed as the most enthusiastic and successful researcher and contributor to the modernisation of India's leather industry. The special thing about these three scientists is that they hail from rural India and kisan families.

I met in Delhi the Andhra Scientist, Swami Raju, who had become at first a Vedantic Swami, taken Sanyasin order and studied the scientific truths embedded in Upanishads and then fascinated the pre-war German scientists by his theses and discourses. He rose to be the Deputy Director of the National Physical Laboratory. But I did not know exactly what discoveries he made or what he demonstrated. I was content to admire him, because, every great votary of science demands our respect.

Another Andhra Scientist, the late Sri Yallapragada Subbarao, also contributed his share to the discovery of some of the antibiotics or pencillin and the news of his achievements in American laboratory lifted up our spirits during our war-time jail life. One of my colleagues in the Pachiappa's college, Dr. Kamesam was a student of Dr. Raman and took his D. Sc. for his theses. He became, in subsequent years, professor of physics in the Usmania University. The scientific work carried on by another colleague, K. Suryanayana, professor of Chemistry, about the origins and significance of Mohenjodaro and Harappa archaeological finds interested me. He sought to prove in an elaborate thesis—so big as to prove too costly to be printed by him—that the people of that civilisation were worshippers of Lord

Shiva and were also the ancestors of the Panch-Dravidas, notably the Andhras of the Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra and it was from their language that the later South Indian languages arose.

Unfortunately we do not have, in our Indian languages, adequate scientific literature. A few scientists of the first two decades of this century tried their best to write good enough books in Telugu. Those books proved to be popular and useful and helped youth of my generation to get some elementary idea of modern sciences. But so few of our distinguished scientists bothered to write any book in our languages. Only one scientist of some repute, namely, K. Kondayya, a lecturer of the Benares Hindu University, devoted much time and money to edit in Telugu, an excellent Journal on science. He published a number of books also of great value. An agronomist, the late Jogiraju wrote a few books in Telugu on Agricultural Science. Only recently, brief Encyclopaedias of Science have come to be published in Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Hindi. How I wish we had a few such brilliant novelists like H. G. Wells to write such novels as his "War of the Worlds". I must record my admiration of Burmese Premier Nu and Burmese people who received in great ceremony and devotion the arrival of the first edition of their Encyclopaedia printed and imported from England. That devotion is so much like India's worship of the goddess Saraswati but alas, Swaraj India has yet to recapture that fervour for learning and science. And how soon would India be able to pay proper salaries, allowances and provide facilities for research for her scientists, engineers and other technical "know how" and relieve them of all worldly cares as Soviet Russia does. One of the fortunate things that happened since the advent of Swaraj was the renewed interest taken by Pt. Jawaharlal in scientific Research and Scientists. He had been giving great impetus to the development of scientific researeh. I have gained great personal satisfaction through my friendship with the great Andhra Engineer, Dr. K. L. Rao, who is acclaimed as one of the few world's authorities on Flood Control and Irrigation and with the other great Engineer, Dr. Khosla, the Vice-Chancellor of the Roorkee University of Engineering. I am particularly glad to say that while I am unable to understand the nature and significance of the discoveries and contributions made by these other scientists who are carrying on their Fundamental Researches, I am able to appreciate both the significance and

immediate utility of the achievements of these two great engineering experts. For instance, the Nagarjuna Sagar, which bids fair to bring irrigation to more than three million acres of land in the famine zone of five Districts of Andhra, is the special contribution made by these two great engineers by their demonstration of its practicability. Swaraj India has achieved the great engineering projects of Tungabhadra and Bhawani, Hirakud and Damodar Valley and Bhakra-Nangal and Chambal and many other projects like the Kosi Flood control which are in the earlier stages of development.

True to the traditions of the early scientists, Dr. B. V. Nath who had studied only up to Intermediate examination achieved distinction as a chemist, doing research on Soils, first at the Pusa Institute in Bihar and later at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute at Delhi. He was thus unique in having risen to that eminent place of being a Director of the National Research Institute without obtaining any of the conventional degrees. He proved to be an able administrator as well as an eloquent speaker and scientist. He is matched only by Sri V. P. Menon who had achieved equal distinction in the Central Administration, without ever having taken a degree but starting his career in the same way from clerical stage. Both were my good friends, one because of my interest in agriculture and the other because of my close association with Sardar Patel, who guided him in his successful efforts in merging all the 600 and odd states in Swaraj India.

So Swaraj India has all enthusiasm for scientific reseach and all praise for scientists. A larger percentage of the educated people in India than elsewhere, attempt to understand the latest scientific discoveries and experiments carried on all over the world especially ever since the advent of Sputnic Era. This interest has been a traditional feature of Indian intellectuals, but it was fanned by the sudden emergence of such modern scientists like Ramanujam, J. C. Bose, whose centenary was celebrated a few years ago and P.C. Ray, Meghanatha Saha, and Raman.

Indian Dailies in English and local languages also give good and detailed reports of the discourses of scientists and thus contribute to the spread of news about science and scientists. Dr. Haldane's lectures are the latest contribution to India's awareness of science.

Yet we cannot say that India has learnt how to treat her scientists either liberally or considerately, not to speak of displaying reverence, in the face of the tragic suicide of Dr. Joseph, an agricultural scientist whose pleas for higher salary and legitimate promotion were so woefully neglected. Time and again complaints come to us in Parliament as to how ministers and administrative heads interfere so annoyingly in the management, promotion, salaries and studies of the growing ranks of researchers in our thirty National Research Institutes and more university science faculties.

I have been reading off and on about the achievements of the Curies of the Radium fame and Dr. Einstein. It is in keeping with the scientific traditions of India that Dr. Narlikar, who is in his thirties, should have achieved such fame as Ramanujam and should have reconciled the theories of Newton and Einstein. I have felt whether rightly or wrongly the Einstein formula, that matter is equal to energy and *vice versa*, was one of the many things which were divined by the Indian scientists of the Upanishadic era, and which enabled them to develop the conviction that there is nothing in the world which does not contain a particle of life. The Jains' faith in non-violence arose from that conviction. J. C. Bose started his experiments to prove the existence of feelings, etc., in vegetation because of that faith. Mahatma Gandhi's whole attitude to life was based on that faith. Hence my own conviction that the thousands of Saints and Sanyasins do tapas continually in the Himalayas, Vindhyachala or Kerala forests and valleys or in their homes are also after the same scientific truth about the "be all and end all" of this universe as Einstein, etc.

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# *Gandhijee and United Front Era*

During that period of the United Front (1936-40) my relations with Gandhijee not only remained as cordial as before but reached a higher degree of intimacy and understanding. He knew that I stood by him and his ideology when Jaiprakashjee assailed it vigorously in his book "Why Socialism". When Swami Sahajanand the President was carrying on his ideological attack upon the main political tenets of non-violence in its application to Kisan struggles, I refused to support Swamijee though I was then the General Secretary of the All India Kisan Congress, because I was convinced that peasants' cause could be promoted only if one steered clear of violence. I was told later on how my correspondence with Swamijee, in which I expressed my confidence in Gandhijee in unequivocal terms, was tapped by the then Congress Ministry and it informed Gandhijee about our internal discussions. When the need arose for my support to the Bihar Kisans' attempts to defend themselves against the violence of zamindars, I hastened to defend their right to carry their 'dandas' or 'sticks' which they use to drive cattle. The Times of India, which was then a supporter of the British, had observed that "Ranga too defends the Kisan's right to carry the danda, with less acerbity but with equal firmness" like Swamijee. Gandhijee could see the justice of my plea and immediately changed the tone of his attack on Swamijee.

The Congress ministries came into conflict with the Kisan Congress on many an occasion and Gandhijee, who was supporting the ministries, found that the Kisan Congress was too obstructive. On the other hand, we were feeling very unhappy at the slow pace at which the Congress ministries were moving in providing relief to our peasant masses. For instance, large numbers of peasants were being evicted by zamindars from their holdings, especially in U.P., Bihar and Andhra, for fear that anti-Zamindari legislation might come to confer upon them the ownership of land. Our plea that such large-scale evictions should be banned fell on deaf ears. We wanted definite steps to be taken to abolish the Zamindari system. But the ministries were content with temporary measures, such as the passing of halting legislation in U.P. and Bihar, extending the scope of protection for tenancy, reducing rents to some extent, appointing the Enquiry Committee in Madras and introducing Bills in Bombay. We were impatient to obtain protection for peasants against the unbearable burdens of agricultural indebtedness and asked for the declaration of a moratorium against the collection of debts. Rajajee, the then Madras Prime Minister, gave a bold lead in declaring the moratorium but was obliged to withdraw it soon. His solution of bringing down the total burden of debts to no more than twice as much as the original debt (the principle known as Damdupat) proved to be very useful and effective. On this front, the Kisan Congress was able to feel much satisfaction. It could not however get the tax-burdens reduced to any substantial extent. On the whole the Congress ministries relieved the sufferings of peasants to a noticeable degree, and so I was able to give them my moral support on behalf of the A.I.K.C., despite the growing opposition of the Political United Front, and this naturally brought me into conflict with the C.P.I. and also Swamijee, who was gradually moving in their direction.

Gandhijee used to insist that I should go to him at least once in every six months, especially to discuss the Kisan and other questions ; that is, apart from my usual meetings with him whenever the A.I.C.C. met. Once I could not go to him for even seven months. So when I rushed to his railway carriage at Delhi to have his darshan, I thought he taunted me for the delay, even while smiling so happily. I found out later that he was observing silence. So much were our minds in tune with each other. I

hastened to Sevagram soon after and on that occasion Dinah Stock also accompanied me. Then we had a heart to heart talk about the implications and dangers of the United Front, on the political, kisan and labour fronts. But he warned me that unless we kept the core of our mass organisations moored firmly to the satyagrahic, non-violent patriotic convictions of our national cause, we would be in danger of losing our very soul.

On the crucial occasion in 1938 when he took over, for final disposal, the file against me from the Working Committee, accusing me of inciting Kisans to violence against a particular Zamindar in Krishna District, he asked me if the main facts of the complaint were correct. I said, "Yes". Then he asked me : "How do you justify your stand ?" I told him that it was the Zamindar who had indulged in violence against peasants and their families and I had only appealed to the peasants to be bold enough not to allow the repetition of such indignity. He burst out laughing and said : "That is Ranga all over. He cannot be untrue to his peasants". Then he went on to warn me : "That is not Congress type of non-violence." I answered : "In that case, our Kisans will take centuries to learn to practise it in the Congress fashion." He waved his finger at me with so much of affection. Subash Babu, who was present during that one hour's discussion, admired my courage and truthfulness. He no longer wondered why I had gained Gandhijee's confidence and love.

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# *Devijee's Services During 1940-44 and Fight Against Imperialists and Communists*

While I had some consolations when in jails, Devijee had to grapple with too many troubles outside the jail.

For instance, I was able to conduct classes, almost like university extension courses, for several months for well over 300 experienced, seasoned patriotic fighters for freedom, who were all my fellow-detenues in Tanzore Jail in 1944 and convey to them not only the substance of my thesis but also the main thoughts and conclusions, regarding our national revolution, as had come to be subsequently embodied in my books : (*i*) "World Role of National Revolution, (*ii*) Outlines of National Revolutionary Path, (*iii*) "Why Four Crore Artisans Hail Gandhian Plan" (*iv*) "Pakistan" and my unpublished thesis on the "Manifestation of America—and U.S.S.R. and Beware of their Struggle for World Domination". I was able to test the correctness or otherwise of so many of readings of history, study of Sovietism and gave a further shape to them in the light of the discussions we had and suggestions offered by those experienced social workers and political leaders, drawn from all over the four linguistic areas of the then extensive Madras presidency.

From the 30th March, 1940 till November 1944, I was in jail except for a brief period in 1942. I have written at some length about what has happened to me and how I was feeling during that prolonged period, in my book "Life and Thoughts of a Political Prisoner". I propose to say here only a few things.

The most important happening was my systematic and critical study of Marxism and the preparation of my main thesis for the credo of World Peasantry, in relation to capitalism, Imperialism and Marxism. My books (*i*) "Revolutionary Peasant", (*ii*) "Kisans and Communists", (*iii*) "Colonial and Coloured Peoples" (*iv*) "The Credo of World Peasantry" were all written to expound that thesis and came to be published between 1947-1957. I was able to convince myself and prove that the biggest problem of the twentieth century is not so much the need to eliminate the exploitation of the World Proletariat but that of the world peasantry and that concerted steps should be taken by all revolutionaries to save world peasants from being exploited by all other classes. I came to see that world peace cannot be achieved and maintained merely by organising Socialist Governments in all countries but only if and when such Socialist Governments prevent the exploitation of Primary Producers—peasants—and take them into the fullest and freest partnership in their governmental, co-operatives and other institutions.

I suffered, it is true, while undergoing that incarceration. But I enjoyed the elixir of these stimulating thoughts, interesting talks, absorbing studies and inspiring feelings about the discoveries of thoughts I felt I was making. But Srimati Bharati Devi suffered so much more, without such compensatory satisfactions. For the first six months after I was sent to jail, she had to struggle all alone against great odds to keep up the Kisan movement in the Andhra. She had to mobilise public opinion and sympathy in favour of the Mandasa sufferers after that terrible police-firing tragedy of April 1940 and organise their defence and collect funds for the relief of the victims of police-firing and also for the defence of the accused Kisans. Sri Shyam Babu, who undertook these tasks, came to be interned in his town, Ichchapur, and died suddenly a few weeks after the tragedy and Sri Latchanna was interned in his village of Baruva and so, the whole

burden fell upon her. The only comrade who was free to aid her was the late Vallabha Rao and he was very useful in organising the defence of our Kisans.

Simultaneously with this, she had to collect funds, and organise the Summer Session of the Peasant Institute at Idupalapadu. How nerve-racking it must have been for her to collect funds, get together lecturers and students from all over Andhra, maintain peace between them as they would wrangle over different possible ways of intensifying and conducting the anti-imperialist struggle and see that the students remain loyal to the principal objects of the peasant movement. She had also to manage another session of the Institute in 1941 in Chennuru in Cuddapah District. The Principal of that Session Sri R.N. Reddy had later come to publish his thesis "India's Destiny", a thoughtful and constructive study of Indian problems—social and economic.

During that same period, Gandhijee's direction to me to come out of the jail and obey the Government's Internment Order, just because of his temporary misunderstanding of my defiance of that order as being a defiance of Congress discipline. It pained her deeply, as it had enraged all our Kisan workers. The orthodox, stay-put Congressmen were gloating over his unkind remarks against me and this sudden development of what promised to be a major rift in my relations with Gandhijee, for which they had been praying for so long and this turn annoyed our workers and so, they were urging our complete severance from the Congress. Devijee had to bear all that and work for the continuation of our co-operation and partnership with the Congress and prevent any sabotage of the enlistment campaign for individual satyagraha that Gandhijee was offering to organise. We both agreed that whatever might be the factious attitude of other Congressmen and however painful Gandhijee's wrong criticism proved to be, we should see that the Kisan workers would welcome even that attenuated Satyagraha struggle offered to be started by Gandhijee against the War-efforts of British Imperialists. She worked for the acceptance of this line of action by our workers.

Brother G. L. Narayana was released from jail on grounds of ill-health but was ordered to be interned in NIDUBROLU for another six months. Though this disabled him from active campaigning, he was able to assist Devijee by his advice.

In the meanwhile Devijee had to organise Flood Relief for the flood-stricken Kisans of East and West Godavari Districts. Sri P. Kodanda Ramayya, a Congress worker who had concentrated on the service of the Hill Tribes and the late Vallabharao assisted her in this work. Large number of Congress leaders abstained from offering effective co-operation even in that humanitarian mission. Yet she was able to evoke much public support from all social circles, collect funds, foodgrains and offer much succour to the sufferers. This successful campaign of hers established her as the most effective public leader, acceptable to most of the leaders of all political parties and persuasions.

She became the President of the Andhra Kisan Congress and also one of the General Secretaries of the All India Kisan Congress and brother G. L. Narayana looked after the offices of both these organisations until the internment order was cancelled. She was anxious that I should come out of jail after serving the sentence and take over these onerous responsibilities and so paid the Rs. 500 fine. But Government received the fine, formally released me and detained me on the same day. What must have been her disappointment when she later learnt of my transfer from the Trichinopoly Jail to Vellore Jail.

The Kisan Congress was coming to experience internal troubles, due to the rivalries between Communist and Kisan Congressites in the Andhra: the C.S.P. plus Forward Blockists and C.P.I. in Bihar and U.P. She had to do her best to protect the interests of the Kisan Congressites in their attempts to keep the Kisan Congress properly moored to the patriotic stand of the National Congress regarding the War, which had come to embrace the U.S.S.R. from the East, and the U.S.A. from the West. She became the President of the All India Kisan Congress a little before the C.P.I. adopted the "People's War" slogan in their mistaken faith that thereby they could defend the U.S.S.R. and as they were less mindful of the fate of India's struggle for freedom. G. L. Narayana was by that time free from internment Order and was therefore able to accompany her in her visits to Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and in her discussions and negotiations with different Leftist Groups. They tried their best with much success to prevent the A.I.K.C. platform from being exploited by Communists for the spread of their "Peoples' War Slogan". It was a heart-rending

experience for her to find herself isolated from the local Congress workers who were content with the pretence of the quiet Individual Satyagraha and the Communists who were bent upon exploiting every conference, peasants March or discussion group of every organisation, only to aid and abett the imperialist War-efforts. She could reach me in Jail only once in three months and our talks were being over-heard and recorded by the Official C.I.D. Reporters who were secreted on the other side of the window or doorway by which we were seated and allowed to talk to each other. She kept up her morale and presence of mind under all that stress. But she used to complain of her waning faith in the romance and inspiring aspects of our movement, because of the ugly realities of evergrowing rivalries, and intrigues as between different groups within the Kisan Congress. She could not reconcile herself to the jealousies and envious quarrels even among comrades within the Kisan Congressites themselves.

When at last I was released, what a woeful story of her financial liabilities she had to narrate to me. For well-over 8 months before I was arrested in 1940, I was contracting fresh debts to finance my extensive tours and incessant public work what-with the cessation of the meagre allowances of the Assembly. During my incarceration, "Go Bhumi" became the centre of Andhra and All India Kisan activities and Devijee had to undertake costly tours and campaigns. So, she ran into heavier debts. On top of all this, she had to meet her share of the losses of our weekly, the "Vahini" or "Kranti" or "Go Bhumi" as it was being variously called, whenever fresh securities were being demanded by Govern-ment. Eventually she and G.L. Narayana had to foot a heavy bill to pay off its debts and shift the press to our village. How she raised all these debts and financed all those public activities is indeed a wonder. G.L. Narayana also suffered equally heavy financial losses. Though all this troubled their minds so much, they had discharged their duties nobly and bravely. Their troubles were not over with my release but had only been increa-sed because, we all had to put our heads and financial resources together to fight the menace of Communist's solgan of Peoples' War. They had succeeded with great difficulty, in stalling the Communists at the Nagpur Session of the Working Committee of the A.I.K.C. demand the formation of national government, as a condition precedent to Indians accepting the War as the "Peoples'

War". We all went to the Bihta Session of the A.I.K.C. in June 1942 and could only succeed in getting the Nagpur stand reiterated ; which was no doubt a triumph to Devijee's. leadership of the A.I.K.C. in my absence but which cost the defection of the Forward Bloc comrades from the A.I.K.C. platform because of its failure to dismiss the C.P.I. stand altogether.

When once again, I was detained in 1942 November after ten weeks of underground work. Devijee had again to shoulder new responsibilities.

During the next period of two years, Devijee had to undertake the onerous responsibility of sheltering many an underground worker, keep off the ever-vigilant police, prevent the capture of the Andhra Kisan Congress and other underground fighters for freedom and provide financial and other aids to them. She did much good work in strengthening the Weavers' Congress and Kisan Congress. During that war Government was keen on imposing more and more controls over cloth and food production and it became her responsibility, together with others who were the office-bearers of these organisations, to make repeated representations to Government, hold Conferences and mobilise public opinion in favour of the weavers and Kisans. To obtain yarn supplies and dyes, adequate orders from Defence Services for weavers' production, to press for lowering of specifications for Defence Services' demands for cloth and to obtain adequate remuneration for weavers and to prevent inposition of controls over hand-woven goods and their prices were her routine tasks. Kisans too had to be protected from the vagaries of officers in their attempts to estimate the production, capacity of peasants to have foodgrains surpluses and to sell them and the timings for the procurement of foodgrains and their actual delivery to Government. All this was indeed a never-ending worry not only to Kisans themselves but also to the Kisan Congress. There was always the active fear that any of our workers might be accused of being an obstructionist to the war effort and taken away as a detenue, merely on the report of the lowest procurement officers. Devijee was able to keep a careful watch over the interests of our workers and ward off such threats to a great extent. Her prestige with both peasants and general public was so high that the highest officials at Madras tried to heed her advice. Even when it came

to the fixation of procurement prices for paddy and rice, her advice was given due weight. She used to write to me her appriciation of the timely appeals of Sri B.R. Reddi of Nellore, President of the Ryotwari Landholders Association, who had much influence with Government, because of his Justicite affiliations, for remunerative prices.* Yet, during the whole of that period, peasants had to give away to Government much more of their surplus production at prices which were far from remunerative.

Before I was taken in as a detenue I was able to get into touch with patriotic student leaders, with Sri V.L. Sundara Rao in their centre, and persuade them not to support the Communist controlled students Federation but to start an independent, nationalistic students Congress and mobilise the students behind the National struggle. Sri Sundara Rao, a dynamic and sincere public worker, dared the C.I.D. and toured all over Andhra, and organised the units of the Students Congress and worked under the guidance of Devijee and G.L. Narayana. Devijee was recognised as the All Andhra *de facto* leader of this movement and her presidential address to the Provincial students conference, held in Guntur, was so inspiring that thereafter the Students Federation lost much of its support. Several of the Students Congress leaders were rounded up, after that successful conference and sent to jails.

The nationalist Youth movement was organised by the late Sri K. Ammayya of NIDUBROLU, a former graduate of the Peasant Institute, with the active assistance of Sri Sundara Rao and Devijee gave them much assistance and encouragement. She was obliged to undertake three all Andhra tours during this period to initiate, develop and strengthen the struggle against that insidious 'People's War' movement. During these tours she had to address separately Kisans, weavers, students and youths, besides the all-inclusive public meetings. She was so practical-minded and statesman like and her popularity was so great that Government did not wish to clap her into jail on any trumped-up charge. A number of conferences of nationalist women were organised to counteract the attempts of the CPI to gain support from women also for their "Peoples' War" movement. She popularised

*Ramachandra Reddi became a founder-member of Swatantra Party in 1959.

the Grow More Food and "Van Mahotsava" campaigns initiated by the Kisan Congress. She also pleaded for reserving all Government lands for allotment for landless agricultural workers and pressed for their immediate allotment to them for "grow more food campaign" but not to landed peasants. She intensified the demand of Rayalaseema, which had been developed into a mass campaign by the Kisan Congress since 1926 for the Tungabhadra multi-purpose project. She had the satisfaction of seeing that even that war-engrossed Government agreed to undertake that long-deferred project for the protection of famine-ridden Rayalaseema, thanks to its realisation of the primacy of "Grow More Food Campaign" and dynamism of S.V. Ramamurti, the Adviser.

The irony of Indian politics was that while the Kisan Congress was only trying to give practical shape and dynamism to Gandhijee's constructive programme in all these directions, the power-minded Congressmen both in jails and outside did not mind castigating our path-making and useful work as mere "reformative non-political" activity. Sri Gorrepati Venkata Subbayya, one of the most sincere Congressmen, who had been organising the Zamindari Peasants of Challapalli since 1930, came forward in 1943 to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining the Andhra Provincial Kisan Congress, and thus aid Devijee in the risky task of keeping up the morale of the Kisan masses during that Ordinance regime of 1943-45.

It was behind this facade of extremely useful constructive national service, that Devijee, G.L. Narayana. V.L. Sundara Rao, Ammayya, B Subbarao, N. V. Rama Naidu of "Zamin Ryot", Gorrepati Venkala Subbayya were able to maintain the anti-imperialist struggle of our masses. Sri Gorrepati's assistance to all our workers during 1943-44 was found by Devijee to be of inestimable value. She undertook the special responsibility of conveying to our workers in the Kisan and artisan movements, the progress I was making in my studies in search of the ideological bases for our ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Kalakar Buddhijeevi Raj. Her joy and that of all our workers in and outside jails knew no bounds when I conveyed to them that I was able to discover and prove the inadequacy of the analyses of Marxism, of the forces and agencies of economic exploitation

and their victims and its failure to discover the main fact that peasants are the worst exploited of all classes of toilers. She felt happy to be told through my censored letters and jail interviews that so long as peasants utilise their holdings for self-cultivation, and self-employment and without exploiting anyone, their holdings could not be treated as private property in the usual capitalist and Marxist sense. She gladly conveyed to our workers my message that just as the American-Rooseveltian-democracy had successfully raised the agricultural prices by at least 25% by Governmental measure and lessened the inequality in terms of trade between agriculturists and others, we could plead with the Governments of all other countries also, that they too should try to raise agricultural prices and equalise the terms of trade. She was able to realise the full significance of my statement that it would not be enough to achieve socialism of the Western conception in their industrial economy but there must be a real Socialist and just relationship between agriculturists and others and between agricultural and industrial countries of the world. Throughout this period, she and brother G.L. Narayana were my best media for spreading the results of my researches and the ever-broadening aspects of our ideology and ideal among our workers and masses. This was no mean service, nor was it so easy to accomplish. They thus rendered yeoman's service to our cause. She had many more worries than the mere management of the public activities as she had to manage the cultivation work of our holding which is a tiresome and whole-time responsibility. She had to save as much as possible from agriculture, for her tours and other public activities and spare something for me in jail.

To have to live practically alone in Go Bhumi, even when I am outside jails, manage my farm and attend to household chores and supplement my public services and finance many of my activities, public and private, from out of the meagre income from our far from big holding is too heavy a burden on the broad shoulders of any strong personality. To be able to discharge all that responsibility while I was in jails for years and to ward off the ever-vigilant police, give shelter to so many underground workers and provide funds, food and clothing to such of them as were in need of them and to be ever ready to be taken into jail, while on such active duty was the heroic role that she had to play and she played that role ably and nobly. No wonder Gandhijee

came to be proud of her and held up her example to many a woman worker who met him at Seva Gram. In fact he offered on more than one occasion to supplement her financial resources but she bravely declined the offer, observing that she had learnt to live in the Gandhian manner but not without comfort within whatever she could earn from the cultivation of our holding. And this endeared her even more to our Bapu.

Her influence and standing among the Leftists all over India were so great in 1941 that there was special mention of her work in Jaiprakash Narain's alleged letter to his socialist comrades sent out from jail but captured by the Government. He deplored the failure of the Socialists to gain her support for their party's political line.

Her tours, lectures and contacts with students and youths proved to be a great source of inspiration and strength to the freedom movement. The Government were non-plussed as to how to restrain her work. Her constructive work was so popular with the people. Wherever she toured in Andhra, her speeches were heard by huge throngs of men and women. In those days when almost all the known Congressmen were kept behind the bars, her campaigns enlivened public life and maintained the morale of the masses.

# 23

# *Bapu's Constructive Programme*

This is the era of the National Extension and Panchayati Raj and the associated Block Development Activities. It is worthwhile to reflect how so many of us of the Rural People's Movement had worked for many decades in an entirely voluntary and honorary manner in Gandhijee's great constructive movement, and the change in political and social environment wrought by Nehru's 17 years governance whereby even the social workers have come to demand salaries and allowances in parity with other Government employees and V.L.W's. and B.D.O.'s demand high salaries and conveniences. Nowadays Government is devoting hundreds of crores of rupees for this rural development, but the disciples of Mahatma Gandhi and my own colleagues in the Kisan, Kalakar movements who have been working ever since 1920, with greater zeal and ability than the present day Block Development Officers and Village Level Workers, have roused the rural masses more successfully to undertake their own schemes of village development. I find that all that work we have been carrying on during all these decades has laid excellent and firm foundations for the present nation-wide campaigns. Fortunately there has not been any aspect of social and economic developmental work which has not been explored, mapped out and developed either by Gandhijee's own immediate disciples and their followers or by the workers of the Kisan,

Kalakar movements which I have had the honour of guiding since 1925. Our own work through the Kisan and Kalakar movements and my thesis published in different languages have prepared large sections of our rural masses to welcome the present NES and Panchayati Raj programmes and respond to its appeals for 50% local contribution, in the shape of materials, and labour; I am therefore tempted to put down in writing a few of the memories about a few of Gandhijee's own thoughts regarding constructive programme and my efforts to develop it on a mass scale among the rural masses.

Mahatma Gandhi maintained in his very first thesis "Hind Swaraj" that India was not conquered but lost her freedom by losing her genius to rely upon her own social and economic resources and constructive abilities. So, he did not wish to await the advent of freedom to undertake the task of national reconstruction. He began, through the positive aspects of the 1920-22 Non-Cooperation campaign, his constructive programme including such items as Khadi and the associated Swadeshi, national education, Village Panchayats, Panchayat Court, anti-untouchability and social and economic rehabilitation of all the suppressed classes of India and propagation of Hindi, as national language. Tens of thousands of his disciples came to be devoted to this programme and thousands to each of its planks. Gandhijee used to give exemption from the duty of having to offer Satyagraha and go to jail to these constructive workers. On certain occasions, he asked them to abstain from Congress activities and keep themselves free from any Congress entanglements. Yet, because of the umbrella of his blessings he raised above them, they used to enjoy the same prestige as others who had gone to jails.

As soon as Congress Ministries took shape in a number of the then provinces in 1936, Gandhijee convened the Basic Education Conference at Wardha and presented his ideas, which emanated from the many experiments made by him and his Advisers Sree Zakir Hussein, who later became Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh University and President of India and Aryanayakam, who continued to be in charge of the famous Sevagram Centre of Basic Education until his death in 1967. The Conference accepted his

thesis and his Advisers published his thesis, as elaborated by themselves and the conference. Thus arose the new movement known as the Basic Education movement with the Naya Talimi Sangh, as its organisation. Acharya Kripalani popularised its ideas through his book "The Latest Fad". I hastened to extend my whole hearted support to this new constructive movement. Chief Minister B. G. Kher of Bombay and Sri Srikrishan Sinha of Bihar took the lead in starting large scale experiments with this system of education. The U.P. and M.P. also did some good work. I have taken special interest in spreading the ideology behind this Basic Education movement. I saw in it the best possibility for imparting most useful education to our children without in any way oppressing them, as the Traditional system does. I wrote a short thesis in appreciation of this charter of freedom for children as I have looked upon it and it was published in the book called "Gandhijee and Education". So, when its national conference was meeting in Seva Gram in 1945 January to review the progress made since 1936 in some States and the obstruction caused in other States by the War time British administration, Gandhijee was good enough to invite me also to join that Conference.

The constructive programme of 1920-34 used to be at the mercy of the political ups and downs of the Congress. That is, whenever the legislative or active political activity of the Congress used to be very popular, the constructive aspect of the Congress work used to run at a low ebb and, so, Bapu wanted to place it on an independent footing, so that it could go on, without being affected too much by the political vicissitudes of the Congress. He had no objection to most or all the devotees and practitioners of constructive programme continuing to be active members of the Congress but he wanted them to give primacy to this programme. So, the All India Village Industries Association (A.I.V.I.A.) was brought into existence in 1934 at the Bombay Congress Session under the Secretaryship of Dr. J.C. Kumarappa to work as a companion to the All India Spinners Association (A.I.S.A.). He was glad to find that I began to give them my whole-hearted support. I had to contend with C.P.I. and C.S.P. colleagues on the Kisan platform in strengthening this constructive programme, since they were all bitterly opposed to them. I was fortunate in having had the friendliest relations with almost all the construc-

tive workers of Andhra. I was able to give them maximum possible support and encouragement, and almost every one of the graduates of the Peasant Institute has taken pride in supporting this programme and its devotees. Thus, Sri Sitarama Sastri of Vinayashram, who later came to be known as Swami Sitaram and all his followers, Sri U. Lakshminarayana of the famous Sarada Niketan for Women of Guntur, Sri S. Ramaswami Chowdari and P. Nagabhushanam of the Andhra Library Association, Sri M. Satyanarayana of Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha and his numerous Pracharaks, all the Harijan Sevak Sangh workers and all those who have been engaged in the Associations of village Panchayats ; and Depressed Classes Uplift received our whole-hearted support during all these years. Bharatidevi, Kanakamma, Chukkamma, Durgabai, Laxmibai developed the women's political as well as social movements.

Besides, we helped the late Dr. Yejendla Sreramulu to start and run the movement for Ayurvedic Veterinary medicine, schools and training centres. Under the inspiration of Gandhijee, the movements for strengthening Ayurvedic and other schools of Indian medicine, Naturopathy hospitals, popularisation of un-cooked diet, and vitamin rice came to be organised by several constructive workers and we gave them support and encouragement. We supported the campaign for hand-pounding of paddy, started by Sastrijee with a view to protect the vitamin-content of rice-diet and provide employment to peasants thereby anticipating by twenty years, the present day world-wide passion for vitaminised foods. It was quite usual for people to earmark "Purses" presented to me during my tours, for some of these constructive activities and I used to give them to the concerned organisations, because those of us who were wedded to these constructive activities were either honorary workers or were content with nominal allowance. I was able to raise a debate in the Assembly to demand that Government should undertake a special nation-wide fight against the scourge of malaria and wrote a series of articles in the Delhi Press. I hailed Gandhijee's decision to settle down in Sevagram which was situated in the Malarial Zone of Madhya Pradesh, as another of his inspiring contributions to draw the attention of the nation to the urgency of that problem of malaria and the wasting effects of so many other ills of rural India. As sure as anything, Mahatma Gandhi

contacted malaria in that village, was admitted into a Nagpur hospital and so the country began to concern itself with the need for the anti-malaria campaign. The Government had thus no excuse to neglect this urgent national need and no wonder these post-war decades have come to witness steady progress in this fight against this menace of malaria.

Bapu was keen on turning every type of waste material of open-air latrines, etc., into compost manure, besides saving society from its nuisance value ; so were we, who were engaged in the Village panchayat movement. He was popularising the use of the latrine, while we were popularising both the trench and bore-hole latrines. In this way, he used to show us the way and we were developing it further, and widening the scope of the constructive programmes; hence his special attachment to and appreciation of our work.

We found in 1945 that the Controls regime was likely to last for some years and there was need to mobilise all sections of people, interested in its removal or relaxation. A number of all India and also provincial organisations, catering to the needs of different elements of rural people, had come into existence and there arose the need to bring them all together on one all India platform. Some of those organisations were interested in politics and others were entirely non-political. So, we organised the Federation of Rural People's Organisations (F.R.P.O.) with myself as the President and Sree N. V. Naidu, C. L. Patel as General Secretaries. It has been voicing, ever since, the demands of different sections of our rural people. The Bharat Kisan Sammelan, All India Hand Loom Weavers Congress and Bharat Gramodyoga Sammelan are the principal mass organisations which are affiliated to it.

I attended the first, second, fourth World Conferences of Agricultural Producers, as the leader of the delegations sent by the F.R.P.O. The F.R.P.O. became one of the foundation members of the Internal Federation of Agricultural Producers and has been given representation on the Executive of the I.F.A.P.

The F.R.P.O. has had the privilege of conducting the all-

India wide agitation against the control regime of 1944-52, and contributed its mite in its ultimate removal in 1952. Alas, Nehru reintroduced the Control regime in 1959-60 and India's economic unity has been broken up by zonal controls and consequently food deficits have increased up to a crore tons.

The F.R.P.O. has grown to be an effective national non-political platform. I am glad to say that the late Sri C. L. Patel continued to be its honorary General Secretary until his death in 1962. He proved to be one of the best colleagues I have had in my public life. It is hard to come across such a loyal, honest and able colleague. He is devoted to the cause of Kisans, weavers and all other rural people. He has become well-known all over India for his integrity, ability and solid secretarial services. He hailed from the same village, Karamsad, as Sardar Patel.

# 24

# *My Relations with Nehru So Close, Yet So Far*

I was not so fortunate in my relations with Jawaharlaljee although from an ideological point of view, we could have been expected to achieve a much closer and happier comradeship. As ill-luck would have it, the very first time that we had to deal with each other on the A.I.C.C. platform, we appeared to have been ranged on opposite sides, for no fault of our own, in the prolonged discussions over the clauses of the Charter of Fundamental Rights that took place in the Bombay A.I.C.C. in September 1931. He was obliged to sponsor the charter as prepared by the Fundamental Rights Committee and as adopted by the Working Committee. I found it necessary to move a number of amendments, aiming at strengthening or advancing the rights of peasants and weakening those of the Zamindars and Talukdars. The Congress was not yet ready to join issue with the powerful vested interests of Zamindars, who were collecting more than Rs. 30 crores per annum from peasants and who had come to deny the traditional rights of peasants for proprietorship or at least permanency of tenure. Jawaharlaljee probably held the same views as we did but he was obliged to sponsor the Working Committee's neutrality and so, had to oppose all our

amendments. Thus arose a psychological hiatus between us. No wonder there passed many heated exchanges between us. In one of my replies, I remember having taunted him with inconsistency between his leadership in the Anti-Imperialist League, which met a few years earlier in Europe and his unwillingness to range himself against Indian Zamindars who were the allies of British Imperialism. He was very much annoyed by that. I am afraid that set off the tone for our tete-a-tete for the ensuing thirty-two years of our mutual relations in the Congress, Parliament and country's politics. Bapu espied such a possibility and advised me, when I saw him later that night, to be careful not to get on the wrong side of Jawaharlaljee.

When I had decided in 1933, together with so many other erstwhile no-changers, that it was time for Congress to enter the legislatures, he was advising the newly formed C.S.P. to boycott them. I became convinced as a result of my previous four years of disappointing struggle outside the legislatures for the protection of peasants, that it would be most useful to weaken the Zamindars' power in legislatures, which they gained because of Congress boycott of legislatures. So when I went into the Central Legislature, despite the last minute decision of the C.S.P. (taken on his advice) to ask its votaries to boycott it, I seem to have displeased him, although he did not disapprove his own Cambridge friend Sri Shri Prakasha who also did the same. On the other hand, I felt it a little queer that he should have encouraged some Congressmen including his sister and the late Rafi Ahmad Kidwai to join the U.P. Ministry in 1937, although he had fought vigorously against the acceptance of ministry during the Lucknow and Faizpur Congress Sessions of 1936. How could such inconsistent leadership command my respect ! I felt that if it could be consistent with Leftism and Provincial Politics for him to let his nominees join the ministry, it could not be wrong for me to have chosen to go into the Assembly on Congress mandate to protect and promote the interests of the peasant masses.

At the time of the Faizpur Congress (1936 December), he chose to be specially indifferent towards me, as if to indicate to the A.I.C.C. that though I became the president of the A.I.K.C.

and the great Peasant March came to demonstrate peasant's faith in A.I.K.C., I could be treated merely as one among so many other members. Some friends. including journalists, like to remember even today how, while all other Leftists were obeying every wink of his eyes, I alone was able to electrify the whole A.I.C.C. in that Faizpur session by defying Jawaharlal. To his peremptory retort to my opposition to the Report, "Table your amendment within one minute", I replied, "please remember, you can't be dictatorial. I must have sufficient time to formulate my amendment". That brought him down to earth and made him smile in a dissembling manner and the whole House enjoyed that stimulating clash. He continued to hug only those Leftists who were in the C.S.P. and whom he had invited at Lucknow into the Working Committee. He must have known how poor was their influence among the masses, as well as Congressmen when their leader who contested with me for presidentship of the All India Kisan Congress was hopelessly defeated. When later Sardar Patel opposed the peasant's pledge and demanded its withdrawal, although it was openly stated never to be pitched against the Congress discipline, he did not try to come to the rescue of the A.I.K.C. nor did he express any sympathy for me during that crisis.

My support to the students' movement of 1938-42 as it continued to exhibit too much spirit of revolt displeased him. He did not appreciate Swamijee's cult of "Kisans' Danda" in Bihar and he must have wondered why I did not disown Swamijee. I posed the need for giving adequate representation in the Councils of the Congress for peasant organisations and pressed him to give prominence to peasants' problems. That might have irritated him so much, whatwith his worries over the quarrels caused in the Congress organisation all over the country by the C.P.I.'s manoeuvres and Leftists' partiality for the Red Flag, their parallel demonstrations and common slogans during Congress processions and platforms, etc. All these and many other imponderables must have contributed to the lack of that sense of understanding, sympathy and affection from his side as was available from Gandhijee. This proved to be most unfortunate for me and my causes.

When however he did not show the loyalty, expected of

him, towards Subash Babu during the Tripura election dispute and he failed to stand by all of us of the Left and thus soften the Rightists' attitude, I felt disappointed in him, as the national leader, next only to Mahatmajee. It needed all that happened during my $4\frac{2}{3}$ years of incarceration between 1940-44 to help me to recover my faith in his leadership. So many of us derived much satisfaction and strength from a close study—which also was so pleasant—of his "Autobiography" and his other writings. He was such a fine writer.

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# *Relations with the Sardar*

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel has come to be remembered much more by M.Ps. and journalists, as one who could have saved our country from such and such a blunder if only he had lived, than while he was alive. Only very few become more famous, after their death and Sardar belonged to that category.

For many years I could not get on with Sardar Patel, possibly because his old friends from the South, Rajajee and Doctor Pattabhi did not give scope for gaining a third friend. His personal opponent and victim, Shri Indulal Yagnik was welcomed by me in 1936 into the leadership of the Kisan Congress and I learnt about their bitter relations only later on and that his dislike of the Kisan Congress was largely due to my friendship with Indulaljee. I found myself in greater agreement with Subhash Bose, as he was keen on fighting the British on their refusal to yield to India's demand for Independence, whereas the Sardar was anxious to utilise the Congress hold on State Governments to gain more power for India. As his antagonism to Subhash policies grew, his dislike of my politics increased. When he found me inaugurating the first All India Forward Bloc conference in Bombay on the eve of the A. I. C. C. he could not contain his anger any longer. So when we happened to meet in Rajendra Prasad's room on the next morning, he bluntly asked me, "when are you going to

resign from the Congress ?" Quick came my retort, "Why should I resign ? Whose property is this Congress ? Yours ?" The peace loving Rajenbabu made peace between us with the remarks, "Sardar, don't you recognise another Sardar in Ranga". That made the noble Sardar laugh heartily exposing his beautiful set of teeth. "But really, Ranga, when you have joined the Bloc, why do you want to remain in the Congress ?" I replied, "Sardarjee, who told you that I have joined the Bloc ? I have only inaugurated their function." That calmed down his temper but not his displeasure with me.

Such was the lion-hearted Sardar.

It is indeed a wonder to many veteran leaders of the Congress how we came to be such thick friends, after having been ranged against each other for so long. They did not know how once Gandhijee welcomed anyone into his inner circle of comradeship, it never took long for the loyal Sardar to adopt him as his confidant also. When he realised, with the help of Bapujee, that I could be trusted, he made haste, to become fast friends with me. And during the last five years of his life, he gave me his friendship, confidence, and counsel to such an unlimited extent that it excited the jealousy of many a senior colleague of his. Once a Congress President did not wish to take me into the Working Committee, the Sardar declined to accept its membership if I were not to be in it. For six weeks, the formation of the committee was delayed because of that tussle. In the end, the President yielded, I was invited to be a member and then alone the Sardar's cooperation was offered. Such was the type of support he gave to those whom he trusted. I am free to confess that the inspiring confidence he was good enough to repose in me stimulated me to do my best in the service of our people and country. Such was his power to lift up comrades.

I well remember how he deplored India's unwise rush to the Security Council with her plaintive appeal, when Pakistan encouraged and aided her tribal people to invade Kashmir. He said, "any criminal lawyer would tell you that it is safer to be a defendant than a complainant." "And you were a criminal lawyer", I observed. His eyes twinkled. But he expressed his chagrin many a time over that Kashmir debacle.

The whole country was very much worried over the fast deteriorating conditions of life for the one and three-fourths crores of Hindus in Hyderabad, because of the fascist outrages of Razakars. We of the Andhra were naturally impatient over the patient attitude of the Union Government. I had to see frequently both Shri Nehru and Sardar, even Maulana Azad to make them take some effective action to protect the people in that State, as I then happened to be the President of the P. C. C. of Andhra. Unfortunately the Sardar came to be laid up with heart-attack for several months. When once I could not but convey people's dissatisfaction over the Union Government's failure, he said with much anguish, "ask your friend Jawahar. I have been induced to come from Mussoorie with the definite promise that something big is to be done within a few days. I waited for a fortnight. Nothing came off. Now we are in this Parliament Session."

Another time, I expressed my fears that Pakistan and some British Tories were trying to arm the Razakars and that there grew up many centres in Hyderabad where arms and ammunition were being manufactured. So if and when any action would come to be decided upon, the armed struggle might last so long and result in such losses of lives that the friends of Pakistan in the Security Council might create more troubles for India. He quickly assured me, "Don't fear, it will take only a day or two nights and a day. We have gone into all that with our military experts. Let our friend make up his mind."

Sardar took care to keep at Hyderabad as the Agent of Government of India his trusted friend Shri K. M. Munshi. I took Shri Munshi through some of the affected border villages and towns of Andhra and he too confirmed my information that Vallabhbhaijee had got whole plan of action worked out. When at last the police action was launched upon, Sardar's calculations proved to be right and the Hyderabad State surrendered to the Union within a couple of days.

### Sardar was opposed to Nehru's betrayal of Tibet

I accompanied the Sardar on his aerial journey to Madras, when he was going there to open the Rajajee Hall and unveil his life-size portrait. Just as we were about to board that plane on that morning at Delhi, newspapers were placed in his hand, with also the exclamation from one of the aides that "Master

Tara singh was arrested on the previous night", Sardar asked, "Were there any disturbances ?", the answer was in the negative. Turning to me, he observed, "that is cleanly done". The later developments in Punjab including the Satyagraha which resulted in the arrest of several thousand Akalis have made me feel that so many such editions of such "clean" operations have not succeeded in settling the Punjabi problem.

During that eventful day in Madras Vallabhbhai Patel made two brilliant speeches. He paid glorious tributes to Rajajee and gave the lie direct to many rumours of differences between himself and Rajajee, the other great favourite of the Mahatma. Knowing him as I did, I can say that he was sincere in his tributes to Rajajee.

It was also on that day many pressmen, particularly the representative of the PTI, began to ask me repeatedly whether the hot rumour that I was to join the Union Cabinet could be a good rumour. On all previous occasions, when such a possibility was being mooted in the highest circles, I managed not to be involved in such rumours but on that occasion, it became too difficult for me to laugh it out, as Sardarjee was present and I could not flatly deny any basis for that impression. While we were in the plane, I had occasion to express once again to the Sardar my unwillingness to join Nehru's Cabinet. I complained that while I was being encouraged to present the alternative case whenever any of the propositions, sponsored by Shri Nehru, was felt to be not in the interests of our country or people, there were hardly one other member to back me up, whether it be in the Working Committee or the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary party or any of the High Powered Sub-Committees. So I asked him, what is the use of my going into yet another Committee which has to accept his ultimate authority except to increase the occasions when I have to range myself with so much pain at heart against the second most beloved of our national leaders. "Why not you give it a trial", he suggested. I replied, "I do not wish to place myself at his mercy. I know he will never agree to abolish controls, and compulsory food procurement for instance and I can't compromise on such things".

On earlier occasions when I was trying to persuade Shri Nehru and Rajen Babu to give up the food controls, Vallabhbhaijee

used to express his agreement with me. When eventually the policy of controls came to be abandoned, he was most happy. But when again Jawaharlaljee clamped the controls on the country, he felt himself helpless and would not openly strengthen my campaign in favour of progressive De-Control. Such was his political strategy.

On two occasions, he swam against the tide of public opinion among the great majority of members of the Constituent Assembly and Parliament. He reached his agreements with the patriotic princes over the merger of their States in the Union and offered to see that the Privy purses agreed upon would be guaranteed by Government. Similarly he wanted to assure the I.C.S. officers that their salaries and immunities would also be continued. It was felt by many members that if only Vallabhbhaijee would agree Jawaharlaljee would readily welcome a change. But the Sardar took his stand on the sacredness of the plighted word given to the princes and ICS officers by our leaders in the name of the nation and asked us to make our choice. He won resounding Parliamentary triumphs on both the points. I could not always agree with his silences or commitments regarding many matters of organisation or of policies. He used to appreciate the delicacy of my feelings and assure me by the breezy touch of his left hand on my shoulder, that everything would be all right and I need not suffer from any qualms of conscience. It must have been by such affectionate personal contacts, as well as by the display of his great courage and decisive attitudes and conclusions that he came to win the hearts of so many of us in public life and such experienced civilians like my friends V.P. Menon, C.C. Desai, Shankar, Bannerjee. It is now my good fortune that Shri V.P. Menon, his trusted colleague in the great task of States Reorganisation, Shri Dahyabhai Patel, his son and Shri Bhailalbhai Patel, the dynamic builder of the Vallabhbhai University, have all come to be my colleagues in this Indian movement of Swatantra. Rajajee too is as happy over this trick of Indian history that has brought together so many of Sardar's friends. The other day he remembered how the Sardar used to trip over the spelling of a particular word and when I was enjoying a broad smile over it and quietly observed how well he remembered such intimate details of their comradeship, Rajajee observed, "Yes, I think of him and his doing's more often now-a-days". Such is the hold intimate and endearing

that the Sardar gained on so many of us who were privileged to grow to be his friends. He was known to be so strong and independent of strong emotions. But that was a misleading exterior, as Rajajee said while unveiling his portrait in Eluru town hall in 1960. I was overwhelmed when I saw tears welling up in his eyes when I went to see him in his sick bed in Delhi, because he loved us so much. Jawaharlal was unwilling, I was told, to let Sardar's statue installed on the Vista in Delhi. Mass movements have shown a more chivalrous regard to the Sardar. The historic Peasant March to Parliament in 1965 blessed by Rajajee and led by me to protest against Nehru's 17th Amendment to the Constitution calculated to destroy the sacredness of peasant proprietorship laid its bunch of roses and marigold garlands at the pedestal of Sardar's statue installed in the centre of the Parliament Street and ever since, every Mass Rally that has passed through that central thoroughfare toward Parliament has offered its homage to the Sardar—a unique honour indeed.

# *Emergence of Democratic K. M. P. Raj, Ideal Catalytic Influence of Subhash Babu*

Today (23.1.1967) we have celebrated the birthday of Netajee Subhash Chandra Bose in the Rama-Needu Buildings, the Central Office of the Indian Peasant Institute in my village, Nidubrolu. In the course of my speech, I told our villagers how Subhash Bose visited the Madras Office of the "Vahini" in 1940 and unlike so many equally important national leaders of that era, he met all our workers in the editorial and press sections and appreciated their cooperation with me. Turning to me and pointing at them, he said, "So this is your Factory for producing revolutionaries". When one of the workers observed, "This is only an extension of the Central Factory at Nidubrolu", Subhash corrected himself by saying, "Yes, I remember the peasant Institute also." Such was his readiness to develop the circle of comradeship. At the mammoth gathering that greeted him that evening at the Desodharaka Ghat on the Madras beach, I presided and observed that that great concourse of people was witness to South Indians' admiration for the Himalayan courage, displayed by Subhash Babu in his struggle on two fronts against the Congress ministerialists on one side and the British imperialists on the other. The late S. Srinivasa Ayyangar, former president of the Congress, also addressed the gathering.

Subhash Babu appreciated my leadership of the peasants so much that he referred to me, in his message to the Tamilnad Provincial Kisan Conference of 1939, as the "distinguished and most sincere leader of Indian peasants who is my valued comrade".*

We had several prolonged discussions from the days of Karachi Congress (1931) regarding the ultimate political leadership that Swaraj India should have. Contrary to communist accusations, he was not a Fascist. He agreed with me that peasants and workers should have their due share in Swaraj India's political leadership. He was also prepared to accept our slogan "Kisan Mazdoor Raj". When the anti-compromise conference held at Ramgarh in March 1939 had to state its aims, he hesitated to declare this as its aim, because he feared that the great middle-classes, who had shown in Europe of the inter-war period their terrible power to revolt against the domination of the other two classes, namely, peasants and workers, would feel themselves left out.** He turned round to me, with sincere appeal in his eyes and voice and said, "Rangajee, you have to broaden your slogan in some suitable and inspiring manner, to make these people also feel that they would have an honourable place in the Swaraj India of our conception. This slogan of Kisan Mazdoor Raj is good but not broad enough. Let us not forget the revolutionary role played for decades by those youths of the middle-classes in our own national revolution". I saw the force of his argument and was even more impressed with his sincere anguish at his inability to accept my proposition in that shape. That set me thinking, throughout 1940-41, while in Vellore and

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*In his Presidential Address at All India Forward Bloc Conference held at Nagpur in June 1940, Subhash Bose observed: "Looking back on the last twelve months, can we not claim that events have justified our policy and line of action? Barring the Kisan Sabha of Swami Satajanand, Prof. Ranga, Comrade Yagnik and the Forward Bloc, who is there to stand up to the Rightists today ?"

By the Rightists, he was referring to Gandhijee, Sardar Patel and Nehru and others.

**Referring to the struggle that arose after the Ramgarh sessions—Subhash Bose said, "Nine members of the A.I. Working Committee of the Forward Bloc are at present in prison or internment. In addition to them, leaders of the Kisan Sabha, headed by Swami Sahajanand Saraswami, Prof. Ranga and others are behind the bars".

Extracts from "The Selected Speeches of Subhash Chandra Bose" published by Government of India in 1962.

Trichy jails how to broaden our aims and develop our slogan so to embrace all the democratic minded, progressive, social revolutionary masses of the middle-classes.

I began to study all available literature about Fascists and Nazis, to divine the main-spring of their passionate revolt against democracy and Marxism and their support for these horrible social-reactionary cults. I thought about the role played by the urban middle classes of the Middle Ages against the religious reactionaries and feudal interests. As has been described earlier I found much inspiration in Cole's "what Marx Really Meant" and John Strachy's recognition of the importance of the middle classes. I found out that, but for the support of the middle classes, the British Labour party could not have come into power in 1929. It was the middle classes which broadened the basis for democratic liberties of people. So at last, I convinced myself that I should so broaden my attitudes, ideals and slogans as to make them embrace the middle classes and also to be capable of winning their confidence and support. All these studies and *tapas** took me well over two years. By 1942 I was able to visualise the aim of achieving power in Swaraj India for Kisans (Peasants), Kalakars (artisans), Mazdoor (proletariat), Buddhijeevis (Intellectual workers or professionals), 'Kisan, Kalakar, Mazdoor, Buddhejeevi Raj' to put it in an abbreviated, popular manner, "Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj", the word "Praja standing for all Shramiks† OF ALL TYPES.

The break-up of the National United Front, our disillusionment about the C.P.I (Communist Party of India) and our growing antipathy to totalitarianism of all types whether of Fascist or of Communist brand—cautioned me to place special emphasis on democracy and indicate in unmistakeable terms that the Raj we should have in Swaraj India must be truly and fully democratic. So, our slogan took its final shape as "*Democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj*".

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*Penance in pursuit of spiritual and intellectual power.

†Toilers.

I cannot hope to convey now, in mere words of mine, the magnitude and soul-stirring happiness we continued to feel for months, while in Vellore and Damoh jails, over this veritable political and social discovery, namely, the comprehensive, democratic ideal and popular slogan of democratic K.M.P. Raj.

On my release in April, 1942 and after the failure of the Cripps Mission and while Gandhijee and the Congress Working Committee felt themselves thrown back on the National resources of the masses for launching a second National Struggle for freedom during the Second World War, I approached Mahatma Gandhi in Wardha and discussed a couple of times the need for broadening our national aims and reassuring our toiling masses about the honourable and effective position we wished them to play in Swaraj India. I told him about my discussion with Subhash Babu. I referred to the communist reluctance to give any special assurances to peasants. I expressed my fears that peasants would be likely to be forgotten after Swaraj by most of our national leaders and parties, as had happened in so many countries after they had attained independence. Gandhijee assured me that at the right moment he would give full weight to my thoughts. I saw Jawaharlaljee also in this connection and had discussions. Eventually the fateful resolution on the National Demand passed in the Bombay A.I.C.C. session held in August 1942 assured the nation that in the National Government, political power should naturally belong to the toilers in the fields, factories and elsewhere. I was overjoyed by this development. In November, 1944 Gandhijee was good enough to utter in his own inspiring way, during our talks and on my appeal, what has now become the national ideal of all social democrats of our country, the slogan of "Democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj Ki Jai." After uttering it he smiled and asked me, "Now, are you happy, Ranga ?" I felt, just at that moment, that I had fulfilled the hopes of not only the countless Kisan martyrs but also of Subhash Babu, who had become by that time "NETAJEE" of the I.N.A. fame.

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# *Bapu Blessed K.M.P. Raj Ideal (November 1944)*

I was naturally in a state of great excitement and trepidation because the response given by Bapu to so many of my long-cherished but shyly expressed thoughts and aspirations was so unexpectedly wholehearted. My sense of exaltation over that day's wonderful success stood triumphing over scepticisms and hesitant hopes of over two decades.

So many of the Kisan-born Congressites of the 'thirties could not imagine the possibility of the success of my aspiration for Kisan Raj in Swaraj India. Even the Socialists and Communists working in co-operation with me on the All India Kisan Congress needed prolonged persuasion from us, the Kisan Congressites, to agree to couple the Kisan with Mazdoors in indicating the kind of Raj we should have after the advent of Swaraj and so it was with great difficulty that the GAYA SESSION 1938 of the Kisan Congress presided over by late Acharya Narendra Deva accepted the ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Raj. Subhash Chandra Bose, the then Congress President, was prepared to extend his blessings to our Kisan Congress but was hesitant when we asked him to bless the ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Raj. Indeed those Kisan workers who were fellow-travellers of the Communists were as reluctant to accept this ideal as so many of the orthodox urban-minded Congressites because

they could not think of a State and a society which would be under the influence and control, in due measure, of the hitherto politically under-privileged and socially submerged kisan majority of our country.

I dared to preach persistently, with the help of my colleagues, this ideal as if it was a gospel truth. I worked at my studies to demonstrate the ability of peasants and artisans to gain and exercise their due share of political power and social justice in order to achieve progressive and happy humanity within our democracy. All the time I was anxious to win Bapu's blessings for this noble ideal because I knew that his blessings would help it to gain the necessary spiritual momentum and political currency and win an abiding place in the hearts of our masses.

As we were discussing the pros and cons of this ideal in our daily discussions during Jail Seminars and lectures and Socratic talks, the detenus in Tanjore Jail used to exclaim again and again that if only Bapu would agree to our political ideal, we could more confidently face the Communist challenge and hold the imagination and faith of our youths and students. So when I was taking my leave of the detenus, on the day of my release in October 1944, one and all of them wished me all success in my forthcoming talks with Bapu. I felt sure that if only I could ably present the case on behalf of our peasant masses for their just place in Swaraj India, Bapu of our dreams and contemplation would be sure to extend his blessings to our ideal. But how could I be sure that I alone would be enough to expound all our thoughts, ideology, plans regarding what should be our ideals to be achieved after Swaraj, when our struggle for Swaraj had almost got into a stalemate. All these and other feares were present in my heart every wakeful moment from the time of the formulation of this ideal of KMP Raj in 1942 in Vellore jail to that historic moment when I entered the presence of Bapu. Once I saw him welcome me with his benign smile and blissful wave of his hand, I felt at ease.

And when actually Bapu assured me of his abiding interest in our aspirations for Kisans and declared his faith in their right for due share of political and economic power, I was so much

overjoyed as not to be fully aware of the epoch-making importance of that triumph of the tapas of all of us, the Kisan Congressites.

But as I was contemplating over the results of those talks in the light of all my past hopes, fears, disappointments, I did begin to wonder whether after all what happened on that November day was not a dream. I wonder whether Bapu's approval was complete and final or whether there was any fear of his secretariat watering down his blessing. Again and again I marvelled at Bapu's freedom from inhibitions, prejudices, personal or political. As I went again to him next day, Bapu greeted me with an exclamation of the ideal of K.M.P. Raj and asked me what more I was going to ask him to give. That overwhelmed me and inspired me with hope.

As our morning's talks were over, Bapu advised me to put down in writing the points raised in the course of the discussion so that he could give more precise answers when I would meet him in the evening. I was therefore busy during the afternoon preparing my questions, and Kurshid Ben, one of his secretaries and a grand-daughter of Dadabhai Naorojee, the Grand Old Man of Swaraj, was very helpful in giving the finishing touches to them.

Srimati Bharati Devi and myself were privileged to take part in Bapu's evening prayers on many an occasion. We found those communions with God so morally strengthening and inspiring. I used to feel as if my mind was being toned up. I was not sure whether the inspiration and sense of moral exaltation I experienced was due to the recital of songs from the Holy Books of all faiths during those prayers or to my awareness of the presence of Bapu and my sense of unity with him, the noblest of human beings that I have known.

The great thing about Bapu was that he shared that high privilege of communing with God with the aid of both vocal and silent prayers along with all those who cared to join him. I was fortunate to draw moral strength and spiritual happiness from those mass and public prayers from 1925 till the fatal month of January 1948.

Therefore, when I joined him during the prayers of those two evenings in November 1944, I had already been attuned to the

inspiring vibrations of that great experience of being together with him in prayer.

Twice or thrice I tried to look at Bapu during that first day's prayer. The very moment the gong sounded he quickly adjusted his upper cloth, and I saw him suddenly transformed into a different personality, withdrawn into himself and millions of miles away from us all around him. It was difficult to believe that he, only a moment ago, was so close to us, very much in our midst, smiling or conversing, in vivid rapport with every one of us. Such was his power of concentration, withdrawal and self-control. With him prayer was a period of intense and undivided communion.

The communions at prayer with him during those cold evenings in the serene open spaces on the south of his cottage in Seva Gram made me realise the great responsibility placed on my shoulders by Bapu by his acceptance of our ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Kalakar Buddhijeevi Raj. I felt myself blessed with necessary moral strength to spread his message in India and abroad. I could realise his great love for our Kalakars as it was embodied in his epoch-making campaign for Khadi and all other village industries. I saw then more clearly than ever how passionately he must have been devoted to the peasants as a class of independent, freedom-loving, non-exploitative, co-operative-minded and public-spirited manual workers of the best and most ancient order. He appreciated their self-employed status and readiness to share their meagre resources with all their dependants. It was to protect and promote the interests of these two classes of toilers that Bapu dedicated the growing orders of public workers who sought his leadership since 1920. I was convinced that the National Movement had meaningful significance in his eyes in the measure in which it could and would appreciate our rural civilisation, avoid evils of urban life and industrial centralisation and exploitation and would enlarge the scope for every human being, willing to work by hand and brain to enjoy a free and happy life without being a slave of the State or any organisational boss.

The fact of his having appreciated my studies about our political ideals, his unreserved and ready support for the ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj in India, his sympathy and

support for the campaigns of coloured and under-privileged people all over the world in their struggle for national freedom and social progress lifted me to a higher level of understanding of Bapu's broad and deep vision, his sensitive participation both physically and spiritually in contemporary movements for human happiness and progress.

In Bapu's scheme of social organisation, there was no scope for totalitarianism of any type of any class or society. Nor would he countenance any oligarchic and bureaucratic dictatorship of the Soviet type which robbed the masses of their freedoms. He would not set up a cult of Gandhism but rather his was the Gandhian way of life in which there would be full scope and opportunity for everyone, as he had demonstrated during those two memorable days, to make his constructive and creative contribution to the growth of that way. While these and other thoughts were coursing through my mind my heart consecrated itself to the humble service of all humanity through the peace-loving and humane ideals of Gandhijee and his inspiring leadership.

After the prayer was over, I was again asked to see Gandhijee at about 9.00 P.M. to get more clarification about some of the points raised about Kisan Organisation. I could see, after half an hour of our talk, that Bapu was feeling tired and could do with some rest. He could keep himself awake with effort and his frame looked wan and limp. I felt ashamed of my importunity to keep on with that interview and so I begged Bapu's pardon and suggested that I might be permitted to leave him for the night. He smiled affectionately and as if in gratitude but pressed me to go on with the discussion. I would not, however, trouble him any more and so obtained his permission to withdraw for the night. Such was his sense of duty and concern for his followers with which his personal discomfort would never interfere.

I talked to Bapu about the urgent need for training our public workers in the ideological and organisational spheres and narrated to him the good results achieved by the workers trained in the Indian Peasant Institute which he was good enough to inaugurate in 1934. He agreed with me that we should organise an All India Samaj of Constructive Workers, trained in such schools. Bapu wanted me to study the working of the Ahmedabad Mazdoor Sangh and said it was also trying to train workers to

take up the responsibility of serving and leading the working classes. True to his blessings to me and the ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj, Bapu persuaded that Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh, of which Sardar Patel was the President and Gulzarilal Nanda the Secretary, to accept this ideal and print it at the very head of its Constitution. Little wonder that soon after, the All India Students Congress, Youth Congress and Kisan Congress adopted it as their ideal also.

Subsequently, the Navajivan Press of Ahmedabad which has been publishing Gandhijee's writings and literature about him has published a special pamphlet entitled "Gandhijee and Kisans", embodying the text of those talks between him and me. Mr. Tendulkar, who has published eight volumes of his memorable book on Gandhijee, incorporated much of that discussion in his Sixth Volume published by Government of India in 1962 and earlier in 1953 by Navajivan Press.

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# *War Time Internment (1940)*

As if that sudden discovery made at the Palasa Session about our Kisan group all over Andhra of their isolation from Congress as well as the Communists and the dissolution of the L.C.C. was not a big enough blow, Mahatma Gandhi took the unusual step of asking me to come out of jail, by giving an undertaking to the Government, as was demanded in their Internment Order served on me on 30.3.1940, that I would remain interned in my village. That unfortunate and mistaken advice was proferred by Gandhijee, two days after I was convicted for 1½ years' rigorous imprisonment for having refused to accept the Internment Order. I felt as if Gandhijee lost all sense of chivalry, when he asked me to bend my knees before British Government, a humiliation no freedom-fighter should have been subjected to. No wonder, Government was jubilant and made the grand gesture, through its Chief Secretary, to release me immediately. Of course I refused to oblige the imperialists.

Why did Gandhijee behave so cruelly? He must have thought that I had broken the discipline of the Congress by refusing to accept the Internment Order of the Government. He was afraid that I had acted in that manner, in pursuance of a concerted plan between myself and Subhash Babu to start Direct struggle all on our own, without the permission of himself or the Congress.

Soon after the news of my arrest and conviction was known to the public through the press, a large number of people in Bengal, Bihar and U.P. began to defy the law, and court imprisonment. That seems to have led him to feel that the independent satyagraha struggle that I had talked of starting in cooperation with other left wingers had been inaugurated by me through my defiance of the Government Order. So he hastened to issue that unfair direction to me. Unfortunately he did not give sufficient consideration to my stand against the British Government, to such other facts as my refusal to become a party to starting any independent campaign. So, when many friends from different parts of India protested against his criticism and wondered why he wanted me to bend not so much before him, as before the British Government's arbitrary and insulting internment order, he seems to have relented and modified his stand and softened the blow by saying some kind words about my courage, scholarship and the responsible leadership that I attained. He was also good enough to say that he had more in common with me than with Jaiprakashjee and that he valued my comradeship

The Madras Government communicated Gandhijee's statement to me and agreed to communicate my reply to him. So I wrote a twenty-five-page reply, justifying my action, disavowing all responsibility for what appeared to be a concerted struggle independently of Gandhijee and accusing the Working Committee of delaying the commencement of the struggle and thus losing the most opportune time for striking for freedom in the non-violent fashion under the leadership of the Mahatma.

That reply infuriated the Government but assuaged Gandhijee. So, the Government launched another prosecution against me on a trumped-up charge, incriminating me in Mandasa Riots. So, when I was placed before the court by Government for having incited the Mandasa Kisans at the Palasa Conference of the AIKC in March, 1940 and for having been thus responsible for the later uprisings of Mandasa, Gandhijee advised me to offer my defence and thus ended that two months' long unhappy episode which tested my faith to breaking point in the Mahatma's impartiality. I was given another sentence of one year for the alleged incitement given to Mandasa peasants to defy Government. Gandhijee dropped his charge of internal indiscipline.

Fortunately for me, Subhash Babu stood by me. He wrote a strong editorial in his "Forward Bloc" supporting my defiance of the British Government, criticising the Rightists' glee over that unwanted quarrel between myself and Gandhijee and explaining to Gandhijee that it was not myself but the Rightists who were defying him; Srimati Bharati Devi, G.L. Narayana, Shyam Babu, Gorrepati and all our Kisan Congressites stood by me loyally during that trying period of eight weeks. It was not the power of the British that used to worry us in those days but the power of Gandhijee. But whenever we felt our stand to be entirely correct and found Gandhijee mistaken, we had the moral courage to stand up even to him. Like most of the other great leaders, he was unhappy about my divided loyalties between himself and Subhash Babu. Once that tangle was cut by Subhash's voluntary exile, he was prepared to resume his support and affection for me and many like me. So when I hastened to meet him in 1944 November soon after my release from detention, such was his greatness and genuinely democratic loyalty to his colleagues—and he realised how unfairly I had been treated,—he was noble enough to regret it and embrace me. I think I have to thank that painful period of two months inflicted upon me, while in jail, by his mistaken criticism for the later period of wholehearted and implicit confidence he came to repose in me from 1944 till the day of his death.[1]

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*1. The following extracts from Tendulkar's book on the Mahatma (5 volumes) will indicate the approach of Gandhijee towards the proposal of struggle against Government that Rangajee and Subhash Babu were making in 1940 and also how Gandhijee felt about Rangajee :—*

*"So far as I can see, at present, mass civil disobedience is most unlikely.*

*"Both Professor Ranga and Shri Jayaprakash Narayan", wrote a correspondent, "have been punished under the law. But while you were moved by the latter's sentence, you have denounced Ranga". Gandhijee replied : "There is no room in public life for partial friendships. Real friendship is in no need of partiality. I have none for Shri Jayaprakash. Nor have I any antipathy towards Professor Ranga. I have, perhaps, less differences with Professor Ranga, than with Shri Jayaprakash. . . . I also warn those who accept Congress disciplines against such breeches" as what Rangajee did in defying the Government's Order, without obtaining Gandhi's permission. (Vol. V, p. 276.)*

Incidentally, both the Rightists and Communists gloated much during that period over what appeared to be a complete break between myself and Gandhijee. But they counted without their hosts; my deep faith in Gandhijee as a noble leader and as a thinker and his genuine love and faith in me, as a loyal colleague and sincere Kisan champion. Of his own accord, he told me how he had heard the very voice of my friend Netajee on the Radio and thus assured me that our spiritual understanding was resumed. He was all love for me.

# 29

# *Colonial Peoples Freedom Front*

Our nationalist approach to the Second World War shocked many sincere British Socialists and Trade Unionists. Even after the War ended in the defeat of Fascists and Nazis, they expressed their disagreement to me, when I met them in England in 1946 at the time of the First World Conference of Agricultural Producers. I told them that we, in India, considered ourselves as an independent nation, though the British were still continuing their imperialist regime and resented the arbitrary way in which we were rushed into the War. So, we thought ourselves as free as the United States and the U.S.S.R. to decide upon our attitude towards that War. In fact, our Indian reaction in 1939 to that War was the result of our disillusionment with the professions of the so-called democratic countries and their unconscionable support to Fascist forces since 1935 and our having been dragged into War, without our consent. After all, England was content with Neutrality when the Spanish Fascists were being aided by the Italian Fascists and Hitler's Nazis, while the legally established Socialist-Republican Government was being subverted through violence. We could not forget the callous European attitude towards Japanese continued occupation of Manchouko and later invasion of China. When Mussolini's imperialist armies were destroying Abyssinian national independence, what did England, France and U.S.A. do to help the weaker Abyssinians. Did not England

and France consider their own national interests so paramount as to sacrifice the Sudetan (Czechoslovakian) peoples ? Did not the United States hesitate to rush to the side of the anti-Nazi countries, until she was forced by the Pearl-Harbour tragedy to take sides in the War ? Why did U.S.S.R. think it right to conclude a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany and thus precipitate Hitler's invasion of Poland and swallow half of the land of the Poles ?

On the other hand we associated ourselves with all other Social revolutionaries—victims of aggression, namely, the Spanish, Abyssinian, Sudetan peoples. We also protested against Japanese aggression against China. We sent a ship-load of food to Republican Spain. Thus we thought we would be justified to consider our own national interests of the highest importance and remain neutral, until and unless the British agreed to recognise our national independence and establish a fully representative National Government. In fact, we did feel highly sentimental about the possible damage that might be inflicted upon the great historical monuments of England, as exemplified by Gandhijee's eloquent statement of concern over the fate of the Westminster Abbey and Parliament buildings. When Paris fell, the late Sarojini Naidu's poetic heart cried more poignantly than anyone else in the wide world. That could not, and did not blind us to our duty to our national cause.

As irony would have it, the communists who declaimed Gandhijee's undisguised concern for the welfare of the freedom-loving English peoples and wanted him to hasten to declare the war as an imperialist adventure, did not scruple to call it a "Peoples' War" the moment USSR's 'Ukase' reached them to place her interests before those of India and to sabotage the national struggle launched by Gandhijee and the Congress.

As for the British, all parties were united in demanding India's whole-hearted support for their War-effort but were not willing, even at the risk of losing the War, to concede India's natural and long-delayed demand for freedom and National Government. So I did feel, like all other Congressmen, that we showed no less concern than the British to fight for freedom and to defeat Nazism. Yet, all of us felt bound to pursue our own varying but nationally indispensable and devoted line of action.

Dinah Stock and Fenner Brockway, my European Socialist friends, were able to appreciate the inevitability and justice of the Indian National stand and my support for it. We were convinced that whoever might be the victors, there could be the need for colonial and coloured peoples' Freedom Front and so we obtained Gandhijee's blessings and proceeded to seek friends for it.

The late M.N. Roy was not far wrong in sounding his warning that anyhow the Western democratic powers would come to be so much weakened by the time that war was over as to be obliged to grant freedom to the colonial peoples and so they would do well not to weaken the anti-Fascist struggle. But Gandhians as we were, we could not think of playing the diabolical role of Indian Communists or Soekarno of Indonesia. The emaciation of the Western powers caused by that war, statesmanship of such Western leaders as Attlee, France and De Gaulle and the post-war anti-imperialist atmosphere of United Nations have all hastened the liberation of the colonial peoples of Asia, Africa and Caribbean Islands. Unfortunately a neo-imperialism has imposed itself upon the South East European peoples through the extension of Soviet Russia's Communist control. Yet the revolutionary role of nationalism has proved so irresistible and irrepressible as was envisaged in my books "World Role of National Revolution" and "Outlines of National Revolution" (1944-45) that the Yugoslavians broke away from Stalin's dictatorship in 1948 and Hungarian and Polish Communists have revolted in 1956 against Russian Communist domination and as a consequence, the neo-nationalism of Communist powers has liberalised the attitude of Soviet Russia towards her satellites. Hence the growing independence of Poland, Romania, Albania from Communist imperialism. This post-sputnik decade has to contend with Maoist China's imperialism in Asia. Therefore freedom-lovers have to be ever-vigilant and continue to fight imperialism in this new garb.

# 30

# *Last Message of Bapujee— Liquidate the Congress*

**Failure to liquidate Congress ends in peacefully liquidating Veterans.**

During the very last sitting of the Working Committee, Bapujee's scheme for the liquidation of the Congress which had been the spearhead of India's freedom movement and its replacement by or transformation into the Lok Seva Sangh came up for serious consideration. Bapu suggested that Congressmen should have an opportunity of sorting themselves out into various political camps, according to their socio-economic beliefs and ideologies and also tastes and personal or group associations, now that the overall compulsion for their united effort, that is the struggle for national freedom, was no longer there. The CSP, Kisan, Labour leaders, claimed that it would be conducive to the growth of healthy and progressive development of democratic and parliamentary political life, if the Congress which was common to all, whose prestige and position were built up by the sufferings and contributions of all sections and groups, was dissolved and was not allowed to be politically monopolised by only the majority section in the organisation, while the minority was obliged to go out to contend with the majority entrenched in power and

also the prestige of the Congress. Bapu saw the justice in their claim. He realised how it would be unfair to let the majority enjoy not only the strength of its numbers but also the prestige and power of the Congress, as a going concern with all the good-will and the halo created by the whole membership. He also knew that a good number of members would rather hang on to the Congress by force of habit or by the attraction of its name, history, even though they preferred the ideology of other parties. He also understood how, so many would be inclined to support the dominant group which was lodged in power and ministerial advantages.

The Working Committee however pleaded with him that in the specially trying conditions then prevailing in the wake of partition, it would be too risky to dissolve the tried and trusted political organisation, the INC, and agreed to supplement it by developing an ad hoc organisation for constructive work Before he could reach the Congress rank and file, ill fate took him away from us. The Working Committee could not think of liquidating itself and its mother-organisation, the Congress, to oblige the groups and parties like the CSP which were keen on rivalling with itself. Thus, the first great chance India was given by Mahatmajee before his death to develop healthy democratic party politics was misused by statesmen who were not equal to the creative needs of India's nascent democracy.

I have felt very keenly that there should be two or three more or less equally balanced democratic political parties, believing in parliamentarianism, non-violent and constitutional political action but holding different views as to how to reconstruct and develop our social economy, if India were to progress as on even keel and the Swaraj Governments at the centre and in the states were to function in a responsible, honest and uplifting manner. My bitter experiences of the intolerant, factious and socially reactionary attitudes of the major section within the Congress and the equally bellicose, intolerant, though self-protective reactions of the minor groups convinced me of the need of Swaraj India for such a development of rival political parties functioning in a democratic and responsible manner. So I did feel that India's progress on democratic lines could be insured only if Gandhijee's last testament could be adopted and Congress could be liquidated as a political party. But the post-partition

problems made its acceptance and implementation impracticable in those trying times of 1947-50.

I had, however, begun to feel very keenly during 1950 that the only way in which Indian democratic politics could be kept within the bounds of Gandhian scruples and decencies and responsible democratic activities was for the Congress to split into 2 or 3 political parties instead of allowing the rival groups to jostle each other so unceremoniously within the nominally common fold of Congress. I was having bitter and heart-searching experiences of groupism in Andhra Congress politics and I was more or less powerless to check the prevalence and free play of all the evil passions and unholy practices of groupism. So I proposed more than once, in the course of our discussions in the Working Committee over the evil conditions prevalent in different PCCs that we should take courage in both hands, decide in favour of Bapu's advice and dissolve the Congress and form different political parties. When I found that most of the members were unwilling to dissolve the Congress party as such, I suggested that the minority of which I claimed to be a member might separate itself from the Congress but with the blessings of the majority, and form themselves into a separate party. But even that mild suggestion was not considered to be a constructive approach to India's democracy. The Working Committee allowed itself to degenerate into a platform for the cock-fight between the two groups and to function, not as the highest impartial, appellate authority and Gandhian cementing force between all groups in the states, but as the guardian angel of certain groups in various states and the Damocles' sword over the heads of other groups.

That degradation of the Working Committee came to public notice prominently in the election of the President of the Congress in 1948. Then Dr. Pattabhi and Purushottam Das Tandon contested with each other. It was a keen contest and the two greatest leaders, Jawaharlaljee and Sardarjee, were supposed to be the real contestants behind the scenes, propping up their candidates. I did not then fully realise the inner significance of that contest but only looked at it as the opportunity for Andhras to get their Andhra elected. In fact, the Ministerialist group, which was so much opposed to us, sponsored his candidature and began taunting us that we were sure to fail to support

him, merely because of our group rivalries. I was on the other hand hopeful that if only I displayed such a courageous and generous gesture of support, in the Gandhian spirit. for and confidence in the leader of our rivals, I would be doing the best thing to dispel the fears of our rivals as to our real 100% and all-inclusive Congress loyalties, and to persuade them to shed their groupism and cooperate with us. So I supported Dr. Pattabhi and our votes—tactically the marginal bloc—put him in the gaddi of Presidentship.

The very first thing that Dr. Pattabhi proceeded to do was to call the ministerial leader of the Andhra group opposed to us to become his most trusted General Secretary. The late Shri K. Venkatrao gave up the powerful Revenue Ministership, in the hope of dislodging us from the APCC leadership, through his influence and machinations from the General Secretaryship. Their second effort was to keep me out of the Working Committee on the score that there could not be a third Andhra also on it. But it failed because of Sardarjee's insistence upon the continuation of my membership. The third effort was the notification of an item on the agenda for the very first meeting of the new Working Committee to consider the advisability of organising separate Kisan organisations. That was aimed against us, because of our well-known, decades long loyalty to separate Kisan organisations. That question too was not allowed to be discussed by the Working Committee. In that manner, Dr. Pattabhi and his Secretary, both Andhra leaders of the Congress group which has been opposing me and my followers ever since 1931, continued their nerve-racking guerilla political warfare against us, the Kisan congressites, during the two years and odd period of their office. Is there any wonder that I became exasperated by that war of nerves even on that highest platform and proposed a friendly partitioning of our common heritage, the Congress, the repository of national loyalties, general goodwill of the masses ?

The next presidential election also witnessed the same rivalry, though unacknowledged, between the topmost leaders and the obvious contestants were Acharya Kriplani and P.D. Tandon. Till the moment of declaring the name of the successful candidate, the result was in doubt, so great was the rivalry, so keen was the contest and so narrow was the margin. Many speculations were current in Delhi on the previous night as to how the election

result was likely to turn out and in the end, P.D. Tandonjee was declared elected. That displeased Jawaharlaljee so much that he could keep up "face" only with much self-restraint. The strange thing was that while the Doctor was dropped from the Working Committee, his protege Sri Venkatrao was to continue as a General Secretary. A few months after the new President came in, it became known that Jawaharlaljee could not bear with the Secretaries. So he demanded their resignation but Tandonjee did not agree. Thereupon Jawaharlaljee resigned from the Working Committee. The AICC did not raise any protest against the injustice done to Tandonjee by Jawaharlal's intolerance. That made it necessary for Tandonjee, the President, to resign, so that Mr. Nehru could be appeased. Thus Nehru pitchforked himself into presidentship; the earlier Secretaries who became obnoxious to him were dismissed including Venkatrao. Neither Congress leaders nor members of Parliament dared protest against Mr. Nehru's assumption of Congress Presidentship, over and above the Governmental portfolios of Prime Ministership and Foreign Affairs and Atomic Energy and Scientific Research. Such was the comedy or tragedy of the Congress. This was how Jawaharlaljee emerged as the supreme leader of the Congress. His overall control of the party, the Cabinet and the Congress became one and the same thing—the Indian edition of democratic dictatorship. To succeed him, Jawaharlaljee chose the Chief Minister of a relatively small State. He was not in the front rank of Congress leaders and could not be expected to be a match or an able adviser to the Prime Minister. But just as the worm turns now and then ; so when the President tried to make his presence felt, Jawaharlaljee found a most congenial President in his own daughter. It was said that he did not appreciate this idea very much, but the fact is that he would not have welcomed anybody who stood up to him and stuck to his own guns. The election of the Prime Minister's daughter lent an illusory glamour and prestige to the languishing Presidentship and gladdened the hearts of his admirers. Their only chagrin was that whereas Motilal Nehru could pass on the Presidentship to his son, Jawaharlal Nehru could not do that. All the same, this election enabled many enthusiastic admirers to remark that the *gaddi* was adorned by three generations of Nehrus. Between the grandfather and the grand-daughter the emasculation of the powerful post was completed. From the most respected and honoured position in

India it slumped to be a thankless appendage to the omnipotent Prime Minister.

Nehru's daughter was succeeded by Mr. Sanjiva Reddi, the then Chief Minister of Andhra. He was so new to national politics that he expressed joy over the touring opportunities provided by this new job. It was said at that time that Jawaharlaljee picked him up for the job because of his opposition to me since 1951 and my own assumption of the leadership of the Swatantra Party. Anyway, even he found that the position was so unenviable and so denuded of importance that he pleaded with Jawaharlaljee to be allowed to resign and return to his former position in Andhra. To make room for him, Jawaharlaljee persuaded Mr. D. Sanjivayya, a young Harijan, to succeed Mr. Reddi to the Congress *gaddi* after he was displaced by Mr. Reddi from the Chief Ministership. He said that Mr. Sanjivayya was a very young man and had many opportunities ahead of him and should not fight shy of serving the party. This was indicative of the loss of attraction and prestige of Congress Presidentship. Mr. Sanjivayya frankly admitted that he was so young in age and so far removed from Indian public life that when the Father of the Nation toured many times in the South, he never had his *darshan*. After this period of drill as the party chief, he was drafted to the Central Cabinet as Minister of Labour. The only attraction of the Presidentship has now come to be that it might be an admission badge to the Central Cabinet.

Mr. Sanjivayya was an articulate speaker. He displayed enough courage to complain that so many Congressmen had come to amass riches by misusing their power. He was followed by the monosyllabic Mr. Kamaraj Nadar of Madras, whose strength was his silence. He would break his proverbial silence only by his equally proverbial explanation "Parkalam", which means "let's see". His famous response to the barred and elaborate representations made by the Chamber of Commerce of Calcutta about the economic conditions of the country was to say 'thank you' and close the function. Nadar takes pride in the fact that he never even took shelter from rain in a 'High School'. He knows little English and less Hindi, but he knows where power lies and how to pull strings. He was the unquestioned master of the Tamilnad Congress caucus and made a name as the king-maker of Madras. When the Madras politics was menaced by the

possibility of Communist ascendency in 1952, he pleaded with Rajajee to take up the Chief Ministership of the State and save it from Communists. After the crisis was over, he thought it fit to cease to be a king-maker and became a king himself.

The high watermark of Nadar's career was the unanimous election of Jawaharlaljee's successor. This was about the only feather in his cap as Congress President. Nadar's term of office has been witnessing the richest crop of squabbles and dissensions within the Party and by the time he plugs in one hole, the Congress dyke springs a leak elsewhere. The President is overworked in persuading dissidents to quit fighting the ministerialists in U.P., Bihar, Mysore, Gujarat, Punjab, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra and Rajasthan. Nadar was the architect of the Kamaraj Plan of 1963 which was enunciated by Jawaharlaljee with the ostensible view to wean Congressmen from love of power and to induce love for organisational work among them. But the Plan is lying in ruins today, its purpose has been defeated and in fact it has exposed the hollowness and ineffectiveness of the Party. The most prominent of the axed Ministers Shri Morarjee Desai and Jagjiwan Ram are some of the most discontented dissidents, athirst for power. The Congress President, known for his simplicity and preference for action to words, has not been able to inspire Congressmen with a spirit of selfless work. The one redeeming feature of the Congress scene is the emergence of a few bold Congress dissidents.

Some of them are ready to break away from the party as so many of us did in 1951 and 1959. But the comparison stops here. While we quit Congress on ideological grounds, the present-day dissidents seem to be motivated more by frustration in their efforts to capture power in the Congress ministries than by any differences over ideology. These dissidents go to the electorate not to put forward fresh and bold alternative programmes but only to claim that they would implement Congress plans more sincerely, honestly and efficiently. They have little experience in organising independent political parties and conducting electioneering in opposition to the Congress nor would they learn from the other democratic parties which arise from similar splinters from the Congress. Democratic Opposition is rendered ineffective by the proliferation of such weak little parties.

The question of purity of Congressism at the time of general elections of 1951-52 during Mr. Nehru's Presidentship and Prime Ministership also assumed a special prominence. Soon after he became the President, it became known that the U.P. Sugar Mills Association circularised all the Mills to contribute at a particular rate per maund of sugar produced, to the political fund of the U.P. Congress whose Treasurer also happened to be the Minister incharge of Controls Administration. When this ugly development was brought to the notice of Mr. Nehru in the Parliament he referred to the ways in which political parties in other countries also have had to finance themselves and justified the Congress acceptance of such finance. It is possible that such things might be happening in other countries but it is not conducive to the growth of political morality and to the independence of political parties, that Jawaharlaljee, holding that eminent position, should have justified in that fashion in parliamentary debates. This evil has since grown to be an established concomitant of Indian democratic electioneering; it was revealed in Parliament that one concern alone out of the many concerns had contributed Rs. 10 lakhs to the Congress election fund of 1957 and another contributed Rs. 25 lakhs. In this and many other ways, the Congress Working Committee of 1951 came to be entirely different from what it was up to 1948. It became a political party, like all other parties and no longer a national movement. It was no longer the conscience-keeper of the Congress movement and all patriotic Indians. It was against this metamorphosed Congress that we of the Andhra Kisan movement staged our protest and marched out of its ranks to form our independent political party, the Krishikar-Lok Party (KLP).

Mr. Siddhartha S. Ray stated succinctly, on the 24th March 1958 in the course of his statement in the Bengal Assembly after his resignation from the cabinet, what has grown to be the sequel to that 1947-51 failure of the Working Committee to set matters right in the internal politics of the Congress Assembly Parties and P.C.Cs.

"They were working under an administration backed by a political party whose hierarchy was not interested in the eradication of corruption from our national life. They were working under a system which wanted corruption to continue."

## Mr. D.R. Mankekar on Poona A.I.C.C. (June 1960).

Writing in the *Indian Express* of 9th June, 1960 Mr. Menkekar made the following observations regarding the failure of the AICC to come to grips with the organisational problems of the Congress:—

1. The AICC mettings are increasingly becoming sessions of introspection and agonising reappraisal, for Congressmen —...

2. There can, however, be no mistake about the storm or discontent raging in the minds of the rank and file over the way in which the High Command rules the Party, its stimulated blindness to acts of impropriety and corruption committed by Congressmen. Its refusal to make way for younger people in the leadership of the Party, its inability to tackle firmly indiscipline and factionalism within the party and its connivance at ideological "double talk" indulged by many Congressmen and its failure to stamp out the system of bogus membership.

3. Today most of those attracted to the Congress are men who have an eye on power and office and to that end are prepared to pay lip service to any ideology. Such a state of affairs has generated a strange cynicism among the rank and file in the Congress. It is this cynicism that is at the root of indiscipline, factionalism and frustration among Congressmen.

By 1965, this canker has become even more serious. The evil of bogus membership against which I had to battle in 1951 has become a general feature in many a state Congress. The faction fights and group wrangles which scandalised me in 1950-51 have grown to be the recognised features of Congress politics, especially in U.P., Bihar, Punjab, Gujarat, Andhra and Mysore. Casteism and linguism, which had always provided the motive power behind factions have achieved and assumed new power in Bihar, Mysore, Andhra, Maharashtra, Punjab, Assam, Orissa, Rajasthan. Charge-sheets of corruption are raised periodically aganist almost every Congress Ministry by dissident Congress legislators. Such charges have come to be proved to be largely based on truth in the case of Chief Minister of Punjab, the late Pratap Singh Kairon and the Chief Ministers of Orissa, Bijoo Patnaik and Biren Mitra. In short, instead of leaving the Congress

and openly forming themselves into wholesome opposition political party or parties, the malcontents organise themselves into Dissident Groups to operate unashamedly for the mere purpose of jockeying themselves into power but with the permission of the Working Committee. Passion for naked power and not service, loyalty to the brokers for power but not to any ideals of service to the people have come to be the hallmarks of so many Congressmen. Among themselves they intrigue restlessly and without any sense of shame for mere offices and opportunities to gain power but they manage to keep together at the time of election just to confuse the voters, the great majority of whom are kept illiterate, despite the three Plans and to defeat the other democratic opposition parties. It looks as if Congress has come to recognise handy vested interest in the illiteracy of the great majority of voters.

I could not content myself, for any length of time, with such an immoral and suffocating political environment. So when opportunities arose or circumstances appeared to be favourable as in 1951 and 1959, I was glad to forsake its protective and powerful platform and attempt to appeal to the masses to respond to the call of Gandhian ideals and approaches. We live in the hope, that under the leadership of Rajajee, the greatest and most senior colleague of Gandhijee, our people may succeed in building up an alternative, wholesome and powerful democratic society.

One wonders why the Congress leaders, many of whom had the benefit of breathing and growing into political maturity in the Gandhian atmosphere of service, have allowed the Congress to degenerate to this extent and in this manner. The absolute power that they have been allowed to enjoy over three general elections and for all these eighteen years has blinded them to democratic decencies and Gandhian standards of public morality. Those of us who differed from these Congress leaders left that party and gave opportunities to Indian electorate to defeat the Congress candidates and vote for the opposition candidates, in every one of the three General Elections. But unfortunately again and again the voters favoured the Congress by supporting it with money, volunteers, and finally votes. No wonder the Congress and its leaders have not found it necessary to shake itself free from the new evils that have crept into its political habits and

units and to improve its political standards and hearken back to the long forgotten Gandhian moorings.

Even in the face of this very discouraging political atmosphere, I have made bold once again in 1962, as I had done in 1952, to challenge the Congress and give the opportunity to our voters to choose me and my colleagues in the Swatantra Party in preference to the Congress. But the voters again failed to rise to the occasion and succeeded only in defeating me and most of our opposition candidates, thanks to the sedulous failure of the Congress Governments to give priority to anti-illiteracy campaign. Even the inspiring and ennobling leadership of Rajajee did not prove to be enough antidote to the political opium administered by Plan-expenditures by the Congress Governments. Is there then any wonder at the continued descent of Congress into further depths of political immorality, corruption and irresponsibility ?

# 31

# *Partition and After*

We were all opposed to Muslim League's demand for partition of the country. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Republic of India, wrote in 1945-46 his monumental thesis "India Divided" in which he showed how disastrous such a partition would be. I wrote my thesis in Telugu entitled "Pakistan" and published it in 1945 to counteract the League's and communists, propaganda in Andhra. In spite of all our efforts, partition was brought about and the topmost Congress leaders who were vehemently denouncing it all the time felt they had to accept its inevitability though with a heavy heart. I was in England when the fateful decision was taken. On my return I expressed my dissatisfaction with it to Bapu. He shared my disappointment but confessed how he felt helpless in acquiescing in it when the four great Congress leaders, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Rajen Babu and Jawaharlal Nehru, thought that they should rather yield to the League's demand than prolong the unbearable disruption of national life as was being caused by the League's ministers in the Coalition Cabinet. Calcutta, Delhi, Punjab riots could not be prevented by that coalition, nor did Lord Pethick Lawrence agree with my plea to instruct the Governors to insure peace. So that decision was felt to be imposed by the very circumstances which made possible the attainment of India's independence. It was wrong of Azad to have later disavowed his responsibility for that ill-fated decision.

Partition brought in its wake frenzied fighting between Muslims and Hindus resulting in heavy carnage in Bengal and the

that Punjab, Sind, N.W.F.P. and brought about untold sufferings to thousands of families who became uprooted and disorganised overnight. Tales of such gruesome tragedies were too inhuman to be believed and described.

Millions of the valiant Sikhs and Jats, Gujjars and the patient and peace-loving urban Hindus of the NWFP, West Punjab and Sind and East Bengal were thrown upon India. They had lost all their worldly possessions, and most of the families lost the lives of one or more of their members, with no identifiable graves in West and East Pakistan. Independent India could do but little to assuage their sufferings and heal their wounds. Yet they behaved so nobly and heroically and bore their ordeals in the best spirit of patriotism and fortitude.

Delhi and indeed every city in East Punjab, U.P., Bihar, Rajasthan and West Bengal was flooded with these unfortunate refugees. It is a matter for wonder and gratification that the people in all these cities managed to provide some shelter to these suffering brethern despite the wartime habits of rack-renting and *Salami* or *Pagarhi* demanded by house-owners.

Prime Minister Nehru appealed to the people possessing houses to welcome these fugitives and exhorted the latter to go and occupy every convenient but unoccupied house or part of a house for temporary periods. In this manner Members of Parliament had to throw open their bungalows in Delhi to these fellow-countrymen. I had the privilege of thus sheltering for four years two such Punjabi families. I was struck with the nobility and good cheer in which they passed their days of trial and hardship and tried to work their way to a decent living in Delhi in keeping with their former standards of self-respect and self-reliance. Even the poorest of the urban migrants who could not manage to occupy alcoves, arches or verandahs, managed to put up low huts with quickly improvised mud walls in which they could have some privacy and comfort and thus avoided the privations of pavement denizens such as abound in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

It would take a Kalidasa or a Tagore to delineate the pathos of those terrible days of bloodshed, hatred, flight, refuge and resurrection, days which brought out the worst and best in men

and witnessed the irrepressible spirit of men to help themselves to ascend phoenix-like from their own ashes. We realised that we won our independence a bit too peacefully and the price of suffering had to be paid. These days seemed to us to be the baptism of fire through which independent India rose to greater maturity and responsibility.

Bapu, the ascetic Father of the Nation, who shunned the citadels of power, was moving during those days where he really belonged. He was available wherever there was suffering and people groaning from their wounds needed his gentle and balmy touch of love and assurance. He was a veritable Christ moving amidst sinners urging them to quit evil-doing and amidst sufferers asking them not to fear but to take heart and trust in God. Bapuji's footsteps traced the trails of blood in Calcutta and Noakhali. Everyday we read reports of the sufferings of East Bengal refugees as they were trekking their way to India in search of pity and protection.

The assassination of Mahatmajee was the worst calamity that could befall the country and it came as the culmination of the misfortunes of young Independent India. It came at a time when we needed him most and the cup of the nation's misery was full to the brim. It took a long time for his countrymen who adored him for over four decades to overcome the pain and sorrow of this tragedy. To millions of public workers like me, it was a personal tragedy.

The provisional Parliament and Government placed the maximum possible funds at the disposal of the Refugee Rehabilitation Organisation set up at the Centre and in the States. Refugee camps were organised and refugee families were sheltered, fed and clothed for months and in many cases for years, till they could feed for themselves. In the meanwhile, quick steps were being taken to put up new townships, industrial colonies or estates and construct special colonies or town extensions, all over Northern India, to provide some kind of decent housing facilities for hundreds of thousands of families. Many blunders were committed and there were many unhappy instances of neglect of the needs of refugees. However, by and large, India acquitted

herself well in coming to grips and solving this unprecedented and overwhelming problem of rehabilitating more than five million helpless refugees. Mr. Horace Alexander, the eminent English Quaker, whom I have known since 1922 as a great friend of suffering humanity, testified in his book on this problem to India's performance which, he said, merited world's appreciation.

This is not to say that there was not any controversy about Government's rehabilitation policy. Several of us, for instance, led notably by the late Purushottamdas Tandon, then President of the Congress, pleaded with the Government that some compensation should be paid, at least in a few instalments, to the refugees for the lands, houses and other properties they lost in Pakistan, to help them establish themselves in this country in some business or the other. Jawaharlaljee reacted to it rather unfavourably and was opposed to this suggestion for over two years for fear that this would impose colossal financial burdens on the Government. Nevertheless, the Government veered round to this suggestion and implemented it after the impact of the 1951-52 General Elections.

The situation in East Pakistan has continued to cause us a lot of worry right up till now. The stream of refugees coming away has not dried up. They are being forced out by political and social oppression and hopeless economic conditions. At one time lakhs of refugees began to rush into India and Sardar Patel raised his powerful voice of protest against Pakistan's policy of oppression of the Hindus of East Bengal and said that if India were to provide land and monetary support for millions of such Pakistani citizens then Pakistan should be willing to concede adequate area of land to East Bengal. Pakistan started war preparations to sustain her right to oust its Hindu citizens. Sardar answered this threat with an assertion of India's might and its capacity to meet such a challenge. I was then sent to Bihar and Bengal, and I met the Ministers and ascertained how the civil defences were being developed. When asked by the Calcutta press, I assured the Bengali people that the whole of India would be behind them in trying to protect the interests of the Hindu citizens of East Bengal. The Prime Ministers of both countries later realised the need for a peaceful settlement and met together and reached the famous Nehru-Liaquat Pact. Unfortunately

Pakistan did not bother to honour that Pact after the first year with the result that Hindu-Pakistanis are still being forced out of East Pakistan. The plight of these refugees beggars description. Unlike the Punjabi refugees, these people have been too poor and too much oppressed for so long in the past to be able to recover their self-reliance. The Dandakaranya Project, which was specially developed for rehabilitating these refugees, proved a failure. Even today, this problem of Bengali refugees defies effective solution.

It was highly creditable of the people of the South Indian States of Andhra, Hyderabad, Madras, Mysore and Travancore & Cochin that they did not allow the mad communal frenzy that had Northern India in its grip to percolate into the South and mar the beautiful communal harmony that prevailed among their Muslim and Hindu populations. There was not a single echo down South of the incidents that plagued North India. Though the Muslims have always been a minority in all these areas, they too indulged in League's separatist politics in the pre-Independence days and annoyed the other communities in no small degree. Yet, their leaders did not provoke them to violence nor did the majority community lose its sense of citizenship and fall a prey to the preachings of extreme communalists. The late Maulana Azad enjoyed a great influence among the Hindus of the South, possibly to a greater extent than among the Muslims and Hindus of Northern India, and Mahatmaji's preachings for communal amity had greater and deeper influence upon the masses of the South. So when that national emergency overtook the country, the people of South India stood like a rock behind the national leadership.

The big exception was provided by the followers of Kassim Razvi, known as Rajakars of Hyderabad. Maulana Azad was one with the rest of us in demanding that Hyderabad State should also accede to India and in opposing Razvi's move to keep it as an independent State. The Rajakars pursued Nazi methods and avowed their faith in Fascist ideology. Though the Muslims in that State were only 15% of the total population, they claimed special rights of monopoly in political power by virtue of century old musty imperial power enjoyed by them. They took advantage of the anxiety of Jawaharlaljee and the Maulana to pursue conciliatory and gradual means to persuade the Nizam to realise the inevit-

ability of the State's accession to India and mistook their attitude for weakness and unwillingness te assert India's determination to respond to the call of S.O.S. from the overwhelming majority of the people of the State for protection from the Rajakars' violence.

The violence of Rajakars grew apace and led to a reign of terror in all areas of the State especially after their unholy deal with Communists. Life became insecure there and the stream of people quitting the State was reminiscent of the happenings on the Indian borders with Pakistan. The tales of woe of the fugitives were so heart-rending that I had to voice the strong feelings of dissatisfaction felt by the people of Andhra, Maharashtra and Mysore who lived on the borders of the Hyderabad State at what seemed to be too weak, too slow and too hesitant attitude of Prime Minister Nehru in the face of these vicious manifestations of Fascism by Rajakars. Several Prime Ministers were being appointed and dismissed in quick succession by the Nizam at the instance of Razvi.

Negotiations were initiated by the Nizam with Pakistan and several other States for international recognition of the independent status of Hyderabad State. The gun-running escapades of Campbell with the connivance of British imperialists and the appointment of a so-called representative of the Nizam in Pakistan were too much for our masses. So we began to look to Sardar Patel to give just the needed determined leadership to the country. Though he was struck with a heart attack at that time, he was able to summon up sufficient strength to persuade the Union Cabinet to launch the famous police action which routed the Rajakar hordes and delivered the poor people of the State from fear and thraldom of the communal fanatics. This digression is only by way of showing how by and large South India has remained a bastion of communal harmony. The recent communal disturbances (1964) in the North in the wake of East Pakistani oppressive programmes against the helpless Hindu and Christian citizens left South undeterred in its adherence to communal harmony.

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# *A Glimpse at India's Constitution Making*

The most notable fact in the making of Free India's Constitution was that the Law Minister who officiated at that task, which lasted for years, happened to be Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the All-India Harijan leader from Bombay. He was a great scholar, eloquent speaker, powerful debater and a learned lawyer. As if to avenge the millennium old injustice done to Harijans by India's caste-ridden and scripture-wedded generations, who laid down the Dharma Sastra from Manu to Shukra, free India gave that unique opportunity to Dr. Ambedkar to become the high-priest of her Constitution. The whole body of the Congress veterans who had been devoted to the cause of social equality and freedom as enunciated by Bapu, felt proud of the development.

The Provincial Assemblies, which had been newly elected in 1946 on the franchise adopted by the 1935 Parliament Act, elected us to the Constituent Assembly. The Princes of the Indian States came to nominate, with the cooperation of their Praja Mandals, where such existed, their representatives. Like Bhishma, Gandhi did not choose to join this Assembly. Though the Congress held the supreme political leadership, for all non-Muslims, it elected a large number of non-Congress but eminent jurists, patriots and many non-political leaders as members. Except

for Communists, that Constituent Assembly was fairly representative of all important national elements.

In the early months of the Constituent Assembly, the Muslim League also joined us in its deliberations. But soon after, it decided to boycott the Assembly.

Once partition took place, the Constituent Assembly began to make rapid progress. For some months even after that, it was not quite clear on what basis the representatives of the Indian States were going to join us. During the last two decades of the British regime, there used to be some talk of the princes coming into all-India federation for the purposes of Defence, Commerce and External Affairs only. Once Pakistan came into existence, some of the princes wanted to come into more cooperative relations, whereas states like Travancore and Mysore wanted to achieve some kind of independence. Thanks to the alertness and political awakening of the State peoples, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who was the Union Minister for the States, was able to negotiate, coax, frighten or drag, one after the other, the States and their princes into the orbit of the Constituent Assembly. It became clear before the first anniversary of independence that there was a revolutionary move for states to come under India's political suzerainty in the same way as the old provinces. Aided by Sri V. P. Menon, the resourceful Secretary of the States Ministry,* the Sardar persuaded almost all the States to agree to their grouping into regional entities and later on to merge in the Indian Union. By 1950, the merger of the States became a *fait accompli*, which was the greatest peaceful revolution; a unique achievement of Independent India** and a tribute to the patriotism of princes.

Once that merger was achieved, a radical change in the attitude of Constitution-makers towards the relations between the Union and Provinces took place. In the beginning, when there was the possibility of the States acceding to the Indian Union only for limited purposes, keeping with themselves the residuary sovereign powers, the Congress Party as well as others were thinking in terms of a weak Centre and more powerful States.

*Menon joined the Swatantra Party as a Secretary on 4-6-1959.

**See Menon's classic book, "Integration of India".

But, as we gained more and more experience of the functioning of the Union Government in tackling the terrible Refugee and other problems that arose directly out of partition and in facing the outside world and in coming to grips with the internal problems of integration and construction, we felt great confidence in the Centre and its leadership, headed by the Sardar and Jawaharlaljee. As compared with the stability, strength and statesmanship of that leadership, we found the leaders of the States weak, inadequate, pitiful and divided among themselves. The corruption that came in the train of controls, the factions and wrangles among the ruling party's leaders that came to the surface in all their ugliness and painfulness at the State level disgusted the public and encouraged Congress leaders at the Centre to make bold to give greater powers to the Centre and less and less autonomy to the States. Thus, within that period of less than three years of Constitution making, there was almost a complete reversal of attitudes from favouring strong States to preferring a strong Centre. Over and above all this, the advent of the National Planning Commission, and its launching of the Five-Year Plans, have completely subordinated the States o the Union Government.

The American and British political structures had great influence upon us. In formulating the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the provisions of the Irish and Weimar Constitutions also influenced us. The influence of the Communist movement and Russia's achievements can be seen in the Chapter on Directive Principles enshrined in our Constitution. I was particularly happy over Shri Munshi's insistence upon the incorporation of the Chapter on Fundamental Rights. Jawaharlaljee was equally unhappy over Clause 31, safeguarding the fundamental right of people to own, hold, sell and inherit property. Our Constitution incorporated the right of every Citizen to appeal directly to the Supreme Court against any infringement of any of the Fundamental Rights—a unique feature indeed. Alas, never did we then imagine that within a decade after its promulgation, this Chapter would come to be mutilated by Parliament, thanks to the rapid march of the Congress towards the acceptance of the Communist conceptions regarding peasant proprietorship and landownership.

We decided unanimously upon adult franchise for which I had been working ever since 1925.* We wanted to ensure the enjoyment of all those freedoms of press, speech, platform, person, etc , for which the British champions of freedom and American Pilgrim Fathers and Federalists and French Revolutionaries had sacrificed so much and for so long Indeed 'Human Rights' as indicated by the U.N.O. years afterwards were inscribed by us into our constitution. Thus, we incorporated the essence of the achievements of the nineteenth century Liberals and Socialists and the Humanists of the first half of this century into the spirit of our Constitution.

We wanted a Republic with President as its head. The Indian President however was not to be vested with the powers enjoyed by the American President. His position was only to coincide with the status of the French President. At first we desired to have elected Governors but in the end, favoured their appointment by President on the advice of the Union Government. This was to avoid expensive elections and to strengthen the Central Government. We decided upon giving emergency powers to the President to dismiss a State's Ministry and declare a state of emergency in order to avoid the danger of communist dictatorship raising its head and disrupting the unity of India, and we took to heart the red signals shown by the Telanghana Communist revolt and the 30th January tragedy. Unfortunately Congress rulers at the centre misused this power in a partisan manner.

We provided for a bi-cameral Parliament at the Centre. We were undecided as to the merits of Second Chambers at the State level and so left the choice to their elected Assemblies. Myself and the late T. Prakasam tried to introduce the Swiss** devices of Referendum and Recall in order to make the Legislatures more responsible and responsive to public opinion. The Socialists supported us in this move. But we could not persuade the Party to table it for discussion in the Assembly.

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*Unfortunately 75% of our voters continue to be illiterate till 1967, because the Ruling Party found a vested interest in their continued ignorance. The Plans did not give priority to any national anti-illiteracy campaign.

**Repeated failure of responsible Government in Kerala strengthened my belief in the Swiss system of government. Therefore I have on many occasions pleaded for the introduction of the Swiss system on experimental basis at least in States like Kerala where no party has emerged in majority, thereby making the Parliamentary system unworkable.

We were keen on abolishing the Zamindari system. But we knew the dangers of not having to pay full compensation, lest all property holders should immediately lose confidence in the stability of their rights and investments. So we struggled hard for years to reach a reasonable compromise. Unfortunately the Constitution came to be amended specially to accommodate or comprehend the socialistic approach of our states and Union.

We were so much influenced by the British type of Parliamentary governance, that we did not leave scope for the development of either the American type or Swiss type of Cabinets. We left the choice of the ministry to the Governors. How short-sighted it was, came to be experienced within the very first decade, when three State Governors had to take over the administration, on the failure of any party to command a majority.

The Indian Constitution can claim to have indicated the possibility of rapid social and economic progress of the twenty million tribal peoples, by giving them political autonomy in their own small regions. The Tribal people are given the same quantum and type of representation in Parliament as all other people but, in addition, they are to be aided specially hy their autonomous political units. In this, our Constitution has broken new ground and shown how to reconcile the interests of highly developed or under-developed people of different cultural and ethical concepts and traditions. Unfortunately we could not adequately comprehend the need to win willing consent of the brave Nagas, Mizos, and other hill tribes. So the problem of reconciling them to Indian citizenship is still lacerating our polity.

Gandhijee's four-decades-long insistence that untouchability is a blot on Indian culture and conception of civilisation was epitomised, as it were, by the Constitution through out-lawing untouchability and declaring all human beings equal before the law and State, irrespective of racial, caste or creedal differences. To implement this declaration, the constitution has provided for the appointment by the President of a Commissioner for the Scheduled Castes, Depressed Classes and Tribal People to watch and report how these unfortunate people are being enabled by Governments and people to achieve effective social and political parity with other classes of people of India. We have later made untouchability a cognizble offence.

We have also taken special care to indicate that the protection and advancement of Backward Classes—who had been known as Depressed Classes in British times—should be a special responsibility of Government. Unfortunately not much has been done or achieved in freeing the great bulk of the Harijans, more especially Backward Classes, from their economic and social backwardness. But we have removed the blot of "Criminal Tribes Act" from our statute book and founded a "Vimukti Jati" or Liberated People's Association.

Our Constitution has sanctified the Rule of Law. We have entrusted its guardianship to the Courts. So, the Supreme Court has come to be the custodian of our Fundamental Rights and all other Constitutional Rights. In all this, we held the U. S. Supreme Court as our model. Unfortunately during the seventeen subsequent years, the Congress Party tried to erode this supremacy of our Courts under Jawaharlal's inspiration. Mr. Subbarao, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the majority of Judges upheld our contention that Parliament ought not to amend Fundamental Rights. Would Parliament respect that Supreme Court judgment ?

Over the question of language or languages, we have had prolonged painful discussions. On one side there was the emotional feeling that we should have only one national language, *i e.*, Hindi, to promote the political and cultural unity of India. On the other there was the equally strong emotional attachment to our regional languages, some of which have possessed full-fledged literatures for more than a thousand years. Some wanted English to be retained as the common language as the link between North and South India, and between India and the world, whereas some others did not want to lose the importance of Urdu, which would give us a life-line for cultural unity and understanding between India and Pakistan. In the meanwhile the States of U.P., Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh were forging ahead with their proposals and programmes of developing Hindi as their State Language. Their M Ps. in the Constituent Assembly began to press powerfully and persistently under the leadership of Shri P. D. Tandon that Hindi should be adopted as the National language. Though Hindi is still being developed, it has been adopted as the official language. But there is great

opposition to making it the only language of the Union Government. People of Southern States and also of Bengal, Assam and Bombay are not willing to give up English in favour of Hindi, for many reasons, including their fear that Hindi speaking youths and peoples of North India might gain an undue advantage over them in competing for the Central services and Public or State enterprises which are daily proving more important, thanks to the planned economy. On this extremely difficult issue, the Constitution has failed, quite inevitably, to give any clear lead to the country.

We did make some provision for the protection of linguistic minorities and for the submission of a quinquennial report to the President by the Special Commission to be appointed by the President. By creating the one and only one citizenship for the whole of India, we hoped the ugly problem of domicility of States denying equal rights to all people of all languages could be overcome. But Indian statesmanship has failed miserably on both these fronts. Indian unity is in danger of being broken up because of the growing linguistic, regional and caste oriented fanaticism.

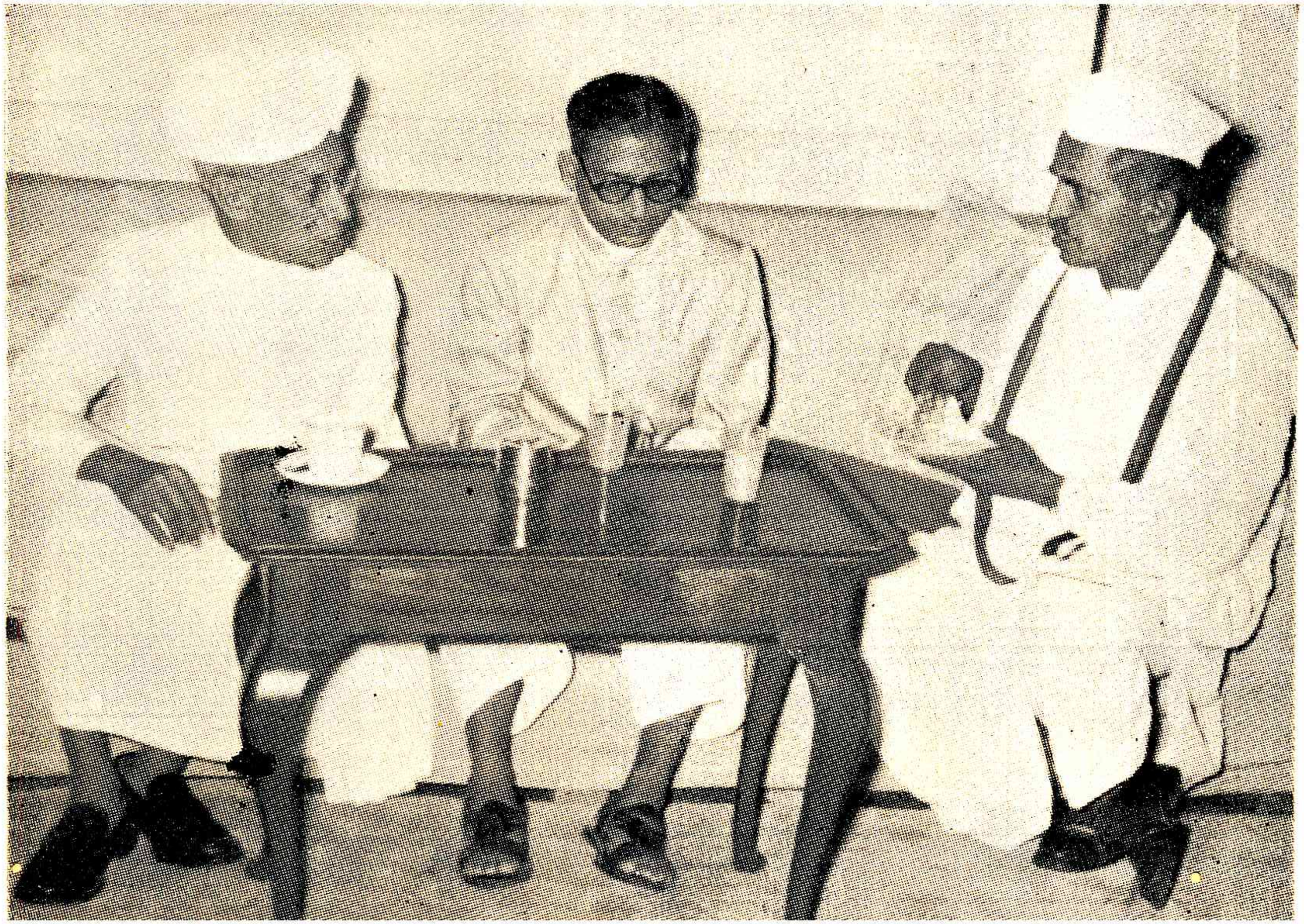
We have had to give due consideration at every turn to the amendments moved by Shri H. V. Kamath and a few other spokesmen of the Socialist Party. Some of their amendments were calculated to give more power to the State over the social and economic activities of people. Some other suggestions of theirs tried to broaden our democracy. They suggested the adoption of Initiative, Referendum, Recall, Proportional Representation etc. We adopted the Constitution in 1950. Yet so impatient were we to get rid of the feudal system that we allowed Jawaharlaljee to get the Constitution so amended (Article 31) through the provisional Parliament as to throw open the doors for the later confiscatory land legislation, including the 17th Amendment which empowers Government to take away any land, including house-sites, for so-called public purpose declared as such by Government. We could not settle the question of linguistic redistribution of States. That had to wait till the self-immolation of Potti Sreeramulu of Andhra and the subsequent States Reorganisation Commission forced the Union Government to create the linguistic States of Andhra, Mysore, Kerala by 1959 and Bombay and

Gujarat by 1960. Yet the demands for Vidarbha and Assam Hill States are still worrying us.

Most of the preparatory work of the Constituent Assembly used to be done in the Steering Committee which was dominated by the Jurists of the calibre of the late Alladi Krishnaswamy, B. N. Rao, Gobind Vallabha Pant and K. M. Munshi, who were fortunately steeped in the spirit of the liberal traditions of the democratic West. Wherever the top political leaders could not agree among themselves, they used to bring such issues before the Congress Party meetings, which were then being held in the Constitution House. They were presided over by Congress President, J. B. Kripalani, till November 1947. The unattached non-party political leaders like Dr. Kunzru as well as the leaders of special interests used to have some effective say in those party discussions. While he was the President of the Congress, Acharya Kripalani used to play an important role in shaping the decisions of the party meetings. But, his Gandhian approach to such vital questions as the limitation of the powers of the Central Government, enlargement of local autonomy, controlling of the powers of the Civil Service, limiting the salaries of high officials did not find favour with most of the Congress M.Ps. who were impatient to grab and exercise power.

The pilgrimage of Bapu through the sorrow-laden land of Noakhali, his abstinence from any of our deliberations, while we were preparing the Constitution, cast a terrible gloom on our minds and endeavours throughout that prolonged period of Constitution making. Many of us felt his absence too poignantly because we found ourselves helpless to stem the tide of increasing the powers of the Union at the cost of the States. All our hopes of devolutionising power in favour of Village Panchayats and District Parishads and removing party politics from their activities had to wither away in the absence of his inspiring presence.

The speeches delivered by Rajendra Prasad in the Constituent Assembly as its President were learned and persuasive and those of Sardar, Radhakrishnan and Jawaharlaljee were inspiring. The late Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy, Dr. Ambedkar, B. N. Rao and Shri Munshi made useful contributions in drafting the



Ranga (extreme right) with Vice-President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
at Rashtrapati's Party on 17.9.55.

Constitution. Rajajee, the then first Indian Governor-General, played his important role from behind the curtains, through his advice to the national leaders.

The achievement by India of such a Constitution, incorporating humanism, liberal spirit of the ages, stands to our credit. Unfortunately Jawaharlaljee was not so fond of it, as he feared that it might obstruct his plans for ushering in Socialism. He was instrumental in making 17 amendments in 17 years—as contrasted with the Americans' respect for their Constitution with only 6 amendments over 170 years of their Republican career.

Once partition took place, we had to have our own Parliament to attend to the legislative and other problems of governance while the Constitution was being fashioned. So we decided upon converting the Constituent Assembly into the provisional Parliament with only one change: that those members who were also members of the State Assemblies were excluded from the Provisional Parliament.

We elected G. V. Mavlankar as the Speaker of the Parliament, since Rajendra Prasad who was the President of the Constituent Assembly, could not take up this responsibility also. Rajendra Prasad proved to be a very successful President of the Constituent Assembly and his great sense of national unity and interests, his long and glorious association with Gandhijee and his Buddhistic compassion, understanding and equanimity endeared him to one and all. The late Mukherjee, the great Christian leader proved to be his able lieutenant as the Vice-President. Mavlankar, who was also one of the freedom-fighters and who had been attuned to the Parliamentary decorum and responsibilities by his speakership of the Central Assembly, became the respected First Speaker of the Provisional Parliament. When he passed away in 1956, the whole of India and all the legislatures felt the grievous loss and mourned his death. He laid excellent foundations for Parliamentary procedure.

The Republic was inaugurated on 26th January 1950 and we elected Rajen Babu and Dr. Radhakrishnan as the first President and Vice-President respectively. Radhakrishnan became the Second President in 1962 after the retirement of Rajen Babu. Strange as it might seem, the very same Jawaharlaljee, who was a cham-

pion of Republicanism, persuaded us to accept membership of the Commonwealth and the British Queen as the symbol of that Commonwealth. Such is the vengeance that history inflicts upon us.

I was pre-occupied, during the tenure of the Constituent Assembly, with the politics of the Madras State, of the A.P.C.C. and the movement for a separate Andhra State. I had also to attend a number of International Conferences. But by active participation in the discussions in the Working Committee and debates of the Congress Party which used to meet almost every afternoon during the days of the Assembly and by lobbying on behalf of all the under-privileged sections (backward classes and tribal people) and by my speeches in the Assembly, I am proud of having been one of the fathers of our Constitution.

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# *Trials and Tribulations Caused by the A.P.C.C.*

I was not interested in the internal politics of the Congress right up to 1935. There were awful rivalries in Andhra between the late Sri Prakasam and Doctor Pattabhi and I have already narrated how I was made the victim of active hostility of both the groups in Guntur District ever since I joined the Congress as a whole-time public worker in 1930, in spite of the fact that I avoided any entanglement with them or rather just because of my non-involvement in their rivalries. In 1933, there was an abortive attempt made by the late Desoddharaka, the late Speaker of Andhra Assembly Sri Kaleswararao and others to move a vote of no-confidence in the then President and Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee (APCC). I avoided any participation in that also, although both the then president and secretary were doing their worst to weaken my all Andhra-wide anti-zamindari movement. But by 1936, I came to feel that I should also express my want of confidence in that leadership because of their active and determined attempts to weaken the Kisan Congressites and prevent their participation in the formation of Congress parties in the District Boards and the then pending selection of candidates for the Madras Assembly. The Kisan Congressites excepting for the late P. Shyam Sundararao were ignored in making the selections of Congress candidates for

the Assembly. During the 1937-38 Congress ministerial regime, the Congress ministers pursued an anti-Kisan sammelan policy because they wanted the people to know the Kisan workers were not in good books of the Government. So I decided to contest for presidentship of the APCC in 1938. I was defeated by a narrow majority in that keenly contested election and Dr. Pattabhi Sitharamayya was elected.

Soon after that election, the P.C.C. and ministry began to pursue an entirely "group" policy towards all Kisan issues raised by the Kisan Sammelan. I protested against that to Gandhijee. He said that such a policy was taking shape because of the fear felt by the ruling group that I might capture the Congress leadership. So he advised me that if I wanted Kisan issues to be considered on their own merits, I should make it clear that I was not aspiring for Congress leadership. I warned Gandhijee that it would not be fair to expect peasant leaders never to hope to gain their due share in political leadership for peasants and on behalf of the peasantry. Nevertheless, I agreed in 1939 to make the necessary sacrifice so far as I was concerned and I did publish my intention not to stand again in any contest for the Presidentship of the P.C.C.

How did I then come to be elected to the Presidentship of the P.C.C. in 1946 ? I knew before I left for England in 1946 that there were two rival groups within the P.C.C., one for and another against Shri T. Prakasam. I also knew that, at long last, a number of the District Congress Committees were welcoming the enrolment of our Kisan workers as Congress members. Shri T. Prakasam became the Chief Minister, in spite of the opposition of the Mahatma and he kept out of his ministry the leaders of Pattabhi's group. Thus by the time the elections for delegates to the PCC were held, it was found that Kisan workers were the balancing third group. I felt that we had no chance at all to replace the existing leadership, and so, I advised my followers to support whosoever would offer to assist us in serving peasantry and artisans. After I had left for Europe, Shri K. Obulu Reddi found that since Shri T. Prakasam became the Chief Minister, his group lacked a big enough leader to command general support of their group and so, was not averse to my becoming the President. Moreover, a substantial section of the rivalling Pattabhi's group

was so much dissatisfied with their own group leadership and opposed to Prakasam's leadership, that it offered to support me, if our group offered to sponsor my name. There was also a general feeling of sympathy for me as I had not yet been given any responsibility within the Congress, while the other two leaders Prakasam and Dr. Pattabhi had had more than their due innings. Thus I came to be elected, in my absence, without my prior knowledge or consent, as the President of the P.C.C. but in the teeth of the opposition of Dr. Pattabhi's group. It was but natural for that opposition to be specially embittered because it lost its place in both the ministry and the P.C.C. leadership. So Dr. Pattabhi proceeded with his attempts to persuade the All India Congress Working Committee to negative the proposals of the P.C.C. and, if possible, to suspend the P.C.C.'s Working Committee on the plea of certain alleged irregularities committed by the previous executive in elections.

Sardar Patel was then the bosom friend of Dr. Pattabhi, and was keenly disappointed at the defeat of the attempts of Dr. Pattabhi, and himself to prevent Prakasam from becoming the Chief Minister and also at the defeat of Dr. Pattabhi's candidate, the late Pallam Raju, in the election of the president of the P.C.C. So he reinforced Dr. Pattabhi's efforts to subvert the Working Committee of the A.P.C.C. Mahatma Gandhi was also unhappy over the frustration of his efforts to persuade Prakasam not to seek the Chief Ministership.

When I returned from Europe about a month after my election and met Gandhijee in the Bhangee Colony in Delhi after the evening prayers, he congratulated me both on the success of my mission in Europe in popularising our national cause and Gandhian ideals and also on my election as the President of the APCC. He expressed pleasant surprise when I asked for his blessings for the All India Kisan Sammelan at its forthcoming annual session and observed, while walking on the green lawn behind his cottage and patting me on my shoulder, "so, you don't forget your Kisan Sammelan even after becoming the President of the P.C.C.". I replied, "Bapujee, all these positions have their meaning to me only because they might help me to serve the Kisans and Kalakars more effectively". He was overjoyed. I pressed him while he was in that happy mood to offer more

direct and open support to the Kisan Sammelan. He replied, "Now things have taken the proper turn for you and me and everybody. I shall be able to help you". Then he proceeded to talk about the P.C.C. and advised me to see that the Madras Congress ministry would pursue Congress and popular policies and purge the administration of corruption and political patronage.

Soon after, I reached Andhra and took charge of the P.C.C. affairs. I proceeded to discuss a dynamic programme of constructive work to be undertaken by the P.C.C. I pressed into service all I had learnt about the organisational and propaganda ideas and apparatus of the British political parties. I tried to persuade my colleagues to help me to adopt a similar programme of work and strengthen the Congress, as a dynamic and progressive political party with the deepest contacts with the masses. It is significant that the first meeting of the P.C.C executive on my return met in the famous Rama-Needu Vidyalaya in Nidubrolu of the Indian Peasant Institute, from which the General Secretary Sri K. Obulu Reddy and Joint Secretary Shri G. Latchanna graduated. It accepted in general my proposals for organisational reorientation. We decided to offer suitable honorariums to a large number of Congress workers, enough at least to cover their out-of-pocket expenses, so that they could be enabled to carry on public work, throughout the year, without being worried about their day-to-day expenses.

I had been feeling ever since 1923 that such payments of honorariums could alone ensure a continuous and reliable stream of service from public workers for such a national political party as the Congress and I knew from my experience of the working of the British Labour Party that such a system would yield good results, as was exemplified by the surprising recovery of that Party from the 1930 shocks and by its capture of majority in Parliament by 1945. Gandhijee too had been pleading since 1925 but in vain for such payments to public workers. The CPI adopted this device of paying salaries and allowances, small though they were, to most of its whole-time workers and was able to achieve remarkable results in developing its cells and cadres of voluntary but disciplined workers. So I was happy that the A.P C.C. executive agreed to my proposal.

Alas, it soon came to be mis-interpreted by the rival Congress group as an attempt on my part to regiment the Congress and turn it into an efficient political machine to further only the interests of the majority group. So, its press began to complain to the Working Committee that on this score also, our leadership should be thrown out of the P.C.C.

At the Bombay A.I.C.C., held in July 1947, Pandit Nehru was elected the President of the Congress, in the vacancy caused by the resignation of Maulana Azad. Maulana Saheb added much to the prestige of the Congress during his tenure of 1940—46. I expected Pandit Nehru to welcome my election as the President of the A.P.C.C., as he must have known that I was one of the very few champions of peasants in the long history of the Congress movements to reach that coveted position, especially as we were then gaining National Freedom. Instead, Pandit Nehru was persuaded to appoint Srimati Kamala Devi to enquire into the alleged irregularities in the elections held for Guntur D.C.C. and any other complaints, without giving me any time either to look into the organisational set up of the Andhra Congress or to explain what was happening in Andhra in my absence. And I felt that it was a cruel blow dealt to me, hardly a month after taking charge of the Presidentship. That enquiry was intended to slump my prestige among the Andhra Congressmen's ranks. When Kamala Devijee came, the enquiry turned out to be an invitation for complaints from all Andhra Districts and Congress Committees. Whatever had happened during the previous year in organisational matters, was ventilated in it. Most of those who were disappointed by not being selected as Congress candidates for the Assembly came forward to level their charges against my executive. I found all that undeserved hubbub quite interesting, as it gave me my first real and intimate insight into the detailed working of the Congress organisation. So I treatad the whole enquiry as a process of political education for myself. Kamala Devijee was impressed with my genuine interest in developing the all-group organisational set up and appreciated the political possibilities of the new orientation I was proposing to introduce, in order to fight the effective and growing communist organisation in Andhra. When her enquiry was over, the Pattabhi group began to shout that my executive would be superseded by the Working Committee.

I learnt during that one month of my intimate contact with the P.C.C. organisational set up and its working and the complaints and counter-complaints voiced during Kamala Devijee's enquiry, that the evil of groupism spread its tentacles right down to all Districts, Taluks and even a large number of villages. Whereas the leadership of most of the Congress Committees used to be manned by urban elite right up to 1939, there was the new development of the rural leaders providing most of the personnel of the leadership. I was the second president of the P.C.C. in all its career of 3½ decades hailing from rural areas and all my three Secretaries were also ruralites. This was in itself democratic development. What is more, a large number of the politically-minded youths who had begun to play their role in public life since 1934, that is, ever since I had begun to contact the youths and students during my frequent tours in every year in the countryside and in their schools and colleges, were much in evidence in the new youthful leadership of not only the Congress but also in Communist and Socialist Parties, and their new interest in winning their due places in the leadership of the Congress Committees excited the jealousy of both the old-time groups. Casteism was shyly, yet rapidly, trying to gain a powerful hold over the Congress leadership. The presence of the Congress Ministry and the anticipated early achievement of national freedom had excited the ambitions of a large number of the erstwhile Justicites and other Village and Taluk level leaders to join the Congress and gain their innings in the new politics of the country. Adventurism, opportunism and not self-sacrifice were coming to be the hallmark of too many Congress office-bearers.

Many a trick was utilised in keeping out new or adverse elements by those in charge of Congress Committees from the membership, elections and leadership of the Committees. There was not much evidence of scruples or Gandhian ethics in gaining a footing or a majority in the leadership of a committee or in sticking to it and preventing the electoral success of the opposition. Thus, there were complaints that membership cards were not issued though subscription was paid, new members of the opposition were not welcomed, election notices were either not issued in due time or were forged and elections were not held honestly and so on. It was a shock to me to witness all that display of such passionate hostility and complete absence of faith in each

other's bona fides and words of honour and I began to wonder how, with such mutual hatred, we were able to stand by Gandhijee and help him to win our freedom. Many a veteran Congressman accused so many of the Kisan workers of being wedded to the ideal of KMP Raj and, therefore, unfit to hold such responsible posts within the Congress leadership without realising that they were thereby ignoring the blessings of Gandhijee for that ideal. So many genuine and long-suffering sincere Congress veterans, who were otherwise good, did not feel ashamed to display their violent passions against each other and bare their teeth in an unseemly manner. All these and such other ugly facts strongly reminded me of what Tolstoy pictured in the "Resurrection" about Russian politics. I developed a strong desire to do my best, during my period of presidentship, to bring most of them together and help them to share in the leadership of Congress Committees and thus knit them together.

But those who were defeated in the P.C.C. election, and their leaders did their worst to strengthen some of those behind me who were equally factious-minded in their efforts to confine the P.C.C.'s ambit to the Kisan Congressites and Prakasam's group. I had to struggle against these two mutually hostile and exclusive groups during all the five years of my administration.

Kamala Devijee's report did not find fault either with my one month's administration or with my proposals for toning up the Congress. It only made certain comments on certain decisions taken by the earlier leadership, in which the leaders of both the older groups were represented. So, Dr. Pattabhi could not succeed in persuading the Working Committee to supersede my committee.

The Auditor of the A.I.C.C. was sent to examine the accounts of the A.P.C.C. and he found that the funds had been used properly ever since I was elected the President.

Why did Pandit Nehru display such a hostile attitude towards our Committee ? There was no precedent for the appointment of an enquiry committee against a P.C.C. only two months after its new executive was elected and without any specific charges and without giving any chance for the newly elected

president to explain in answer to the charges, if there were any.

Our workers and leaders began to wonder whether he was importing into his treatment of our P.C.C., his anger or prejudices formed against me during my pre-war tete-a-tetes with the Congress High Command. Their fears became strengthened, when the election held for the delegates to the Guntur District Congress Committees were set aside and directions were issued by his A.I.C.C. Secretariat to our committee to hold fresh elections for more than 700 places. I felt, however, that he might have desired to make sure that on every score, my public record and Congress administration were above board, so that he could be sure of how to deal with our committee, for, after all, my coming into the presidentship of the A.P.C.C., with all my convictions regarding KMP Raj and the place of Kisans, Kalakars in the political life and leadership of our counry and my known passion for dynamic mass action, might make a great difference in the Congress organisational politics and so, he should be convinced of my bona fides on all sides.

When thus they were frustrated in their attempts to turn the Working Committee and Pandit Nehru against us, the opposition group tried to prejudice Bapujee himself, because he was our highest authority for organisational and moral purposes. Gandhijee asked me to send him my version of the Congress administration but took care to add that he knew that I would send him only the truth and he would be content with my reply. So I sent to him a long report, explaining the reasons for the new orientation given by me to the Congress organisational set up and also to the development of the cadres of workers, including the Seva Dals, for spreading the message of the ideal of KMP Raj, blessed by himself in almost every sphere of social and public life and stating how, when and to what extent I was succeeding or failing to succeed in gaining the confidence and cooperation of both political and non-political elements in the Congress. He did not find fault with me for anything and said that I should go forward to the best of my capacity in the light of what I would consider to be in the best interest of the Congress, as he was convinced about my bona fides. He warned me, however, that I should try to win the cooperation of as many of the oppositionists as possible, since they too were good national workers. With that failure of

theirs in that last and most decisive court of appeal, the opposition group lost heart in its campaign to over-awe and subvert our committee from above and began to concert measures to oust us from below, either by trickery or by gaining ministerial power.

To maintain the Congress ministry of Shri Prakasam became a difficult task for both himself and his friends in the Congress Assembly Party of Madras and also for the A.P.C.C. By insisting upon standing for the leadership of that party despite Gandhijee's advice and by becoming the leader, after defeating his opponents among Congress MLAs, Sri Prakasam laid himself open to continuous pressure from the Delhi leadership and the opposition group within the party to defeat him. Gandhijee expected me to keep the scales even between the two groups, knowing full well that before I had left for my European tour in May 1946, I was supporting Prakasam and requesting him to waive his objections to his leadership.

I began to wonder what was meant by his advice to hold the scales even. I found that Shri Prakasam had taken up one after another a number of popular steps, in quick succession, to implement the Gandhian constructive programme. For instance, he set apart rupees one crore for Khadi, and another crore for Harijan uplift, both of them popular and essential. He proceeded to organise the P.C.C. (Producers and Consumers Cooperatives) societies to eliminate middlemen's profits to the maximum degree to prevent the exploitation of both producers and consumers of food grains through their mutual cooperation, just the socio-economic armour that we had been clamouring for since 1923. He and his colleagues in the Jogannapalem village-self-sufficiency experiment, begun in 1939, offered to organise under Government auspices, the Firka Development scheme, which was really the harbinger of the later NES of the Central Government inaugurated in 1952, *i.e.*, six years later, and he placed adequate funds at its disposal. I saw in it a consolidated effort to implement through the wholehearted cooperation of Government and the public, all those items of constructive work that Kisan Congressites had been developing in various places, at different stages, but with limited funds and with so little support from Government or the nationalist forces. So, we responded to this

scheme of Prakasam most enthusiastically as we found in it the promise of fulfilment of so many of our dreams.

The only costly experiment that he launched which caused us some misgivings was his decision taken under the political pressure of his Congress opponents in Andhra and Tamiland, to undertake prohibition of all intoxicants all over the State within a year. We were all in favour of it in principle, since it was the principal plank in Gandhijee's constructive programme, but we feared for the financial consequences of adopting it for the whole presidency and the incidental unemployment of more than a million Gowdas or toddy-tappers.

In the face of these and other constructive measures of the ministry, I felt that my duty lay in strengthening his ministry. But I found to my sorrow that his opponents did not care for the Congress unity or the Gandhian principles or programme or for the national interests. They cared only for places in the ministry. So I suggested repeatedly to Shri Prakasam to invite four or five of them into the ministry. He would rather handle the four or five ministerial responsibilities himself, too old as he was, than show any spirit of accommodation. I could not accept the popular criticism that his opponents were only place-seekers and, as such, they should be shunned, because I felt that, as they too belonged to the same Congress party, suffered in jails and worked for freedom, they had every right to expect to be called into honourable partnership in the ministry even after having differed from the leader at the time of his election. Shri Prakasam decided, but when it was too late, to heed my advice and invite two of the oppositionists to join his cabinet, but they refused and worked for the downfall of his ministry. I could not then remain indifferent to the fate of the ministry, and so advised the oppositionists to continue to support the ministry. They approached Sardar Patel and the Delhi leaders for support for their move to dethrone Prakasam. I pleaded with the Sardar, Pt. Nehru and their Working Committee, and I was supported by the late Desabhakta K. Venkatappayya, that it would be setting up an undemocratic and unholy precedent to let any group of malcontents in such a ruling party as the Congress to move a vote of no-confidence merely because they had succeeded temporarily in gaining a majority in the party, without being able to

establlsh a *prima facie* case. Such a move would cause subversion of the party's political ideals or public morality. I warned them that the hoped-for-majority within the party was being trumped up by those social forces of the nation and vested interests which were threatened by Prakasam's efforts to implement the forty-year-long programme of the Congress. Desabhakta raised his powerful voice against the Centre's prejudices against Prakasam and also against the introduction of groupism in the counsels of the centre. But the centre was then out for Prakasam's fall. I made up my mind to warn Andhra MLAs against pursuing their proposed move of supporting a No-confidence Motion; for which they could not advance any reason except that they did not like Prakasam. I knew the risks involved in that decision; that it would turn the Central leadership much more against me than what was evidenced by their 'blitz' during the first two months of my Presidentship of the P.C.C. Feeling confident of the support of the Centre for their unholy move, the rival group of MLAs went ahead, passed the No-confidence Motion and elected a new leader, Shri O. P. Ramaswami Raddiar, my friend on the Tamilnad Kisan front and my jail mate in Vellore in 1932.

I was shocked at the short-sighted factious spirit displayed by the Congress Working Committee in this crucial episode and I began to feel that I should strive hard to prevent this attitude from becoming the general feature of the all India Congress leadership. I felt so little confidence in my ability to put my shoulder to this task because I knew how Bapujee felt himself helpless to save Prakasam and his programme, after having once given the Working Committee freedom to display its hostility towards such a senior leader. So, when I was called into the Working Committee, I knew that I was up against an impossible task.

During the five years of my Presidentship of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee (A.P.C.C.) I tried to build it up into an effective political party. I was anxious that it should be capable of inspiring the youths and students. It should also prove to be a powerful electoral political instrument. It should be capable of enthusing the masses, through its constructive work as well as public enlightenment activities. It must also educate the political workers, keep them engaged in different but interest-

ing and inspiring activities, as closely associated with the daily life, needs and thoughts of the masses as possible. It would certainly remain financially effective and also independent of the vagaries or interests of money bags.

Looking at my achievements of that period (1946—51) from this distance of time (1967), I cannot say that I have succeeded either fully or even as well as I was then hoping to, in implementing the whole plan that I had placed before myself, but I can say that, I have made the best possible and most sincere efforts under the very trying circumstances that surrounded me during the whole course of that period.

Apart from discharging the A.P.C.C. responsibilities, I managed to find time to go to England several times during that period (1946, 1947, 1948, 1949). I studied the workings of the British Labour Party. I made a special study of the American Democratic Party which was interested in the Rooseveltian programme which pleased me and the Cooperative Commonwealth Party of Canada. I tried to examine the possibility of utilising some of their experiences in developing our party organisation.

But all our hopes of consolidating the ranks of those Congressmen who had suffered so much during our freedom struggles and developing mass contacts and uniting villagers around their democratically elected leadership through wholehearted cooperation between the Congress ministries and Congress organisations outside legislatures and their allied class organisations were belied. We had some warning of such an unhappy possibility through our experience of Congress ministries of 1936—39 period. But we were once again entertaining rosy hopes when, in 1946-47, Congress assumed power both in the states and the centre, because we felt that our war-time sufferings, our new determination to live up to Bapu's expectations of us, and his death might help to clean our hearts. Alas, Congressmen did not take long to range themselves into their old new groups and line up one group against another. In some states like Bihar and U.P., both the groups were accommodated in the same P.C.C. and ministerial leadership but in some like Rajasthan, Orissa, Bombay, Madras, the majority group managed to keep out the minority. Even that would not have done so much harm, if the P.C.C. leadership had been left undisturbed by the ministers and both were willing to

accommodate each other, even if they belonged to two rival groups. Unfortunately both the rival groups were competing for public favour, one with the power in the ministry, the other with the power of placings within the Congress hierarchy and opportunity of reaching the people through raising and voicing popular demands, rousing agitation and utilising the public platform. The results were most unhappy. Instead of both cooperating with each other in serving the people, they busied themselves in splitting up the people and spreading confusion about their leadership.

In Andhra, I was going more or less according to the plan of developing mass contacts and whole-hearted and progressive liaison between the Congress organisation and ministry, as outlined in my thesis "World Role of National Revolution", published in 1945. I was convinced of the progressive policies and programmes, initiated so rapidly by Shri Prakasam, the then Chief Minister. It was because of that creative unity of purpose between the two facets of the Congress and also because of the dynamic work of the A.P.C.C. and the cooperation offered by the excellent band of experienced constructive workers all over Andhra that Sri Prakasam was able to inaugurate his programme of the Producers and Consumers Cooperative Societies, and Firka Development Programme with large-scale Khadi production at its core and persuade millions of villagers to take them enthusiastically. Even then the non-cooperation of the third group which was left out of the ministry did queer the pitch and boded ill for the constructive programme.

It is obvious that once the ministry begin to take interest in the fortunes of local elections it can use its influence to favour one group against its rivals. Elections to Local Bodies, Cooperative Societies etc. are said to be expected to be conducted impartially and the Government officers are expected to behave like impartial umpires or watch-dogs. But in actual fact, many of the officers concerned came to prop up the groups which were favoured by the Ministry, in the hope of gaining promotion etc. from the ruling group in the Government and they used their powers to prop up the ministerialist groups by fair or foul means, either by misusing their powers or by not preventing obvious miscarriage of justice. There were serious allegations that even when an anti-ministerial group in a village obtained a majority

of votes in a village panchayat election or even in a cooperative society's election, the officers concerned declared the minorities as majorities and obliged the latter to go to the courts and suffer the consequences. Hence also their decision to take active interest in the politics of cooperative societies and village panchayats and District Boards and Temple Trust Committees and indeed, in every elective body in which public workers would be interested. It was becoming daily more difficult for the people of villages which were ranged on the side of the A.P.C.C. to get their cooperative societies registered or to obtain necessary finances from the District Cooperative Banks. Jawaharlaljee was himself obliged to make this complaint in 1957. In fact, the District and State Cooperative Banks, Stores, Marketing Federations, Loans and Sales Societies and Land Mortgage Banks came thus to be riddled with this evil of groupism and the people who were on the wrong side of the Ministry found their societies and individual cooperative activities seriously impeded. Similarly those Congress Presidents of the District Boards and Village Panchayats and Chairmen of Municipal Councils who were opposed to the Ministerial group found their developmental schemes neglected, their proposals for civic improvements cold-shouldered and help being given to those people whose activities were disapproved by the Boards concerned. In this manner all the people and their leaders came to be marked out or divided up into the friends and opponents of the Ministry, irrespective of the fact that all of them might be loyal members of the Congress. Hence the emergence of Dissident Groups of 67.

**Bait of Five Acres for Political Sufferers**

A very clever and superficially unobjectionable manoeuvre was devised and practised by the ministerialist group under the evil influence of the late Kala Venkatrao, the Revenue Minister, in order to weaken our ranks and to split the ranks of the Congress veterans who were so solidly behind us because of their admiration of and whole-hearted participation in our constructive activities. Their ministry proposed to grant five acres of wet land or 10 acres of dry land out of Government land to all those who had been political sufferers because of their participation in our national struggles since 1930. The Government Order said that a political sufferer had to obtain a certificate from the A.P.C.C. of the fact of his suffering and then indicate the fields that he would like to be allotted to him from the unoccupied Government land. The

application was to be scrutinised by a District Committee presided over by the Collector and including non-official representatives of Government and Local Boards, but not of the Congress Committees. The onus of scrutinising the claims of applicants to have been sufferers was placed on the A.P.C.C., whereas the privilege of granting lands was reserved to Government and nominees.

The A.P.C.C. did not object to the idea of giving relief to political sufferers. But it wanted a pension in cash, to be given to such needy sufferers as was being offered by the U.P. and other Governments, because it was convinced that the whole procedure prescribed for obtaining land through the Revenue Officials was so cumbersome and would lead to demoralising the political sufferers into submission to the evils associated with the Revenue Department. But Government insisted upon land grants only.

Then I suggested that all those political sufferers who had some ostensible and adequate means of livelihood either through inherited lands or through business, or through professional incomes ought not to be granted these lands ; Government did not agree with me. Actually the then Finance Minister proceeded to obtain these grants both for himself and other members of his family and claimed that though these grants would not amount to much when compared to his other possessions, his successors would prize them as emblems of national recognition for their patriotic services, forgetting the main objective of such grants to provide aid to the helpless sufferers. I refused to apply for this grant for myself; Devijee and G.L. Narayana, my brother also refused, because we have some inherited holdings to maintain us. Yet, what we could have had as grants would have been 20 to 25% as much as we had inherited. We felt that our sacrifice was in line with our plea to Government, made ever since the inauguration of the Kisan Movement, that all unoccupied Government lands should be reserved for allotment only to the landless agriculturists. We set this example for a conduct which is something like the "Bhoodan" by Vinobhajee six years later. Several other Congressites who were in similar economic position also followed our example. On the other hand, several of the Congress Ministers and their rich henchmen grabbed Government lands without any compunction.

In course of three or four years afterwards, most of the political sufferers who had applied for these grants came to suffer

bitter disappointment, what with the corruption prevalent among the Revenue officials from the village up to the District Collectorate and the quarrels which arose with the Harijans who had already been cultivating some of those Government lands on temporary leases granted to them during the war for "Grow More Food" purposes and also with the local Panchayat Boards and villages, who did not like their tanks, tank-beds and grazing commons to be appropriated by these sufferers who hailed from distant villages. Even today (7-11-1967) there are still some political sufferers who have not obtained any grants. The Andhra Government decided in May 1960 to extend this evil to the political sufferers of Telangana also.

The whole thing degenerated into a farce. It also degraded a good number of political sufferers. The only object served by this manoeuvre was to persuade a number of these Congress veterans to go over to the ministerial group and quarrel among themselves and become virtually enslaved to the Congress bosses.

Another more reprehensible development was the general slump in political standards and moral behaviour of Congress leaders. An ex-President of the A.I.C.C. who has become a Central Cabinet Minister got a grant of ten acres of land within the precincts of Greater Town and it is worth a fortune. He refused to give it up, even after reaching high political positions. Another ex-President of the P.C.C. got a grant of 5 acres of village common and yet another ex-President of a D.C.C., their colleague, got three grants of 10 acres each of nominally dry land but got it converted into wet land only a few months after the allotment. The worst of it all is that whereas the grants were to be of land for cultivation, the above-mentioned grants of lands could be used for other more remunerative purposes. Thus each of them has got grants worth Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 150,000. No wonder people began to lose faith in the moral standards of Congressmen. The late Prakasam carried on a raging campaign against all this but in vain. We were all helpless spectators of this deterioration. These very offenders now masquerade as the champions of the Bhoodan movement; yet neither the A I.C.C. nor Vinobhajee asks them to give up their ill-gotten grants.

## Movement for Separate Andhra State

I have already said how I was brought up in the very lap of the Andhra Province Movement since 1911, and how I have been as keen on the formation of the Andhra State as any one else. When I became the President of the A.P.C.C., the urban people as well as rural people were keen that I should take up that issue and do my best to achieve separate Andhra Province. So I began to devote considerable time to this movement.

One of the great events of this movement was the Andhra Conference organised by the A.P.C.C. in Madras in 1948 under the Presidentship of the versatile orator and author Sri D. Balarama Krishnayya. The Presidential procession, led by the late Prakasam, was most impressive. The conference was hailed as the grandest of its kind. More than 50,000 persons took part in it. Its very success provoked the ministerial group to create a bone of contention in that popular wave for immediate achievement of Andhra State, by raising the bogey of Rayalaseema's claim for separation. It is curious how big reactions flow from very small incidents and result in unforeseen but terrific results. Some of the Rayalaseema youths wanted to move an amendment to the resolution demanding the formation of Andhra Province sponsored by Shri T. Prakasam. Sri Prakasam refused permission to those youths to stage a demonstration, since the discussion was over and the resolution was passed or was almost passed and heavy rain was pouring down from the tents upon the audience. Those youths took offence at that ill-temper of Sri Prakasam which was induced by the heavy rain etc. So they rushed to the press and called it an insult offered to Rayalaseema. The Ministerial group encouraged them and helped them to convene a Rayalaseema conference at Nandyal to demonstrate their opposition to the whole demand of Andhra Province. Sri N. S. Reddi, who later became the President of the A.I.C.C. and who now claims to be the architect of the separate state, presided over that conference and made a furious attack on the idea of a separate Andhra State and demanded that Rayalaseema should be either kept out of it or granted a separate provincial status. Their agitation gave a powerful handle to the Delhi leaders to delay the formation of the Andhra province. For long years, both Prakasam and myself struggled hard in the Constituent Assembly, the Congress party

in the Andhra area and in the Congress Working Committee to bring pressure to bear upon the central leadership to agree to the Andhra Province. We could not succeed.

**Our Loyalty to the Andhra Movement**

Dr. Pattabhi who was then the Congress President tried his best to further the cause of a separare Andhra Province, although he was so much opposed to me and was supporting in a factious manner the ministerialist group in everything else. We were both responsible for the formation of the Three Man Committee consisting of himself, Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru. That JVP report suggested that Andhras should give up their claims to Madras, if the Andhra Province were to be formed. I advised Sri Prakasam to accept that but he refused to agree, and so the whole issue came to be bogged in that dilemma of the Andhras, whether to have the Province without Madras or to await a more favourable opportunity in future. The advent of this Andhra State and the later formation of a number of new states, based more or less on linguistic affinity, would not have become possible but for the terrific, heart-rending and supreme sacrifice made by that noble Andhra, Potti Sreeramulu who fasted unto death in 1952 on this issue.

Sri Potti Sreeramulu was a quiet, sincere, business-like Gandhian. He stayed for some time in Gandhijee's Ashram and observed the Ashramite simplicity and social discipline throughout his career. I had the honour of giving him the desired facilities from all Congress Committees, in his attempts to remove various disabilities of Harijans. He was responsible to persuade Government to treat the 30th of every month as the "Harijan Seva Day". He had an extraordinary ability—spiritual and physical—to fast for prolonged periods—and he fasted several times to persuade local poople to open temples and wells for Harijans. Thus he got opened to Harijans the great Temple of Ranga Nayaka of Nellore, where the famous poet Tikkana of the thirteenth century wrote his inspired Telugu epic, "The Mahabharata". He accompanied me in one of my Andhra tours and I found his speeches brief, effective and eloquent in his own quiet Gandhian manner. We became good friends. When I heard on my return from Canada, that he had undertaken a fast unto death to achieve Andhra

State, I warned the Andhra public that he would be as good as his word and that either Andhra State would come to be formed by Sri Jawaharlal or we should be prepared for Sreeramula's self-immolation. Since Sri Jawaharlal was not prepared to concede the Andhra State at that stage, Sreeramulu, like the determined Gandhite as he was, fasted for a longer period than could humanly be imagined and breathed his last. Thus, Sreeramulu demonstrated that though Gandhijee was killed in 1948 by a bigot, Gandhian spirit and strength of suffering and sacrifice for the success of public causes, without hurting anyone, were immortal and could find noble votaries to demonstrate their moral fervour and power. The Andhras of Central Districts were so much enraged at that callous failure of Central Government to respond to the demand of all Andhras for their own State, expressed so eloquently through so much self-suffering from the noblest Gandhian, that they vented their rage on the Railway properties of the Government at Vijayawada.

Sreeramulu's death and its immediate sequel shamed the Central Cabinet of Nehru into hastening to declare its readiness to form the Andhra State and to appoint a commission to study the whole question of reorganisation of states. Thus arose the States Reorganisation Commission and its sequel, the formation of so many linguistic states all over India by 1960. Indeed, a stupendous monument to that short sweet-spoken Sreeramulu.

I was opposed to clubbing together regions of varying social, economic and political developments, like the erstwhile Andhra and Telangana, Mysore and Hyderabadi Karnatak, Madhya Bharat and Chattisgarh, merely because their people spoke the same language. Hence my support to Dr. Chenna Reddy's move for Telagana state. We can now see, after a decade's experience of linguistic conglomeration of these areas, how the cause of democracy has suffered as a result of the merger of these people and areas of uneven development and incompatible social forces.

We are witness, even after the formation of the latest Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana States, to the never-ending ugly squabbles between the linguistic states over the jurisdiction of border areas. Instead of promoting national integrity, as was hoped for by so many of us, linguistic redistri-

bution of states tends to threaten national unity. Movements like the Shiv Sena of Maharashtra and struggles between Assamese and Bengalis, dispute over the zonal and political jurisdiction over Chundrigarh and Belgaum and other areas in the West Coast and the outburst of intolerant chauvinism of linguistic majorities over their local linguistic minorities as in Orissa, Assam, Karnatak, Maharashtra and obstructions caused in developing Nagarjunasagar, projects on the Narbada and Godavari, etc., make me wonder whether our sacrifices in favour of this movement would after all promote national unity and integration.

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# *My Abortive Attempts to Achieve Congress Unity (1948-51)*

I was most unhappy over the gradual degeneracy of Congress politics into factious politics of rival groups. I found that this evil was growing in every State, less pernicious in some and more unhealthy in some other States. For instance, in Bihar, there were two major groups dominated by Bhumidars and Kshatriyas, the two rivals for power from villages upwards to the States's P.C.C. level and they were as good as rival parties contending for supremacy at every level in every Committee, and every election. It was for the purpose of deceiving the public and for economising the honest political effort to be made if they had chosen to function publicly as rival and independent political parties that they have preferred to work in juxtaposition and jostle each other within the name-sake common party. I hated that dishonest development in political life. I tried to overcome that evil in the Andhra through persuading them all to come into the executives of all Committees and sharing in the privilege of providing candidates for all elections but I failed. The elections to the District Boards came in 1949. There were eleven of them in the then Andhra. We chose to set up candidates for 8 of them. During my absence in U. S. A. and Canada, the A.P.C.C. decided to pursue the usual policy of Congress groupism and give as little scope as possibe to the group in minority. But on my return to Andhra, I persuaded them to reverse that policy and agree to give

representation to both the groups, more or less in proportion to their respective strengths in the District Congress Committees, which had to bear major portion of the brunt of the elections. I hoped that through this orientation, which was considered to be most dangerous and unfortunate by the Veterans on my side, I could create a sense of genuine confidence in the minds of the rival group, headed by Ministers and persuade them to accept a policy of cooperative effort — all-inclusive effort — in all 'Congress Committees by all groups. It was a painful effort for me to have to disagree with the late Shri Prakasam and give majority of nominations in West Godavari District to the group led by the late Dr. Rangayya, as against Sri K. Suryanarayana, who was supported by almost all behind me in the P.C.C. Similarly we gave majority of nominations to the opposition group in Nellore, Cuddapah, Anantapur, Kurnool, East Godavari and West Godavari, and to our supporters only in Krishna, Guntur and Chittoor Districts. It was unfortunate and shocking to me that the minority group failed to appreciate the spirit of democracy and comradeship and party's unity in which I made my big experiment and offered them so much representation. They took all that was offered to them as a matter of comradeship and proceeded to set up their rival candidates, under the guise of Independents, to those of ours standing in the name of the Congress. Thus the spirit of compromise and comradeship displayed by me was knocked down by them. The electorate were confused and disgusted with these tactics. The result was the weakening of the morale of Congress workers and their hold on the masses.

Even at the stage of choosing the candidates for Presidentship of these Boards, I stood firm by the principle of unity and comradeship between all the groups, despite the bitter warnings of my colleagues and even despite the disappointing experiences during the elections for members. The provincial Congress proceeded, under my pressure, to nominate the rival group's men as official party candidates and refused to use the P.C.C.'s prerogative to choose whom soever it pleased. It was but natural for the rival group to be pleased with my achievement. But when there were equal number of members supporting rival candidates for nomination for Presidentship, and the P.C.C. made its choice, the rival group led by ministers proceeded to set up its candidate, in defiance of normal party discipline and moral standards and got their nominees elected with the help of the opponents

of the Congress within the District Board. Thus they demonstrated their unwillingness to respond to my offer of comradeship and unity, even when that offer was demonstrated so sincerely and concretely.

My cup of bitter disappointment was filled to overflowing by what the Ministers did soon after those elections. The Presidents of the District Boards had to approach them for sanctions for so many schemes and proposals of the District Boards. The Ministers took advantage of these contacts in order to weaken the morale of the Presidents and win them over to their own group. Thus, instead of resulting in greater unity and hegemony of all the forces within the Congress, my bold sacrifice of the interests of our group and statesman-like bid for unity, cooperation and understanding between rival groups ended in further weakening of my group and strengthening the rival group of ministers and embittering the feelings of my colleagues towards the rival group. Only then did I realise that the canker of groupism has eaten into the vitals of the Congress and that only that leader could function effectively in it who could also agree to become its votary and efficient, if unscrupulous practitioner of faction politics and keep his flock together and reward it fully and unscrupulously.

Yet another experiment was attempted by me in 1948 to bring together, in the Working Committee of the A.P.C.C. the representatives of all three groups working under the leadership of late Shri T. Prakasam, and myself and the ministers. Sri Prakasam could not put up with the idea of cooperating on the same Committee with the ministers who had gate-crashed into the cabinet after defeating him through unscrupulous means. The ministers were also not so keen on such a tripartite unity, as was suggested by us as they were on joining hands with us, to the exclusion of the ministers and their partisans. My attempts to bring them together to cooperate with us of the Kisan Congress could not succeed and I was fated to carry on with the help of Sri Prakasam and despite the opposition of the Minister's.

This canker of factious groupism has continued to eat into the vitals of the Congress and 1967 is witness to the bitterest, and most unashamed struggles for supremacy of one group over another in most of the States, notably U. P., Mysore, Punjab, M. P., Bihar, Kerala and Andhra.

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# *Congress Debacle in Andhra in 1951*

In Independent India's party politics there is a definite power-relationship between the State Governments and Local Authorities like the District Boards, Village Panchayats and Municipal Councils, affecting the inter-relation between parties functioning in them. The result is that whereas before Independence, the party in power in any local Authority was generally able and expected to be independent of the political or personal predilections of the ministers in the State Government, and functioned as an independent entity, the incumbent in authority in the Local Authority in the post-Independence era, has become amenable to the political influences of the State Cabinet and its leadership. This trend became too powerful, especially because, for all outward purposes, the party in power in the State Government and the Local Authority happened to be one and the same, the Congress. Actually a large number of local authorities were led by the KMP Raj Group within the Congress itself and their presidents were expected to be above the temptations held out by the State Ministers. Unfortunately too many presidents fell under the sway and lure of various concessions and favours that the State Ministers were too ready to offer. So the presidents concerned were willing to forsake us and walk over to the ministerialist group. Thus a large number of delegates who had been elected on the KMP Raj slate (Nominations), had

been waylaid by those Presidents of Local Boards who had secretly developed a liaison with ministerialists. At the right nick of time, these delegates who were interested in getting ministerial favours for perpetuating themselves in power, betrayed us. This shocked the public conscience and scandalised the rank and file of Congressmen. Such was the slump in the morals and sense of discipline brought into play by those in power from New Delhi to the remotest Local Authority, who had been trading in the name of Gandhijee.

And who were those ministerialists ? They were those against whom Sri Prakasam and others raised many serious allegations of misuse of public funds and Governmental authority. They were those who had lost the goodwill and confidence of the public by using politically corrupt means in exercising the powers given to Government under the controls over the procurement prices and distribution of foodgrains, sugar, cement, kerosene, manures etc., *i.e.*, during the much-hated control regime. They were those who had removed Sri Prakasam by sponsoring no-confidence motion without stating any reasons or charges against him, just because they manoeuvred to gain a few more votes.

Those ministerialists incurred public disfavour and much censure by upsetting almost all the constructive steps taken by the Prakasam Ministry. For instance, they sabotaged the producers' and consumers' cooperatives. They undermined the Khadi development scheme. They neglected the Firka Development Project, which anticipated the later NES. They turned prohibition, procurement and distribution of food, sugar, kerosene, iron, steel, cement and other controlled commodities into a racket. The KMP Raj Group's resistance to that group became the most popular, and democratic revolt of the masses and the "forced result" of 11-4-51 came to be looked upon by them as the culmination of the sinful machiavellism of the ministerialists. Ever since, public life in the Andhra has been turned into a punishment for those who wanted to remain loyal to Gandhian morals and standards and a reward to those who belonged to the ministerialists and did their bidding, however demeaning it might be. Thus, cooperative societies, village panchayats and other public institutions have been turned into theatres of political warfare between the groups and all the powers of Governments have been prostituted to prop up ministerialists and to frustrate others. Any contact

with Government was turned into a personal, private or group interest and the KMP Raj Group was purposely victimised. The British Regime appeared to shine better by contrast. This has become by now an established order of our public life.

There were quite a number of people who blamed me for having helped Dr. Pattabhi to become the President of the Congress, because it was his presidentship which was principally exploited by the ministerialists to weaken and eventually displace the A.P.C.C. as the authority to conduct party elections and to encourage ministerialists, to condone indiscipline within the organisation and even to prop up those who defied the P.C.C.'s moral and material authority. Why did I then support Dr. Pattabhi ; that too, despite the wishes of Sardar Patel's group within the Congress ? Because I wanted at least one Andhra to become the President and I hoped that once his greatest ambition was fulfilled, he would rise to the occasion, overcome his factious leanings and endeavour to bring about harmonious relations. Many a friend advised me against such a course but I preferred to put faith in the oft-repeated professions of Dr. Pattabhi in Gandhian ideals and precepts of public life.

Pattabhi's group feared that their friends, the ministerialists, would not be allowed to return to power in the ministry, if we were allowed to remain in control of the Congress machine until the elections. So, all the ministerialists were bent upon capturing the Congress organisation by any means and then having the power to set up their own favourites as Congress candidates and relegate us—the KMP Raj champions—to a minority and thus ensure the continuation of their ministerial power. They feared that we might reverse their un-Gandhian policies and work for the protection of Kisan and Kalakar masses and advance their cause along Gandhian plan.

Unfortunately for us, the desperate and unconventional steps adopted by the late Sri Prakasam to expose the politically corrupt methods and machinations of the ministerialists prejudiced the Congress High Command against all of us. My impassioned championship of Sri Prakasam and vigorous exposure of the partiality and partisanship of the Congress President and General Secretary annoyed Pt. Nehru and others as they felt that I was

tearing away the protective curtain of prestige and general impression that the Congress President could do no wrong, which had shielded the Congress High Command till then from the growing political unrest of the rank and file of Congressmen. So, though the majority of the members of the Working Committee were in sympathy with my stand that Congress organisation ought not to depart from Gandhian standards of democracy and decency within Congress politics, Jawaharlaljee's stress on the prestige and power of the Congress presidentship and Rajendra Prasad's support for his conception of A.I.C.C. Office, right or wrong, helped the then President and General Secretary to weaken and worsen our position in the Andhra and eventually to pervert the prospects of the election held on 11.4-51. All my protests were in vain, even after P. D. Tandonjee became the President, because Sri K. Venkatrao managed to continue to be the General Secretary.

At no stage did Jawaharlaljee try to see the whole truth—nor did he heed my warnings about the rapidly worsening Congress morale in Andhra or about the political immorality engineered by ministerialists. He cared more for the plumage but forgot the 'dying bird'. Our rank and file were coming to doubt his impartiality and were forced to entertain the fear that possibly he was wishing for our defeat, so that there could be peace of the old sort with his earlier friends being in charge of both the Congress and its ministry. Jawaharlaljee backed the General Secretary of the A.I.C.C. in preference to us.

Who was this General Secretary? He was the same as came to be dropped by Jawaharlaljee, after staging a none-too-scrupulous and un-Gandhian political manoeuvre against the next President, P. D. Tandonjee. One of the most important complaints made by Jawaharlaljee against Tandonjee's leadership was his want of confidence in Tandonjee's Secretaries. Yet it was the same Secretary who was allowed a few months earlier by Jawaharlaljee and others to perpetrate the political horrors which culminated in the debacle of 11-4-51.

The ministerialists found themselves in a hopeless minority in almost all the Districts. So they approached their chiefs, who were also the leaders of the A.I.C.C., to withdraw the power of holding elections from the P.C.C. The Working Committee played

into the hands of the A.I.C.C. Chiefs and so set aside the P.C.C. Executive. How I wish I had resigned at that stage from the Congress, in protest against those methods, imposed only to oust us from the organisation by undemocratic and Fascist manoeuvres! But the enraged masses of these Andhra areas were bent upon continuing that constitutional struggle to its bitter end, while remaining in the organisation. So my resignation was not permitted to become effective until the fateful 11-4-51.

It is a sordid story how those of us who believed in the Gandhian approach to politics and in the ideal of KMP Raj had come to be dislodged from the leadership of the Andhra provincial Congress in 1951 on that fateful April eleventh. We were said to have been found in a minority of five votes. The Election Officer Sri S. K. Patil found himself unable to allow six of our voters to take part in voting on the technical and untenable ground that he had not formally accepted their election, though his representatives had declared them elected. The twenty-five delegates, representing the Guntur District, were prevented from taking part in that election by the Injunction order issued by the Guntur District Court, on the application of the ministerial wing of Congressmen. This court injunction was obtained by ministerialists, contrary to the assurances given by their leaders to the National Working Committee and to the hitherto prevalent conventions of the Courts not to interest themselves or interfere in the elections of political parties. Thus, though we claimed to have a majority of more than twenty, we were declared by the Election Officer to have been in a minority of five, for no fault of our own. He minimised the enormity of his declaration by observing that the "majority" that he declared was only a technical one.

Why and how did the Ministerialists resort to court injunctions? Such a procedure was unprecedented. I warned the Working Committee that the President Dr. Pattabhi and General Secretary Sri K. Venkatrao would not prevent their followers from resorting to the courts and obstructing the even course of Congress elections. The General Secretary gave his solemn assurance that he would do his best to prevent such a perversion of Congress elections and our conventions and see that the Congress organisational discipline would be kept above the courts' purview. The Working

Committee passed a solemn resolution, warning Congressmen against any such resort to courts, as that would deal a death blow to the moral sanctions that alone could and should be depended upon to maintain sanctity in Congress organisational discipline. Yet when actually the ministerialists went to the courts and dared the Working Committee, the national leadership laid itself open to the charge of working against us by not taking any action against those who were directly and indirectly responsible for flouting its warning and by insisting upon holding the election, despite the inability of 30 of our delegates to vote, thanks to the intervention of court and Election Officer, thus disabling us so unconscionably.

We refused to accept that declaration by the Election Officer as just and valid because we felt that it was a forced and unjust decision and that we were actually in great majority and our majority was so mangled as to appear all so falsely as a minority. We said it was an un-Congress and un-Gandhian result which we were not bound to accept.

There was yet another reason for our inability to put up with that debacle of 11-4-51. Sri Prakasam became so exasperated with the imbecile failure of the Congress national leadership to discipline the ministers and hold an open enquiry into their alleged acts of misconduct, misuse of power, nepotism, etc., that he tried to experiment with the democratic means of leaving the Congress Working Committee and dared it to take action against him. I could not allow them to do that without offering the stoutest opposition to pass their proposed motion of censure against him. We had a number of stormy sittings and I had to hold forth against the Working Committee's continued neglect of its duty towards the Congressmen and public in South India. Is there any wonder that Jawaharlaljee and several others were put out with me for offering such spirited criticism, to which they had not been used? How could there be any tolerance on the part of our public with the one-sided and inconsiderate censure passed by the Working Committee against Sri Prakasam.

On the fateful day (11-4-51) more than fifty thousand people, mostly peasants and artisans and other workers gathered at Vijayawada to watch the interests, as they thought, of their beloved KMP Raj Group within the Congress. What forces or

influences or emotions induced or impelled them to go there from their distant villages in the far-flung Districts? The 'Krishna Patrika', founded by the veteran patriot and a doyen of Andhra Journalists, the Late M. Krishna Rao, said that they felt that their beloved leaders and workers who had popularised among them the ideal of KMP Raj and who had defended their interests as against the corrupt Controls Regime and also against the violence of Communists should not be deceived and defeated by the wily and unscrupulous ministerialists. They entertained the fond hope of seeing their leaders triumph in spite of that one-sided election. They were convinced that if only their leaders could win in the Congress election, they would be able to campaign for Congress in the coming elections and would be willing to welcome a Congress Ministry with KMP Raj personnel, so that they could hope for the abolition of the corrupt control regime and also the anti-Gandhian evils of nepotism, casteism and misuse of political power.

When the unwelcome result was announced, the 'Krishna Patrika', said, the vast concourse of people felt as if they were politically dead and an unbearable disaster had befallen them and the country. Not one was found to hail the victors. Many wept and more predicted the electoral defeat of the Congress.

As days and weeks passed, and as the so-called victors found it so difficult to face the enraged public who were scandalised by their misbehaviour, more and more of their supporters were found to express their sorrow at the dishonourable role played by ministerialists. Some Presidents of the District Boards, who belonged to the ministerialists, began to exclaim that if it had not been for the high standards of democracy and noble ideals of public life, upheld by the KMP Raj President, they would never have had the opportunity of being selected as Congress candidates for presidentship. The public reaction against the ministerialists was so great, intense and prolonged, that Congress ministers and their supporters and the prominent participants in that wretched counter-revolution perpetrated against us, could not face public meetings with any sense of confidence right up till 1954.

It was my good fortune to have been looked upon by the great majority of the politically awakened, non-communist masses of Andhra as the true Gandhian who sincerely tried to implement

Gandhian political principles of public work and who was victimised and deceived by ministerialists who were masquerading as Congressmen. That is my reward.

When therefore the ministerialists offered us nine out of nineteen places on the Working Committee, after having snatched away the leadership from us in such unbearable circumstances, we could not think of the possibility of any honourable comradeship with such a dishonourable junta. So we refused their offer. The Congress Working Committee was unwilling to do any heart-searching. Hence our decision to quit the Congress, and part company with its national leadership which then appeared to be atonce imbecile towards ministerialists and power-blinded towards us. Large sections began to feel that Jawaharlaljee too was a willing party to that one-sided and factious treatment meted out to us because he chose the new President of the A.P.C.C. as a member not only of the Working Committee but also of the powerful parliamentary board, to spite us as it were and to prop him up as an alternate leader of Andhra.

It was under such circumstances, I wrote my letters of resignation to Tandonjee, the Congress President and Jawaharlaljee, the most important member of the Congress Working Committee and Tandonjee's successor, which were incorporated in my book "Why Ranga Resigns from Congress" published on 4-6-1959, the birth-day of Swatantra Party.

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# *All India Congress Affairs from the Working Committee's Window*

I began to gain the experience of the attitudes and reactions, successes and failures of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress from 1947 onwards. I owed that opportunity to Gandhijee's persuasive pressure on the three great national leaders within the Working Committee : the Sardar, Jawaharlal and Rajenbabu. In 1946 itself he nearly succeeded in gaining me this opportunity but for the last moment obstruction on the part of one of the topmost leaders. All I could do during Panditjee's regime (1946-47) was to ward off the missiles hurled at me in the A.P.C.C. It was during Acharya Kripalani's Presidentship (1947) that Gandhijee succeeded in giving me the privilege of taking part in the discussions of the Working Committee which were being carried on in his immediate presence and in which he used to take part whenever the Committee desired his special advice. Gandhijee's demise on 30th January, 1948 was an irreparable national loss. It created a void for me also, because with Mahatma Gandhi in the Working Committee I could have gained much precious experience, and seen how he influenced the Working Committee through his very presence, how he lifted up the level of the debates to those moral heights, how the members of the Committee, including Jawaharlal and the Maulana and Sardar,

used to be careful about the maintenance of the high standards of the Congress politics, if only he had lived for a few years more and favoured the Committee with his presence and participation in its discussions.

As I observed earlier, I had been in very close counsels with Mahatma Gandhi since November 1944 so far as the Kisan Congress and other mass organisations were concerned. I was favoured with Gandhijee's own confidence in me. I am grateful to him. I did learn much from that close association I enjoyed with him. But to be an effective and active participant in the discussions of the Working Committee, while he was present and when anyone of us could enjoy the privilege of asking him to give his opinion on topics where there was serious difference of opinion, was indeed a good fortune.

Bapu presents himself to our memories in innumerable poses during all those long years, whenever we wish to conjure up his picture before our mind's eye, and we feel enraptured and inspired by each facet of Bapu's personality. Many a time I find much pleasure in visualising Bapu, seated on that soft milk-white cushion with the charkha before him and busy with spinning, or reading some letters, or learning one of the South Indian scripts, while we were busy with our discussions in the Working Committee. He would have no upper cloth at all and his chest, though not too broad, used to appear to me as broad and comforting as the whole world. In the afternoon glow, his skin would glisten and there would be a lustre on his forehead. He used to look utterly absorbed in his own work, but whenever Jawaharlaljee found it necessary to raise his voice, Kripalani thought fit to offer a laboured reply or when I ventured to make a vigorous statement or Maulana made a profound observation, he would slightly turn his eyes towards us, gain a fleeting impression and hasten to withdraw himself into his own world. But whenever any of us ventured to ask him to intervene and give his advice, he would turn his eyes on us and I used to feel as if the Sun at Ushas had blazed all its affection towards us. Generally it was the turn of Jawaharlaljee to give him a brief resume of our discussions. Then he would proceed first to regain his thin upper cloth, cover his chest at least in part and turn a little towards us, as if thereby he wanted to do honour to the Working Committee, pause for a long minute

and then proceed to express his view. Once the Committee came to some decision, he would withdraw into himself and we used to feel as if he had drawn miles of distance and the thickest Purdahs between himself and ourselves. No wonder his presence had an uplifting a nd soul-stirring effect upon the Committee.

After his death, we in the Working Committee failed to live up to those high standards of public duty and organisational unity and affectionate consideration of the numerous disputes between different cadres, groups, factions of Congressmen, which came up for final settlement. There were groups and factions within the Congress ever since 1920 and even Bapu could not eliminate them. Bapu was not quite successful in handling the Nariman and Khare disputes (1937-38) as satisfactorily and mercifully as could have been hoped for. But the manner and mood of facing such disputes became terribly demoralised and degraded into factionalism a couple of years after his death, and that was the beginning of the tragedy of the Congress in the post-Swaraj India.

It became well-known that in West Bengal Dr. B. C. Roy's ministry had grown extremely unpopular and that Communists and other non-Congress political elements were gaining much political strength. More than in any other State, factions in the Congress had taken firm roots in that State, thanks to the bitter struggles between the supporters of the rival leaders, Sen Gupta and Subhash Babu. Shri P. C. Ghosh, a well-known Gandhite, had been ousted from Chief Ministership although he was universally acclaimed to be upholder of pure and honest administration. But ever since Dr. B. C. Roy had taken his place, Congress factions had been growing embittered towards each other. So when my old friend Sarat Babu, the brother of Subhash Babu, once a minister at the centre and leader of the Congress party in the Central Assembly, gave a resounding defeat to the Congress candidate, Jawaharlaljee felt himself impelled to go to Calcutta and enquire into the Congress ills. He declared after his two days' discussions with all sections of the public that there was need for General Elections and pending that, for the reconstitution of the B.P.C.C. On his return he persuaded the Working Committee to endorse his views and it adopted the resolution framed by himself. But when it came to implementing it, Dr. Roy, an astute statesman,

created such a situation that the Working Committee was put on the horns of a dilemma, whether or not to dismiss a ministry which continued to enjoy the confidence of the Congress Assembly party. After prolonged talks and negotiations, Jawaharlaljee, Sardarjee and the Maulana found it impossible to displease Dr. Roy, and so, were prepared to countermand the earlier decision. When I asked, "when the Working Committee did not mind upsetting the popular Prakasam's ministry, why should it ask us to eat this humble pie ?", there was no answer. But my question displeased the leaders.

East Punjab inherited almost all the factions and complications of the pre-partition Punjab. On behalf of the Working Committee, Maulana Azad was supposed to be in charge of its politics, both before and after the partition. He was understood to have been in favour of Bhim Sen Sachar, an eminent advocate and experienced ex-minister, for the leadership of the Assembly Party of the Congress. But the Sardar favoured Gopichand Bhargava and as he was also a close associate of Gandhijee, especially in the constructive programme, he was helped to become the Chief Minister. The malcontents found a hearing from the Maulana and Jawaharlaljee, who were not convinced about the faith of Dr. Gopichand in secularism, so there were comings and goings of Punjab Congress leaders to and from Delhi in their attempts to gain the upper hand over each other. No charge was considered to be bad enough to hurl against Gopichandjee and his ministry. I grew tired of those intrigues behind the scenes and the strange atmosphere of suspense and ignorance in which the Working Committee was being kept. At long last Dr. Gopichand mustered courage to demand a hearing from the Committee and I favoured an open discussion. When the Doctor came, and gave detailed answers to the charges of favouritism towards Hindus, nepotism, corruption and mal-administration, the Committee wondered why he had been persecuted for so long. So I asked why, while he was enjoying the confidence of his party, he should be obliged to go to Delhi so often to maintain his prestige. The leaders concerned who desired a change kept their own counsel discreetly. Nevertheless, through the repetition of such campaigns of nerves, Bhargava's ministry was brought down a few months later, because no ministry could long survive the displeasure—open or veiled—of the top leaders, and the Working Committee was virtually power-

less, to do anything contrary to the wishes of the mighty triumvirate.

The Utter Pradesh Congress Committee was an imperium in imperio. From 1920 onwards, it provided a large number of members of the Working Committee and either the president or one of the secretaries or both president and a secretary are provided by it, and so its voice is the strongest in the Congress hierarchy of leadership. Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Acharya Kripalani, all Congress presidents, either hailed from it or made it their own State. The P.C.C. leadership was often found to enjoy the dominant voice in the A.I.C.C. and its Working Committee. So they had decided long ago that it would be self-respecting and decent for them never to take their provincial disputes to the Working Committee. So long as the local leadership was above faction, and groupism could be kept within safe limits, that understanding was very good and was to be encouraged. But after the achievement of Swaraj and the transference of Jawaharlaljee to the Central Government the late Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, who was the leader of the group which rivalled that of Govind Vallabh Pantjee, became too powerful. Pantjee's genius proved inadequate to adjust their local affairs amicably. Perhaps this was because a large number of the second-rank leaders became ambitious and tried to reach ministerial rank, now that Swaraj was achieved and there was no longer the earlier compelling reason for subduing their natural ambitions for power and places of public recognition.

An extraordinary situation arose when, almost for the first time, a considerable number of Congress MLAs revolted against the U.P.C.C. and Pantjee's Assembly leadership and preferred an appeal to the Working Committee over the decision made against them by their local Assembly Party. Their leader, Chief Minister Pantjee, and the party quickly proceeded to suspend them from the Congress party merely on the ground that they dared to appeal to the All-India Working Committee. I felt that as an arbitrary and undemocratic thing to do. But no serious discussion was allowed to be developed. It was known that Sardarjee was supporting Pantjee, while Maulana Azad and Jawaharlaljee were in sympathy with Rafi Saheb, whose followers were in trouble. Pantjee made a fervent appeal for comradely cooperation from the

rival group within his party and neither Maulana nor Jawaharlaljee could demur from that stand. One evening when Jawaharlaljee was late in coming, Sardarjee made an open appeal to Rafi Saheb to desist from supporting the rebels and help Pantjee. When he implied that Rafi was responsible for most of the trouble, Rafi laughed and replied, "How could you say that ?" That did not take them anywhere. All of them were keen on keeping the real discussion of those affairs away from the Working Committee. Neither the President nor any other member wished to go into the crisis caused by the greatest of the leaders amongst themselves. In the end, the unfortunate MLAs whose only fault was their attempt to exercise their democratic right of appealing to the Working Committee against their provincial Congress leadership's decision against them, were said to have committed a grave act of indiscipline and were therefore sent out of the Congress. As a protest against that unfortunate and untenable decision, forced on the Working Committee by the top-most leaders, my old colleague in the Central Assembly, former Minister of Finance in the U. P. Congress Ministry and Editor of the 'Sainik', Shri S. K. D. Palliwal resigned from the Congress. I was wondering whether if only Bapu had been alive and present at our sittings and heard my vain protests or queries, the top leaders would have thought fit to give such one-sided and unfair decisions in such crises.

The Gujarat P.C.C. also enjoyed more or less the same immunity from any interference from the A.I.C.C. and its Working Committee, almost equivalent to what had been enjoyed by the U P.P.C.C. because of the presence in the Working Committee of the doughty Sardar, not to speak of Bapu's overall leadership. The result was not altogether satisfactory. Only those whom the P.C.C. leadership favoured had any chance at all to play any worthwhile role in the leadership of the various Congress Committees. When Sardarjee decided to give up the Presidentship of the P.C C. he thought of an equally old and deserving Congressman as his successor. When the younger generation wanted to make a change in the local leadership, the usual difficulties in the way of enrolment, proper enlistment and holding of election were met with by them and the usual tricks were played against so many of them. Those abuses were brought to the notice of Jawaharlaljee, years after Bapu's death, and he tried to bring some of them to the notice of the Working Committee, but the

presence of the Sardar made him mention the complaints of the dissident Congressmen in Gujarat only by the way. When I visited Gujarat after I had left the Congress in 1952 and was touring the countryside, I was surprised to find how narrow had become the base for Congress membership in that sacred area of Bapu and Sardarjee. The 1957 General Elections displayed the extent to which the Congress organisations had gone on rotting in that land of Gujarat.

Bihar was not known to have been one of the problem states, as Bengal and Punjab had been, until 1937, that is, until Congress took office in the local Government. During that 1937-39 period of power, rivalries between my two good friends and Rajan Babu's principal followers and colleagues, the late Shri Krishna Sinha (Bhumiar) and Anugrah Narain Sinha (Kshatriya) came to the surface and caused a rift among Congressmen from the village right up to Patna. The Kisan Movement led so vigorously by the late Swami Shajanand Saraswati did much, during that period, to weaken the hold of the Congress leaders over peasants, because of their unreadiness to take timely steps to relieve the Kisans' distress and to control the repressive activities of Zamindars. As in U. P. so in Bihar, most of the top-ranking Congress leaders from the District Congress upwards hailed from Zamindari families, and so their response to Kisan demands was never a spontaneous emotional reaction. By 1946, their moral integrity was weakened, their mutual rivalries were solidified into factious attitudes towards each other and they were no longer willing to maintain the semblance of unity among all Congressmen. It was with great difficulty and because of the statesmanship of Anugrah Babu, that Sri Babu's leadership was allowed to be continued right up till 1951. But the storm was very much on the surface.

In Bihar, the good leadership of Rajen Babu as the President of the P.C.C. for decades did not prove conducive to the development of a sufficient number of leaders of the first rank, able to take his place with ease and control, inspire and guide the rank and file Congressmen when the time came for him to go to Delhi. Those two big leaders who were next to him were obliged to be in the ministry and were at loggerheads with each other. There were not eminent enough leaders to keep the

Congress house in order. So the ministry which was dominated by them could not be controlled by Congressmen.

There was an open scandal over the grant of vast areas of lands from a Zamindari estate which was under the management of the court of wards to certain families in which some of the ministers were specially interested. There was no proper payment made for the lands. All sorts of allegations were being made by those interested. My friend, a prominent Forward Bloc and PSP leader, Sree Mahamaya Prasad Sinha held great public meetings to demand an open enquiry. Things reached such a pass that it had to be brought before the Working Committee, in spite of the sorrow it caused to Rajen Babu, because Bihar had never before been obliged thus to stand as the accused. Working Committee had all consideration and tried its best to get it settled through Rajen Babu's good offices. When nothing else availed, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was requested to study the whole ugly affair and suggest a way out. He found out to his horror that the President of the P.C.C. who was also asked at one time to intercede in the dispute, had received a portion of the disputed lands and later converted it into a Trust Property for some Ashram of his. On his report, the Working Committee decided, after much cogitation, to ask the State Congress Government to take steps to return the lands to the original owners and also to the tenants who had been displaced. On one legal pretext or the other, the implementation of that recommendation was delayed for years, creating thus an ugly atmosphere of corruption and shady transactions.

Since then Bihar Congressmen have come no nearer to each other. They live as if they belong to two irreconcilable political groups and they are thus represented and functioning in the PCC and ministry. At the last occasion of the choice of the leader, Sri Babu who had been ill for years was not allowed to withdraw in favour of Anugrah Babu, who had also been ill for nearly as long, and in the bitterest contest they had, Sri Babu got the majority. In name the Congress was in power in Bihar but in spirit, it was long dead. The Working Committee is certainly unable to come to grips with that situation. I warned it as long ago as 1950-51 about these possibilities but when it comes to such States, where

great personalities are involved, it is struck with paralytic short-sightedness and imbecility.*

The then Madras Presidency had the two full-fledged P.C.Cs. of Andhra and Tamiland to serve the political needs of those principal areas included in it. Shri Kamraj Nadar became the President of the Tamiland P.C.C. in January 1940, thanks to the rivalry between the Late Satyamurti and Sri Rajagopalachari, the two giants of Congress politics after the retirement of the late S. Srinivasa Ayyangar. He had ever since been busy with the sole task of consolidating his position within the Congress organisation, since, on the public-relations side of the Congress, Satyamurti continued to spread the Congress message among the masses right up to the time of his death, and thereafter Prakasam performed the same duty for Kamraj's benefit right up to 1946. He stood by him even when Gandhijee felt constrained to castigate Sri Nadar for his "cliquism". Kamraj was so much opposed to Rajajee's return to the Chief Ministership of Madras that he encouraged Prakasam and tried to help him to become the Chief Minister in 1946. But when it was known that Gandhijee and Sardarjee would be displeased if Prakasam was supported, he set up the late Muthuranga Mudaliar to contest Prakasam. When Prakasam was nevertheless elected in 1946, he offered to cooperate with him, and advised such of his followers as were nominated by him and accepted by Prakasam to work as ministers. Because one of his nominees was not accepted by Prakasam in one of his unwise moods, Kamraj took offence and began to work for the downfall of Prakasam. Taking avdantage of the presence of this large rival group of Congress MLAs of Andhra and also of the vantage position occupied by his own nominees within the ministry, he worked quietly with his usual acumen, and achieved his objective of defeating Prakasam within the first year of his rise to the Chief Ministership.

Sri O. P. Ramaswami Reddiar, the next Chief Minister, was not so experienced in administration, nor did he have an all-presidency-wide reputation. So his ministerial colleagues made haste to favour a number of their supporters during those 'days of controls. Every favourable order by Government has come to

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**Congress ministry came to be defeated in 1967 general elections and replaced by M. N. Prasad's coalition ministry.*

mean, thanks to growing power of the State, so much of a fortune to the favoured few—from the granting of a licence for selling rice or wheat, Kerosene oil, sugar or manure, cement, iron, etc., which were then controlled commodities in any village or part of a town, to the sanctioning of Government loans to dig or repair a well or a tank, to build an oil, Vanaspathi or textile mill, or the issue of a licence to open a cinema hall or a small flour or rice mill or to run buses on certain routes. The ministers distributed their favours among their caste, faction and party friends. Every social activity had become an important function of Government, which could be conferred as a special favour by the fiat of a minister upon anyone or any group specially favoured by him. Many a minister indulged in that nefarious exercise of the Government powers, in Madras as in every other State. Sri Prakasam came to know of a number of instances in which this improper use of Governmental powers was feared to have resulted in special benefits either directly or indirectly to some of the ministers or their immidiate favourites. He prepared a charge sheet against the ministers concerned and placed it before the all India leaders. When his attempts to interest the triumvirate of our leaders, namely, Sardar, Jawaharlal and Maulana, had failed, he placed it formally before A.P.C.C. and wanted me to send it up to the All India Working Committee. I felt that it deserved a careful study by the Working Committee. Even then I appointed a sub-committee of three to go through it and then send it up to the Working Committee. But the latter was very unwilling to take it up for serious consideration, especially because, by that time, one of the accused ministers, Sri Kala Venkatrao, had become one of the General Secretaries of the Congress and the godfather of all the accused ministers, and Dr. Pattabhi was the President. But Sri Prakasam gave no peace to members of the Working Committee through his various moves, and I had continually to remind the Working Committee, while incurring growing resentment of the new triumvirate (Nehru, Patel and Pattabhi) against myself, of their duty to investigate the allegations. It took nearly two years before the Working Committee could be persuaded to appoint a sub-committee to study the charge sheet. In the end, the Working Committee was told, despite my dissent, that there was nothing substantial in the charges to merit either the resignation of the whole ministry or the dismissal of any of the ministers concerned. Is there any wonder that public faith in the bonafides of

the topmost leadership of the Congress came to be badly shaken up ? The public knew how Government loans were utilised by many of the beneficiaries for purposes other than the stated one. Indeed, one of the big concerns to which a large sum was loaned by Government has gone to pieces; its Tiles Factory was dismantled and sold and its directors were hauled up before the courts for the repayment of Government loan. Till 1965, that public loan had not yet been recovered. Its managing director became a minister in 1962. India of 1965 after the death of Nehru has become the heir to the culmination of all such misdeeds of that ministry in 1947-48, and so many successive ministries in different States during all these years. Parliament has had to witness the scandals perpetrated by the Chief Ministers of Punjab and Orissa because our warnings had not been heeded.

Similar complaints were made against certain ministers of the U. P. Government of the Control period. When nothing was done by the Working Committee, the people of Agra took law into their own hands, boycotted the visit of the ministers concerned, mobbed the most unpopular ministers and insulted the Congress ministry as never before. Yet the Congress ministry in U. P. and in Madras continued to hug and misuse the powers given by the Control Raj. And the Working Committee remained a helpless witness, and all my attempts to make it take some action or other to check the spread of that rot were of no avail.

Sri Khandubhai Desai, one of the leaders of the Ahmedabad Mill Mazdoor Union, published a pamphlet and spoke repeatedly in Parliament, complaining of the huge profits made by the Textile mill-owners out of the defective administration of yarn and cloth controls. The prices of yarn and cloth were kept up so high as to enable the least efficient mill to remain in production. On top of it, much of the yarn and cloth produced was left out of account and was allowed to be sold clandestinely at exorbitant prices. We all demanded better administration from the Textile Commissioner, the lowering of control prices and direct supplies of yarn to weavers, but all in vain. Why did the Bombay and Central Governments allow such a racket to prevail for so long ? Why did the Working Committee fail to give any strong directives to those Governments ? The powerful Gujarat capitalists and the more powerful textile magnates could not be touched by the inner

circle of the national leadership of the Congress. How could the Congress cabinets deal impartially and independently with national issues, when they openly welcomed donations, running into crores, from each group of industrialists and threaten to cold shoulder those who would not open their purse-strings to their party bosses.

This evil of political corruption, which we espied in Madras and protested against so long ago as 1948, has grown to dangerous proportions and become a wide-spread malady of our democracy. The reports of the Das Commission over the charges against Punjab Chief Minister, of the Central Bureau of Investigation over the charges against the two ex-Chief Ministers of Orissa, the High Court Judgment against the President of the P.C.C. of Madhya Pradesh are the vindication of the heroic fight initiated by the late Prakasam and the Andhra P.C.C. under my leadership so long ago as 1948. The report of the Santhanam Committee on Anti-Corruption indicates how the Indian democracy has not succeeded to overcome the evils of corruption, even 17 years after our first powerful warning and protest.

# *Evils of Controls Regime*

## Regime of Controls

The declaration of War brought in the regime of controls. Within the very first week of that declaration, the press was flooded with the reports of the Ordinances about price controls and police raids on markets to control prices. Besides my other anxieties as to the right policies to be adopted and pursued concerning our national struggle for freedom and the rival attitudes of the Congress, Leftists, Kisan Congress, I had to meet this new challenge.

I recollected how during the first World War, some of our Kisan elders, notably the late K.V. Chalapatayya and Desabhakta of Coastal Andhra, rose boldly in defence of our peasants and worked for the relaxation of the controls over agricultural prices and movement of our food grains. I had to turn in my mind such possibilities as being accused of pleading for profiteering by Kisans during the war crisis, being indifferent to the welfare of the urban masses, notably the proletariat and keen only on the welfare of the Kisan class. I knew however how agricultural prices had been below remunerative levels ever since 1922; disastrously lower than subsistence levels between 1929-35, and sluggish in rising to the subsistence levels, and how even the 1939

prices were far below remunerative levels. I was also aware of the extreme sensitiveness of the Government of India to any obstruction to its War-time economic measures and of the Congress Ministries' hesitation to back up the Kisan demands at that crucial juncture.

I decided to plead that peasants ought to be allowed to recover from the shocks—so painful—of the past 15 years' long economic depression and official neglect to help them to gain a portion of the back-log and achieve parity with the inevitable War-time rise in prices—both open and controlled—of all other commodities and services. To such a plea neither the proletariat nor the commercial and industrial and professional classes could be expected to raise any legitimate objection, since they too would be asking for similar consideration for their own war-induced new demands for protection. There was no guarantee that the press, which has been so overwhelmingly urban-minded and controlled by urban millionaires and others, would give any consideration to the genuine needs of our peasants for protection—or rather for absence of controls—until they regained their essential parity with the non-agricultural classes.

In spite of all this, I quickly decided to come out with my statements warning Government against any untimely controls over agricultural prices and demanding that if and when controls were thought of, remunerative levels of prices should be prescribed for food grains and other agricultural produce. The press was not too antagonistic, though it was not enthusiastic in my support. The C.P.I. reacted violently against my stand and criticised it as calculated to raise the urban costs of living. I retorted that the interests of seventy per cent of our population also needed protection.

The A I.C.C. was meeting at Wardha to settle the Congress attitude towards War. The Anti-Imperialist conference was meeting within the same week at Nagpur under the Presidentship of Subhash Babu. Mine was an important role in both the conferences, as a representative of the Left Consolidation Committee. I raised this question of protection of peasants against the threat of controls in my informal discussions with the Ministers present at the former and the Leftist leaders at the

latter. I found a more friendly and sympathetic attitude towards peasants' interests among the ministers and just the contrary attitude among most of the Leftist leaders. The Congress Ministers agreed to advise the Government of India not to impose controls over food grains until the agricultural price levels rose sufficiently to cover at least the costs of cultivation. That was a big score for me.

Then I went to Delhi, talked to the officials of the Agriculture Ministry and succeeded in persuading them to hold their action for at least some time. Mr. Khareghat, I.C.S., who was then powerful, displayed great sympathy for peasants and agreed with my standpoint and promised to see that agricultural prices would be allowed to rise appreciably. So, when I had to go to jail in April, 1940, I had some satisfaction that peasants' interests would be safe for some time at least. The last bit of advice I gave to Devijee before I was taken into jail was to keep a careful watch over price movements and see that Government did not demand any greater sacrifice from our peasants than it would demand and obtain from other classes during that war period.

By 1942, Government found it necessary to control the prices of wheat. But the late Sri Chowdhari Chhoturam, a Minister in Punjab Gevernment and a redoubtable leader of Punjab Kisans—a good friend of mine—took care to see that not too low a price was fixed and that not too much of the peasants' wheat was compulsorily procured by Government at that controlled price. For a few months in 1943, the Central Government found it necessary to maintain those controls but realised how impossible it was to enforce it in the face of the obvious disinclination of Punjab Government to cooperate with them. The outbreak of the Bengal famine and the outcry for quick and adequate procurement of wheat for despatch to Bengal emboldened the Government of India to impose price controls over wheat and rice.

Sri Chhotu Ram succeeded, however, in obtaining a reasonable controlled price for Punjab wheat. Andhra and Orissa have been surplus-rice areas but their provincial governments were not so keen on protecting the rice producers. So the control price levels were too low. The policy of procurement was also so one-sided that the local officials in charge of procurement had

plenty of scope to indulge in corruption. Thus, most of the officers from village officials right up to the District Supply Officers, with the intervening Firka and Taluk supply officers, (FSO's, TSO's) began to levy their tolls on peasants, rice-millers and merchants in order to allow them to keep with themselves some surplus production to be sold in the free markets. The only way that the village officials could avoid incurring the hostility of peasants was by under-estimating the average production levels and also the possible surplus produce of each peasant family and thus leaving some margin of surplus, which peasants could manage to sell in the open market. But as the procurement of more and more supplies of rice was being enforced, the hierarchy of officials had no other choice but to force peasants to give up more and more of their tiny surpluses. In this process of applying repeated squeezes, those villages whose leaders were united and clever at propitiating officials and those big land-holding peasants who could influence officials through suitable entertainments or bribes were able to gain at the cost of all others. In this way, a system of unjust discrimination came to prevail, in which honest or powerless peasants and helpless villagers suffered very much. Bharati Devi, B. Ramachandra Reddy, G. L. Narayana and others interested in Kisans put up a valiant fight to get at least a reasonable level of prices fixed for rice, but they could not achieve much success. So they decided to organise Food-Grain Producers' Conferences.

Just as this system of exploitation of peasants as a whole and discrimination against honest peasants was being perfected, I was released from my detention. As luck would have it, I reached NIDUBROLU on the very day on which the Andhra Provincial Food-Grains Producers' Conference was being held under the Presidentship of the late Marena Subbarao of East Godavari, a loyal Kisan leader. I inaugurated the Conference and made a fighting speech exhorting Kisans to be ready for all eventualities in case a reasonable price level was not fixed by Government and adequate quantities of rice were not allowed to be kept by rice-producers for the maintenance of their family-members and paying in kind to agricultural workers. The Conference demanded that in place of the then prevailing price of Rs. 10/8/- per maund of paddy of 166 lbs. a price of Rs. 12/8/- per maund should be fixed for coarse type of paddy.

To have taken that stand during that Ordinance Raj was an extremely risky thing for all those peasants and especially for myself who had been released after 4½ years of incarceration. But that was the time for such a bold lead.

During the four days of my stay at home, I received deputations of peasants from different parts of Andhra. Those who were living by the sea-coast complained of their own extreme need for rice-supplies, as their own production was not enough even for six months. They said that they were obliged to pay twice as much as the towns-people for the controlled rice supplies which were so inadequate and the only way they could supplement their open purchases was by stealthily conveying head-loads of rice, at night, from the rice-surplus areas. The weavers of Chirala, Perala, Vetapalem—the biggest handloom production area—said that they would be happy if the controls were removed. They were obliged to pay so much more for the so-called rations which were so inadequate and so much more costly and so bad in quality. They were paying twice as much more for the larger supplies they were obliged to get through the poor workers who were good enough to carry head-loads of rice, running all sorts of risks of being caught by the police, village officials and even railway staff. The Kisan leaders from Rayalaseema bitterly complained of the too high prices of rice prevalent in their areas, extremely short supplies of rice in all their markets, the utterly bad quality of rationed rice and the corruption—open and unashamed—prevalent in the ration-shops and in all ranks of supply and procurement officials. On my way to Sevagram from which I received a summons to meet the Mahatma, I stopped for a few days in the famine-stricken Srikakulam district and found that the local unemployed people were migrating to the neighbouring Orissa province in search of cheaper rice, since they could not get it even at twice the controlled prices.

The Government organised a number of Cooperative Stores for the distribution of controlled commodities but they could not protect people from the incidence of official oppression and corruption. The fair-price shops did not avoid black-marketing. The quality of controlled rice and wheat deteriorated and the rations often proved unfit for human consumption. Even ration-shop dealers became partners in that engine of oppression. The

Weavers' Congress was alone able to protect weavers to some extent through the cooperative supplies of yarn and dyes but their prices were too high and "open-market" also prevailed.

I narrated these and other sufferings of the people to Mahatma Gandhi and he too deplored the growing evils of the food controls and from then onwards, he campaigned against controls.

As soon as I went to the Central Assembly, I made it my major task to bring to its notice the evils and defects of the food controls. I spoke on every relevant occasion on different aspects of the prevalent system of controls. I pressed the need for leaving adequate quantities of food grains with peasants to feed themselves and also to enable them to pay in kind to the agricultural servants and workers, before their surpluses were estimated and requisitioned. I pleaded for ascertaining the average levels of costs of production of the main food grains and for prescribing the control prices, in close relation to the thus ascertained costs of production; even if government could not ensure the payment of remunerative level of prices, as suggested by the Floud Commission which enquired into the Bengal Famine and also by Sir Theodore Gregory's "Food Grains Enquiry Committee". Regarding the needs of the agricultural workers and non-agricultural rural masses, I demanded that a portion of the surplus food grains, requisitioned from local peasants, should be earmarked for their use, and locally distributed among them not merely at the controlled prices but also at the concession prices at which urban consumers were being supplied with such food grains. I knew how great were the sufferings of such people when almost all the requisitioned food grains were taken away to towns and when the local inadequate supplies had to be obtained by them at exorbitant prices from some of the bigger peasants, merchants and rice-millers.

There was also the painful role played by the rice-millers as middle-men between peasants and Government. They took full advantage of the situation, procured food grains at controlled prices, and offered only a portion of it to Government and sold the remainder in the open markets—otherwise known as Black-Markets—at very high prices, both locally and also to other areas in their own Districts. They made huge profits, even after

propitiating the police, procurement and Revenue officials with fat bribes, which grew to be regular mamools and, as such, accepted by all as unexceptionable gratifications.

Millers encouraged some peasants to secrete their unprocured surpluses, purchased them at prices lower than open-market prices but higher than procurement prices, and sold the rice at open-market prices in the upland and non-rice-producing areas. In this way they made huge profits, pleased the influential peasants and lined the purses of officials to the chagrin of consumers.

I tried to interest cooperators in this rice-milling industry in the hope of checking these vagaries of millers and officers. But the few District Cooperative Marketing Federations organised by Kisan leaders and Cooperators, and the rice-mills they hired for the purpose of milling, were unsuccessful both in checking black-marketing and in helping peasants to get better prices through such cooperative milling and selling, since the officers who were accustomed to 'Mamools' did their worst against them at every turn.

A large number of cooperative stores came to be organised in most towns. Besides rice and wheat, sugar, manures, kerosene oil, etc., were offered for careful distribution at controlled prices. Unfortunately quite a large number of their office-bearers utilised every such public responsibility to favour their favourites, relations, etc. The result was that these Cooperative Stores also came to be suspected of black-marketing.

Gradually black-marketing grew into an open business and work in it proved to be almost a cottage employment for thousands of honest, hard-working workers in and around every town. These people employed themselves in carrying head-loads of rice from villages to towns, by roads or by railway. They took advantage of the concession we obtained from Government for such head-loads of foodgrains to be carried by workers returning to their villages from the areas of their employment. These head-load workers came to be looked upon as public benefactors by the urban consumers, because most of the urban consumers would have suffered, but for their supplies, from serious under nourishment.

Sometimes the merchants in the consuming centres, at other times merchants and millers in the production centres, engaged these workers at fairly tempting wages to traffic in these head-loads of rice. The sufferings of the urban people because of the scarcity of foodgrains became so painful, and the importunities of these load-carriers to be allowed to carry on what they considered and most people recognised as legitimate and socially necessary function were so appealing, that the general public in villages and towns and on the roads and railways supported this traffic. Thus, the laws relating to that system of controls were almost ignored by everyone and a veritable super-governmental black-market traffic came to prevail all over the country, under the very nose of officials, with their connivance and much to their profit.

All my complaints and those of many other members of the Assembly could not influence the Government to prevent this black-marketing or drop that unsatisfactory system of controls. I felt unhappy at the growth of atmosphere of widespread social corruption, lawlessness and cynicism. It was becoming clear that neither the producers nor consumers could be blamed for ignoring the laws and regulations of the food-controls as they were so contrary to the elementary laws of their social existence. I decided to continue my efforts to protect peasants from this menace of social corruption and degeneracy induced by controls.

During all these four years after my release and before the death of Mahatma Gandhi, the Kisan Sammelan concentrated on fighting this growing evil. I persuaded the Andhra Provincial Congress also to reinforce the Kisan campaign against that awful system of controls. Even then I found that we could not make any dent in that evil system, especially because the Swaraj Government fell in love with it, as it were, and persisted in enforcing it with greater vigour in the vain hope of relieving the growing distress of the urban and rural proletariat and middle-classes and because of Nehru's doctrinarian faith in the efficacy of controls.

The Communists played much mischief during that period, in worsening the effects of the controls. During the War, they pursued the wrong policy of trying to obstruct the "open market", and harassing peasants as well as workers who were good enough

to supplement the rations of urban people by making available whatever unprocured surpluses of foodgrains they could obtain from villages. They encouraged the Government to give more and more powers to the local officials to use compulsion against peasants to surrender their foodgrains, even to the degree of leaving only inadequate supplies for their own family maintenance.

In these and other ways, they contributed to the harassment, and impoverishment of peasants and the urban proletariat, because of their wrong enthusiasm for the Government policy and also possibly because they wanted to rehearse the Soviet Controls which they wished to be able to enforce eventually when they obtained full political power. They levelled their charges of black-marketing against anyone who was opposed to their "Peoples' War" slogan and thus contributed to the indifference of the masses to all those who were genuinely opposed to black-marketing.

Fortunately Mahatma Gandhi was able to hearken to the sufferings of the masses. He realised how the peasant masses were being impoverished, to the advantage of urban classes, by the too low levels of controlled prices for rice and wheat. He put faith in the detailed reports I was able to send to him. I got enquiries made in different parts of the countryside about the actual working of the controls and narrated to him the main findings of those enquiries and surveys.

Jawaharlaljee, who had been much opposed before 1947 to the Food Administration of the Government of India because of the widespread prevalence of corruption and black-marketing, reconciled himself to the same administration after becoming the Prime Minister because of his fear that in the absence of the system of controls, the Calcutta famine might be repeated. Gandhijee did not have any such fears. He agreed with those of us who were in intimate contact with the agricultural producers that there was on the whole enough of foodgrains in the country to go round and there could be no danger of starvation deaths, once the controls were withdrawn. So he reinforced our campaign by pleading during his Evening Prayer Speeches for the removal of the controls. The Food Ministry's experts did not agree with him and Jawaharlaljee who had such touching faith in those experts was most unwilling

to give up the controls. But there came a stage when Gandhijee decided to threaten the Government with Satyagraha if the Kisan masses and producers and the proletarian and professional masses, as consumers, were not freed from that most oppressive and corrupt engine of controls. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then Food Minister, at last decided to remove the controls. We hailed it as the greatest triumph of Swaraj India and of our masses.

However, the price controls over rice were not given up so far as Andhra was concerned. The prices were kept down at an unremunerative level. Yet there was a sense of relief for all the Kisans. The procurement became less oppressive, requisitioning less coercive and open markets were no longer condemned as 'Black Markets', and peasants were able to get somewhat reasonable prices for their surplus produce, left over after procurement.

The relaxation of controls over sugar, kerosene, iron, cement, etc , helped to liberate the people from the oppression of the control-officers. The atmosphere of corruption weakened. The masses began to breathe a sigh of relief and freedom. I felt extremely happy at that triumph of all of us in the Kisan and Congress popular front.

Hardly had Gandhijee died, before the administration began its manoeuvre to get back the controls. The C.P.I. began to demand them on the ground that the urban proletariat were obliged to pay the open-market prices. I was shocked to find the I.N T.U.C. leaders also asking for food controls. The industrialists did not wish to pay higher wages and dearness allowances and so they too favoured food controls. The Socialists followed suit. Jawaharlaljee who was in favour of controls made it easy for their return. After all Government which is the biggest employer would like to keep down the cost of labour.

So, unfortunately, the controls were clamped upon the country hardly one year after Gandhijee's death. We had to renew our agitation against them and continue to struggle against that dreadful regime for nearly four years until it was put an end to in 1952.

The Andhra De-control Conference was held in 1949 in Machavaram, the birth-place of Devijee, under my presidentship and we demanded a price of Rs. 15. per bag of 2 maunds (165 lbs) of paddy. Rather than de-controlling, Government conceded that price. My book "Peasants and Controls" embodying my detailed suggestions for the rational administration of controls became very popular all over the country and I was hailed as the arch-fighter against controls; so a large number of urban champions of de-control reinforced my efforts.

The All India De-control Conference was held at Agra in 1951. The late Sidwa presided and I inaugurated that session and became the president of the All India Progressive De-control Association. We organised an All India protest day against the controls. During the 1951-52 first General Elections for the State Assemblies and Parliament, we made the demand for de-control one of the principal planks of the Election Manifesto of the Krishikar-Lok-Party that we had started. The only condition that I stipulated in an informal manner for offering to support the Congress Party in Madras State, which failed to get a majority, and needed our support to obtain a majority, was that it should agree to remove the controls atleast on foodgrains. Fortunately for our masses, Shri C. Rajagopalachari, the ablest and most honest Congress statesman, became the premier and achieved the desired de-control whithin six months after assuming power. And the late Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, the Food and Agriculture Minister in the Union Government, displayed his statesmanship by extending the initiative of Rajajee to the whole of India and liberating the country from that control-regime.

All the fears of the Food Ministry's experts were falsified. The millions of small stores of foodgrains which both the producers and consumers were in the habit of secreting in their homes, in anticipation of sudden failure of food supplies from ration shops, etc., were no longer needed and were all disgorged. So, instead of the prices going up, as was feared by Governments, price levels remained well within the open-market prices and even came down in some places.

Towns and villages were liberated from the clutches of corrupt officials. Hotel keepers, Restaurant owners and house-holders

in all towns found it possible to purchase once again clean, wholesome rice and wheat at reasonable prices. What is more, all the Kisan and consuming masses felt happy that they need not indulge in sales, purchases and other transactions outside the limits of law and they could live easily without the fear of being accused of black-marketing. In fact, I deemed it one of my best and biggest scores for our peasantry and other masses.

I have given this detailed report because I am anxious that our public of this and succeeding generations shall know how much the public suffered between 1943—53 because of these controls, how greatly our masses felt the indignity of being suspected, at any moment by any officer, of black-marketing, even when they were only dealing in legitimate activities of everyday life, and how heroically and passionately thousands of us in the Kisan, Congress and professional's movements worked against this menace of economic oppression. Moreover, there is ever the danger of such controls being introduced again by any arbitrary Government on the excuse of any and every emergency. Hence the need for them to be on their guard and fight for freedom from Sovietism. We are again resisting these controls introduced since 1964.

There were many humours in that Control Raj. It was a common experience of those days to find bundles and sacks of rice being thrown into third, inter and second class Railway carriages through the doors and windows, and passengers being obliged to shift for themselves in the confusion caused by that process. The carriers would rush into some other compartments, just as the train steamed out of the station. They would quietly sneak in, at the next stops, and make sure that their head-loads were safe and would plead with some passenger or the other to look after them, either by word of mouth or by a pleasing or plaintive look or wink, until they found it possible to come back and unload them at their repective destinations. The passengers too used to smile and protect the interests of those "poor" head-load carriers.

Many a time, police would be keeping guard at certain Railway Stations to catch hold of these traffickers and would try to levy their tolls on those unfortunate people who got caught. Often women who were aged or pregnant or weak would stumble

and fall with their head-loads of rice, in their frantic efforts to run away from the Railway area and then start crying for fear of losing their wages as well as the rice. Sometimes passengers would go to their rescue, plead with the police and help them to escape from the clutches of law.

It was usual for a large number of young people to throw the head-loads into the carriages and then secrete themselves on the underframes of carriages and travel in that risky manner. New centres of black-marketing arose during that period. The marginal villages in the deltaic areas, villages situated by the waterways and road-junctions, and other places, from which it was easy to spirit away the lorries, cars, carts, head-load-carriers with their rice loads, reaped huge profits and became rich with their employment by potential.

Every police station, situated on the highways, became a coveted place for the officers and constables. Both the revenue and police officials developed a mutual comeraderei over agreed methods of dividing the spoils accruing from their non-action against that traffic.

The distribution of iron for agricultural implements, chemical manures and seeds was entrusted to officials of the Agricultural Department and in some places to Cooperative Stores—either fully or in part. Unfortunately most of our peasants were obliged to pay heavily to these distributing agents before they could obtain the help proferred to them by Government. To stand by peasants and prevent this corruption was a hard task but the Kisan-Sammelan did try to discharge this duty in a large number of centres. Alas, we are obliged once again (1966-67) to organise Satyagraha to protect head-loaders ; to plead in Parliament for abolition of Zonal controls and District to District check-posts. The latest moves of Central Government to monopolise grain trade belies Gandhijee's hopes and challenges Kisans' freedom.

## "Grow More Food" Campaign

It must be admitted that the "Grow More Food Campaign" of the Government did yield very good results, although not as fully as hoped for. Irrigation was extended and more insurance

against drought was ensured. The use of chemical manures became popular and resulted in heavier yields. Thus, the area under irrigation was increased and total foodgrain production was stepped up. The Swaraj Government intensified this campaign in all directions. I feel glad that the initiative taken by us of the Kisan Sammelan, with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi as long ago as 1942, has come to bear such good fruits for the benefit of the nation.

It was in pursuance of this campaign that I prepared and published my "Food Plan" in 1949-50 and submitted it to the Prime Minister, at his request. It pleaded for priority for minor and medium-scale projects. It was carefully studied by Lord Boyd Orr, who had been invited by Government to suggest such a plan and he incorporated many items of that plan in the plan of action he recommended to Government. It is gratifying to feel that one of my suggestions—to issue prizes to the best producers and give them suitable titles—came to be implemented and the title of the "Krishi Pandit" has become an established and coveted social distinction among our Kisans.

One of the most effective means to promote agriculture would be to prevent soil-erosion. We pressed for a campaign for it as long ago as 1937 and the Swaraj Gavernment has come to organise an All India Soil Protection Committee and allot funds for this campaign. Shri Munshi, the Minister for Agriculture, (1948-51) inaugurated the Van Mahotsava to save forests and achieve soil-protection.

The new awareness of food shortage and fear of the repetition of the Bengal Food Shortage made the war-time Government revise its policies and attitudes towards the need for developing irrigation facilities. Whereas in the past Government insisted upon economic returns from every irrigation project, the new "Grow More Food Campaign" made the Government give more importance to the capacity of any project to irrigate lands, and add to our food production and thus protect them from drought or shortage of foodgrains. Thus, most of the minor and major projects which used to be ignored and dismissed as being uneconomical came to be considered favourably, once it could be proved that they would contribute to greater production of food-

grains. The Tungabhadra Project, which had been kept in cold storage for decades, came thus to be undertaken. Shri S. V. Ramamurti, Adviser of Madras Government, persuaded the Government to sanction investigations on the ambitious Rama-Pada Sagar Project on the Godavari. The Hirakud, Damodar Valley, Bhakra-Nangal, Chambal, Narmada, Lower Bhavani, Sharavati, and Kosi Projects began to be studied from this new angle.

M. Satyanarayana, M.P. and myself from Parliament and V. Prasad, Kannayya and Gopalakrishnayya and others from Kristna Delta organised people's campaign for the development of what has now come to be known as Nagarjuna Sagar on the Kristna river and it triumphed over the obstructions caused by Andhra ministry (1953-54). So, we shared in the jubilation of the Andhra peasants when that Sagar's waters were released in 1967 as the culmination of five years of our work and ten years of project workers' toil and sacrifices. This great project, when fully completed, would irrigate six million acres and add three to four million tonnes of rice and other foodgrains.

Thousands of minor projects were also entertained and developed all over the country.

The Kisan Sammelan took up this responsibility of organising the special committees of Kisans of every local project area to work for the investigation and development of all such irrigation and drainage projects. This constructive work was developed on the lines of my work for the Peddavadlapudi Project of 1926-34. This has grown to be a popular, constructive and fruitful activity for many of our workers. The Kisan Sammelan has been able to derive much satisfaction from the success achieved in this campaign which is still continuing and thousands of our workers have gained much valuable experience in this line of public work.

Some of the means of developing the "Grow More Food Campaign" did not give us so much satisfaction. The loans given for digging new wells or deepening old wells or repairing tanks were not always fully utilised in a constructive manner and both the peasants concerned and the officers were at fault. It was not unusual for peasants to have to forego 10 to 15% of the loan amounts as bribes, before they could draw them from Government.

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# *The Plan and Myself*

I was associated with the National Planning Committee, organised by the Congress and inaugurated by President Subhash Chandra Bose in 1938. Later, I came to be one of the members of the 9-man Committee, appointed by the Congress in 1947 on the advice of Mahatmajee, to evolve an Economic Programme and it later became the Standing Committee on Planning.

To consider its report, the Conference of Congress Chief Ministers—all the State Governments had only the Congress ministries—was convened at Delhi in 1949 and that Conference recommended the formation of the National Planning Commission.

It also advised State Gevernments to take suitable steps to assure peasants remunerative prices for their produce.

It sounded a warning, on the advice of some of us, against controls and advised the Governments to re-introduce free but socially progressive economy. Dr. Pattabhi supported me.

In pursuance of those recommendations of that Conference on Planning, controls over the distribution of several commodities were withdrawn.

During the discussions in that Standing Committee on Planning, held in the house of the Prime Minister, I found myself seriously in disagreement with the tentative proposals made by Shri Nanda and favoured by Jawaharlaljee regarding agriculture. They were unhappy over the freedom enjoyed by peasants as to what crops to grow, in how many acres of their holdings, how much of their produce to use for their household purposes and how much to sell ; when and where and to whom to sell. They thought that there could be no efficient or calculable national planning, while the whole of agricultural community whose production accounted for more than half of the national annual production would be allowed to remain beyond the pale of controlled economy. I could not agree with them. I wanted them to rely mostly on the efficiency of incentives, remunerative prices, market-competition and whatever special assistance that Gevernment could offer, by way of cheap and adequate credit, linked with marketing and forward contracts, supply of improved seeds, implements, manures, insecticides, cattle feeds and fuel.

I was prepared to allow such State ragulations as would be calculated to insure peasants against crop failures, cattle-epidemics and assure them adequate, remunerative prices or stabilised prices. I also pleaded for protection of workers and tenants under peasants. But I warned them against any plans to undermine the land-owning cultivators. Nandajee and Jawaharlaljee, however, wanted the plan to bring almost all operations of agriculture within the controls of the State. They wanted planning on community and family basis and village councils to work on behalf of the State to settle the socio-economic life of both landed and landless rural folk. Indeed they desired to remove all economic differences between the landed and landless villagers.

We went on arguing about these points for over two days and all the time I found myself in a minority of one, since all others were non-agriculturists, who were so much under the influence of Soviet system of controlled economy.

It was those discussions for and against controlled economy and the economy of self-employed peasantry which settled more or less the future relations of the members of that Committee with Jawaharlaljee.

Shri Nanda, Khandubhai Desai, C. D. Deshmukh, the non-Cabinet members of that Committee, came to be welcomed into greater and greater comradeship in the heirarchy of Central Cabinet of Nehru, whereas I abstained from being drawn into the embraces of Jawaharlaljee's ministerial power and began to take an increasingly critical attitude towards the successive Five Year Plans. No wonder, Jawaharlaljee found me to be the most uncompromising but one-man opposition to his control-oriented policies, programmes and I too gladly accepted my role of opposition while remaining within the same broad-based Congress. All this found its inevitable expression in my public speeches in Parliament.

Shri Nanda progressed step by step not only as minister in the Central Government but also in the ever bolder proposals, he made through the Five Year Plans, to weaken the freedoms of our peasantry. Thus, Co-operative farming, Community Development and Panchayat Raj and imposition of ceilings were taken up as instruments of State to undermine peasant Farming. Then followed proposals to pay the same nominal compensation to the expropriation of excess lands over and above ceilings as was offered to Zamindars. The socialisation of trading in food-grains was also proposed. The regimentation of Co-operatives, State-partnership in the directorate of Co operative Banks and the nationalisation of rice and fiour mills are being introduced. Controls over credit for grain trade, movements of foodgrains from State to State, even from District to District, distribution of rice and wheat are also in their current planning. Not being satisfied with all these manoeuvres, Nandajee persuaded Jawaharlal to get the Constitution amended through the 17th Amendment to empower Government to expropriate peasants' holdings, for any purpose, on payment of compensation, so that Co-operative or Collective farming can be introduced on a large scale, whenever the political and economic climate becomes favourable for such a drastic offensive against peasants.

All these possibilities were mooted, though in a suggestive manner, by these two leaders, during those fateful discussions in that Standing Committee in 1949. It is no wonder that on every subsequent occasion that I and Jawaharlaljee found ourselves arguing about the fate of our peasantry vis-a-vis the Plan, we

had this great difference of view to be negotiated with. We seemed to be talking at each other, never achieving a complete heart to heart understanding, in all our subsequent talks and correspondence.

## To go back to the beginnings of the Plans and the evolution of my reactions to it

I found that my fears were fully justified by the anti-peasant bias with which the First Five Year Plan's Report was drafted. So I took care to sound a note of warning in my Parliament speeches in 1951 and 1953 when the Report came up for discussion, that unless Government was prepared to assure our peasant masses that their peasant economy and proprietorship over their small holdings would be protected and promoted, I would have to wage a ceaseless war, on behalf of peasant masses, against that aspect of the Plan. In fact long before that, I took up the same stand in my presidential speech at the K.L.P. convention held in Tenali in 1954. But all my warnings were in vain. Government went ahead with its anti-peasant approach ; hence my additional caution to the A.I.C.C. sounded in my reply to Sri Balwantrai Mehta in 1953. These were published in 1959 in my brochure "Why Ranga Resigns from the Congress". Because Government was too busy with other aspects of the Plan and was anxious to prepare public opinion in favour of the Plan as such, it did not take any effective steps to weaken or undermine peasant economy during the First Five Year Plan period. I was shocked that Vinobhajee should be doing his worst to weaken the special sanctions behind peasant proprietorship, by daring to call the possession of a holding a veritable sin. Government gave his followers all necessary financial and other assistance under the the Bhoodan Campaign because Nehru felt that it would undermine peasant's passion for land.

The Second Five Year Plan was drafted in a bolder vein, more blatantly opposed to the peasantry and with greater zeal for the replacement of peasant economy by co-operative farming. Even in regard to the fixation of ceilings, the plan envisaged no ceilings on professional and urban incomes with the authority of Jawaharlaljee against such ceilings but proposed to fix them on agriculture at Rs. 300 per mensem (that is, three times the basic income of Rs. 100). I protested vehemently against this one-sided approach and it was only thereafter the ceiling was said

to be fixed at six times the basic holding, if and when found necessary. Once again at the Missouri Conference of States Ministers of Co-operation, I had to join issue with the planners and warn Nandajee against his passion for co-operative farming to replace the free peasantry and challenge them to send me to China in their special Delegation under Sri R. K. Patil's leadership. I only agreed to experiments to be made with co-operative farming, as one of the several types of agricultural economy. Instead, Government sent their own chosen men and even they could not produce an unanimous report; the minority opposing co-operative farming.

At that stage, I was fortunate to find an efficient colleague in research in Sri P. R. Paruchuri. We both made a detailed and scientific analysis of the Secoud Five Year Plan and produced in 1956 the brochure called "The Plan and the Peasant" and exposed the anti-peasant and pro-urban bias and momentum of the Plan. The IFAP and IPU appreciated our analysis and published extracts from it in their journals. Lohia also hailed it. The Union Minister of Food and Agriculture felt constrained to echo our warnings against the Plan's intentions against peasantry.

Throughout these years, *i.e.*, since 1952 and on every relevant occasion, I have striven hard in Parliament to question the bases of the Five Year Plans, so far as rural masses are concerned. In and outside Parliament the Bharat Kisan Sammelan has been voicing its powerful dissent from this aspect of the plan.

Thanks to the nation-wide propaganda inaugurated in favour of the Plan, on the platform, in the press, in schools, Colleges and Universities and in Parliament and the incessant campaigning carried on by Jawaharlaljee and all ministers and officers, an atmosphere of the Plan possessing magical powers to uplift our masses has been sedulously created. This has naturally pleased the Communists and Marxian Socialists since what they would have liked to do was being carried on by the Congress and its Governments. When the campaign of Vinobhajee and his band of workers with all their quasi-religious appeal to people to stand by the Plan and to give up all ideas of proprietorship over their holdings, is also added to Governmental propaganda, one can imagine how difficult it must have been for the Kisan Sammelan,

without its own press and with no funds, to stand up for the peasant economy and question the moral sanctions behind this plan against peasants. It was this frightful task that we of the Kisan Sammelan had girdled our loins to fulfil. We found that the political leaders of almost all organised parties decided to take advantage of Vinobhajee's new call to all the people of villages to make free gifts of all their lands to their village panchayats. In my Masulipatam speech of October, 1957, I warned India's political parties that if they were to persist in their so-called Gram Dan move which would virtually mean coercing the minority in villages to give up their lands on the dictates, expressed through law or social pressures of the majorities, which would be backed up by Government, we would have to organise peasants' satyagraha to protect peasant economy.

Some of the Congress leaders thought that I was threatening to start some new campaign against themselves and so began to display their bludgeons of organisational discipline. They were mistaken. My attitude was no new thing. My readiness to rush to the defence of peasants and their family economy was made known to Jawaharlaljee during our discussions in 1948-49, the Masulipatam speech only expressed my decade-long campaign in a rather effective manner, in the dramatic setting provided by the Yelwal Conference convened by Vinobhajee in August 1957 and attended and upheld by leaders of Communists, Socialists and Jaiprakashjee, Congress and Jawaharlal.

Thus I have been worried during all these years as to how best to defend peasant masses against this gathering menace, this new slave-owner in the guise of collectivised co-operative farm. In the past it was comparatively easier to rouse peasants against the visible evil symbols of Zamindari and such other systems of exploitation. Now it is much more difficult to awaken, warn, organise and inspire them to fight for their rights as against the veiled threats embodied by so much of cajolery, masquerading as the socialist plan and the National Plan. Especially is it so, when the communist and socialist parties hail it as the progressive plan and condemn everyone who dissents as reactionary and enemy of the plan. Yet I have had to shoulder this responsibility. Hence my concentration of major part of my studies and writing to the exposition of peasants' case against this

aspect of the plan. Hence also, the publication by the Peasant Institute during these years of my books (i) The Credo of World Peasantry, (ii) The Plan and the Peasant, (iii) Panchayat Landlordism and Peasant Economy, (iv) Co-operative Farming and the Peasant, (v) Storm Bursts over Peasants and (iv) Self-employed Sector.

I had to devote more than an year after my return from U.S.S.R. to give final shape to the "Credo of World Peasantry" because I wanted to battle with the new octapus of the Plan, with its allies and tentacles of socialist, communist parties, with the help of the ideological weapons forged by the "Credo". I am glad to find from the reviews of this book that it has come to be accepted as offering a powerful and scientific "Ism" for our peasants. I am happy over the production of this literature in defence of peasant economy and its content of self-employment, as the quintessence of Democratic Socialism or Welfare Society of the 20th century. I am hopeful that this literature will continue to light the way for our peasants and democrats for generations to come.

Kisans are also interested in the economic development of our country. So the Kisan Sammelan had taken the lead in 1954 to organise the Special Kisan Train of Pilgrimage to National Projects, thanks to the initiative and organising abilities of Sree Ramana, M.P. and Ramu Naidu of Anakapalli. Sree Veerachari and other Kisan propagandists have taken ten trains, called the Ranga Kisan Specials, annually throughout Northern and Western India between 1956—64 and once through South India (1959) to enable Kisans to see what Hydel, Irrigation and Industrial development projects have been contributing to the industrial production of India. We received no special encouragement from Government other than whatwere offered to any special trains. Since then, a number of 'Kisan Specials' have come to be organised from other States also. The Kisan Sammelan has done all this extremely valuable "Enlightenment" work among Indian Kisans because of its abundant faith in planned construction of India's economy, but on progressive, democratic lines of freedom and not to enable planners to destroy self-employed economy. The Kisan Sammelan can claim to have taken the initiative in pleading and campaigning for the foreign economic assistance for

the development of India's economy and for the success of the plan. But the irony of it all is that the Congress and other political parties accuse Kisan Sammelan and myself as being opposed to India's planned progress.

As for myself, I had to consider patiently what chances there could be for me to develop a strong-enough nation-wide opposition to the leadership of both JAWAHARLALJEE and the CONGRESS PARTY itself. It would be a difficult enough task to oppose Jawaharlaljee's fascination for the Gram Dan and cooperative farming. It would be almost superhuman effort to oppose the age-old Congress Party itself. But I found it impossible to persuade Congressmen to distinguish as between these two entities and let me work with the Congress, while opposing Jawaharlaljee. In the British Labour Party such a distinction came to be made when Aneurin Bevan was fighting against Gaitskell's policies. But not so in India. So, if I must fight cooperative farming, I had to fight Jawaharlaljee and if I had to contest his authority the Congress would come to range itself against me. How could I then have the courage to face up to these almost overwhelming political forces.

I began to hope, however, that the growing ills of our social economy caused by the Congress should enable such as myself to rouse the people to revolt against the Congress and its admitted failures on so many fronts.

One wonders naturally why it should have taken so long for Indian politicians and people to realize the designs of our planners and to revolt against this Nehruism. It should, however, be remembered that most of our freedom-fighters had come to be so impatient for achieving economic progress that in the first flush of national freedom, they turned more to the West than to our own home-bred foundations for inspiration, despite 40 years of Gandhian teachings.

It is of great significance that during the first four years after India became free, the British Labour Government enjoyed substantial majority and a large number of us who were then in the Congress Working Committee and on tbe Executive of the Congress Parliamentary Party had for long been avowed Socialists.

No wonder, the Congress Ministry was most anxious to develop India's economy on the most practicable socialist lines. By rapid strides, the Zamindari, Jagirdari systems were liquidated and tens of millions of peasants were assured of proprietorship over their holdings. Great impetus was given to the trend for developing State enterprises; from the Housing Factory to Chittaranjan Locomotive Factory, from the Hindustan Machine Tools to Indian Telephone and Electronic Industries, from the Hindustan Ship-building to Integral Coach Factory. All that passion culminated in the nationalization of the Imperial Bank of India and the great Life Insurance industry.

But the controls regime opened the eyes of the public to the growing intensification of inefficiency and corruption in the administrative services and the Railways. The cost of administration was mounting up manifold, while inefficiency was becoming chronic and the inability of the cabinets and legislatures to control corruption, avoid inefficiency and tone up the administration has shocked our public and created a reaction from their earlier blissful faith in Congress leaders' ability to make the State management yield magical results.

The L.I.C. and MUNDHRA deals, the Jeep, Fertilizer, Tractor, and Damodar Valley, Hirakud, Sharavati and Bhakhra Nangal episodes, the steel plants losses, the contracts negotiated by ordnance factories and ever so many more such scandals have shocked the country and contributed so largely to the loss of public's confidence in the ability, honesty and public spirit of Congress rulers.

The misuse of Governmental power by Ministers at the Centre and at State levels for Party and personal ends and for inflicting vindictive injuries on political or group or factious rivals and people behind them have been making our public to lose their interest in village Panchayats Co-operative Societies, etc. Most of the Social Service Organizations have ceased to interest the Public, especially since the so-called Social Welfare wings of the Congress Government have begun to swell with funds and powers and patronage.

The public have come to react violently to the unashamed misuse of Governmental power to pervert administration of

justice, to pack Services with favourites of political bosses, to divert public funds for non-public purposes and into political channels and to wink at or indulge in callous waste of public funds through the swelling ranks of State employees in the ever increasing number of new State enterprises.

The K.L.P. Section's opposition to the Ministerialists was the most powerful promise of cleaning up this inefficient, over-staffed, costly and corrupt administration.

The prices of almost all consumers' goods have gone up unbearably, over and above the much larger increase caused by the war-time and post-war inflation. The burden of excise duties has also been rising rapidly and these are paid mostly by the middle and poor classes. Even the railway travel is taxed heavily and, very soon, the nationalized road transport will come to be made to yield higher revenues. And what is being done with all these burdensome tax-revenues. The cost of the ever-swelling and much pampered civil administration alone has risen many fold and the Pay Commission's concessions and dearness allowances would cost more. Need anyone wonder that the middle classes and proletariat cry for relief from these burdens.

The Government has been vainly attempting to increase employment for the educated youths, but at what cost by filling the State Services with redundant staff. By wasting more than all the additional revenues derived from the new taxes imposed, as admitted by the Congress Party's own Economy Committee. The planning is discouraging our peasants and artisans from ploughing in all their savings and borrowed capital also in the development of their productive activities by its threats of ill-conceived reforms. The proposals for imposing ceilings have resulted in fragmentation and stopping the flow of capital into agricultural improvements. Its threat of persuading weavers to organize co-operative power-loom factories to replace the handloom weaving and its refusal to help the great majority of weavers who are outside the co-operative fold have made the Handloom Board more an enemy than a friend of the weavars. Its new offers of many subsidies, special preferences for and nation-wide campaign in favour of co-operative farming have warned our peasant masses not to continue to look upon their holdings, as hitherto, as their

safest banks, surest social security bonds and Kamadhenu and Kalpavriksha for their self-employment and self-respecting source of maintenance for themselves and their successors. How can anyone estimate the colossal losses, inflicted on our nation's voluntary efforts at self-improvement and progress, by these threats and disastrous policies of the planners and Nehru's Government? Surely what all the Plan expenditure could do would not replace one-tenth of this terrible damage caused by them. I began to wonder how Congress could hope to arrest these threats and their evil effects, unless it would reorient its whole planned approach.

Could it hold out the promise that through its planning, all the self-employed masses from peasants to industrial entrepreneurs and commercial classes would be given every encouragement to venture forth with their individual and group-wise schemes for expansion of their means of production and all other enterprises and sources of income and thus help the nation to achieve the maximum progress without in any way exploiting any class or group? Would it base its approach on its trust in the willingness and ability of the people to help themselves and the nation, under the aegis of its welfare schemes and protective governance, and eliminate exploitation of the weak by the strong, of the poor by the rich, of the wage-earners by the employers. Such an approach would be based upon the well-springs of our national tradition and cultural heritage of self-employment and decentralized pattern of economic freedom.*

It is because of these and such other failures of the Congress ministers and contradictions in their policies, I began to hope that perhaps it might not be such an impossible task, even if it would be Herculean, to venture once again to brave the Congress, abandon its protective armour and begin to raise an opposition not merely on the single issue of Co-operative Farming but also on the whole gamut of Congress Leadership, Policies, Programmes and Ministerialism.

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**But its latest 10 points, such as nationalisation of Banks and Insurance, does not hold out any such hope.*

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# *Planned Economy and Artisans (1943—65)*

It was while we were still in jails that the Bombay Ten-year Plan for Rs. 10,000 crores was hatched and it set the ball rolling so far as Indians' ideas for planned economy in post-War years were concerned. It was an ambitious approach and so much in line with the conceptions and work of the National Planning Committee. A few months after our release, that is, May 1945, Sri Birla sought the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi for the Indian Industrialists' attempts to gain foreign aid for the implementation of their developmental plans but Bapu declined to extend his blessings to such ventures, while we were yet not free, lest such foreign participation in India's industrial development should further strengthen India's slavery. The late M. N. Roy produced his "People's Plan", while Sri Sriman Narayan Aggarwal, then the Principal of Commerce College, Wardha and a son-in-law of the famous millionaire, philanthropist and courageous colleague of Gandhijee, namely, the late Bajaj, published his "Gandhian Plan". The Bombay Plan laid as much special stress upon the development of industries, primary and tertiary, as the Second Five Year Plan of Nehru's Government and relegated agricultural development to a secondary place. But both the "People's Plan" and "Gandhian Plan" recognised the primary

importance of the need for development of agricultural and rural sector, as being the principal sources of all further development.

In the wake of that atmosphere of planning, Government of India established the Planning Ministry, and appointed the late Sir Ardeshir Dalal, one of the signatories of the Bombay Plan and also one of the partners in the famous Tata concerns, as the Planning Minister. He was asked to provide flesh and blood to the Rs. 2,000 crore tentative-plan that the Reconstruction Panels had worked out and he proceeded to form a large number of panels, including members of the Assembly. I was elected to two of these panels by the Assembly.

As I had said already, I was one of those MLAs who had taken a keen interest in the demand for planned economy and through the "Kisan Speaks" and my notes to the N.P.C. and other writings, I had tried to indicate outlines of a planned social and economic development so far as Rural India was concerned. So I ventured to criticise the "Bombay Plan" as being too urban and industrial minded. I favoured the "Gandhian Plan" as its approach was so much in line with my own for the past twenty years. I was very keen that India's economic development should be promoted along the lines on which her socio-economy has come to be shaped through the ages. So, I pleaded that primacy should be given to rehabilitation, modernisation, and development of our cottage industries, medium-scale industries, and also to the development of agriculture, including the provision of necessary infra-structure and protective, promotional and processing equipment, such as rural credit communications, open markets, godowns, irrigation and flood-control projects, and control measures against erosion, pests and wild animals. I was anxious that some such developmental and social equipment as has come to be created latterly as the N.E.S. and Block Developmental structure should be created, around the village Panchayat system, so that the rural masses could be provided with competent leadership, with adequate powers and funds for stimulating and developing their efforts at self-help. Hence my support to the "Gandhian Plan".

I was not unmindful of the urgency of the need for developing basic industries but I knew, that they needed immense amount

of money, much resources in "Know-how" and machines, and therefore there was the inescapable need for foreign help in men, machines and money. We would have to wait until we become free before our Swaraj Government could begin to negotiate with other countries, their peoples and governments.

In the meanwhile, I pressed the then Government to appoint a separate panel for cottage industries. It resisted that move for a long time on the plea that the subject of cottage industries was a provincial matter. Through sheer persistence and with the help of the other members of the Assembly, I succeeded in getting that Panel established. Thus at long last even the Central Government agreed to shoulder some responsibility for cottage industries, including the hand-loom industry. The mill owners came to agree to this principle only after 1951.

Once we became free, it was not difficult to persuade the late Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, the Industries Minister, to appoint the Cottage Industries Board. He appointed the Handloom Committees to aid the Board and I was asked to be its first Chairman. The Board took within its purview all the Cottage Industries, including Handicrafts, and tried to plan for the development of Training Institutes to provide competent planners, designers, craftsmen and other technicians, as far as possible from out of our artisans, to man the various units of cottage industrial plants. It negotiated with the Defence and other Ministries in order to induce them to purchase the products of the cottage industries. The late Sri Paonikar of Nagpur and myself were appointed members of the Textile Advisory Committee and we did our best through our work on that committee, to ensure larger and cheaper supplies of yarn to weavers. We resisted successfully mill-owners' repeated moves to control prices of hand-woven cloth also. We continued to urge the acceptance by Government of the principle that the textile industry should contribute, through a suitable excise duty, towards the development of the handloom industry. The mill-owners came to agree to this principle only after 1951.

The Congress Working Committee, which met in November 1947 in Delhi in the presence of Mahatma Gandhi, appointed the Economic Programme Committee with Sri Jawaharlal Nehru as

Chairman. I was also a member of that committee and was appointed as the convener for the sub-committee on Agriculture and as a member of the sub-committee on Cottage Industries with Dr. J. C. Kumarappa as its convener. Both these sub-committees met in Wardha. My draft for the sub-committee on Agriculture laid special stress on the need for parity between agriculturists and others, notably industrial and commercial interests and full employment for peasants and agricultural workers also. It also favoured the cooperativisation of services needed by peasants and also protection of tenants. It was adopted with a few changes. The Cottage Industries' sub-committee also laid special stress on the need to develop such labour-intensive employments, as cottage and medium-scale industries, as much because of their capacity to promote economic-freedom and decentralised, non-capitalistic production and self-employment as because of their labour intensive potentialities. The main Committee accepted the reports of these two sub-committees. It is interesting to note that the Chairman, Sri Nehru, had travelled a long way towards progressive attitudes towards Indian economy from the N.P.C. lines, when he differed violently with Dr. Kumarappa and myself over just the same views embodied in the report of our Sub-Committees.

On my return from the F.A.O. Session at Copenhagan in 1946, I contacted all the State Governments with my proposal that our fishermen, who had been so largely at the mercy of middlemen, should be organised into cooperatives. Fortunately a number of State Governments accepted that advice and a large number of Cooperatives have come to be organised to advance them working capital, to purchase yarn and nets and arrange the local sales and export of the fish obtained.

It is somewhat gratifying to me to be able to say that the principles that we have been striving to popularise through the A. I. H. L. Weavers' Congress and Assembly since 1935 and have suggested in our Economic Programme Committees' reports, have come to be embodied in the First, Second and Third Five Year Plans, so far as Cottage Industries are concerned. India's progress in the way of encouraging this industry can be judged from the fact that in place of the pre-war Rs. 5 lakhs annual fund, we have now an annual fund of ten crores, from out of the special excise duty levied on textile production.

Our economy has achieved some progress in the directions which I have been pleading for ever since 1926, *i.e.*, since the formulation of my thesis on Cottage Industries at Oxford that cottage industries of India as being labour-intensive should be protected and promoted. My efforts to develop weavers' cooperatives have met with some success. We have the Khadi Village Industries Commission, with adequate funds, to implement the programme of the All India Village Industries Association (AIVIA) founded in 1934. The Handicrafts Board is working under the presidentship of my friend, veteran national freedom-fighter Srimati Kamaladevi, for the promotion of all handicrafts, in which more women than men are employed in their own houses, and eke out their subsidiary family incomes. The All India Handloom Board is also having good enough funds and is working for the development of the handloom industries. By providing working capital at Rs. 300 per loom, by organising sale emporiums and in offering rebate at 18 to 24% on handloom sales to popularise handloom goods, it has been helping weavers. The Small-Scale Industries Corporation is trying to promote the development of all such small-scale industries as can be independent in their manufactures, as can provide accessories to bigger industries and as can be carried on with the aid of power and a good number of workers and their managers. Every effort is being made to encourage more and more weavers and artisans, to come into the fold of service cooperatives, so that they can be liberated from all types of exploiters and they can all enjoy their self-employed status, and yet produce more and earn more and live a better life. The Central Oil-seeds Committee came into existence in 1948. As its Vice-chairman, I took the lead in shaping the programme, especially for the promotion of the village oil-crushing industry, in which two million artisans are employed, to buy seeds, to store oil and market it and to provide working capital for all these operations. The Khadi Commission is now carrying on that programme.*

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**Unfortunately so many of these Cooperatives have succumbed to factionalism, nepotism and corruption and these Corporations and Commissions have come to be condemned by Public Accounts Committees for mismanagement, wastage corruption and nepotism.*

# 40

# *We March Towards Planned Economy. India's Place in World Democracy (1946–56)*

One of the last series of noble things approved by Mahatma Gandhi and adopted by the Working Committee, which have come to gain great significance in subsequent years, was the suggestion that Congress should state its aims and ideals regarding economic and social problems since it had come to assume power in the Central and State Governments. We had prolonged discussions for a few days in his very presence and we benefited much from his criticism, suggestions and active guidance. In the end, we formulated the resolution on Aims and Ideals and it was accepted by the A.I.C.C. with few alterations. Sri Jaiprakash Narain, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, both of the CSP, were also present during these discussions and agreed to that resolution. The Committee then proceeded to appoint the Economic Programme Committee with Jawaharlaljee as President to prepare a detailed programme and I was made a Member of it at the instance of Bapu.

The E.P.C. split itself into three Sub-Committees, namely, on (i) Agriculture, (ii) Cottage and Village Industries, (iii) Organised Industries with myself, Dr. J. C. Kumarappa and G. L. Nanda,

respectively, as conveners. My draft for the Sub-Committee on Agriculture contained the extremely valuable demands of peasants, that they too should be assured of security of their holdings, of parity with all other classes of people and also of full employment. Since agriculture and village industries are closely associated with each other, Dr. Kumarappa welcomed my active cooperation in preparing his draft which was later considered by the sub-committees. But on one very important point—Kumarappa's suggestion that peasants should be forced to make their villages self-sufficient in food suplies through regulated crop planning—I could not agree with him and the Committee, as I feared that it might tighten the control of officers over peasants. The general view of the Committee was in its favour. Sri Jai Prakash Narain also had reservations about one or two points but to the rest, he was quite agreeable. When the whole Committee met under Jawaharlaljee's chairmanship, we agreed to the three reports with a few minor changes and they were published in a brochure by the A.I.C.C. after they were endorsed by the latter.

The A.I.C.C. which accepted the report of the E.P.C. appointed the powerful Standing Committee on Economic Planning with Jawaharlaljee as Chairman to ensure the implementation of that report and I was elected to that Committee also. The CSP left the Congress by that time and so, its representatives were not included in it. The new E.P.C. met occasionally and considered a few draft proposals to elucidate some of the items included in the programme. Sri Shanker Rao Deo, the General Secretary and myself evinced great interest in this programme and persuaded the Working Committee to convene a conference of the Congress Chief Ministers of the concerned States and invite its cooperation in preparing a more detailed programme, as could be implemented through their Legislatures and Governments. Panditjee was willing to cooperate with us in regard to all these proposals because of his dis-appointment with the slow pace of development that he could achieve through the Central Government and through the P.M.'s (Prime Minister's) Exhortations to the C.Ms. (Chief Ministers) and also in view of his memories of the Pre-war National Planning Committee's work. Sardar Vallabhbhai was rather sceptical about the possibilities of our proposals for National Planning but he did not want us to be tied down to any dogmatic plan.

The N.P.C. had prolonged discussions at Jawaharlaljee's house, during the summer of 1948 to prepare our draft proposals for the National Conference. We invited Dr. C. D. Deshmukh, the former Governor of Reserve Bank, also to join us in our discussions.

While we were discussing the ways and means of reconstructing our rural economy, Sri G. L. Nanda began to dilate on his scheme of developing crop planning and socio-economic self-sufficiency on a village basis. He laid special stress on greater production and Jawaharlaljee was anxious to judge almost everything concerning agriculture from that standpoint. They were inclined to under-estimate the contribution made by peasants, through their small holdings, to agricultural production and to be over enthusiastic about the possibilities for greater production through cooperative farming, consolidation of holdings and village planning. I agreed with them about the need for consolidation. I would not have much objection to some overall crop planning, not for every village, but for every region. I expressed grave fears regarding cooperative farming. But I found that Jawaharlaljee was too impatient about economic freedom enjoyed through self-employment and considered it as unprogressive and I expressed my strong disagreement with his attitude. I could see that he was not happy over my approach. He could not understand my peasantism. I was shocked to find the Mill Mazdoor representative, Nandajee, so anxious to devise ways and means to ensure cheaper and abundant supplies of food grains for mill mazdoors, irrespective of the corresponding fate of peasants and Jawaharlaljee's readiness to agree with him. In later years, I was to witness much more of this. Another revelation was that the other members were bent upon bringing down foodgrain prices by every means and they were not satisfied with the tightness of controls. They did not like my insistence upon remunerative prices for foodgrains. They were not at all prepared to concede the justness or the practicability of parity between agricultural and other people. Jawaharlaljee, displayed his impatience with my persistant espousal of peasants' cause. So I laid special stress on the social value of freedom enjoyed by peasant masses from economic slavery but he grumbled that such freedom should not be at the cost of social progress. I reiterated my faith that if only service cooperatives were organised to serve as an armour and a lever for progress in peasant economy, all the higher

production, that Jawaharlaljee was passionate about could be achieved. We did not reach any conclusion but it became clear to me how I was all alone in that committee of nine top statesmen who could only appreciate and desire the special production of the 25 per cent of our population, comprised by the city dwellers and proletariat.

Sri Deo and his assistant, Prof. Mitra, prepared some very useful drafts for our consideration.

The National Economic Programme Conference consisting of all the Congress Chief Ministers, Members of the Working Committee and also of the Executive Committee of the Congress Parliamentary Party, met in the same hall in which the present Council of States meets. The then Congress President presided over it. During those two-day long deliberations, most of the Chief Ministers concentrated on the food situation and controls and expressed keen interest in the need for industrial development but did not bother much about all other equally important items of the programme.

Our proposal that there should be a permanent National Planning Commission under the auspices of the Union Government was hailed by the whole Conference.

A shortwhile after that Conference, Panditjee, as Prime Minister, decided to appoint the National Planning Commission with himself as Chairman. But from that stage onwards he did not bother to consult either Deo or myself, who were principally responsible for the drive and initiative which culminated in getting the Congress to formulate that line of action. That reminded me of how he accepted the office of Chairmanship of the former N.P.C. from Subhash Babu but did not bother to ask him to join that Committee as a member. The personnel of the Commission did not include even one member, who could be considered to have been connected, however remotely, with the peasantry or with their All India Kisan Sammelan. So I found it necessary to criticise bitterly, in my speech in Parliament, this most unsatisfactory feature. I warned Parliament, that it should see that the Commission would properly and satisfactorily protect and promote the interests of the crores of

Indian peasants, whenever there arose any conflict between them and other classes.

Simultaneously with these endeavours through the Working Committee, Deo and myself wanted to work through the Executive Committee of the Congress Parliamentary Party also to get some definite plan of action adopted. Along with myself, Sree Anantha-saynam Ayyangar, Shanker Rao Deo, the powerful General Secretary of the A.I.C.C. reinforced our efforts. The Industry and Commerce Minister, the late Sri Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, was anxious to toe the line loyally with the progressive forces within the Congress. We persuaded the party's Executive Committee to indicate the lines on which India's agricultural, industrial and other development should proceed. The consensus of opinion within the Executive was in favour of reserving the key industries for development and regulation by the State so that the national interests would be promoted. The Committee had also the benefit of the draft reports of the sub-committees of the Economic Programme Committee. It decided, on the suggestion of Panditjee, to request the Ministers for finance, Industries and Commerce to prepare a draft statement for later and more detailed consideration by the Committee and, thereafter, by the whole party. That draft statement suggested that the whole realm of industrial development should be divided into three broad categories, namely, industries which could be nationalised, also those whose future development should be reserved for State-enterprise or socialisation as well as private enterprise and the industries in which private enterprise would be free to display its initiative enterprise and development capacities.* We explained how the

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**The failure of the three Five-Year Plans to improve the basic conditions of life of our masses, despite imposition of excessive tax-burdens, especially excise duties, inflationary deficit financing and heavy borrowings in India and abroad and charities from everywhere including PL 480 food imports, the phenomenal rise in the wastage, inefficiency, corruption in construction and management of state undertakings and aweful sufferings caused to people by the Controls Regime which have resulted from the adoption of such an academic conception of economic development were not there within our ken or experience. Our over-enthusiasm and impatience to skip over century-long painful experiences of Western World and achieve economic development within two decades blinded us to the pitfalls and sufferings experienced by Soviet Russia I, for one, came to realise only by 1958-59 how those plans of ours in 1949-50 and the wrong allotment made for State and people's sectors and lopsided priorities given to industry as against agriculture. Hence my brochure "Plan and the Peasant" of 1957-58, protesting against the anti-peasant approaches and wrong priorities 'favoured by Nehru'.*

Governments were not in a position to raise adequate funds to pay compensation and take over such highly developed and standardised industries as the Textiles, Iron and Steel, Mines, Sugar and Cement. We did not think it would be wise to fritter away the slender resources in simply pensioning off industrialists but it would be better to reserve Governmental resources for the development of new and key industries. We were, however, keen on reserving the great key industries of national and strategic importance to State enterprise, such as the manufacture of armaments, aeronautical industries and aircraft manufacture. We also warned the Committee against antagonising or disheartening Indian and foreign private entrepreneurs, since the foremost need of India was development and not dogmatic statism. I insisted upon the formation of special Economic Civil Service to manage the enterprises in State Sector; Sri Ayyangar and Gadgil reinforced my plea and Shyama Prasad agreed with us.

The party as a whole gave its consideration to our Executives' draft and passed it with minor alterations. It was then presented to the Provisional Parliament on behalf of the Government and accepted by it. Thus it became the National Industrial policy. It has ever since remained the basic policy of Swaraj Government. I was asked to sponsor it at the Jaipur and Nasik Congress Sessions. I enunciated the principles of the Mixed Economy. Mr. M. R. Masani had already published his thesis on the need for and utility of Mixed Economy.

It is worthy of note that though the industrial policy statement indicated the possibility of the creation of Economic Civil Service, the Union Government has failed up till 1967 to take any definite steps to create it, although Jawaharlaljee was obliged to announce Government readiness to organise it, when the Mundhra scandal (1957) regarding the investments of the Life Insurance Corporation called for some such development.

In pursuance of that National Industrial Policy, Shyam Babu convened a tripartite conference of State Governments, Trade Unionists and Employees and persuaded them to agree to a Two-year Truce on the industrial front, in order to maximise industrial development and production. I took part in that National Conference on behalf of agriculturists. As one of the oldest and most steadfast friends of industrial proletariat, I gave full support to

workers' plea for adequate dearness allowances, bonuses, etc., and also for workers' participation in industrial management. It must be said to the credit of the Communist and Socialist representatives of workers that they too responded wholeheartedly to the eloquent call, made on behalf of the nation, by Shyam Babu, the Industries Minister.

Rajen Babu, the then Congress President, appointed the Agrarian Reforms Committee under Dr. J.C. Kumarappa's Chairmanship and I was appointed as one of its members. That Committee favoured the fixation of ceilings upon land holdings and protection to tenants. But myself and O. P. R. Reddi, Ex-Chief Minister of Madras, presented a minority report. We suggested that the ceiling should be fixed at 5 to 10 times the basic holding, whereas the majority wanted it to be only 3 times. I was hurt by the behaviour of the Doctor because, when we were equally divided, he agreed to the ceiling being 5 times, whereas on the next morning when one more member came to attend and support him, he went back upon our previous day's agreement and insisted upon the ceiling being only 3 times as much as the basic holding. Surely such was not the public conduct that Sevagram had taught us. The majority wanted to introduce an element of compulsion in developing cooperative farming whereas we were opposed to it. Both of us were agreed upon the protective steps to be taken to benefit tenants. There was complete agreement about the need for stabilising agricultural prices at remunerative levels, for organising crop and cattle insurance and for providing adequate and cheap credit to both the landed and landless peasants and for organising Service Cooperatives to embrace and protect peasants. The irony of Indian politics is that whereas so little has been so far done to implement our unanimous recommendations regarding service cooperatives and providing infra-social and economic structure, a national controversy is raised and instability in rural economy is caused by the Planning Commission's irrational proposal to fix ceilings at 3 to 6 times the basic holding and to inaugurate a national campaign with all the support of Government in favour of cooperative farming, to the discouragement of the national economy of peasant farming.

On the question of seeking and obtaining foreign aid there could not be an equal degree of agreement between the Prime

Minister and some of us. I and Sri S. K. Patil felt convinced that without foreign loans, aids and other kinds of assistance, it would not be possible for India to forge ahead in agricultural and industrial development. I think I was the first among the Congress Members of Parliament and Working Committee to realise the incapacity of Indian economy to provide necessary savings and investment-capital to pay for the minimum requirments for economic progress and I made all that clear in my thesis, 'The Bases of India's Foreign Policy" published in 1948-49 in the *Eastern Economist* and later incorporated in my book "Towards World Peace" (1952-53). I put in a poweful plea that the Democratic West should rush to the rescue of India with adequate supplies of men, materials and money to help her develop rapidly and raise the standard of living of her masses, in her race with the Communist allurements held out to her people by World Communism and domestic CPI and Chinese Communist triumph. Sri N. V. Naidu, delegate to the IFAP Conference in 1948, presented this view on that International Platform at Paris and persuaded the other delegates to strengthen India's just claim for a part of the Marshall Aid—coming as it did so soon after the spirited opposition to the Marshall proposal, by one of the American experts on foreign affairs Mr. Rosenburg in his book "America and India". But Jawaharlaljee felt that our outspoken thesis pleading with both India and USA, that the latter should come forward with her offer of support and help as had been offered to Western Europe under the Marshall Plan and the former should be willing to welcome such aid, would weaken his foreign policy. We could not agree with him on that. So, whenever this question came up for discussion in the Working Committee he used to feel uncomfortable at the revelations made by Sardarjee and others how the loans floated by various State Governments were not proving such a success and there was so little of national savings seeking investment in industrial development. Except for his wrong policy on Tibet, I was supporting our foreign policy in my speeches in Parliament and also through my remarks in the Working Committee, whenever Jawaharlaljee spoke on our foreign policy. But I was so unhappy at his unreadiness to realise the urgent need of India for foreign aid, if at all our economic development was to be speeded up. He was equally unhappy with our impatience. When I was going to the United States, I asked him what line I should take if I were asked by American statesmen about

India's attitude to any proposals of foreign aid. He told me that I should make it perfectly clear that India would certainly welcome foreign aid, provided there were no strings attached to it. It was with that assurance behind me, I pleaded in my press conference held in San Francisco in 1948 for quick action by America to help India. Thereafter I interviewed Secretary of State Marshall at Washington and urged him to extend American Aid to India in the same way as non-military aid was being offered to Europe. In that hectic atmosphere of commencement of the Cold War and Air-Lift to Berlin in 1948, the American statesmen failed to show proper response to that shy feeler from India. By next year (1949) a number of things happened to change the attitude of the United States. The Cold War became very intense. On the Yugoslavian front, America scored a victory, as also in the air-lift challenge. Soviet Russia and People's China began to show greater interest in India and other South-East Asian countries. India was emerging successfully from the after-effects of the Partition and the Kashmir conflict was no longer unfavourable to India. India's role in the Korean crisis was coming to be better appreciated. The Indian Foreign Affairs Association built up by us at Delhi for the discussion of foreign affairs invited a number of American statesmen to meet Indians, including a large number of M.Ps. and discuss the possibilities for better understanding between India and United States. At all these *tete-a-tetes*, Indians made American statesmen realise how strong was India's disappointment as well as resentment at the step-motherly attitude of America towards Asian democracies. So, by the time I went to the States in June 1949 the American Government and public and Press were keen on the forthcoming visit of Jawaharlaljee and were willing to discuss ways and means by which economic aid could be given to India. The American farm leaders, notably Mr. James Patton, were anxious I should meet the newly elected President Mr. Truman and explain to him how India's Kisan and other masses needed irrigation and flood-protection and power projects to achieve rapid progress. So they arranged my interview with the President and we had a free and frank talk over possibilities for the mutual aid and assistance between our two countries. I found President Truman very enthusiastic about the prospects of winning India's friendship. He was prepared to appreciate India's unwillingness to join any of the blocs. He frankly observed, "We are content

that you are friends with our friends", meaning thereby, the Commonwealth. He expressed his satisfaction that I had already won the support of their powerful Farm and Labour lobbies and interests. It all looked as if the American Governmental set-up was all geared to respond most handsomely when the Indian Prime Minister made his State visit in the following few months. I reported the gist of my talks with all the American statesmen and financial leaders and the President to both Srimati Pandit and her minister Sri B. R. Sen. The latter expressed his gratification by saying, "you have done more within this week than what we had hoped, but in vain, to do during the past two years." I made a detailed written report to Jawaharlaljee and the then Finance Minister about my impressions of American statesmen besides an account of my talks with them. I met them and explained the situation. I looked forward to something big happening as a result of his visit to U.S.A. But something happened when Jawaharlaljee went to the States and talked at and over the heads of their leaders at the White House that relations between our two countries cooled off all so unexpectedly and India's progress for the following two years could only be achieved in a very halting manner because of the reluctance of Americans to hasten to India's aid. That naturally disappionted me and made me feel so much frustrated.

As if that was not enough, India was overtaken by serious food crisis. The re-introduced controls were inffective to assure minimum rations to the townspeople; prices were rocketing in the markets and corruption was rampant. At that stage, some Senators in Washington sponsored a move to make a gift of 2 million tons of wheat. But some others expressed resentment at India's foreign policy and unfriendly attitude of her leaders and threatened to oppose that gift. Some of us in Parliament who were keen on developing understanding between our two great democracies sponsored an appeal from some Indian legislators to American members of the Congress, to understand India's predicament and to support the move of proferring food gifts to India from American democracy. This appeal was shown to the then Food Minister and also to the Deputy Minister for External Affairs, before it was finalised and cabled to Washington. Suddenly Jawaharlaljee took strong exception to this most democratic and self-respecting appeal from some Indian Parliamentarians to American Parliamentarians; rushed to Parliament and deplored its issue and

thus created a storm in the tea-cup of India's relations with the United States. This hasty and unfair criticism of our most inoffensive gesture came up for much adverse comment in the Parliamentary Party and Mr. Masani had some caustic things to say against the impetuous pride and domineering moods of the Prime Minister. Thanks to Sardarjee's statesmanship, the Working Committee preferred not to discuss this difference between Jawaharlaljee and myself.

I have had, however, the satisfaction that he came to see, but eight years later, the need for American foodgrains and agreed with the American Government that two million tons of wheat etc. should be offered to India as a gift or loan or both, the proceeds of which could be spent in India in financing the N.E.S. and other projects of development. I am also glad that he came to realise, though after having lost so much precious time, India's pressing need for more and more of America's aid, given either directly through the TCA, Point Four and Ford Foundation or indirectly through the Colombo Plan aids and welcomed the continuous flow of America's help to India. I felt that the decade-long efforts made, in this direction, by myself, S. K. Patil and a few others were more than justified, when he laid special stress on this Aid from USA during his second visit to the States in 1954 and when he sent the Finance Minister to the States specially to negotiate both with Washington and private entrepreneurs for abundant and continuous and assured supplies of American Aid as it is so vital to make the Second and Third Five-Year Plans a success. I am glad that during those three painful years of India's crying need for much foreign aid in 1948—51 and of our own courageous espousal of that need of India despite the short-sighted unwillingness of Jawaharlaljee to appreciate our patriotic stand, Sardarjee stood by us like a rock and continued to sympathise with our thankless but self-appointed mission of serving India in that manner.

Strangely enough, U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. on one side and India on the other havef orgotten to observe the limits beyond which foreign aid should not be showered upon India, so much so that Indian economy has been inflated in an unhealthy manner. This competitive injection of foreign aid has actually tended to bad planning, gigantism in project development, colossal wastage,

lopsided priorities to the neglect of immediate needs of agriculture, wastage, corruption and mismanagement. It is admitted that all the foreign aid that can come would not be enough to meet the instalments of repayment of these debts. Inflation, spiral of rising prices and ever higher levels of taxes and costs of production and consequent slumping of the international value of the rupee threaten to destroy Indian economy. Hence Rajajee's warning against any more dependence upon foreign economic aid. Thus the circle is being completed from our demand for such aid in forties and fifties to present-day cry against any more of it, like the Sanskrit proverb that "even too much of Amrit (Nectar) would prove to be poisonous".

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# *The Second World War; Its Aftermath; Exit of Old Imperialism; Entry of New Imperialism*

Our nationalist approach to the Second World War shocked many sincere British Socialists and Trade Unionists. Even after the War ended in the defeat of Fascists and Nazis, they expressed their disagreement to me, when I met them in England in 1946 at the time of the First World Conference of Agricultural Producers. I told them that we, in India, considered ourselves as an independent nation, like the United States and the U.S.S.R. and hence had the right to decide upon our attitude towards that War. In fact, our Indian reaction in 1939 to that War was the result of our disillusionment with the professions of the so-called democratic countries and their unconscionable attitude towards Fascist forces since 1935. After all, England was content with neutrality when the Spanish Fascists were being aided by the Italian Fascists and Hitler's Nazis, while the legally established Socialist Republican Government was being subverted through violence. We would not forget the callous European attitude towards Japanese continued occupation of Manchouko and later invasion of China. When Mussolini's imperialist armies were destroying Abyssinian national independence, what did England, France and U.S.A. do to help

the weaker Abyssinians. Did not England and France consider their own national interests so paramount as to sacrifice the Sudetan (Czechoslovakian) peoples? Did not the United States hesitate to rush to the side of the anti-Nazi countries, until she was forced by the Pearl-Harbour tragedy ? Why did USSR think it right to conclude a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany and thus precipitate Hitler's invasion of Poland and gobbled up half of the land of defeated Poles ? On the other hand we associated ourselves with all other victims of aggression, namely, the Spanish, Abyssinian, Sudetan peoples. We also protested against Japanese aggression against China. We sent a ship-load of food to Republican Spain. Thus we felt justified to consider our own national interests as of the supreme importance and remain neutral, until and unless the British agreed to recognise our national independence and establish a fully representative National Government. In fact, we did feel highly sentimental about the possible damage that might be inflicted upon the great historical monuments of England, as exemplified by Gandhijee's eloquent statement of concern over the fate of the Westminster Abbey and Parliament buildings. When Paris fell, the Late Sarojani Naidu's poetic heart cried out more poignantly than anyone else in the wide world. That could not and did not blind us to our duty to our national cause.

As irony would have it, the communists who declaimed Gandhijee's undisguised concern for the welfare of the freedom-loving English peoples and wanted him to hasten to declare the war as an imperialist adventure, did not scruple to call it a "Peoples' War" the moment USSR's 'Ukase' reached them to place her interests before those of India and to sabotage the national struggle launched by Gandhijee and the Congress. It shocked us, 350 political prisoners in Vellore jail, to find the communists changing overnight from being anti-British detenus into "People's War" champions. I cannot adequately convey the horror felt by so many of us at this ghastly readiness to surrender their judgments and conscience to Moscow's dictates.

As for the British, all parties were united in demanding India's whole-hearted support for their War-effort but were not willing, even at the risk of losing the War, to concede India's natural and long-delayed demand for freedom and self-government. I did feel, like all other Congressmen, as much concern as

the British for freedom and desired the defeat of Nazism. Yet, all of us felt bound to pursue our own varying but nationally indispensable and devoted line of action.

Dinah Stock alone among my European Socialist friends was able to appreciate the inevitability and justice of the Indian National stand and my support for it. Her letters were withheld by the Jail authorities. Devijee used to convey the thoughts of my European friends during all those years. We were convinced that whoever might be the victors, there would be the need for colonial and coloured peoples' Freedom Front and so we obtained Gandhijee's blessings and proceeded to organise it. Fenner Brockway supported our demand for freedom for all African and Asian peoples.

Looking at those events from this distance of time, I find that our reactions to the threat of Japanese invasion were highly symptomatic of the wishful irresponsibility thrust upon us by the prolonged imperialist domination of India. We did not mind the defeat of the British in Burma and Malaya. We did not also want the Japanese to come into India and impose their imperialism over us. We thought that somehow our passive resistance against the imposition of Japanese imperialism would be enough to save us from falling under their sway. How ? There was of course the extreme measure of passive resistance suggested by Mahatma Gandhi but I don't think most of us felt that our people were capable of rising to those heights of suffering and sacrifice. Yet we were not prepared to organise violent opposition against the Japanese imperialism just as Netajee had built up the I.N.A. against the British or as Aung Sang developed Burmese opposition to the Japanese. We were only too keen that the British should go out of India. We came to know only much later how Netajee was responsible for preventing the Japanese from invading Assam and Bengal and also bombing intensively any of our industrial centres.

In the Congress Working Committee, Rajajee and Jawaharlaljee pleaded strongly in favour of preventing at any cost the Japanese invasion and were therefore keen on reaching an honourable understanding with the British. But the British imperialists were prepared rather to lose India to the Japanese than invite

Indian leaders to form the National Government. Thus, there was a stalemate, throughout the war, between those irreconcilable forces of Nationalism and Imperialism and Indian patriots suffered continually from an insoluble dilemma between conflicting emotions.

Whether Jawaharlaljee intended it or not, his "Glimpses of World History" prepared the ground for developing the mind of nationalist India to see the beginning of the freedom of all Colonial peoples in India's struggle for freedom. Gandhijee emphasized repeatedly that the success of India's non-violent struggle would hold the key to the advent of freedom of all colonial peoples. I began to visualise how the movement for national revolution had a world role to play. I could also realise the danger of allowing the Comintern alone to act as the sole champion of the freedom struggles of colonial peoples, thanks to its anti-imperialist ideology. So I set to work on the preparation of my thesis, while in Vellore jail in 1940—42 and completed my book entitled "Colonial and Coloured People", advancing the ideological justification for demanding the recognition by the democracies of the World, of national independence and political freedom of all Colonial peoples all over the world. When I was outside the jail in 1942 for a few months, I obtained Gandhijee's blessings for starting the Colonial and Coloured Peoples' Freedom Front in London with Dinah Stock and myself as the Secretaries. It was indeed typical of our satyagrahic optimism that even during those darkest hours for world anti-Nazi forces, we had the courage to plan and prepare for such a world platform however notional against imperialism. When again I was put in jail between 1942—44, I prepared the other thesis "Outlines of National Revolutionary Path" and "World Role of National Revolution", assuring the Colonial peoples all over the world that they need not depend upon Comintern and Soviet Russia for any ideological support for their national struggles. They need not also suffer from any sense of defeatism that their movements for national freedom might come to be treated as reactionary, unless they tacked them on to Communist movements and that their own movements were a part of a progressive world movement. On my release from jail, I was able to obtain the blessings of Gandhijee for these theses and these ideological bases and got them published in 1945-46 and thus had the satisfaction of contributing substantially to the ideological

independence of all national revolutionaries from the 1930—40 Comintern domination.

M. N. Roy began to say in 1942-43 that the Western imperialist powers would be so impoverished after the war that they were bound to shed their empires. We did not then take him seriously, nor did it appear to the major imperialist powers till 1956 that they had to grant independence to their colonies. But the cold war and the Iron Curtain which came to dominate world political atmosphere and the later achievement of Atomic Power by USSR have brought about the liquidation of Western imperialism in the whole of Asia and America between 1956—1965.

The British Labour as well as Conservative ministries and even such a passionate devotee of French greatness as President De Gaulle have taken time by its forelock and agreed to liberate African peoples and countries. My old friends Jomo Kenyatta, Koinage, Mulumbo are today the top leaders of their respective governments. This is one of the most inspiring and progressive developments, in which so many of us have found great justification and satisfaction for our labours. More than anyone else, Fenner Brockway of British Parliament, our good friend, deserves world's gratitude.

Alas, even while one type of imperialism was getting itself liquidated, another type of imperialism—more insidious and less easily recognizable—began to spread its tentacles over the eight or nine South-East European nations and also over the newly liberated Asian peoples; that is, the communist imperialism. Masani and myself were some of the first batch in India to warn the world and protest against its expansion. Jawaharlaljee was unwilling to castigate it and oppose its votaries, Stalin and Mao-tse Tung, possibly because, being the Prime Minister, he had to be discreet. But I could not bear this new and ugly development and consequent destruction of the democratic regimes and peasant parties of the Green International in Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czeckoslovakia, not to speak of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithunia. I deplored the short-sightedness of Roosevelt and callousness of Churchill and Attlee at the Yalta and earlier

conferences. I be-friended the Polish Vice-Premier, Mikolajczyk* in 1946 at Copenhagen. When later, he and Ference Nagy, the Premier of Hungary, were obliged to seek asylum in Washington, I met them in 1954 and offered Asian sympathies for their heroic efforts to raise the new movement for the liberation of communist-dominated countries and peoples.

It shocked us all over the world, who have remained loyal to democratic ideals, to find Jawaharlaljee hesitating to condemn the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian communists' national revolution. I and Masani, Jaiprakashjee and Socialists had to extract from him in the course of our Parliamentary debate, the admission, though belated, that the Hungarian national uprising was a people's movement and Russian armies were unjustified in suppressing it. The nationalist pressures from the satellite countries against Russian hagemony go to prove the correctness of our thesis on "World Role of National Revolution" as contrasted with the monolithic communist thesis of World proletarian revolution

Indian Government's inability to champion the cause of the people in the Soviet empire has cost India too much. Tibet was claimed by communist China as her colony and Jawaharlaljee willingly acknowledged the communist claims, despite the protests of so many of us. That wetted the appetite of China and led to her aggression or aggressive designs over North Korea, Viet-Nam, Cambodia, Burma and Indonesia. What appears to be nemesis has occurred, namely, China's aggression over India in 1962 and her unholy alliance with Pakistan. So, while I derive some satisfaction that our 1922-62 movement for liquidation of Western imperialism has succeeded, yet another phase of imperialism is gaining hold over expanding areas, while we are growing older. What a social calamity !

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**Mikolajczyk served the cause of these unfortunate countries by reorganising the Green International with the help of Ference Nagy, Doctor Dimitrov and working as its President until he died in harness in 1967. I cooperated with him on that platform.*

# 42

# *Foreign Policy and Foreign Aid*

In foreign affairs, I found myself in genera! agreement, apart from my dissent from Government policy regarding Tibet and Kashmir, China and Israel, with the policies pursued by Jawaharlaljee between 1955 and 1958, so far as the facts were known to us.* The role played by India at the Geneva talks over Indo-China assured the cessation of war in that long-suffering country and assured early advent of national freedom. The French withdrawal from their pockets in India in November 1954 raised the hopes of our people that Portuguese too might withdraw from Goa. I was one with our Prime Minister in deploring the haste with which the USA and UK convened the SEA Conference and concluded their Pact (SEATO) despite the strong disagreement expressed by India, Burma, Indonesia and criticised the attitude of the West in my speech in the Rajya Sabha. The success of the Bandung Conference and the emergence of the doctrine of Co-existence, embodied in the Panchasheela, enabled our Prime Minister to conclude a series of Joint Statements, starting with Yugoslavia of Marshal Tito, with a large number of European and Arab Governments. That raised India's stock in the world and extorted from USA's leaders of foreign affairs and policy, the

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**It was only after our defeat at the hands of China that we realised how hollow had been the so-called international reputation we were supposed to have won.*

admission that Bandung Conference proved to be a contribution to world peace. I wrote an article in the "India-International Quarterly Journal" edited by my friend Sri C. L. Patel on the "Emergence of Panchsheela" as a third force making for peaceful co existence of the two rival blocs while the non-involvement area could go on expanding.

As Secretary of the Congress Party I was able to persuade Jawaharlaljee to send his blessings to the World Government Convention. But I could not persuade him to extend support to Israel or to withhold support to the China's move for admission into U.N.

I have however dared to incur the displeasure of Jawaharlal by carrying on an international campaign over years from 1948 onwards, especially in America, Canada, England and other countries of Democratic West and also Japan to awaken the democrats all over the world to their urgent duty to buttress democracy in the East against the challenge of totalitarianism and communism, with India as their starting point. I urged that they could do so by placing greater funds than were being offered to Europe, at the disposal of Asian and African peoples and Governments to enable them to equip themselves with the minimum social infra-structure and to help such fairly advanced countries as India to build their basic industries.

When it became known that USA was contemplating the conclusion of a military pact with Pakistan, I too warned USA, as President of the Foreign Affairs Association, during our Reception to Mr. Allen, the USA Ambassador, that such a pact would cause a serious set-back to the friendly relations between the two greatest democracies of the World and could only encourage those in India who had been clamouring for closer approach towards the USSR. The Prime Minister too repeatedly voiced India's strong opposition. Yet, that pact became a reality and, as was anticipated by us, it proved to be a further encouragement to the bellicose spirit and war-mindedness of Pakistan towards India. Ever since, no Indian leader, worth his salt, has found it possible to ask Indians to put faith in America's repeated assurances that her military aid to Pakistan would never be

Ranga in the International Labour Organization Conference
held at San Fransisco in June-July, 1948

allowed to be used against India.* President Kennedy's ready response to India's appeal for help when China invaded Indian territory has, however, rekindled much faith in U.S.A. Unfortunately Kashmir issue continues to prevent complete understanding between U.S.A. and India.

I draw special satisfaction over the recent enthusiasm that America and USSR have been displaying over India's plea for economic assistance on a large scale. But this Foreign Economic Aid has not reached such heights as to endanger India's economy, undermining our spirit of self-reliance. As I observed earlier, I urged upon President Truman in 1949 and CPA Conference at OTTAWA in 1952 and the IPU platform in 1954 the need for economic assistance to Asain and African peoples, not as a matter of grace but as an essential premium for democratic security and minimum homage to world democracy. But during those years 1947-56 neither the Western statesmen nor their publicists were so keen on entering the columns of this crusade for economic aid to world democracy. Between them all, they lost a decade of precious time and great opportunities. Strangely enough the long sleeping Government of India and the somnamubulent West are now inclined to go to the other extreme in their anxiety to let their newly gained passion for the success of India's plan to ride rough shod over the peasant and artisan economies of the self-employed people, which are the greatest bulwark and most progressive foundation of full-fledged democracy, human freedoms and free, full and self-governing social economy.

It is interesting to note in retrospect how slow were American experts in economics, business and international affairs to realise the need for Asian and African countries to develop their national economies if they were not to fall an easy prey to the Communist approach. I was one of India's delegates to Indo-American Conference held in Delhi in 1948-49 under the auspices of the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Council of Pacific Affairs. One after the other, Indian delegates Shri C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, an experienced elder administrator, V.T. Krishnamachari, Prasad of Reserve Bank of India, Durga Das

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*US arms were discovered to have been used by Pakistani forces in the Pakistan aggression over Kutch in April-May and again over Kashmir in autumn of 1965.

the veteran journalist, De Costa of the *Eastern Economist* and myself laid stress on the need for rapid economic development of India. With equal insistence the American delegates hailing from Industry, Universities, Research Institutes and International Study Groups, expressed their fears that planned economy savouring of socialism would not make any appeal to American public. I expressed my surprise how the same American nation which accepted the Rooseveltian New Deal including the magnificent effort behind the agricultural price supports and achieved social securities for their working classes and developed TVA under governmental auspices could express fears that any similar Asian effort might smack of Communist orientation. I reinforced the plea of all other Indian delegates that unless America would soon make up her mind to offer adequate financial and industrial assistance on a much larger scale towards the economic development of Asian and African countries, even their political stability would be endangered and the spread of Communist influence could not be arrested.

American representative Mr. Grady also displayed an unfriendly attitude in his speech in the ECAFE Conference held in Ooty in 1948 and repeated the usual but annoying American warning that unless the investment climate in the Asian countries grew to be favourable American capitalists might not be willing to risk their capital investments in these countries. No wonder, Jawaharlal, like all other Indians, reacted to this attitude with equal vehemence and expressed India's determination to stand on her own feet, irrespective of consequences. I expressed my regret at that Grady type of American attitude towards our needs in my Press Conference held in San Francisco in July 1948. I was able to persuade Mr. Morse, the Director of the I. I. O. to understand India's attitude. Both of us tried to persuade General Marshall the then Secretary of State to appreciate the urgency of world's need to help India in the same way that Western Europe was being helped but we found him to be obsessed with the European situation. Again and again I tried to influence American savants and statesmen, from their Ambassadors in India to their visiting leaders, as they came to address our Foreign Affairs Association managed by J.M. Aggarwal, its resourceful secretary, to realise the absolute urgency in the interests of World Democracy, of enabling India and other Asian democracies to forge

ahead with their projects of economic development. They used to promise to convey to U.S.A., Indian democrats' unanimous wishes for the timely extension of the Marshall Plan to India also.

It is quite possible that our contacts, talks and writings, besides a better appreciation of the Asian situation in the light of the emergence of USSR's challenge to USA's programme of Economic Aid and Peoples China's Communist regime, have thawed American attitude towards India's policy of non-involvement in International Affairs.

Here is a brief account of how and for what purpose, my interview with President Truman took place, which currently received such worldwide notice and consequently excited the ire of Communists.

The American Farm Organisations, notably the National Farmers Union were the earliest to realise the timeliness and utility of my demand that the Marshall Plan should be extended to Asia and Africa giving top priority to India, if the spread of international communism were to be arrested. So we thought that it might serve the world cause of democracy, if I sought an interview with President Truman and they approached the State Department to arrange such an interview. It came as a surprise to the Indian Embassy in Washington, to learn that such powerful farm interests of America were keen on arranging those contacts between myself and the President as well as the heads of many of his departments.

When I met the American President, I told him how it was as natural for India to remain non-committed regarding the cold war as it had been for USA during the nineteenth century not to be involved in European conflicts. He agreed when I said that "Unless Indian industrial development is speeded up and agricultural and peasant economy is butteressed by the provision of adequate credit, chemical manures, famine insurance, irrigation, power, communications, marketing facilities and other infrastructure, Indian masses would naturally turntow ards Sovietism as the only saviour." He agreed to that also. Then I expressed my appreciation of the great possibilities of the "Point Four" to speed up the economic development of the East. That warmed him up and he began to indicate the hopes, he was

cherishing as to how the "Know-How" as well as the key machinery of USA and other countries of the Free-West could organise, nurse and develop many industries—basic and key—of the under-developed countries. He appreciated my initiative and expressed the hope that Shri Nehru would make some concrete proposals during his forthcoming American tour to enable him to persuade the Congress to grant, if not the four billions per annum suggested by me, at least a substantial amount. Then he indicated which high officials I should see in order to promote our common objective.

It was indicative of the friendly mood of America that though I carried no governmental portfolio or introduction and I was known only as peasants' leader and Parliamentarian, President Truman and his concerned advisers at the State Department, Agriculture Secretariat, and so many institutions displayed so much interest in my non-official exploratory mission and assured Indian people, their appreciation of Indian democracy's need for their comradeship and their whole-hearted willingness to place maximum possible resources at India's disposal.

Unfortunately the Indian Prime Minister would not appreciate either the whole-hearted change that had taken place in American Government's attitude towards India or whatever good impression my mission had produced and so failed to take advantage of the new mood of America and repulsed her gestures of friendship and co-operation. The result was the loss of four precious years before Shri Nehru realised the indispensability of USA aid to achieve the targets of the Five Year Plans. The American Government took four more years and their people eight years in all after those exploratory and initial steps taken by me, S.K. Patil, K.M. Munshi and a few others, at the risk of being misunderstood by our own people to arrive at their present favourable attitude, independently or irrespective of India's foreign policy.

It was only when he realised that the plan targets could not be realised through India's resources alone, Jawaharlaljee could become realistic enough though so belatedly, to permit his successive Finance Ministers and Indian industrialists to initiate the needed negotiations and to facilitate the flow of foreign capital and "Know-How". The latest agreement to import tens

of millions tons of foodgrains more or less as a gift from U.S.A. is just on the lines of what so many of us had been pleading with the world democracies and India for the last 18 years *i.e.* ever since the Copenhagan session of the World Food and Agricultural Organisation.

On every later occasion that I visited U.S.A. (1952, 1954, 1964) I met the leaders of both parties and high officials of the State Department and told them that India's economic development should be accepted as one of the primary international responsibilities of the Free West and that the Point Four U.S. aid and Colombo Plan aid were not enough and the application of the Marshal plan on its European scale would alone quicken the economic pulse of the East.

I am glad to acknowledge the contribution made towards this happier climate by many democrats especially Lord Boyd Orr, the late Mrs. Roosevelt and the USA Ambassador in Delhi, Mr. Chester Bowles. He did so much through his work as Ambassador in Delhi and also through his powerful writings notably his books "The Ambassadors' Report" and "New Horizons for Peace", to help U.S.A. to reorient her attitude towards the east.

I have also been pleased, like many people, with the recent offer of help by USSR to enable India to achieve the basic industrial equipment. In fact USSR's whole-hearted offer of credits and "Know-How" to build up the great Iron and Steel Works at Bhilai, to construct the Heavy Machine Manufacturing Factory, to explore and tap oil resources etc. has given rise to competitive offers from U.K. and U.S.A. to start similar large scale industrial concerns and enterprises and this has raised India's hopes of early fulfilment of her targets for the development of basic industries. Thanks to this tendency, the target of six million tons of steel production per annum has come to be fulfilled by 1966 and the 3 million tons Bokaro steel plant and the fertiliser plants are being built and oil has come to be tapped on a large scale and more ship-building yards have come to be constructed on both the coasts.

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# *Foreign Policy and Foreign Tours (1955-58)*

I received a cable from Paris all so unexpectedly on the 2nd October that I should go there and address the inaugural session of the Congress of the International Peasant Union on the first of November 1956. The same day I presided over a function in the P.B.N. College in our village to offer our homage to Mahatma Gandhi and appropriately enough to express thanks to all those lecturers and students who worked under the leadership of the Social Service League of the College and its Chairman Sriman Narayana, who has since become its Principal, in laying the foundation for the auditorium. On my return from the college function, Devijee handed over the cable to me and I wondered whether she would agree to my flying to Paris, that too at such short notice. But I noted with delight that she had already started packing my warm clothing and was preparing to help me to leave the same night for Delhi via Madras. That was typical of her sense of duty towards me and our movement, ever since 1924. It is also so typical of the way things have happened in my life.

I spent a day in Rome on my way to Paris. As I was hovering between these two ancient and magnificent cities, I wondered within my mind what might have been the fate of these cities and

their countries if the Marshall Plan had not been utilised to rebuild their war-ravaged economies and if their Communist parties had gained Parliamentary majorities as they threatened to do uptill 1948. Could they have fared any better than Poland and Hungary ?

I met the Indian Ambassador, the late Mr. Thivy, and had lunch with him at his home in Rome. He was in the Indian National Army, a good patriot and a fine man. He told me how USA helped in the election of Dr. B.R. Sen, my old friend, as the Director General of the FAO. This was indeed creditable both to Sen and the USA. I was glad that the FAO did the right thing in selecting its chief from the under-developed part of the world, because he would know how to interpret the needs of the under-developed countries to the rest of the world and persuade them to spare their surplus wealth for the backward areas. The FAO too had its share of internal schisms and rivalries as between continental or national groups but I felt confident that B R. Sen would be able to help them get to work as a team. He has achieved much success in that direction and has since been thrice re-elected unanimously and retired only in 1967. "Save the World from Hunger" campaign is his special achievement.

Mr. Thivy was glad to find how much trouble I took on that Sunday to find a shop and purchase an incandescent statue of Gandhi-like St. Francis of Assissi.

I reached Paris on the night of 30th October and on the 1st of November morning I met the leaders of the IPU at the Congress held in the Grand Hotel near the Plaza del Opera. And what a difference there was between the atmosphere of the 1954 Congress held in New York and this in Paris. At the time of leaving Nidu-brolu only a week earlier, little did I know that anything like what confronted the world from the 30th October onwards was likely to happen.

Yet by the time the IPU Congress met, England and France had already given their ultimatum to Egypt over the issue of the nationalization of the Suez Canal by President Nasser. The Hungarian national revolution led by the Communist youths seemed to be set for success in forcing the Soviet occupation forces to

withdraw. Naturally, the delegates were agog with great excitement and hopes of prospective revolutions in other Soviet occupied countries of East Europe were taking wings. Much sympathy was in evidence for the thousands of the victims of Soviet violence against the patriotic and revolutionary youths of Hungary who revolted against the Soviet imperialism of the past decade. There was admiration for those fighters and delegates hoped for liberation of all the peoples in the Soviet satellite countries in Europe. My friend Ferenc Nagy told me how he would have to rush to the Hungarian borders and send whatever help might be forthcoming from the West for the Hungarian freedom fighters. He left that very night for his destination on his noble and risky mission.

To me it was a happy revelation to find that such a revolt could take place against the ruthless Soviet imperialism even after a decade of the Communist dictatorship and under the very nose of the Soviet occupation forces. This also inspired me with a new hope and dispelled some of my fears for Indian democracy. I told myself that even if some Indian States should go to Communists through elections, the Indian masses too could rise in rebellion and liberate themselves even as the Hungarian patriots found it possible to rise and put to flight the Soviet regime and armies. I felt that my stand as expounded in my books "The World Role of National Revolution" and the "Outlines of National Revolutionary path" that the urge of people to achieve national independence would be just as irrepressible and irresistible as social revolution and would prove to be a world-shaking force was being justified by the heroic Hungarian youths through their great sacrifices. I was told how only a few weeks earlier the Polish youth and people revolted at Poznan and forced the Soviet imperialism to beat a retreat and won a large degree of national freedom for their local Communist regime from Soviet control. My speech was hailed in that atmosphere of the Congress as highly inspiring. In fact I was myself so much inspired by the Hungarian revolution. Gone was the sense of disappointment with the Andhra political debacle. Gone also was the fear of Indian peasants' helplessness in the face of the gathering threat of cooperative farming that Jawaharlaljee was holding over their heads. Thus was the Communist Ministry of Kerala brought down in 1959 by peoples revolt. In my second and longer speech at the Congress I outlined the plan of action for

all democratic forces all over the world to safeguard human rights and freedom and promote the interests of free and independent peoples and their decentralised social and political institutions. It was appreciated as a contribution to the fund of thoughts that all democrats should cherish and use in their struggle against the forces of totalitarianism.

I found it my duty to sound a note of warning to Congress that it would be its duty to raise its voice against imperialism of all types and from any quarter, and to condemn the Anglo-French attacks over Egypt, and to mobilise world democratic forces against the imperialism of the Soviets, France and U.K. It would be as wrong for the Congress to be indifferent towards the fate of victims in the East as it was for the Bandung powers of the East to be indifferent towards the fate of the peoples of Eastern Europe under the thraldom of Soviet Union. I was pleased that Mr. Mikolyczyk, Dr. George Dimitrov and the rank and file of the Congress expressed their agreement with this viewpoint. In a special article published in the January 1957 issue of the I.P.U. journal and in Indian papers, I have set out in detail my experiences and impressions of that inspiring Congress and of that epochal week of world-shaking events in Hungary and Egypt.

The Hungarian revolution unfortunately ended in an aweful tragedy. The Soviet authorities were on the point of signing a pact with the Hungarian Premier Imre Nagy more or less on the same lines as the one they concluded with Poland. The Soviet troops which were actually pulling out of Hungary walked back to reimpose their control over the country. In this they were emboldened and felt justified by the Anglo-French aggression on Egypt and they thought that a world which could condone the Western imperialism would have no moral authority to condemn their doings. That was the tragic part of the action and reaction of the two types of imperialism which was in action at the same point of time in two different arenas.

I was in London and Lancashire during the first fortnight of that November. Dr. M. Round, formerly of the Mission Hospital at Nidubrolu, remembered my birthday and came all the way with her adopted Indian daughter Jean and presents to greet me. Mr. and Mrs. Cross of chorley gave a Birthday Party at their charming home "Glendene" in which I have found hospitality and affection on my visits to England. I wrote the report on my visit to U.S.S.R. in "Glendene".

I met Mr. Hugh Gaitskell in the Chamber of the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons and we discussed the European and Asian situations. He was at one with me in feeling that as long as Europeans continued to maintain their imperialist hold over Africa and to introduce the new hegemony of Inter-Continental Defence Bases over Asia and Africa, there would always be the irresistible temptation to Russia and China to justify the maintenance and expansion of their worldwide hegemony. I expressed my appreciation of the heroic and timely protest he had been making in and outside Parliament against the Eden Government's ultimatum to Egypt declaring war against Egypt and he was glad that India would be pleased with the Labour Party's anti-imperialist stand. He added : "One of the reasons for our Party's attitude is that we want to assure the Eastern peoples in the Commonwealth that in England large sections of people do not approve Eden's policy of imperialist aggression." He was however sorry that Jawharlaljee should be hesitant in condemning Soviet savagery in Hungary while he condemned in strong enough terms the Anglo-French aggression against Egypt.

As I was talking to Mr. Gaitskell my mind went back to the previous occasion in 1954 when I met there his distinguished predecessor Mr. Attlee (later Earl Attlee). We were discussing ways and means of strengthening world democracy and of publicising the sacrifices made, struggles waged and triumphs achieved by freedom fighters and martyrs for human rights in different countries through the ages. Mr. Attlee said that Socialism could be a success and a factor for progress only when it was based on a commitment to human freedoms and full-fledged democracy. Like the true democrat and socialist that he was, he voluntarily retired due to old age and helped Gaitskell to take his place. We met once again in 1955 at the party given by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in honour of the Indian Parliamentary Delegation to the Soviet Union which went to London on completion of the Russian tour. Presiding over the occasion, he was good enough to refer in pleasant terms to our quarter of a century long comeraderie in the world movement for democracy.

During that stay in London, I met again the leaders of the Federation for World Government, the late Clement Webb and

Gilbert Macallister. I realised from my talks with them how greatly Indian stand on Kashmir was being misunderstood and how the Conservative Party's pro-Pakistan attitude was accepted by so many liberals and others too. I found it as hard to convince them, as I had earlier found it to be with the Editors of the *New York Times* in 1954. That India went into Kashmir on the specific invitation of the Maharajah and the National Conference when their capital was threatened by the tribal invaders, who were being inspired, armed and provisioned by Pakistan Government.

I paid my second visit to the office of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and discussed the problems of co-operative movement all over the world, more especially in the East with the Director and his assistants. We were convinced that in the East, we would have to welcome the assistance of governments in stimulating interest among the masses in co-operative efforts and in starting and advising co-operative institutions. We agreed, it would be suicidal for co-operative movement to let governments control and interfere in the management of co-operative societies. The ICA office were not quite happy over the degree of state interference and control that were envisaged by the recommendations of the report of the Rural Credit Survey made by the Reserve Bank of India. I agreed with them.

Yet the Patna Congress of the All India Co-operative Union was persuaded by the State Ministers, Registrars of Co-operative Departments and the representatives of the Reserve Bank and the Union Ministry to underwrite that report. For more than eight years we have had a taste – very bitter and disappointing – of the increased dose of official over-lordism. When at last the Delhi Congress of the AICU met in April 1958, even Jawaharlaljee had to admit that his Government made a serious mistake in accepting too blindly some of the recommendations of that report, notably the replacement of village coops. by large-scale societies for groups of villages. I expatiated in my speech in that Congress over many of the defects of the new partnership between the coops and governments and requested governments—ministers and officers—to be content with advising and guiding coops and not at all to seek to dictate, punish and prune them. It was on

these lines, I wrote my article on the new approach of Indian Government to co-operative movement and it was published in England in British Co-operative Journal and also in the Indian Co-operative Journal and Eastern Cooperator and all other cooperative magazines. The Government is now bent upon commandeering co-operatives also in its campaign for growing statism. It is in no mood to consider my suggestion that the conduct, scrutiny and settling of elections, accounting and auditing and management of co-operatives should be handed over to a non-partisan, non-political, quasi-judicial Tribunal or Commission.

I met a number of African leaders in the flat of our friend George Padmore in Cranleigh Street, London.

While introducing me to them he showed them my photograph kept in that drawing room, side by side with the photographs of so many African and Asian leaders of freedom movements. He told me how the Gold Coast was making rapid progress towards independence and how Dr. Nkrumah was trying to learn from Indian's experiments to raise the economic status of Indian masses. He was however so unhappy that the British imperialists were succeeding in keeping the Nigerian chiefs disunited and thus delaying the advent of their national freedom. I narrated to him how, we in India, have done our best to popularise the freedom struggles of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria; how our Foreign Affairs Association and other organisations specially working for those individual countries were strengthening Jawaharlaljee in his diplomatic efforts to persuade France to concede their national freedom. All of us were happy that through the good offices of India at the Geneva Conference and the far-sightedness of the French, Indo-China, Morocco and Tunisia were gaining their full national independence. Padmore congratulated me on my latest book "Towards World Peace" (published in 1953) and said that it anticipated by many years, the Bandung decisions and indicated the right policy to be pursued by all the underdeveloped countries. I thanked him for the kind reference he made to my work for the colonial peoples and Africans too, in his latest book "Pan Africanism *vs.* Communism".

The world's cause of democracy lost one of its great champions when George Padmore died in 1958. He, more than any other intellectual, did so much to promote the freedom movement of all colonial peoples, especially of Africa. He was the principal architect of the Pan-African Congress. His authoritative books on African problems did great service to awaken the West to the needs of African masses. It was my privilege to have been his colleague in the movement for African's freedom. I am glad to learn that Dr. Nkrumah, his friend and collaborator rendered national honours to George, which he richly deserved.*

How glad George would have been to learn, if only he had lived upto 1965, that Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Nyazaland and so many other African countries have become independent and our old friends Jomo Kenyatta, Koinange have come to offer leadership to Kenya's Republican Government.

Once again I met the good old friend of all the colonial peoples, Mr. Fenner Brockway at the House of Commons. Our mutual friend and well-known Indian journalist Mr. Thamanker also joined us. I found him visibly ageing in body but not in spirit and moral fervour. He narrated how the Kikuyus of Kenya were temporarily subdued by British terrorism and how he felt sure that within the next decade, Kenya would become free. I expressed my appreciation of his recent book on "Kenya's Struggle for Freedom". He amused over my speech at the special meeting of the "Peoples Congress" convened by him on my previous visit to London in 1965 and said that several leaders of Morocco and Tunisia expressed satisfaction with the help rendered to their cause by India's leaders. He was as usual very much concerned over Jawaharlaljee's support for "Mixed Economy" and his fascination for Chinese type of Communism. I told him that Jawaharlaljee was no more pro-capitalist than British Labour leaders who were content to live under Mixed Economy and that it would be wise for India to let industrial development take place under private enterprise and thereafter think of the means of guiding and directing it. He agreed with that. I did agree with him, however, that Jawaharlaljee was inclined to look at Chinese experiences with somewhat the eyes of an enthusiast and more so, because of his blissful faith in the Chinese type of Co-

**Unfortunately, NKrumah degenerated into a dictator and was displaced from power just as ignominously.*

operative farms. I detailed how he was keen on replacing the peasant economy by Chinese type of cooperative farms and how I was opposed to such a move. He was worried over that and said that if only it were possible England would like to regain peasant economy and more of the self-employed people. He deplored, however, the general tendency of industrialism and Western Socialism to weaken the socio-economic bases for the self-employed. I am glad to learn that this good friend of World's Democracy has been made a life peer in 1964, and thus saved from the worries of periodical elections. He joined forces with Earl Attlee in championing the causes of World Government and Democracy.

I wanted to meet again India's good friend H. N. Brailsford but he was too ill to receive any friends. He was nearly 80 years old. He did so much by his writings and otherwise to promote the world causes of national freedom and democracy during the past fifty years. He remained loyal to those causes, in the tradition of Godwin and Shelley, whose lives and works he had studied with such admiration. He helped me ever since 1922 in my studies and contacts in Europe. My present standpoint on socialism, democracy, decentralised political institutions and peasant economy and their democratic significance owes so much to the foundations that he laid in 1922-26. He died in 1957, full of honours from all over the world. I am glad to learn that an album, containing the tributes from many of the contemporary world statesmen was presented to his loyal wife in June 1958.

I missed the presence of Harold Laski, that great intellectual and friend of all the under-privileged peoples and nations. Cruel death removed him in the prime of life from the midst of the world movement for the freedom of colonial peoples just in this decade of its fulfilment. His great theses on political problems especially "Liberty in Modern State" of the twentieth century have helped lovers of democratic freedom and institutions to realise the dangers of dictatorship and the indispensability of liberty and human rights. I could not meet another good friend Cole, as he was ill. He too grew like Laski in the creative atmosphere of Mill's thoughts on "Liberty". Robert Owen's spirit of "Cooperative Commonwealth" and the "Self-employment and Industrial Self-governance" of the Guilds of the Middle Ages. Their writings inspired both Western Socia-

lists, and Liberals and Asian and African freedom lovers. It used to be a great delight to me to meet them in their London homes and exchange thoughts and experiences every time I went to England. As fate would have it, both of them have passed away, leaving the democratic world so much the poorer. It gave me much satisfaction to visit in the company of Rajajee in August 1959 the Laski Institute of Political Science, founded in Ahmedabad by Sri Mavlanker, the junior, the son of the late distinguished Speaker of Lok Sabha.

During my this stay in London, I improved on my friendship with the aged but energetic late Sir Howard D' Guilve, the Secretary General of the CPA. We met a number of times and discussed the outlines of the book to be prepared and published by the CPA in English and many oriental languages, on the roots, sap and strength of Parliamentary Democracy. He was good enough to refer to the scheme as largely mine and as arising out of my speech made at the Ottawa Session of the CPA (1952). I was pleased to find how great was his influence over the leaders of all political parties in Parliament. He took the trouble to gather at the lunches he gave me at the House, representative leaders of all parties. I was so happy to meet again at these lunches friends like Arthur Henderson, Morgan, Clement Webb, Lord Home. That good friend too passed away in 1964.

I paid a visit to the British House of Agriculture, the new headquarters of the National Union of Farmers and met Sir James Turner and Mr. Knowles, who have been my colleagues on the IFAP since 1946. They were worried over the possible repercussions of the advent of Free European Economy. They expressed confidence in the ability of the NFU to prevent any adverse policies being adopted by their Government. I felt so unhappy that Indian agriculturists were too weak organisationally to entertain similar confidence in their ability to persuade Jawaharlaljee to respect their wishes and interests. I told them that I had attended, while in Paris, a meeting of the representatives of European farmers unions at the IFAP headquarters and that I found them seriously wrangling over the farmers' attitude towards the proposed Zolverien (common market) for Western Europe.

**Peep into South East Europe—Bulgaria.**

All so unexpectedly Sri B.J. Patel, the Secretary General of the AICU met me one day in Delhi in May 1957, at the fag end of the Parliamentary session and asked me if I would be good enough to join him in our two-man delegation to the Bulgarian Cooperative Congress to be held in Sophia on the 11th to 13th June. I was hesitant as to the utility of our going to that Communist country, whose co-operative movement could only be a side-show to their totalitarianism. He was so keen on our mission. So I agreed. I rushed to Nidubrolu for a couple of days stay and talks with our Kisan workers at Vijayawada and returned to Delhi. We had considerable difficulty in finding plane fixtures at such short notice to enable us to reach Sophia—an out of the way place for air-lines. We reached Geneva on the 10th June, 1957.

I told Sri Patel, while we were in Geneva, that home of democracy, how I had been struck during my previous visit (1955) to Switzerland, with the contrast between the fullest democracy of Switzerland and the strongest dictatorship of the USSR. I referred to my efforts to get the devices of referendum, initiative and recall, introduced into India's Constitution and how I failed. I said I was still convinced that under Indian conditions of caste-rivalries and non-development of more or less equally balanced democratic parties; democracy could be a success only if all-parties are given more or less proportionate representation on the cabinets, as in Switzerland. I felt that only non-partisan but all-party committee government as in Switzerland, could enable India to avoid the degenerate politics of France. But that would require the display of very much patience with and respect for each others' viewpoints. It might also result in slow decisions and more frequent compromises than would be possible for the young and inexperienced Indian democrats. It is interesting to note here that Sri Jajprakash Narain is also keen on some such non-party or all-party leadership of our ministries. Rajajee has been pleading for a non-Party, All Talents cabinet even for the centre.

In recent years (1960-67) I have been pleading repeatedly in the light of the failure of Congress party to gain majority in Orissa, Kerala, Bihar, U.P., W. Bengal, M.P. for the introduction of this Swiss System of Committee Cabinets, as an experiment.

Unfortunately this ruling Party decided to let Orissa slip into the control of buccanneering Congressmen and Kerala into President's Rule, which is only a respectable term for dictatorship of the Congress Party in the name of the Constitution. I have also suggested the adoption by such coalition ministries of U.N. device of deciding matters by achieving 'consensus' on all essential matters of policy, whenever the all Party Cabinet Committee has to grapple with serious matters of policy and on defence. Having tasted unrivalled power during the past 17 years—thanks to the adoption of British democratic mechanism of ruling by majority, Congressmen are naturally unwilling to switch over to the Swiss democratic mechanism of ruling by all-party Cabinets and deciding policies by patiently achieving consensus.*

We passed through Vienna aerodrome. We found a large number of Jewish families going to Tel Aviv, the capital of Palestine. They were in such poor circumstances, yet they had high hopes in their hearts. But why were they leaving even the Free Austria? Palestine was their dreamland. The wonders achieved by such heroic immigrants can be realised by reading the inspiring book "The Exodus".

We reached Sophia on the 11th night. On the next day we attended their co-operative congress, held in a highly attractive hall, which became, when filled by only two thousand delegates, so impressive. I found Communists, everywhere, to be such experts in making a good show of every such conference.

I gave to the conference the message of Indian co-operators. In it I laid stress on the free democratic character of Indian Co-operative Movement and indicated the new emphasis that we are laying on the time-honoured controversy as to the degrees of official control and direction over the Co-ops. I referred to India's anxiety to develop agricultural co-operation, not to replace but to buttress and promote the freedom and economic independence of our twenty crores self-employed peasants. I told those Communist cooperators about the nation-wide debate raging in India as to the advantages and disadvantages of peasant-economy and Co-

*Even the unashamed large-scale defection of M.L.As. from one party to another after 1967 General Election and consequent instability of ministries in Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, W. Bengal, M.P. have not persuaded Congress to opt for Swiss model. Acharya Kripalani has begun to plead for such all-party Cabinets.*

operative-farm economy and the preference shown by Indian Co-operators and peasant movement to self-employed peasant economy.

My friend M. Popovic, a member of Yugoslavian Parliament, himself a communist leader, came and congratulated the Indian delegation on their courage in carrying their message of democratic co-operation into that very orthodox citadel of Comin Form and his charming and cultured daughter Brankic acted as interpreter for our talks.

On the 13th June, we paid a visit to the Museum organised near Sophia in memory of the great Bulgarian peasant leader, M. Alexander Stambolisky, who had been the first peasant Prime Minister of Bulgaria in 1921-22 and who was murdered by the reactionary feudal lords in Parliament Hall itself. We paid our homage to that peasant leader, who showed that peasants could and should come into power in modern democracies, by organising their independent political parties and also developing their economic strength through Service Co-operatives.

On the 14th June, we were taken to Slavatsa, his birth-place, as there was to be a national celebration of his birth-day. We found several people carrying the green flag of the famous Green International and displaying in their button-hole badges of the peasant party. The slogans were of the peasant party and the salutes were in the Green International Fashion. We were indeed in the atmosphere of the IPU and that pleased us very much.

Somehow someone seems to have hinted that I was the same as the Indian professor who had been associated with their beloved Green International. So, many hastened to meet and shake hands with me, and just as quickly disappeared from our company to my great surprise. I learnt, rather guessed, that they did not wish to be noticed too much in my company lest the Communist ministerialists should be offended by their intimacy with us since I.P.U. is anathema to Communists.

We saw the little cottage in which that great Prime Minister and martyr was born and also the two-storeyed building where he was ambushed and the small out-house where he was stabbed to death.

In the village, a modern school auditorium and public library were constructed in his memory and they were being consecrated in his name during that Birth-day Celebration.

I was asked to address that huge gathering of peasants, who were brought there in the trucks and lorries belonging to the collectives and co-operative farms. I think I succeeded in conveying to them, through my speech and bearing, how inspired and happy I was to have been present at that function. I assured them that their leader was no longer a national hero but had also come to be known to all class-conscious peasants and their leaders all over the world. I told them how I wrote about his ideas and achievements and ultimate martyrdom in my book "The Revolutionary Peasant". "Alexander Stamboliski has become world famous and immortal. His enemies are surely dead but he has become ever-lasting. The titles and estates, the powers and pomp of the feudal lords are no more but his ideas and services to peasants continue to be cherished today by Bulgarians and peasants all over the world. Even today power-mongers and worshippers of authority should take a lesson from his career during his life and after his death that, peasant democracy, agrarian socialism and freedom are eternal but totalitarianism, exploitation and trickery can only be shortlived". Referring to their peasant party's flag, badge, etc. I said that "in India too we are trying to create such emblems. Peasants all over the world have the same needs and aspirations, and so, they must learn to be united, just as the proletariat are united. Then we can have a true democracy of all toilers, than merely Government of only one section of the people."

After that public meeting, there was a brief dedication ceremony in the auditorium. The famous actress Miss Margarita, who is also a member of Parliament and daughter of one of the martyred colleagues of Stamboliski, recited a dedication to Samboliski. She spoke excellent English and introduced us to the leaders present at lunch. We learnt, to our surprise, that the Communist dictatorship has found it wise to allow the peasant party to continue to function, but as its ally and included three of its leaders in its cabinet. In the after-lunch speeches the leaders reiterated their faith in Stamboliski's agrarianism and vowed allegiance to the peasants' cause.

On the 15th June, we visited the National Monastery in the very lap of mountains which had once served as the cradle of Bulgarian nationalism and literature and met some of the peasant leaders, who had been released from jail by the Communist regime only a few months back. We understood how a large number of such peasant leaders have had to make their peace with the dominant regime and how anxious they were not to appear to nurse their earlier peasantism.

On the 16th June, I was invited to the office of the peasant party, near the great square. I found a plaque placed on the wall, towards the office in memory of the great peasant leader Radich who was shot dead in Parliament by the feudal lords. Outside the office, there was the giant sized statue of Stambcliski. The office was itself a substantial multi-storeyed building. In the auditorium there were portraits of the galaxy of peasant leaders. The peasant party's ministers and other leaders, who have made their peace with the ruling communist party, took pains to explain to me how it was in the interests of peasants that there should be an alliance between the peasant and communist parties.

On the 17th June, I left that beautiful Sophia with its forlorn cathedral. At Belgrade, Popovic and other Yugoslavian friends met me at the aerodrome and greeted me on behalf of Yugoslavia.

Both Sri B.J. Patel and myself visited a few farms—co-operatives—near Sophia. We found the peasants eating only bread from out of huge loaves. Their dress was of poorest material. On enquiry, we learnt that some of the most enterprising and 'well-behaved' peasant families were allotted separate fields for their family cultivation in the hope that they would produce more, while deriving greater satisfaction. That means, through the operation of incentives, peasant economy is regaining its foothold, even from out of the collectivisation and cooperativisation. Sri B. J. Patel who left for Poland and Czechoslovakia has informed me after his return that in Poland peasants were given back their former holdings and peasant economy was coming into its own again thanks to Gomulka's realistic appraisal of the failure of co-operativisation. But recently Gomulka seems to be yielding to orthodox Communists by giving State encouragement and preference to co-operative farms. Anyhow, peasant economy is staging a successful come-back in many Communist lands.

In Yugoslavia, the communist-cum-peasant leaders who had been responsible to organise co-operativisation of agriculture and who were subsequently asked to disband co-operative farms and re-instate peasant economy assured me that Gomulka of Poland was taking the wisest steps in returning land to peasants. They said that no other system—neither collectivisation nor co-operativisation—can provide as many, as effective and as sure incentives for better and greater work, more vigilance and greater economy of farm resources and equipment than peasant economy.

There was no freedom, spontaneity or voluntarism in the cooperatives or for their members in those totalitarian Soviet countries. There is no doubt that they are an adjunct to the State, an auxiliary to the production department and an effective preparatory ground to induce peasants to come into the arena of State control and regulation. They are the means through which the Soviet State gains control of agricultural production and distributes consumer goods to peasant masses, most of whom are not yet reconciled to the Communist State. It is doubtful if there is any voluntariness about co-operative movement, *i.e.*, any peasant being free not to join the local co-operative farm or store. Co-operatives are only an extension of State anthority but managed indirectly through the Director of the Co-operative Society and not directly by the State servants or bureaucrats.

On my way back I stayed in Vienna, that beautiful city of the Socialists in the pre-war days. I went into the Parliament House, which was built by the Hapsburgs on the imperial scale, with its ghosts of the past imperialist ministers like Metternich and found the four score present legislators of the tiny State of Austria utilising the great Hall. I went to the two great Art Galleries and saw the famous paintings of Reubens. I visited the place of Marie Antoinette and saw India's Room with the exquisite Mughal miniatures painted and fitted into the walls. Our Indian Embassy representatives told me how Austrians were happy to be freed from political and Economic control of Soviet authorities and that they were making rapid progress since becoming free. The Viennese are famous for their technical know-how and industrial equipment and are in a position to supply experts to many countries.

I passed through Athens once again. I was thinking of my 1955 visit to that city of ancient civilisation and the splendid moonlit evening on top of the Acropolis hill in the company of a number of pilgrims like myself and a few Greek friends. We all gathered then from many countries, USA, Canada, England, Greece, India, Egypt, almost by chance, soon after the open-air theatre was closed for the evening. We fell into a pleasant conversation and reminded ourselves of the teachings of the Sage Socrates and the fate that befell Grecian Democracy after it had so foolishly condemned him to death and of the age of Pericles, his memorable speech, especially the one of paying homage to the martyrs to Greek Democracy. Our Greek friend M. Takis told us so many fables regarding Greek Gods, traditions and also about the numerous wars between Greeks and Turks. We caressed the huge marble slabs that must have done their duty in the vast theatres of that ancient Greek civilisation and admired the beauty and stature of those marble damsels who are supporting those great edifices.

Someone suggested that we ought to commemorate that fine meeting of ours by forming ourselves into a goup; another suggested it to be called the Pericles group and all hailed me as its president, E. H. Trott of Canada, I. Karras of New York as Secretaries. We went on with our discussions till after midnight.

One of the topics discussed was the post-war recent struggle for power in Greece between England and the USSR. Contrary to our impressions in India, M. Takis told us that it was a fight between the local Greek Liberals and Socialists on one side and the Communists on the other. He showed the scars of the wounds he received in that fight, and said he fought for democracy. That was a surprise to me because most of our Indian Press had taken the side of the Communists, all so unwittingly. Once again (1967) Greece has gone under military dictatorship, because of failure of her post-war democracy. I. Karras of New York, E. Trott of Toronto have proved to be good, thought-provoking friends and correspondents and I had the good fortune to meet them in 1964 during my visit to USA to inaugurate the 6th session of the I.P.U. E. Trott came to India and met me and Rajajee in July 1965 at Madras on her way to Tokyo to attend an International Journalists Conference.

On returning to India I hastened to reach Hyderabad to meet my distinguished friend George Dimitrov of the IPU. As a matter of fact he reached Delhi when I had gone to Nidubrolu on the eve of my departure for Europe. I met him for a day in Delhi before I left for Bulgaria. He was naturally excited that I was going to his mother country from which he and his dear wife had to flee nearly ten years back as they had been condemned to death but they managed to escape from the clutches of the Communist regime. We talked about Stamboliski and he advised me to try to go to his birth-place and hinted that I might try to be present at the Birth-day celebration.

So when we met at the Ranga Bhawan in Hyderabad we had much exciting and exhilarating things to communicate to each other. I was sorry I could not meet his daughter, while I was in Sophia, who was being looked after by his mother. He was so glad to learn that I had visited many of the places which were so dear to him and his colleagues in the Bulgarian peasant movement. He was sorry that so many of his former colleagues have had to make their peace with the Communist regime.

He told me in his turn that he had visited Punjab, Rajasthan, Bombay and Hyderabad States and everywhere he found two or more Congress ministers who said they were of the K.L.P. persuasion regarding rural problems and peoples. He met our dear colleagues Ch. Surajmal, Dadubhai Amin, Wankhade, Natu Ram Mirda, Dr. Chenna Reddi, N.V. Naidu Latchanna, Obulu Reddi. He was so much pleased with the degree of permeation that the K.L.P. philosophy has achieved notably in the ranks of Congress legislators.

He came to India specially to be present at the Vijayawada function of installing my life-size bronze statue. But owing to the outbreak of cholera, the function was postponed suddenly from 23rd June to the 12th July. He readily agreed to visit Japan in the meanwhile and return to India for the function. But he wanted immediately to go to Nidubrolu, my birth-place, and meet Dêvijee in her own home, "Gobhumi"

We reached Nidubrolu by car from Tenali on 23rd June 1958. A procession awaited us at the canal-bridge to the east of the

village. We were taken on that decorated bullock-art. Hundreds of Kisan workers from many villages in Guntur District, who had somehow come to know of our visit, thanks to the Kisan Sammelans' telephone-alerts, greeted us, besides many more local people. At the Peasant Institute, a splendid welcome address was presented to our distinguished guest and the institute authorities outlined the achievements of the Institute since 1934. In his inspired reply, Dr. Dimitrov linked Nidubrolu to Slavotsa of Stamboliski and said, it would become famous in days to come as the birth-place of the pioneer democratic peasant movement of this country in Asia. He felt glad that he had met many ministers who had been nurtured in peasant politics in that very institute. He assured them that "Rangajee's call that peasants of the world unite is reverberating in the western hemisphere also and the I.P.U. and western domocratic leaders looked upon your leader as their leader also". I presented formally to him and the I.P.U. the first copy of my latest book "The Credo of World Peasantry". That was a fine gesture befitting the Institute.

Devijee gave us a lunch at "Gobhumi", in our small farm and the guest told her about the sacrifices and sufferings of his wife, who had been his best colleague in the peasant movement. On our visit to the village, he took a film of the home in which we, three brothers, our mother and grandfather were born and also of the new home which Mother Mangamma built. That was a memorable day for all of us in Nidubrolu.

On our return to Tenali, a large number of workers believing in Democracy met him under the presidentship of the famous scholar-*cum*-lawyer Sri A.G.K. Murti. Sri Murti expressed doubts as to the prospects for Indian democracy under Congress leadership and expressed faith in the ability of Indian peasants and artisans and their movements to sustain Democracy if only they would have a chance to share in Government. Unfortunately Murti died in 1966, after a tour of U.S.A. and writing a time book on his talks with U.S. leaders. His death is a great loss to "Humanist Movement".

**Visit to Pakistan and Ceylon in 1957**

I was asked by telephone message while I was in the midst of Birth-day celeberations at Gudivada on 7-11-1957 to

join India's delegation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's session in December, 1957 at Delhi. The CPA's delegates were to tour in Pakistan from 11th till 20th of November and in Ceylon from 21st till 25th of November. I had therefore only a day at Nidubrolu, on my return from Gudivada before I reached Delhi by plane by 3.30 p.m. of the 10th and there, I was ushered into the celebration organised by Delhi friends for my 58th birth-day on that evening.

I was congratulated by them for the courageous opposition I had been offering against the collectivist move, under the guise of co-operative farming, with the powerful support of Jawaharlaljee and Vinobhajee and they all wished me success in that heroic struggle for the social freedom and economic independence of India's peasant and artisan masses.

On the next morning I flew into Karachi and joined the C.P.A. delegation. We toured for eleven days in Pakistan ; reaching Karachi, Lahore, Hyderabad, Thetta, Peshawar and Khyber Pass. I found evidence of rapid development of irrigation projects and textile mills and also of urban housing. I was happy to find that with the help of Canadian assistance, an excellent irrigation barrage-*cum*-Hydel Project was being constructed in the heart of tribal area so that the benefits and prosperity of modern world could be brought to the very doors of tribal peoples. The construction of Mangla Dam would benefit Kashmir and tribal areas. We found the young engineers extremely enthusiastic about their work.

Politically Pakistan seemed to be extremely ill at ease. Their English daily papers were so full of abuse and hatred of India and false and imaginary stories of communal struggle and oppressions of Moslems in India. I felt sick by their hatred of India, which contrasted so much with India's indifference about Pakistan's attitude towards her and about Pakistani internal politics. I was shocked to learn that Pakistani politicians were neither unanimous nor keen about holding even for the first time their general elections. There was so much uncertainty about the tenure of the new ministry of my old friend Mr. Chundrigar and in fact, that ministry fell a few weeks after the C.P.A. Conference concluded its session in Delhi in December. The subsequent subsidence of Pakistan into a military dictatorship and the

banning of all political parties have only confirmed what we then felt about the utter political instability of Pakistan.*

I was glad to have had the opportunity of seeing again in Lahore the great Mosque built by the Mughals, the lovely Sikh Gurudwara, the imposing Fort. I liked the jewel-like Mausoleum built for the famous Urdu Poet Mohammed Iqbal, who gave us that song "Sare Jahan se Achha Hindustan Hamara". We enjoyed the tea-party arranged in the miniature Shalimar Garden built by Emperor Jahangir. I felt so sad that the Mausoleum planned to be built on the grave of Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, the Premier and leader of the unionist party of pre-partition Punjab, who kept Mr. Jinnah at bay for years over his demand for Pakistan was not allowed to rise above the plinth level.

I marvelled at the tricks of fate that Empress Nurjahan who ruled so despotically over the Mughal Court and who would not allow her step-son who was also son-in-law of her brother to come into the Gaddi without fighting a losing battle, had to live in miserably retirement and insist upon being buried in the undistinguished mausoleum in Lahore in utter disgust at the irony of fate.

In Ceylon, we were confronted with the coalition ministry including the representative of communists. It had functioned for over two years. At the time of our visit, what was known as the Paddy Bill was causing great political controversy. It sought to fix the ceiling for Paddy-landholding at 5 acres. The non-communist parties revolted against that. The Premier was hard put to it to bring about a compromise among his cabinet colleagues.

Premier Sri Bundarnaike who was my contemporary at Oxford, pleaded for such coalition ministries in the East in the course of his speech at the later Delhi session of the C.P.A. Unfortunately he came to be murdered in 1959 by political intriguers and ever since Ceylon has been suffering from political instability. Till recently (January, 1965) his wife Smt. Sirimavo led Ceylon as the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party, which defeated her coalition, has now formed the new Cabinet with Mr. Dudley Senanayake as Premier and with a Swatantra programme.

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**Marshal Ayub Khan's regime has replaced limping parliamentarianism and has achieved during past 7 years guided, indirect democrary. Ayub Khan continues to be a prisoner of "Hate India" attitude and campaign of Pakistan politicians. It has led them into Pakistan's aggressions in Kutch and Kashmir in 1965. Even the Tashkent Pact has not freed them from this unfortunate hatred of India.*

During our motor journey to Kandy, we passed through some beautiful valleys, so full of smiling rice fields, bowing bamboo groves, attractive clusters of bananas and greeted white-clad happy men and women, selling green coconuts and offering cool coconut water. It was such a pleasant journey through the Garden of Eden, as it were.

The vast lake at Kandy is placid and pleasing just as the deep, serpentine river is grand. The University buildings were built after the ancient Buddhist-cave architecture of Ajanta and the hostels after the Buddhist Viharas. The whole architectural ensemble was highly romantic and worthy of that Buddhist land. It was then that I fully admired Malaviya's conception of Indian architecture, as displayed in the Gopurams of Banaras University. At Sirigiriya, we marvelled at the engineering dexterity and artistic excellence of the Sinhalese engineers and artists of the Ajanta School who achieved the architectural and artistic marvels of that Solo Rock Palace, fort and their frescoes.

It is unfortunate for India that all the Sinhalese parties have been following their unwise and reactionary policy towards the large population of Indian settlers and labouring immigrants.*

I took this opportunity to go from Kandy to the beautiful valley, hollowed by Queen Seetajee's prolonged stay, during her captivity in that garden by the gurgling stream. I felt for a moment as if I saw her, in all her pathetic beauty, perched on that hilly seat, as so exquisitely painted by Raja Ravi Verma. It was several thousands of years ago that she was thus incarcerated in that valley, yet, so great has been the hold on our emotions of that epic story of Ramayana woven and sung so enchantingly by the sage-poet Valmiki that every Indian feels even today so much veneration towards Rama and love and devotion towards Seetajee. I offered my homage and prayers to the spirit of Seetajee, the ideal woman, wife and mother.

It was while in Ceylon, I began to fall ill and so I rushed back to Delhi only to be laid up with some bronchial trouble. For full fortnight, I was bed-ridden with serious illness, for the first

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**Indian Premier Shastri had to agree to receive lakhs of these state-less Indian residents of Ceylon and India is now trying to find funds, jobs, land holdings for these unfortunate immigrants (1967).*

time for many years. Penicillin injections and my will power to play my role in the C.P.A. Congress enabled me to be in the session, despite that illness.

## C.P.A. Session in Delhi 1958

During that session, I was enabled by India's delegation to play an important role in expounding the cause of colonial peoples for full freedom. The thesis of the colonial and coloured peoples' Freedom Front, which I presented in my book "Colonial and Coloured People" (1945) was outlined in that conference, this time on behalf of Free India of Gandhi and Nehru. I told the conference that the biggest contribution Commonwealth could make to the rapid development of underdeveloped countries would be the grant of political independence. I was also privileged to take part in the discussion on behalf of India after Jawaharlaljee initiated it and I put in a strong plea for another Summit Conference of the Great Powers. Soon after that conference discussions came to be initiated for that Summit Conference, but as ill-luck would have it, that conference of 1960 proved so abortive owing to the impetuous attitude of Khruschev against Eisenhower. India's demand for the sharing of the world's surplus wealth as between underdeveloped countries was supported by Mr. Gaitskell. We endorsed the proposal mooted in U.N. circles that the developed nations should set apart atleast 1% of their annual income for the development of developing nations. The inaugural issue of the Journal of the "Indian Foreign Affairs" published extracts from my Conference speeches. The second issue of the 'Indian Foreign Affairs' Journal published my latest paper upon the need for putting a ban on nuclear weapons. I hailed the Soviet offer of stopping their manufacture as something like a rainbow on the dark clouds of threats of war. Such was (1958) the relief felt by the unattached world and peoples. Rajajee went with Gandhi Peace Mission to U.S.A., U.K. and France in 1962 and pleaded with President Kennedy, etc., that Atomic powers have no right to inflict nuclear aggression upon humanity as a whole. I am glad to claim that it was the draft prepared by Rajajee which formed the basis for the Test Ban Treaty concluded by Kennedy and Khruschev on behalf of U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. and India became the first signatory of that treaty of 1963.

Gaitskell was as warm a friend of so many of us in Asia as Aneurin Bevan. He used to send such heartening messages of appreciation, whenever reports of my speeches in Parliament used to reach him. He died suddenly just as the chance of Labour Party assuming power was becoming visible. The death of both those great rivals for leadership paved the way for the attainment of Prime Ministership by their younger colleague Mr. Wilson. Such are the blandishments of Dame Fortune or Fame.

Mr. Wilson has failed to live up to the traditions of comradeship and understanding of coloured peoples', built up by Attlee, Gaitskell, Bevan. His one-sided, unwise attack upon India, when Pakistan aggressed upon Kashmir in 1965, has almost endangered the existence of 'Commonwealth' Club, which was expected to serve as a useful, if nebulous or notional international bridge towards "One World" by its modern architects, Attlee and Nehru.

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## *Resignation from the Congress*

April 19, 1951.

My dear Sri Tandonjee,

I hereby tender my resignation to the membership of the Working Committee, AICC, ex-officio delegateships and primary membership of the National Congress and request you to accept it.

I joined it at first as a volunteer when I was a student in 1917 and later became a full-fledged member of the A.P.C.C. in 1923. After intermittent periods of service in its name, I came to embrace it in 1930 as my whole time means of service to our masses as an honorary public worker. I have devoted more than twenty years of my active public life in the prime of my political career to our national cause under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and answered his calls to go to jails and do constructive work and worked so loyally as a Congressman. Naturally it is not easy for one like me to think of leaving this organisation, except for compelling reasons.

I will indicate a few circumstances and reasons which have led me to take this grave decision.

Even when Bapu was still alive, ministerialism had begun to poison the relations between those who were ministers and the growing circles of their special supporters and beneficiaries who have come to be known popularly as the Ministerialists and other Congressmen who had preferred to be outside that charmed circle. Bapu was often obliged to express his distress at that ever-widening rift and the fast-hardening atmospheres of schism and loss of faith in each other in the ranks of Congressmen.

Those of us who were dissatisfied with Ministerialists for the additional reason, that they were becoming indifferent to their duty to implement the Congress policies and programmes and who wanted dynamic action on the Gandhian lines also used to complain to Bapu about our discontent. We were shocked at the misuse of the powers over people's every day life accruing to Ministers from the continuation of the War-time controls and I had to initiate a nation-wide campaign—in the name of the All India Kisan Sammelan—against the controls as such and the unjust food procurement and price policies in particular.

Bapu succeeded in infusing into us and the general public a fresh wave of faith in the post-Swaraj Congress by his successful campaign against controls—the biggest evil of these days and also by his periodical warnings to Congress ministers.

When the Socialists were thinking of leaving the Congress, argued with them that if only they disavowed their dependence upon Marxism and accepted Gandhian socialism like so many of us, we could all continue to remain in the Congress and promote the cause of Gandhian Socialism through the Congress itself. Little did I imagine then that the forces of social reaction and personal egoism would be so strong and unscrupulous and successful as they have proved to be.

Even while Bapu was alive, the Working Committee formulated the Congress objectives resolution. Sri Jai Prakash Narain and myself had the honour of cooperating in its development and its final acceptance by the A.I.C.C. at Delhi in November 1947.

I played an active part together with the leaders of the Socialists and Pandit Nehru as members of the Congress Economic

Programme Committee and ours were unanimous recommendations. The Industrial Policy Statement (1948) of the Government was so largely based upon the recommendations of the Congress Economic Programme. Later on, the Working Committee set up the Planning Sub-Committee, in which I was also a member. It had also produced a near unanimous report which was approved by the Planning Conference of Premiers and P.C.C. Presidents. I was also a member of the Agrarian Reforms Committee and I was a signatory, together with the then Premier of Madras, Sri O.P.R. Reddiar of the minority report. I am proud to think that the present day congress objectives, economic policies and programmes are more or less those which I too had laboured for and which I had hoped would lead us towards the fulfilment of the Gandhian objectives. I have been feeling that though the Socialists had left us, we could still hope to fulfil our mission towards the masses by our work through the Congress, armed as we would be by this progressive orientation that we had been able to give during those 4 years of freedom to the Congress objectives and programmes.

I dare say you might remember my talks with you in Allahabad as long ago as 1935 in connection with the formation of the All India Kisan Congress. I laid special stress, even then, upon the need for all Congressmen and especially for the champions of Kisan masses to look far ahead of the objectives of Swaraj and to think, plan and work for the creation of suitable political and social conditions, even while we were struggling for Swaraj, for the achievement of effective power for the toiling masses, so soon after the attainment of Swaraj as can be made possible. During all these twenty-eight years, when the world's thought has come to be so powerfully influenced by the rise of a section of the masses to supreme political power in Soviet Russia, I have been actuated most powerfully in all my principal political activities by this great aim of helping our Kisan and Mazdoor masses to liberate themselves from the centuries-old social and economic monopolists and to gain their rightful share in political and social institutions and opportunities. It was in the hope that I would be able to achieve these objectives, in cooperation with other colleagues in the Congress and with the aid and leadership of Jawaharlaljee and other national leaders, I have been exhorting Kisans, artisans and Mazdoors of different states to join the Congress in large numbers.

If, however, our masses are to achieve real political power in the Union and State Governments and remove their social and economic disabilities and create conditions suitable to the raising of their living standards, they have to gain an effective say in the counsels of Congress Committees. The moment they had begun this preliminary work, they came up against those very social and political forces, which had long dominated the Congress and who were naturally unwilling to loosen their grip over this engine of political power. A struggle was inevitable. It had been going on for years in those states where the Kisan and Mazdoor organisations have made the masses politically conscious and where their challenge to the established groups of Congressmen became rather strong and compelling.

The prolonged Andhra crisis in the Congress during the last five years, that is, ever since the provincial Congress passed into the hands of the avowed champions and organisers of Kisans and other masses, has been the result of this understandable social conflict between those who had been accustomed to monopoly of social and political power and who were suddenly ousted from office in 1946 and those Kisans and Mazdoors and their champions who gained their first innings in their march towards political and social revolution.

During this five years' struggle, those of us who formed the Kisan Mazdoor majority in the P.C.C. have tried our best to practise from the P.C.C. platform also, the Gandhian ideals and standards and have also attempted to satisfy the Andhra Congressmen's sentiments for unity among Congressmen. So we did not oppose the ministerialists as vehemently and as publicly as the masses desired us to do. While Sri Prakasam exposed their misdeeds, especially their perversion of public authority into a private and personal monopoly of power, we could only appeal to the Working Committee for a judicial enquiry into the charges framed by Sri Prakasam. You know how the Working Committee and its leaders have failed to control that Ministry. In the meanwhile the Madras Ministry secured an additional source of strength in the election of Dr. Pattabhi as the President of the Congress, thanks to our support, given to him in the cause of harmony in the Andhra Congress. He appointed as his General Secretary Sri Kala who was the leader of the Ministerialist Group. Ever

since his election, the position of those of us who have been the champions of the masses and who formed the majority in the A.P.C.C. has been made untenable by various acts of omission and commission committed by Dr. Pattabhi and his Secretary Sri Kala. The scandals of one lakh 'bogus' membership campaign for which Sri Kala issued a personal cheque for Rs. 25,000* and the nine lakh effective membership made possible by Sri Kala's circular No. 26 and his secret instructions to his followers are too well known. The culminating achievement of Sri Kala is the crop of injunction orders obtained from the Courts by his friends to obstruct the P.C.C. elections, to get the P.C.C. Working Committee put out of action, contrary to democratic conventions on the artificial plea that the period of the P.C.C. was over and to get repeated postponement of elections whenever his men needed time and to persuade the Working Committee to force the April Eleventh Election upon us all, after making sure, through their usual foul means, that 26 delegates almost the whole of whom would have supported us could not take part in that election, owing to the injunction orders obtained by his partisans from the Courts. Our friends did not wish to play the same game and were bound down by the repeated exhortations of the Working Committee not to go to Courts and so, Sri Kala's game had won the day.

Is there any wonder if today the masses in Andhra whom we have had the privilege to serve and claim to represent are thoroughly disillusioned and have no more hope of achieving their long-cherished ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj with the help of the Congress ? We have not at all entertained any faith in violence either then when we were fighting for Swaraj or now in our social revolution. We have pitched our faith in democratic, non-violent Gandhian means. But owing to the failure of the Working Committee and the unscrupulous and anti-Gandhian methods pursued by the Madras Ministerialists, we find that our adherence to Gandhian standards and democratic means have been the cause of their tactical majority.

To demonstrate my anxiety to carry with us the minority in the Provincial Congress, I supported Dr. Pattabhi's candidature for presidentship although he was doing his worst against us, being the leader of the minority. Soon after Ahmedabad resolu-

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*Congress primary membership fee was then 25 P. per annum.

tion was passed (1951 January) I met the leaders of the ministerialists and offered them effective representation in the A.P.C.C. for their minority provided they would withdraw the injunction orders and recognise our majority. But so determined they were to obtain complete control of the Congress for their reactionary forces and to deprive us, the champions of the toiling masses the leadership of the Congress, that they insisted upon the election contest under the unequal and unjust conditions created by their injunction orders and sanctified by the Working Committee despite the protests of yourself, Rajajee, Jagjeevan Ram and my own dissent. They have thus demonstrated beyond all doubt that like all other vested interests and reactionaries all over the world, they will have democracy only when it serves their hegemony, power and privileges.

When such has been the fate of the best organised and most politically conscious section of our Kisans who have been loyal to the Congress and accepted Gandhian leadership ever since 1921, need one wonder if they have lost faith in the ability of class conscious Kisans and Mazdoors and their champions to gain an effective and powerful voice in the counsels of the Congress organisation as it is shaping itself today.

This loss of faith is not so sudden as it may appear at first sight. We have been wondering whether in this peaceful social revolutionary struggle the submerged people and their leaders with all their handicaps of Gandhian scruples and lack of traditional experience in Chanakya politics, could at all attain success.

Both at Jaipur and Nasik* Kisan leaders of different states were trying to argue against Kisans' participation in the Congress organisation now that Swaraj was won. They complained of the many ways by which they were being discriminated against by Congress leaders. Now that this Andhra's experiment too has failed, I have nothing more to offer in support of Kisan's and Mazdoor's partnership with the Congress.

## Controls

The administration of controls, especially the coercive procurement processes indulged in by the Food Ministries, the over-

*Congress Session.

estimation of yields and underestimation of Kisan needs of foodgrains, the unremunerative prices of foodgrains which are being imposed upon our Kisans, the failure of Governments to ensure even minimum agricultural and other requirements to the Kisans, and the consequent spread of discontent and sense of frustration among the Kisan masses and the failure of my repeated attempts to persuade Jawaharlaljee to understand the Kisan's needs, troubles and sentiments have all been exercising my mind and heart for a long time. I have been wondering whether there could be any hope at all for our Kisans in the present Congress when they are all so strongly in favour of such obviously anti-Kisan controls and their corrupt administration.

I am conscious of the good turn rendered to our Kisans by the abolition of Zamindari system in a number of states also by the liquidation of the Princely orders. But when we have been expecting so much more especially in the direction of protecting the cultivating tenants from rack-renting and assuring them of long periods of tenure and fixation of minimum wages based upon the prior fixation of minimum prices of agricultural commodities and when we were confidently expecting a change from the present disproportionate expenditure on the civic amenities of towns to proportionate and just development of villages, what has been attempted and achieved has only intensified our discontent.

The failure of the Rajasthan Government to liquidate the vicious Jagirdari system and of the Punjab Ministry to prevent large-scale eviction of tenants are running sores.

The ten millions of handloom weavers are being condemned to semi-starvation because of the weakness of Union Government *vis-a-vis* the industrialists. Our Ministries' failure to give a fillip to cottage industries is writ large on their records. The boated plan of building one million houses for industrial workers, the much-heralded schemes of social security and minimum wages for all wage-earners have had still birth.

The ministerialists have welcomed so greedily the new opportunities for exploiting the public which the controls, and extensions of State powers over increasing spheres of life, have given them. As a result of their misuse of these controls and new

state powers, they have demoralised the public, discredited the administration and brought the Congress and public workers into great disrepute. However much some of us have attempted to liberate our people from these controls, there seems to be no hope of our success. Most of the Ministries have been misusing their powers to grant bus-routes for their own sectional or political advantages. Besides, the Working Committee and its Parliamentary Board have either failed or become powerless to check the growing corruption and political degeneracy in the ranks of ministerialists, for reasons known to us also.

**Congress Ministries**

The attitude of the Working Committee in regard to the conduct of Congress Ministers has been most unsatisfactory ; not only in regard to Madras but also regarding other provinces. The Parliamentary Board has been neglectful of Congress responsibilities towards the people whom it has exhorted to have faith in its ability to set up suitable and good candidates, next to guide them in their activities in Congress parties and legislatures and lastly to form Congress Ministries and control them. We criticised most vehemently the Board's failure during the Working Committee discussions held in the presence of Bapu. Later on, when the charges against the Madras, U. P. and Punjab Ministries came up for discussion in the Working Committee, the dictum was propounded that it should not interest itself in whatever improprieties or mistakes that might take place in normal administration and that it could concern itself only with broad issues of policy. I repeatedly protested against this approach and you were also good enough to emphatically repudiate this dictum. Nevertheless the Committee and the Board have allowed more or less complete freedom in all the administrative matters to the Ministries and their log-rolled parties. This had disastrous results. For, in these post-war years of controls the every day life of every citizen and every class of people has come to be influenced for the worst by the inefficient and corrupt administration of controls and the general public have derived no protection from the Congress High Command. So long as a Premier manages to keep his party in good humour by distributing the spoils of office and controls, he is free to demoralise, and even prevent the administration and deny the citizens of their elementary freedom in their civic life.

**Failure of Union Government**

Turning to the Union Government, I have had several occasions to protest vehemently at the failure of the Ministries dealing with vital aspects of our national life, namely, Finance, Industries, Commerce, Food, Relief and Rehabilitation. I had to express in Parliament my want of confidence in these Ministries, much to the distress of our leaders and had also written to the Prime Minister Nehru more than an year ago and the latest revelation made by the Estimates Committee and debates in Parliament bear out my criticism. Yet I am afraid there are many more muddles, even scandals to be unearthed. Are not the jeep purchase, Central Tractor Organisation, fertilizer purchases, disposals, Government Housing Factory, Prefabricated sheds, Sindri Factory, big and numerous enough failures of our Ministry to shake our faith in its ability to assure us honest and efficient administration ?

Would not any or all of them have driven a popular Ministry out of office in England ? We have all been patient with this leadership. Yet do we have any assurance that such muddles or scandals will not be allowed to recur.

All these points of dissatisfaction and discontent have been brewing in my mind and in those of many people in Andhra and elsewhere for a long time and it is all a matter of chance when this unhappy development of the Andhra elections in the course of omissions and commissions of the Congress leadership has proved to be the last straw to break the patience of the people and destroy their faith in the Congress organisation.

Yours sincerely.

N. G. Ranga.

My dear Ranga,

Your letter of the 19th *ultimo* was handed on the 23rd *ultimo* to our permanent secretary. It was circulated to the members of the Working Committee held on the 3rd and 4th instant. The Working Committee asked me to deal with it.

It was disappointing to me that you were absent from the last meeting of the Working Committee, and also from that of the All-India Congress Committee. You have expressed your views on several matters connected with the administration of the country and also with the affairs of Congress. You will not expect me to go into all these points. What I am immediately concerned with is your resignation from the Congress Organisation. You are a member of the highest executive body of the Congress and are thus in a position to influence the policies of the organisation. Your complaint is that your views have not prevailed. I would ask you to consider calmly whether that would not apply to most of us. All that we can do in democratic organisations is to press our views and trust to the general good sense of its members. I strongly feel that your remaining in the Congress and in the Working Committee will be more helpful to the causes you have at heart than your going out of the Congress and organising a new show.

I would ask you not to be led away by happenings in your own province. You lost the election for the presidentship by five votes, yet your voice in the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee is bound to influence its activities largely. It was in recognition of this influence that the new President offered you nine seats in the Executive Committee out of the eighteen seats excluding that of the President. I should have thought that this division of the Executive Committee seats would lead to a better understanding between the two existing groups in Andhra. I suggest that even it is worth trying.

As a friend I ask you to reconsider the whole matter and not to take a decision in a hurry. I should like to have a talk with you when you are here.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- Purushotamdas Tandon.

7th February, 1951.

My dear Shri Jawaharlal,

I have been thinking seriously what I can do in my own way to respond to your inspiring and timely call to us all to pull our full weight behind your leadership and that of our Government and Congress, in the course of your moving speech in the Working Committee at Ahmedabad and A.I.C.C.

As you know I have been trying my best to aid and co-operate with you at the Centre in spite of my many differences with the policies and programmes of your Government, especially on the food, agricultural, industrial and international fronts but more often I have found it necessary not to be too enthusiastic about them.

There were occasions when Bapu and Sardar used to ask me to associate myself even more intimately with your Government but I would not agree, since I would be in a hopeless minority in that environment. I wanted to wait until after the next General Election on adult suffrage so that I could be sure of support in Parliament in addition to your own sincere momentum. Hence my statement, in my letter to you and also in my speech in Parliament during last August-September session, that I was not thinking in terms of a place in your Cabinet.

The parlous economic condition of our country especially on the food and industrial sectors and the daily worsening world situation are causing me no end of worry.

Yours sincerely,

N. G. Ranga

2, Ferozeshah Road,
New Delhi.
19th May, 1951

My dear Shri Jawaharlal,

Ever since 1930 I have been striving, with the blessings of Bapu, for the achievement of political and social conditions which would make possible the establishment of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj under the political leadership of the National Congress. But, as I have often made clear during our discussions in the Working Committee in the last two and a half years I have been very uneasy and disappointed because of the unfair attitude of the Working Committee, particularly towards the Andhra Congress and the Madras Ministerial affairs. Recent events have brought this disappointment to a climax.

The Ministerialist Congressmen of Andhra, under the leadership of Mr. Kala Venkat Rao, manoeuvred to secure Court injunctions for 26 seats in the whole of the Guntur District etc. forming 1/8 of the total strength of the A.P.C.C. The Working Committee then decided that the election of office-bearers should be held before the elections for these 26 seats were completed. This was an unjust decision: Shri S.K. Patil advised against it. Rajaji contended that it would mean great injustice to one section, and I made a vehement protest on behalf of the wronged section. All the same you chose to lend your weight to it, even though the Congress President remarked in the Working Committee that he was not satisfied with it. The result is that the Ministerialists have captured the P.C.C., not by straight electoral methods but by exploiting the Government powers of patronage and punishment and the High Command's inability or unwillingness to intervene in the cause of justice.

It is strange that the Working Committee should once again have directed Congressmen not to criticise Congress Government in Public, even in present circumstances. I need not mention here that if I had been present at that meeting I would have resisted such a wrong directive. How can there be any check on the Congress Governments, if the High Command helps the Minis-

terialists both in the States and at the Centre to take advantage of their own power and influence in the A.I.C.C. and make use of the Congress as their tongue-tied maid-of-all work ? As a result, people will be left so helpless that they may fall into the hands of the malignantly disruptive forces.

You have often expressed digust at the unhealthy tendency of Congressmen to fight and hate each other, and to develop factions within the Congress, but you would never come to grips with the problem. Asked in the Working Committee to suggest ways and means of getting over these conflicts and establishing unity, you have frankly stated that you are not clear how it is to be accomplished. At the Ahmedabad session I suggested that it was necessary to reconstitute the States Ministries and P.C.C.'s giving representation to all sections, and you endorsed the suggestion, but it was not effectively pursued further. It seems that the Working Committee, even with a National Leader of your standing on it, could not set things right even to a small degree of satisfaction. If the Working Committee continues to be a helpless spectator of this rapid process of disintegration of the Congress, it forfeits its right to provide the sole national leadership.

I do not feel that you are coming to grips with the growing problems of indiscipline, disruption and political immorality prevailing among a large number of Congressmen, or that on matters of national importance, you are giving the dynamic and consistent leadership which is expected of you, after the fullest and freest consultation with the Working Committee and the Parliamentary Party. You are not shouldering the high and heavy responsibilities which the nation in its dire necessity has been placing at your doors.

I have therefore come to the conclusion that the Congress as it is shaping itself, thanks to its insoluble quarrels and its ministerial misdeeds, cannot enable us to raise the living standards of our people during the next ten years ; nor can it promote our ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj.

That is why I have been suggesting for the last year and a half, both in the Working Committee and in private discussions,

that it would be better to allow Congress to split into two parties, instead of letting ourselves become silent spectators while this great national organisation is gradually disintegrating. We might in this way divert the leaders and workers who do not see eye to eye with the present Government on certain matters, from their tendencies to join with the forces of disruption. I suggested that it would be good for the country if a healthy opposition were provided from among our own Congress Comrades who have earned popular respect and gratitude by their services. On the occasion when I was asked to say how this could be brought about, I suggested that all those Congressmen who were dissatisfied with the Congress administration should be allowed to form the opposition party, with the blessings of the majority section, and to function as the alternative democratic leadership. I said that I would myself prefer to join such an opposition. It would in effect be a very different thing from disowning the basic ideals of the Congress which has trained and disciplined us in the long struggle for national freedom.

Besides all these, I have come to be oppressed by a painful mental conflict between my conviction that certain aspects of your foreign and economic policies are wrong, and my personal regard for you and sense of discipline under your leadership.

I have often made it clear, both in my correspondence and in Parliament, that I had no wish to associate myself more closely with your Government, because I had no hope of rendering effective service to our Kisan masses by being in a hopeless minority, and by implementing your policies of controls and procurement prices so much opposed to Kisan interests. I have differed too deeply with many of your Government policies. But as a disciplined Congressman I have not given vent to my feelings all this time accept under great restraint. I was even willing, as I wrote to you soon after your Abmedabad appeal, to extend my co-operation in the interest of the country during this critical time.

Therefore, the need to reorganise the political leadership of our country into more or less equally balanced but friendly political parties, both aiming at the same cooperative common-

wealth and Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj but making their approaches in different ways, has become too insistent. Otherwise, we shall be running the grave risk of allowing the Congress party alone to monopolise the national leadership and then to rot from inside and collapse all too suddenly, thus making a free gift of our country to the Communists, as has happened in China.

Many of us are, therefore, obliged to build an alternative democratic leadership and thus ensure future progress of our country and protection of our masses from the threats of totalitarian forces both from inside and outside. We hope that the country would support the alternative leadership that we are building up.

Yours sincerely,

N.G. Ranga

June 1951.

My dear Tandonjee,

It is unfortunate that our discussions on the 9th June afternoon regarding my resignation could not yield any useful results. Since you complained in your letter dated 13-5-1951 that so many points affecting general policies and programmes of the Congress and Congress Governments were raised that a detailed reply could not be attempted by you, I posed three specific points in my interim reply to you dated 15-5-51, namely, the need for instituting enquiries into the misdeeds of the Madras Ministry up-to-date, the conduct of those Congressmen, including your Secretary, who had gone to Courts for injunction orders despite repeated warnings by the Congress Working Committee and also the need for reorganising the Congress Ministry and reshuffling the portfolios of Ministers so as to make it fully representative of all important elements in the Congress legislature party and Congress organisation and requested you to say what you propose to do in those directions.

To my surprise, you were not prepared to think of taking any action in the desired direction, not because such enquiries are unnecessary but because of your fear that such enquiries might not lead to any useful results. Even in regard to the reorganisation of the Ministry, you pleaded inability to achieve such a reorganisation not because you felt it to be unnecessary but because you feared that the Ministry might not like it. Your whole approach to these Ministries has struck me to be apologetic. You have frankly stated that the Ministries resent any interference from the Parliamentary Board either by way of an enquiry into their public conduct or reorganisation of their personnel and when I reminded you of what Sardar had done between 1936—39 and what a good impression was created by the Parliamentary Board's decisions regarding the Bihar Batia Land dispute, you replied by referring to the latest difficulties over the Punjab Ministry. You were honestly feeling helpless. My fears became confirmed that the Congress Parliamentary Board cannot possibly be expected to control the Congress Ministries and protect the masses from their misdeeds and, therefore, the Congress Working Committee cannot but betray the trust placed by the people in its ability to guide and control the Ministries.

Then you referred to yout earlier suggestion that I should advise my friends in Andhra to accept the offer of nine seats out of 18 made by the new President of the A.P.C.C. I was so much pained at your failure to realise the utter untenability of any such position. I expected you to see how our majority was turned into a minority by keeping away from the election 26 deligates, who should have been enabled to vote on the 11th April, by the Court Injunction orders obtained by Shri Kala Venkatarao's Ministerialist party and how the gentleman whom you prefer to recognise as the President, has no just claim to pass for a president, and therefore, it is the bitterest of jokes that he should bolster up his minority into a technical majority and then grandiosely offer us half the seats on the Working Committee. The humour of it all lies in your accepting his offer as a generous one and asking me to jump at it, forgetting all so conveniently that all this perversion of democratic decencies has come to be possible by the wrong and unjust decision taken by the Working Committee on 25-2-51 that irrespective of the fate of people kept away by Court Injunction orders, the office bearers' election must be held. So many of us in the

Working Committee protested against such a line of action and pleaded that when so many delegates were being prevented from voting for no fault of their own but because of the extraneous Court Injunction orders and such an election, in their absence, would tilt the balance unjustly in favour of one of the groups. But the majority had its own way. I dissented from that and warned the Committee that calamitous results would surely follow.

During our discussions on the 9th June, I gathered that you too deplored the results. But to what effect ? Then I reminded you of the noble standard set up by Mahatma Gandhi's own example ; as to how in the Ahmedabad session of the A.I.C.C. in 1925, when the question of Council entry was being hotly disputed, Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and others walked out in protest against Gandhijee's attitude of 'No Change', and thereafter, when the voting was taken, Bapu's proposition got a majority. But Bapu rose to declare himself defeated, because he argued, that if Motilaljee and Das group who opposed his proposition had remained and voted he would certainly have been in the minority. So he retired from politics for the time being, blessed the Council entry favoured by Nehru and Das and helped them in making the best of their political experiment and leadership.

I wanted you to judge the present day happenings from that noble standard of democratic behaviour and lead the Congress from out of the present miserable moorings.

I have also placed the gist of these points before Sri Jawaharlal, but he too has so far failed to rise to the occasion and take the necessary dynamic action to bring to book the culprits who might be found ranged from your Secretariat to the Andhra District Congress Committees who had gone to Courts in defiance of the Working Committee and who have perverted Congress democracy with such impunity and brought it into such ill-repute.

What is the use of my coming back again into the fold of the Working Committee whose wrong decisions have produced such an enormity and set up such an ignoble precedent ? That is why I have requested you to get these matters discussed in the Working Committee in my absence and try to do justice, not so

much for our sake but for the sake of the good name of the Congress. For, we who have been called upon to lead the people have to set up high standard of democratic decencies and political honesty and we can indulge in such happenings as had been experienced in our Congress elections especially in Andhra only at our peril.

Does not all this mean that somehow the sap of real life and atmosphere of moral standards and judgment has run out of the Congress and the President himself feels helpless in the face of such a scandalous perversion of democratic elections through Court injunctions and turning a majority into a minority ?

If only we too are indifferent to the normal standards that we should conform to in public life, nothing would be more convenient to us than to accept the offer made to us by the Andhra Ministerialists. We could then be sure of our comfortable share in the Congress nominations to legislatures and later on to the Ministry and join the present Ministerialists in subverting the morals of our public life and exploiting the public. But we prefer political wilderness and all the troubles and risks of organising the rival party to accepting such a degrading offer of partnership in political immorality and exploitation of the masses.

I am obliged to part ways from you and the Congress Party. This parting of ways is extremely painful to every one of us. But just as we did make sacrifices in those days of old under the inspiration of Bapu for the sake of our country's freedom, we have, today, to bear these heart-breaks too and make these heavy sacrifices, not the least valuable of which is the love that we have learnt to bear towards each other throughout the glorious years of our struggle for national freedom, in the interest of our noble ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj, blessed by Bapu himself. Let me assure you that all my associates will always cherish the comradeship we have enjoyed under the inspired leadership of Bapu.

Yours sincerely,

N. G. Ranga

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# *Neglect of K.L.P's. Rights by United Congress*

**(Also Prevalence of Corruption among Congress Ministers)**

Nehru's indifference to Parliamentary Gandhian Code of conduct became clear to us of Andhra through his unconscionable failure to honour the gentlemen's understandings reached between us in 1952 and 1955. Dame fortune was equally unmindful of the desserts of the K.L.P. Hardly two months after being sworn in, Shri N. V. Rama Rao, one of the two K.L.P. ministers, died of heart failure. He was an excellent organiser, extremely loyal and devoted to the cause of K.M.P. Raj and peasants. His father went to jail several times between 1920 and 1942. He had also gone to jail while still in his teens in 1930 and again in 1940-44. A lawyer and a good team worker, he had a genius for keeping people together and leading them to achive great and good public tasks. When the whole of Rajahmundry Taluk was under the pall of the terrible Godavari floods of 1952-53, he ventured to go repeatedly on that swollen and turbulent Godavari with his shiploads of foodgrains for the relief of flood-stricken people hanging on to the roof tops. He declined twice the offer of

ministership and thus refused to play the same role as P.T. Reddi. During the one month of tenure, as minister, he prepared a draft scheme for crop insurance and submitted it to the Union Govern. ment and Planning Commission. Nothing has been done in that direction by Government till now (1967).

To have lost him was an aweful blow to the K.L.P. Comrades ? But the A.I.C.C. and state ministerial leadership failed to accept my advice and exhortation, offered so repeatedly for more than a year, that Sri K.O. Reddi should be appointed in his place, to enable the United Congress to recover from the shame and breach of faith committed at the commencement of the new Ministry in not inviting him also to join the Cabinet. They did not mind having only one representative of the K.L.P. in their Cabinet of 24 and it did not injure their scruples to defy or deny the understanding given implicitly to the public at the time of the elections that all the parties to the United Congress would virtually form Cabinet and provide united and comradely leadership to the voters. Sri Latchanna had to make many heart-rending appeals to them before they condescended to accept Sri K. O. Reddi as a minister after a delay of $1\frac{1}{2}$ years. Such was the denial of comradeship and United Front's word of honour ; such was the ingratitude displayed by the highest of political leadership in return to the sincere passion of the K.L.P. for democratic United Front. Jawaharlaljee conveniently forgot that when it stood to gain everything by retaining its party integrity and political independence, the K.L.P. accepted the invitation of Congress comradeship, in the interests of democratic unity. Why ? He must punish K.L.P. for having defeated Congress in 1952, 1954.

It was freely talked about that in order to rehabilitate the Andhra P.C.C. firmly on the political arena and in the hearts of the masses, I was going to be asked to assume its presidentship. Somehow the A. I. C. C. leaders who gathered at Vijayawada in 1955 decided to be content with nominating Sri B.G. Reddi as the leader and to await another opportunity to invite me to assume the leadership of the United Congress. When some of the Congress leaders suggested it to me, I told them that I could think of undertaking that responsibility, only if all the groups would agree. That election took place when I went in Parliamentary Delegation to U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia. I did not

give any written authorisation to anyone to propose my name for Presidentship. Yet, my name was proposed by some Congressmen who were opposed to Sri N.S. Reddi, the favourite of Nehru.

How did the "Salyas" and "Naradas" of Andhra behave over that unfortunate Andhra P.C.C. Presidentship election ? They exploited my name as their group's possession and unnecessarily taunted the group of Sri N.S. Reddi to accept the challenge. Even when they found, by all reasonable counts, two days before the election date, that their leader and Chief Minister Sri B.G. Reddi was unwilling to continue to openly support my candidature, their partisanship did not allow them to give up my candidature, for fear, that any other candidate might not pull as much weight. When atleast. on the morning of the election day, so many of the veteran K.L.P. workers and peasant leaders begged them to release my name from that contest, they insisted upon taking the defeat on my name because they claimed that alone could sustain such defeats. Between themselves and some of the A.I.C.C. leaders, they put my name to group ends, entirely contrary to my wishes when rejoining the United Congress.

They totally ignored my passion for United Congress, *i.e.*, coalition of all democratic parties who defeated Communists.

Some leading Parliamentary friends suggested to Delhi leaders, it seems, that I should be invited to join the Congress Working Committee, as I had been an old member from the days of Bapu. But Jawaharlal objected to it lest it should be misunderstood as a part of the General Election bargain. The same leader is credited to have entertained the fear that as of old, I might prove to be too independent and assertive and too much Kisan-minded. On the other hand, the "Salyas" were later invited into Central and Andhra ministries and several 'Naradas' have become the trusted friends of Sri N. S. Reddi and Nehru. Thus Jawaharlal paved the way for 1967 debacle of Congress and country.

On the eve of my departure to U.S.S.R. in May, in fact, an hour before I left for the aerodrome, one of the "Salyas" came to me, claiming to speak for the State and A.I.C.C. leaders and suggested that I should not object, if by any chance, my name came to be proposed. I could say nothing useful contrary to what I had already stated to them. On my return in July, I asked the A.I.C.C. leaders why they had allowed my name to be

proposed at all in my absence when they knew that there was to be stiff opposition, led by Sri N. S. Reddi, the Deputy Chief Minister. They merely answered that they were assured that the opposition was going to be only nominal. They did not explain on what honourable grounds they failed to do in this case what they did in that of the leadership's, that is, to indicate their preference ; nor did they tell me what reactions they met with from Jawaharlaljee over their choice of the leader and Deputy Chief Minister or over the dispositions they had in mind over the P.C.C's. new leadership. Thus I was presented with an undeserved and unsolicited defeat over the Presidentship : what a recognition of my leadership of the United Congress which helped them to win back their lost leadership in Andhra.

On return to Andhra after my European tour, I learnt how the K.L.P. rank and file were being discriminated against in their attempts to rejoin the Congress and to gain a good hold on the leadership of local Congress Committees. I warned the State K.L.P. leaders and their associated "Salyas" and "Naradas" not to attempt to capture any Congress Committees but only to get into them through the willing co-operation and invitation of all others. But I was told that sedulous efforts were being made by the District and Taluk Congress Committees and their leaders not to register the names of K.L.P. supporters, even after receiving payments for membership and receipts. So many colleagues expressed their sense of frustration at the failure of the Congress leadership to invite a second K.L.P. leader to take the place of the late N.V. Rama Rao on the State Ministry and to reorganise the Congress Committees, as promised at the time of the General Elections in such a manner that the K.L P. workers would be assured of an effective say in the councils and activities of the Congress Committees which would function truly as United Congress.

I brought these facts to the notice of the A.I.C.C. leadership both directly and indirectly but to no effect. One glaring instance of how Sri Ramana, M.P., enlisted himself at the A.I.C.C. and paid up the fees and requested the A.I.C.C. to ask local committees to enlist him on their rolls and how they failed to do so, came to our notice with all its consequent pathos. Later his name was proposed for the presidentship of the District Congress Committee but the election officer of the D C.C. dismissed

his nomination on the ground that his name was not on the D.C.C's. membership list. The A.I.C.C. failed to order the re-election of the D.C.C. even when this instance of injustice was brought to its notice ; indicating how soon it forgot the election-time promises to achieve Congress reorganisation.

By April 1956, it became clear to all the workers and masses, avowing faith in K.L.P. ideals, that they were no longer wanted by those in charge of the Congress Committees in Andhra. During the second half of 1955, the Andhra P.C.C. chose to challenge the right of the K.L.P. workers to continue their organisational efforts for the Kisan Sammelan, on the pretext that the Kisan Sammelan was a rival organisation to the Congress. This shocked almost all Kisan workers and made them question against the wisdom of our merger into United Congress. After all, even Mahatma Gandhi had to admit the right of Congressites of Kisan-mindedness to organise class organisation of Kisans, namely, the Kisan Sammelan.

Even Sardar Patel, who used to be so much opposed to me because of my work for the Kisan Sammelan, was good enough to invite me into close collaboration on the National Working Committee and reconcile himself to the existence of independent Kisan organisation. Now, after having been placed once again in power through the cooperation of the K.L.P. the P.C.C. chiefs wanted to take undue advantage of the K.L.P's. decision to join United Congress by forcing them to give up their 35 years old Kisan Sammelans, to be robbed of their only independent platform to serve Kisans and life-line of contacts with the masses, and to offer allegiance to their nominated *ad hoc* Kisan committee of the P.C.C. This, more than the failure of Congress to increase the number of K.L.P. ministers from one to three and the obstruction offered to K.L.P. masses in joining the Congress and participating in its leadership, opened the eyes of every seasoned Kisan worker and class conscious Kisan to the presence in their midst, in all its old-time intolerance and totalitarian temper, of factious, groupist, power-mad ministerial Congress of the 1947—51 brand. They therefore decided, almost instinctively, to fight this demon, whatever might be the consequences. So when notices were served on the Kisan workers to give up their allegiance to Kisan Sammelan, most of them refused to abandon their loyalty to Kisans' cause and their

Kisan Sammelan and served notice as it were on me that they would not continue to be members of the Congress, under such dishonourable and coercive conditions. Messrs. G. V. Subbayya, G. L. Narayana played a leading role in this revolt.

All that the A.I.C.C. leadership did, when this unhealthy development was brought to their notice, was not to order the reorganisation of Congress in the Andhra but only to ask the P.C.C. not to pursue that controversy any longer, about the right of the K.L.P. workers to continue their championship of Kisans and their rights.

Ever since, every Kisan worker of any consequence and most of the politically-conscious Kisans and others who agree with the K.L.P. approach abstained from renewing their membership of the Congress.

**Why not the K.L.P. function again**

I brought this dangerous development to the notice of the A.I.C.C. leadership in June-July, 1957, and suggested that we might "call a halt to the experiment of the merger" and to let the Congress and K.L.P. function independently but to work in friendly collaboration in the Assembly in providing Parliamentary leadership to the masses. I told them that contrary to the assurances given to the people at the time of the General Elections, the K.L.P. and Praja Party leaders were kept out of the ministry, which came into existence only as the representative of the United Congress and were also denied any honourable partnership in the leadership of the P.C.C. and, as such, they could not be expected to offer also organisational allegiance, with all its rigours under the pre-1951 factious-minded leadership while being kept beyond the pale of equal comradeship.

In March, 1956, Sri K. Obulu Reddi was sworn in as Minister for Food and Agriculture in Andhra State. For about 18 months Sri N. S. Reddi prevented him from reaching that position, owing to the ineffective Chief Minister Sri B.G. Reddi. Shri K. O. Reddi entered public life in 1934, after graduating from Peasant Institute. This factious fight by Sri N. S. Reddi embittered our two K.L.P. Ministers, Sree Latchanna and Obulu Reddi and led the way to many of the later unfortunate developments.

Both our K.L.P. Ministers were hailed by the section of the Andhra masses who had been enthusiastic about K.M.P. Raj ideal. It soon became evident that so may local panchayat leaders and workers and village "Salyas" and "Naradas" were more keen on gaining the ear of the P.C.C. ministers and exploiting their intimacy with them for local and caste advantages and not at all in popularising the K.M.P. Raj ideal among the masses. But the K.M.P. Raj workers were everywhere in evidence in whipping up public enthusiasm for the K.L.P. ministers, ideals and programmes and in gathering huge mass rallys to receive the two K.L.P. ministers and to listen to their K.L.P. Raj ideals. These two K.L.P. ministers were evoking greater enthusiasm from the masses all over Andhra than the other eleven ministers including the Chief and Deputy Chief Ministers. This further excited the jealousy of the P.C.C. Ministry. They failed to use all this popularity as an asset to the whole of the ministry because they could not rise above their factious, caste-mindedness.

Once the former Andhra and Telanghana were brought together into what has come to be the Andhra Pradesh with its total population of about three crores, the Congress Party had to elect a new leader. Sri N. S. Reddi was elected by a majority, defeating his rival Sri B.G. Reddi, the former Chief Minister. Sri N S. Reddi began to pursue his six years long habitual vendetta against the K.L.P. and so, refused to include its representatives in his ministry. The A.I.C.C. leaders failed to fulfil their gentlemen's agreement, reached with the K.L.P. in 1955 and allowed Sri N. S. Reddi to carry on with his one-sided ministry, as if there had been no such thing as the united Congress, through which alone Congress regained the position it had lost in the 1952 General Election. That this was a dishonourable role to play was recognised by Lal Bahadur and several of the Congress leaders but none could persuade Jawaharlaljee to respect the Gandhian Code of political honour and make his favourite in the Andhra behave in the Gandhian manner.

It is not at all for merely a few positions in the Andhra Cabinet that I have tried to test the *bona fides* of the Congress leaders. It is well known that positions in any Cabinet hold a significance all their own in a parliamentary democracy. It is mostly for jobbery, nepotism, corruption and group or caste or

parochial favours that Congressmen struggle so fiercely for places in the ministry. On the other hand, we have demanded them in order to fashion the policies, and shape the programmes of Government to guide, direct and control administration and deal justly as between groups, castes, areas and interests prevailing in the State. That is the real role of a Cabinet. Therefore, to demand but not to beg and obtain and utilise but not to exploit places in Cabinet is one of the indispensable duties of groups of parliamentarians. It is for this purpose, they range themselves as minority and majority parties of an Assembly. Any one can see what a tragic difference it made to British foreign policy when Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain avoided Churchill from their Cabinets. How great were the efforts made by British Labour Party to retain the comradeship of Bevan group, despite his periodical revolts !

Jawaharlaljee and other Central Congress leaders should have known that during the general elections of 1955, the people voted for the United Congress Manifesto and the candidates who stood by that manifesto. By giving them the majority in the Assembly people wanted a United Congress ministry and a parliamentary leadership embracing all the parties in the United Congress. Therefore, it would be falsifying the decision and desire of the electorate to permit the leader of the major group of the majority party to constitute a Cabinet with only the representatives of his group and leaving out the leaders and representatives of the other constituent parties to the United Congress, namely, the K.L.P. and Praja Party. The A.I.C.C. failed to consider it as its special duty to see that the principle of representation for all groups and important elements in the United Congress Party was observed, more so because the K.L.P. put its entire trust in their *bona fides* and merged itself in United Congress and placed its members and aspirations of masses who supported it, at the mercy of Congress leaders. Moreover, they should have attempted to insist upon the observance of the Parliamentary-*cum*-Cabinet convention that the leader of the majority party, once elected, should invite into honourable partnership and comradeship the leaders of the principal elements, groups and their principal supporters, unmindful of their defeated ambitions for the capture leadership and should, in no case, weaken the united party by avoiding the comradeship of rival or associate leaders. Sri N.S. Reddi proved to be true to his reputation, as a die-hard

group leader, vowing political punishment to his opponents, even within his party. Was it not under his stewardship that the Congress lost so heavily in Andhra in 1951 general election? Was it not also he who did his worst to prevent the formation of the United Congress and who tried to defeat many of the candidates of the United Congress in 1955 election? Unmindful as he then was in his knowledge of the principles, conventions and practices of parliamentary democracy as it has been practised in United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, he could be excused for having fought shy of inviting into ministerial partnership such leaders within the Congress Assembly Party as were powerful, experienced and pugnacious as himself but were opposed to him. But how could there be any justification for Jawaharlal and other A.I.C.C. leaders for the failure to observe the principles and conventions of parliamentary democracy ?

After the General Elections in the Telanghana were held, Sri N.S. Reddi was elected unanimously, since my advice was heeded by the K.L.P. and their friends to show him the courtesy of uncontested elections. That avoided whatever justification Sri N. S. Reddi could have felt, even though it would have been a factious attitude, for trying to deny representation in his cabinet to the K.L.P. and Telanghana groups and their friends and the Praja Party. But he insisted upon refusing to recognise his moral duty towards the K.L.P. section. Even then the A.I.C.C. leaders did not choose to assert themselves and insist upon making the Andhra Cabinet truly representative of the majority of the electorate and all sections of the Congress Assembly Party. This failure of the A.I.C.C. leaders became all the more unfortunate, because the K.L.P. members have stood for certain definite ideals and aims and could claim to represent certain sections of the public, notably the K.M.P. Raj-minded Kisans and artisans and their contribution, so clearly desired by the public in the 1955 general election, was denied to Andhra democracy and the general public. The merger of the K.L.P. with the Congress should only be turned by the Congress leadership into an additional advantage to the people behind them and not into a disadvantage. It had no moral right to forget its duties flowing from the manifesto of the United Congress. Those sections of the Andhra public who have voted for the United Congress and especially for the K.L.P. have been discriminated against and denied their legitimate share in the

making of the Cabinet decisions and providing ministerial responsibility and formulating policies and implementing them through their chosen parliamentary leaders. To have kept out the Praja Party from the Cabinet, merely because it has not merged with Congress, is another blow hurled at Indian democracy. After all, the majority party could only claim to represent the majority of the people, leaving out the substantial minority without any direct representation in the Cabinet. If even that majority party again would leave out its internal minority also—a substantial one—from the Cabinet, then the ministry would actually be representing not a majority but a very small minority of the people—an utter falsification and degradation of democratic rule. Therefore, if the Indian public have little or no faith in the democratic *bona fides* of both the local and A.I.C.C. leadership, anyone who knows how the delicate mechanism of parliamentary democracy is being worked and practised in England and U.S.A. need not be shocked. It is indeed surprising that the Indian public have displayed so much patience with this continuing perversion of parliamentary democracy.*

Mr. C. D. Deshmukh, the former Finance Minister at the Centre, suggested in 1959 the need for an enquiry by a high judicial officer into the corruption charges against some Union Cabinet Ministers. The political elite of all parties and non-partisan press took up this matter and demanded an independent judicial enquiry. Sri Nehru tried in vain for months to resist this pressure for a probe into financial and other activities of his ministerial colleagues. At last he allowed in 1960 the President of the Congress, his own nominee, to nominate a committee to study the complaints and report for party's consideration, about the state of political health or ill-health of Congress ministers and magnates. It is, however, every day's experience for rival groups of Congressmen to go on hurling

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**Suecessive Chief Ministers in Andhra and other States have pursued this factious, caste-oriented policy in Cabinet formation, administration with such indifference to democratic decencies that the minority groups within their party have been complaining, from time to time, against the partisan, factious, caste-minded perversion, exploitation of administration, Co-ops, Panchayats, educational institutions and opportuniies. Nehru, Shastri, Nadar, Indira failed to help the tin-gods in ministries to do justice at least to the whole of Congressmen, not to speak of masses as a whole.*

at each other, in the press and on the platform, charges of corruption, undue interference in the administration, nepotism and political toutism and discrimination even against the dissidents, not to speak of the followers of other parties. Prime Minister Nehru felt obliged to shake himself free from some of his most trusted colleagues from his personal secretariat Parliament's success in getting at documents exposing the partiality and immoral attitude of Shastri's Cabinet towards the political corruption prevalent among the highest ranks of ministers, has shaken the confidence of the public in the moral standards of Congress leaders and Cabinets, so much so that the demand first raised by Shri K.M. Munshi, the former Central Minister and Senior Vice-President of the Swatantra Party, has come to be welcomed by large sections of our Parliament for the adoption of the Swedish Institution of Ombudsman to keep guard over the conduct of members of Cabinets, and other dignitaries All this has emboldened the Anti-Corruption Commission headed by Shri K. Santhanam, an ex-Governor, to recommend in favour of scrutiny into the conduct of ministers by Chief Ministers and so on. But the discovery made by Parliament of the failure of not only the Central Prime Minister but also the whole of the Cabinet sub-committee of Shastri to be independent of political expediency has exposed the inadequacy of the suggestion made by the Santhanam's Commission and underlined the demand for an impartial, non-political, judicial authority, like the Ombudsman, to safeguard the interests of the public against the personal, political, partisan activities, misuse of funds and powers of ministers.

We feel that the sufferings which came to our lot in opposing the Congress dictators during these 17 years have not been in vain. The fact that despite all these exposures of their misdeeds and corrupt practices, so many Congressmen manage to get themselves elected, only streamlines the need of our nascent democracy with its liability of so large a majority of ignorant, illiterate voters, for a constitutional check as the institution of Ombudsman to check the personal and political misuse of powers by ministers and their political henchmen. The late Prakasam, who arraigned the then Congress ministers, by his ten hours long indictment in Madras Assembly and all those of us who had paid such heavy political penalties for having stood by him and opposed consistently this

canker of political corruption have thus been vindicated by these later developments, Shri Gulzarilal Nanda, the Home Minister in the Cabinets of Nehru and Shastri, has also played a notable role in turning the search-light of Gandhian conscience upon the labyrinthine tumour of Congress corruption, engendered for so long by the power-mad Congress leadership. I am glad the Administrative Reforms Commission has also endorsed our demand for establishing the Institution of Ombudsman, *i.e.*, Lok Pal.

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# *My Election to Lok Sabha—1957*

In accordance with the decision taken by the Union Government, Telanghana with its population of a crore was merged with the Andhra and the new State was called the ANDHRA PRADESH, with a population of three crores and HYDERABAD as its Capital. Parliament decided there was no need to have elections for the Assembly from the former Andhra, since mid-term general election had been held only two years previously and it would be unnecessary trouble for the public and candidates to go through costly electioneering. So, the 1957 general election was held only for Parliament in the Andhra Pradesh as a whole and for the Assembly also only in the Telanghana.

In the selection of Congress candidates for the Lok Sabha from the former Andhra, the K.L.P. section of United Congress was represented only by myself and Sri Latchanna in the Election Committee, whereas Sri Gopala Reddi, the defeated Chief Minister who had been with Sri Latchanna earlier, found himself back again in his former lair of Sri Sanjeeva Reddi. I tried in vain to persuade the Committee to look at the whole of that selection business as the concern of all Congressmen and not merely of rival groups, and found myself, inevitably, sponsoring quite a number of names of people who had been associated

directly or indirectly with the K.L P. and Praja Party sections of the Congress. Such was the power of groupism that apart from myself, only one other member strongly sponsored by us, namely, Sri K. BALI REDDI, for long the General Secretary of the Andhra Kisan Sammelan, came to be listed and that too provisionally by the Andhra Committee. Two others who belonged for all practical purposes to their side but who were for some reasons not so much favoured by them came to be accepted after being sponsored by us also, when we agreed to two others strongly supported by them.

The A.I.C.C. leaders did not pay any heed to our protest that contrary to the spirit of the United Congress and the merger of the K.L.P., the P C.C. Ministerial Section of the Congress dominated Election Committee and wanted to practically monopolise the selections and the K.L.P. and Praja Party sections and others associated with them were not given proper representation. They wanted to forget the political conditions under which the 1954-55 United Congress was formed and also the gentlemen's understanding that the interest of the K.L.P. section would be honourably sefeguarded. We protested in vain against this blatantly unfair treatment.

When it came to my selection to the Lok Sabha, the D.C.C. bracketed my name with that of Devijee and wanted either of us to be selected. The Provincial Ministerial Section was keen on my candidature, whereas the A.I.C.C. representatives pressed me to set up Devijee. In view of the known disinclination of Devijee to stand for the Lok Sabha and to place herself at the mercy of the doubtful co-operation of Congress bosses and the desire of the K.L.P. section that I should demonstrate that the voting public would be with me anytime I wanted to face elections, I decided to stand. Of course, the A.I.C.C. leaders agreed to my candidature.

Long before the finalisation of the selection of candidates by the A.I.C.C. leaders, I learnt through reliable sources that several of the Congress leaders of Guntur District were intriguing with the connivance of some of their State Leaders to get me selected for the TENALI Constituency and afterwards politically ambush me through their local Communist allies by getting an

independent to stand against me and achieve my electoral defeat, thereby striking a mortal blow to the prestige and popularity of the whole of the K.L.P. section of our Andhra masses. I did not wish to move to the safer and adjacent Ongole constituency and insisted upon facing all such internal intriguers within the Congress and defeating the prospective Communist candidate in disguise and proving my capacity to carry the majority of the voters with me. Yet I tried my best to conciliate the Congress leaders and MLAs. So I met them all and patiently listened to their grievances against the K.L.P. section and tried to pacify them. I informed their P.C.C. leadership at a very early stage of electioneering that I was meeting their District leaders and thus hoped to neutralise the passions and prejudices of their local partisans.

It became clear two weeks after I began the unofficial election campaign, that the dominant leader of the P.C.C. ministerialist was clearly avoiding any open breach with me but has assiduously trying to induce the Communists to set up their candidate. Almost up to the time of filing nominations the Communist Party had not decided upon contesting in my constituency as they felt that my success was a foregone conclusion and they did not wish to lose the goodwill of the Andhra people as a whole by unnecessarily harassing me. For fear that the Communist sponsored candidate might withdraw even at the last minute, the ministerialists persuaded one of themselves—a bosom friend of their domineering leader—to file his nomination. Eventually the Communist-supported candidate belonging to the less publicly-awakened section of Kisans who had so little contact with public life and whose main recommendation was his social title was maintained and supported by the underground section of the Ministerialist Congress.

During the election campaign, only two of the Ministerialist M.L.As. openly supported my candidature and one of them was my colleague on the All India Handloom Congress and a graduate of the Peasant Institute, namely, Sri P. Kotayya. The other supported me but was defeated in his major town at the last moment by their underground, which was being directed by his domineering State leader. When that leader was obliged to address a public meeting at BAPATLA he was factious enough to

say that "Prof. Ranga's defeat cannot be taken as the defeat of Jawaharlaljee. If he were to come to be defeated, he would hav to thank his own friends". When he had to address the TENALI meeting two days previous to the election, he never mentioned my name. It became a generally prevalent joke over the whole of the constituency and elsewhere that "Rangajee got only the symbol from the Congress and nothing else". In fact every social section of the voters was approached surreptitiously with the complaint that in some other constituency a candidate of their caste, standing on behalf of the Congress, was not being supported by the K.L.P. section and so Ranga should not be favoured by them. In this manner the Brahmins, Telagas, Vaisyas, Reddis and Moslems were sought to be alienated from me. Over and above all this underground work, there were the Communists and their electoral allies the P.S.P. who exerted themselves to the utmost with their assured 25 per cent of the votes against me as they rightly considered me as their biggest opponent on the ideological and organisational fronts.

During the whole of that 10 weeks long campaign not one Congress Minister either of the State or the Union cared to touch my constituency and appeal to the people in support of my candidature. The P.C.C. Ministerialists did get Jawaharlaljee and a few other Union Ministers to Andhra to support their candidates but my constituency was kept outside their purview. Jawaharlaljee was in Vijaywada and only the river Krishna separated him from my constituency but he did not bother to come and strengthen me. His Finance Minister came to Guntur town—six miles from my constituency—to support another Congress candidate but would not touch mine. Such was the unashamed hostility or indifference displayed by their central leadership to my election.

I was however glad that I had to depend mostly on the masses and the workers of the K.L.P. persuasion and those small groups of Congressmen who had been loyal to the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. It was an inspiring experience to find the bulk of villagers so enthusiastic about my candidature, so keen on my success and so pleased with my visit to their villages, hamlets and even their homes. From most villages I received gifts towards the election expenses, most of which had to be incurred in towns and on transport facilities.

Kisans and artisans, especlally weavers and Harijans and other depressed classes who were non-communist-minded were all solidly behind me. They collected small sums from among themselves and paid for their local electioneering, I managed to visit almost every village and hamlet and addressed every group or section of voters, sometimes more than once. People were glad of the election, as I had that excellent opportunity to reach everyone of their areas and have the darshan of their men and women and convey the message of the K.M.P. Raj so personally and directly. It was an exhausting, if exhilarating campaign for me. I had to work for more than 12 hours a day for all those ten weeks and address six to eight meetings, as many more talks and take part in many more entertainments. Besides I had to visit the other three parliamentary constituencies in Guntur District and tour for many days in support of the Congress candidates. I am glad my health stood that terrific test. I am grateful to the K.L.P. workers and so many orthodox Gandhians and also to the people who gave such patient and interested hearing to our political expositions.

I took care to see that everyone of the workers led by the incomparable speakers in Telugu P. Koteswara Rao, Vijay Raj Kumar, Veerachari, Sunkara, Satyanarayana Rosayya, Edwards who campaigned for me tried to rivet the attention of the people upon my political ideal of K.M.P. Raj and our economic approach in favour of the *peasant family economy and peasant proprietorship.* They went even further and spread the message of the Kisan Sammelan and assured the electorate that I would be going again to Parliament principally to protect and promote the interests of Kisans, artisans and rural masses. All of them referred repeatedly to my talks with Bapu in 1944 and his blessings to our ideal of K.M.P. Raj. Everywhere our propagandists campaigned against the Communists and their conscious or unconscious fellow-travellers in and outside the Congress. The people were reminded of Communist's opposition to peasants, their economy and their self-employed status. So when I came to be elected by a majority of over 27,000 despite all those terrific odds and the minority-voting in five out of the seven towns of my constituency and the subterfuge of the Congress underground groups, I felt glad that my principal stand regarding peasant and artisan economy and land and rural problems was wholeheartedly endorsed by the

overwhelming majority of the rural masses of my constituency in a symbolic manner on behalf of the whole Andhra rural public.

I took care to warn our peasants in a celebration held in Kuchipudi within a month after our election success against the attempts being made by the Planning Commission presided over by Jawaharlaljee to impose co-operative farming upon our peasants. Shri K. Raghuramayya, the other successful M.P. who later became the Minister of State, reassured that meeting that Jawaharlaljee could and would never allow such an anti-Kisan manoeuvre to be implemented. The Telugu Press wondered how I could dream of the Congress working against the fundamental basis of our peasants, namely, their self-employment and ownership of their holdings. Before the year was over the real designs of the Planning Commission against peasant economy were embodied in the Gram Dan Scheme of the Yelwal Conference convened by Vinobhajee and attended by Jawaharlaljee, Rashtrapati Rajendra Prasad, Congress President Dhebar, Jaiprakash Narain and representatives of the C.P.I. and P.S.P. I had known for long that the Planning Commission as well as Jawaharlaljee were keen on moving in that direction. Their conspiracy came thus to surface. I had been warning them from the Kisan platforms that they would lead the country into economic ruin and social slavery. Many Congressmen who only cared for political power and opportunities were keen on exploiting my differences with Jawaharlaljee on these vital matters to advance their own positions in State politics. Hence their underground opposition to me in the hope of endearing themselves to Jawaharlaljee by ensuring my defeat. I continued to champion the peasants' cause in my vigorous K. L. P. manner and appealed to the Congress to remain loyal to Gandhian assurances to peasants and regained the confidence of Congress M.Ps. so well as to be elected once again in 1948 as the Secretary of their Parliamentary Party with Jawaharlal as Leader.

# *Disillusionment in the Lok Sabha (1957—59)*

In the Lok Sabha there were two notable occasions during the first year 1957-58 in which I had to play an important role. On the first occasion, Sri Dange, the leader of the Communist Party, made a frontal attack on the democratic bases of the Congress Ministry and exhorted the Nehru Government to follow the example of the Communist Governments and people who were following Marxism. I was called upon by the Speaker Sri. M.A. Ayyangar to answer the Communist leader. It is said that I made one of the most effective speeches of the year and answered every important point made by the Communist leader. I said India chooses to go the way of Gandhi and Gandhism rather than the Marxian Way of the U.S.S.R. and People's China, which have massacred millions of peasants and degraded hundreds of millions of free peasants to the depressed state of coolies. India is right in welcoming American aid, as she is so badly in need of such foreign, capital and other assistance and she can abstain from obtaining foreign assistance only at the risk and on pain of slowing down or dwarfing her industrial and other social and economic development. If it suits the Communist Party to let India continue to be poor, in the hope that the discontented masses would clamour for Communist leadership, it would certainly not be proper for democratic parties to oblige the Communists and

follow the suicidal policy of depending on our meagre internal resources and thus delay our development. Thereafter the Communists did not choose to make such broad and wild attacks on our democratic approach.

The second occasion was provided by Sri Masani's cut motion, to discuss the Government's attitude towards co-operative farming. He made one of his most lucid and effective speeches and detailed how co-operative farming had failed in the Communist countries, how the Chinese experience of Communes, Hundred Flowers and co-operative farming could not be taken as a guide for India and how Indian peasants ought not to be imposed upon through this extremely dangerous device. I expressed agreement with his standpoint. I warned Government against taking any hasty steps. I questioned the right of the Nehru Government to launch upon a national campaign in favour of co-operative farming, without obtaining any clear mandate for it at the time of the general elections and after having obtained their majority on the basis of the Kisan votes. I stressed the need for keeping faith with our Gandhian professions of non-violence, decentralisation and democracy and with the peasant masses of India who are not exploiters, who are self-employed, who are and wish to remain free and independent. I appealed to Congress Government not to bring in the costly and corrupt bureaucracy and bossing into agriculture also, which are the inevitable concomitants of co-operative farming. Excepting for one M.P., all others who took part in that debate supported our stand and opposed the introduction of co-operative farming as a national campaign. That was the first occasion, after the general elections, on which I made my position clear on this issue and indicated the limits of my support to the Congress Party. When that strong speech came to be published, Kisan workers all over India took the cue, as to where they should stand in politics and how they must be ready to rally to the defence of peasant economy, irrespective of our other political obligations and contacts. It is interesting to note that the single M.P. who supported that undemocratic move for co-operative farming has come to be promoted as a Deputy Minister, such is the spirit of Nehruism.

Having found that the Congress Party in Parliament was so keen on supporting my standpoint, if left free to decide for itself, Jawaharlaljee pursued his well-known indirect methods of

influencing it, by utilising the moral influence of Vinobhajee ! So, the General Secretary of the Congress Shree Sreeman Narayan was allowed to co-operate with Vinobhajee's move to call an All-Parties Conference at Yelwal in Mysore to propound a programme for Rural Revolution. In that fateful conference of 1957 the Gram Dan Scheme—which was dressed up as merely a projection of the Bhoodan Movement—was endorsed by the President of the Republic, Prime Minister and leaders of the Congress Communist and Socialist Parties.

They took care not to invite me or any of the other leaders of the Kisan organisations that have been championing the Kisan's cause, because, we were all opposed to the introduction of the Chinese-type of co-operative farming and we insisted that only Service Co-operatives should be developed and not co-operative farming, as a national campaign, and we would never agree to any move calculated to undermine peasant proprietorship or self-employment. If Jawaharlaljee hoped that once that new move by the attractive name Gramdan was inaugurated with the blessings of the renowned spiritual successor of Gandhijee and with the support of all the so-called progressive political parties, neither the Congress Party in Parliament, nor myself would be bold enough to oppose his moves against peasant economy, I did not take long to disillusion him.

We were celebrating Gandhijee's Birth-day at Narakoduru on 2-10-1957 and both our K.L.P. Legislators, Shree Bapayya and Sivayya protested against the Yelwal Conference and urged me, in the name of that huge meeting, to enunciate the stand peasants should take on its decisions. By the end of that month, I was to preside over the Krishna District Kisan Conference organised by the veteran Kisan champion G. V. Subbayya at Machilipatam. So I had to hasten to consult my Kisan colleagues all over India about this new menace of Gramdan to our peasantry, but presenting itself in that attractive garb of Vinobhaism. If I chose to oppose it, I must be ready once again to cross swords with Jawaharlaljee, on a platform so well prepared and paved in advance with all the support of the press and all the political parties in Opposition. That might immediately mean my [illegible] political hara-kiri. Eventually it might also mean my parting ways, once again, from the Congress. Would my friends be ready

for another struggle with the mighty Jawaharlaljee and the all-powerful Congress Party ; that too, after having had the painful experience of the blind manner in which our adult suffrage had been functioning. Should I girdle up once again, at an age when usually civil servants would be retiring, to start another independent political campaign, possibly to plough a lonely furrow, as *Shanker's Weekly* put it, when I had done it in 1951. Anyhow I chose to remain true to my conscience. So, I attacked the Gramdan Movement and threatened, from the Kisan platform at Machilipatam, to exhort Kisans to start Satyagraha, if that Gramdan move was sought to be introduced in a national campaign with the backing of the political parties.

No sooner was this threat published in the papers, than Vinobhajee took care to say that Gramdan was not to be coercive move. Jawaharlaljee, Pantjee, the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party, Radhakrishnan, the Vice-President and Dhebar, the Congress President, wrote to me, protesting against my campaign and urging me not to take the Gramdan move as inimical to peasant economy, etc.

A perusal of their letters and my replies* would indicate what tribulations and pressures I must have suffered from during that crisis. I thank God, that I had the moral strength to stand up to what then appeared to be all powerful political compulsions.

By May 1958, that is six months thereafter, the Congress Party in Parliament was able to recover its own confidence in me after that storm had almost blown over and elect me, unanimously, as its Senior Secretary. That election of mine must have conveyed its own political significance to Jawaharlaljee, in the wake of the failure of the Gramdan movement, his pet-plan; but he was such a seasoned statesman that he introduced me to the Congress Parliamentary Executive in a pleasant manner as "Rangajee would help us now". Alas, that new comradeship was to prove all so short-lived. It is true that during those two years there came to prevail an exhilarating atmosphere of mutual trust and

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*See also (*i*) Why Ranga Resigns, (*ii*) 'Freedom in Peril'. and (*iii*) "Storm Bursts over Peasants".

sincere co-operation between us and he used to go out of his way to consult me on questions of the highest importance and of the most confidential nature, in national and international affairs. Yet we both were aware of the presence of the biggest bone of contention between us.

The Planning Commission would not give him respite from its pressure for the adoption of Soviet rural economy, which alone, according to it, could yield better and bigger crops and feed our people more adequately than peasant economy. So he tried ever so many times to persuade me, whenever we had our pleasant talks about all other matters, to join him in sponsoring the Commission's plans before the Party. Keen as I was on continuing that newly found bond of understanding and pleasant comradeship with him, at the most influential level I could not say "Yes" to his all-too-overwhelming suggestions. In the end, he decided to sponsor the Commission's plans for the introduction of State sponsored co-operative farming at the Nagpur Session of the Congress. I warned him against that move. He asked me to come to it and urge my point of view and oppose him. I answered that the dice were so hopelessly loaded against me. I countered by asking why he was so anxious to smother the fears, anxieties and opposition of the Congress Parliamentary Party by facing them with the dictate of the Congress Session and why he would not be patient enough to persuade the more enlightened and less emotional Parliamentary Party. When I found that he was bent upon using the sledge-hammer of the session to silence the Parliamentary Party in which my voice counted for so much, I asked him, with so much emotion, why he was so impatient to lose me for the Party. I reminded him of what he and everyone had experienced during the Madras debacle of 1951-53, when we fought against each other and allowed Communists to forge ahead and then again came together to prevent Communists from capturing power and thus subvert our democracy in Andhra and elsewhere.

That debate—painful for both—was carried on, off and on over a few weeks and ended with the Nagpur Session which passed on 11.1.59 the resolution in favour of a national campaign for co-operative farming. I offered my formal protest on the 8th January and resigned from the Secretaryship in March and at last from membership of the Congress in June 1959.

Through all the previous twenty and odd years, we had not achieved such intimate sense of comradeship and inspiring degree of consultations about the highest matters of policies as we came to experience during that last phase, with himself as the leader of the Party and Prime Minister and myself as the Seniormost leader among the non-official M.Ps. If he really wanted me not to be elected as the Senior Secretary, there were political weapons in his armour which he could have used successfully, and prevented me from resuming the Secretaryship of the Party, which I had held from 1937 till 1951. He knew that I would be attaining that position with the added prestige of once having resigned from the Congress and been invited to rejoin it, in order to reinforce its flagging efforts in Andhra to overcome the Communist challenge. So most of the members of the Parliamentary Party felt sure that he had at last decided to welcome me into the inner Councils and confidence, in the same way as Gandhijee and Sardarjee had done in the past. This feeling was further strengthened by the whole-hearted manner in which we were able to work together in almost all matters. When he could not get me to accept place or places which were within his gift, he persuaded me to accept at least the Chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee as that would not place me at anyone's mercy. The rank and file used to feel happy whenever I used to join issue with him on the agricultural policies as conceived by the Planning Commission.

When eventually I protested against the Nagpur resolution on Co-operative Farming, such was his appreciation of my genuine differences with him that he did not heed the advice of the newly-converted socialists like Malaviya to demand my resignation. I learnt that he opposed the move of some of his loyalists in the Executive Committee, when they urged him to demand my resignation from membership of the Party, after my resignation from the Secretaryship came to be accepted so reluctantly. He was hoping against hope that it would still be possible for me to reconcile myself to comradeship with him, except on agrarian matters, especially in view of our earlier bitter experiences during 1951—55, when we were separated. So he gave me the privilege of choosing my own way and date for taking my final decision. But that issue of a prolonged debate and final resignation seems to have effected a qualitative difference in the personal and social relations between myself and Jawaharlaljee.

Jawaharlaljee could never have dreamt that not only would I finally part company from him and Congress, but also gain the comradeship of Pujya (Revered) Rajajee, his once dearest colleague and chief, as Governor-General, M.R. Masani, Munshi, the renowned former Cabinet Minister and scholar, and such distinguished administrators in retirement as V.P. Menon, Secretary of States Ministry, Narayana Reddi, Naraharirao, Srinivasan of Bangalore, Sardar Lal Singh, Agronomist, Lobo Prabhu (Rtd. I.C.S.), M. Ruthnaswamy and B.D. Patel, Vice-Chancellors. Other accretions of strength from Bihar, U.P., Punjab, Gujarat, Karnatak Kisan leaders which rushed to my elbow so embittered his mind that he betrayed himself into intolerant, unparliamentary opposition and unseemly attacks on me which did so much harm to the public "image" of his greatness.

All this found its culmination in his undignified exclamation in Parliament in 1960, "My hon. friend exchanged so many parties". That provoked me to retort, "I had the courage to do that. My hon. friend never had the courage to do that". On many an occasion, Jawaharlaljee was expected to resign from Congress, because of what then appeared to be irreconcilable differences with Gandhijee or Working Committee. But he managed to avoid such a decision lest it should cause him irretrievable political damage. Who else could have resiled as dexterously from his pro-leftist declarations when he was faced with the Mahatma's warning, "the differences between you and me appear to me to be so vast and radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us."— quoted in "Bunch of Letters". He knew that I could quote many such instances and so, he preferred not to resent my retort to his indiscreet remark. That made the House and even himself to laugh and resume some good humour.

Like a wounded tiger, the Executive of the Congress Parliamentary Party, under the inspiration of Jawaharlaljee, decided to demand my resignation from Parliament. I replied by hurling the counter challenge that if I were to resign, then all the M L.As. who had been elected to the Andhra Assembly in the name of the United Congress founded by the combination of the Congress, K L.P. and K.M.P., as well as the M.Ps. whose return to Parliament became possible only because of my co-operation with the Andhra Congress should also resign. Proud Jawaharlaljee had

no plausible or decent enough answer to my reply. He must have realised how he failed to keep faith with the United Congress that we formed in 1955 and so he called a halt to that controversy.

A perusal of my detailed reply to that vengeful attitude and demand of the Congress would indicate the then prevailing political events and atmosphere. In spite of all the subsequent political exchanges between us over national issues and Chinese invasion, Jawaharlaljee found it possible to say in Parliament that he had great respect for my integrity.

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# *The Fate of Congress Presidentship*

Ever since Gandhijee assumed the leadership of our national movement in 1921, Congress Presidentship came to be marked for men who had won their spurs as all-India leaders of national standing having established warm and intimate contact with the Indian masses and intelligentsia during their tours and distinguished themselves by their performance in the debates of the Congress Committee. When, however, Pandit Nehru was elected to Congress Presidentship in December 1929, he was barely 40 years old. But this was more an expression of the Congress movement's regard and affection for Jawaharlal's ageing father who longed to see his son assume the coveted *gaddi* of the Congress, even if it was too early and himself too frail and aged to hope to see the young son head the Government of Swaraj India.

Congress Presidentship was a highly respected institution in those days as witnessed by the very eminence of personalities who were elected to it. Unfortunately, however, once Jawaharlaljee assumed the Prime Ministership of Independent India he began to cavil at the continuation of its earlier importance in changed circumstances. This resulted in a steep devaluation of the prestige and power associated with the Congress President. Acharya Kripalani, the Congress President, demurred to Jawaharlaljee's reluctance to take the Congress President into confidence on all major policies of the Government and to discuss them with

him before taking decisions. Jawaharlaljee did not share Acharya Kripalani's concern to continue the enormous prestige and importance of the Congress Presidentship and felt that the Prime Minister should be independent of the President of the Congress, which was only a political party, whereas the Government, of which he was the head, represented the whole of the people. In this conflict Pandit Nehru had the support of Sardar Patel and Gandhijee also had to let Pandit Nehru have his way. Acharya Kripalani resigned from the Congress Presidentship as he could not accept the absolute supremacy of the Prime Minister in all major policy decisions. Rajan Babu succeeded Acharya Kripalani as the Congress President while continuing to be Food and Agriculture Minister thus accepting supremacy of Prime Minister. Though a man of independent views, he was too soft-spoken and unobtrusive a personality to assert himself as a Congress President over the dynamic, self-willed Prime Minister. Thus the downfall of the Presidentship was registered even during Gandhijee's lifetime.

Having noted all these developments, Gandhijee concluded that it was high time for the Congress to be liquidated as a political party. He thought that it would not be fair that the party should exploit its great prestige with the people and monopolise the fruits of independence for which the entire people had made their contribution. It would also be unfair to so many of us, the Kisan workers, Socialists, Forward Blocists and many dissidents, to allow the senior leaders of the Congress party to enjoy the power and authority of Central and State Governments while continuing to enjoy the immense prestige of our common heritage of the Congress, which was built up by generations of freedom fighters. But Jawaharlaljee was riding on the crest of the new wave of power and authority, and the ethics of Gandhijee's wish was lost on him. He would not countenance our suggestion to implement Gandhijee's Last Testament to his followers. If he had, the history of Independent India would have been much different and less unhappy.

While Jawaharlaljee and other leaders found it profitable not to liquidate the Congress Party, the Congress President himself was divested of even advisory authority and turned into a convenient instrument in their hands. When Purushottam Das Tandon was President, they found him a little too fearless and independent to feel comfortable and amoral steps were adopted to get

him out and Tandonjee was obliged to quit. Once again Jawaharlaljee took charge of the Presidentship of the party. This set the seal on his overall control of the party, and the Cabinet and Congress became one of the instruments of Jawahar's "Democratic Dictatorship". To succeed him, Jawaharlaljee chose the Chief Minister of a relatively small State. He was not in the front rank of Congress leaders and could not be expected to be a match or menace to the Prime Minister. But when even the worm turned now and then by the President trying to make his presence felt, Jawaharlaljee found a most congenial President in his own daughter. Though he pretended that he did not welcome this idea very much, other leaders knew that he would not have welcomed anybody who stood up to him and stuck to his own guns. The election of the Prime Minister's daughter lent an illusory glamour and prestige to the languishing Presidentship and gladdened the hearts of his admirers. Their only chagrin was that whereas Motilal Nehru could pass on the Presidentship to his son, Jawaharlal Nehru could not do that. All the same, this election enabled many enthusiastic admirers to remark that Congress *gaddi* was adorned by three generations of Nehrus. Between the grandfather and grand-daughter the emasculatian of the powerful post was complete. From the most respected and honoured position in India it slumped to be a thankless appendage to the omnipotent Prime Minister. While the landed feudalism was passing out, political feudalism was ushered in by Nehru.

Nehru's daughter was succeeded by Mr. Sanjiva Reddi, the then Chief Minister of Andhra. He was so new to national politics that he expressed joy over the touring opportunities that the job provided. It was said at that time that Jawaharlaljee picked him up for the job because Rajajee asked me to accept the leadership of the Swatantra Party.* Anyway, even he found his new position so unenviable and so denuded of importance that

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*(i) *As P.C.C. President, I held the privilege of inviting Sanjivayya in 1949 to leave his humble government job and join public work by accepting our nomination to Interim Parliament.*

*(ii) Both these Andhra leaders besides so many Ministers of Mysore, Madras and Andhra Cabinets were pressed into service, as successive Congress Presidents, by Jawaharlaljee to oppose my candidature for Parliament in Chittoor bye-election of 1962. Yet I came to be elected.*

he pleaded with Jawaharlaljee to be allowed to resign and return to his former position in Andhra. To make room for him, Jawaharlaljee persuaded his successor as Andhra Chief Minister, Mr. D. Sanjivayya, a young Harijan, to change places with N. S. Reddi as the Congress President. He said that as Sanjivayya was a very young man he had many opportunities ahead of him and should not fight shy of serving the party. This indicates the complete loss of attraction that Congress Presidentship had come to have for Congressmen. Mr. Sanjivayya frankly admitted that he was so new to Indian politics and so young that when the Father of the Nation toured in South he never had his darshan. After that period of drill as the party chief, he was drafted to the Central Cabinet as Minister of Labour.

Mr. Sanjivayya was an articulate person. He had the moral courage to exclaim that Congress has become the haven for opportunists and wealth-seekers. He was followed by the monosyllabic Mr. Kamaraja Nadar of Madras whose strength was his silence. He broke his proverbial silence only by his equally proverbial answer "Parkalam", which means "Let's see". Nadar takes pride in the fact that he never even took shelter from rain in a 'High School'. He knows little English and less Hindi, but he knows where power lies and how to pull strings. He was the unquestioned master of the Tamilnad Congress caucus and made a name as the king-maker of Madras. When the Madras politics was menaced by Communist ascendency, he pleaded with Rajajee to take up the Chief Ministership of the State and save it from Communists When the crisis was over, he thought it fit to become a king himself.

The high watermark of Nadar's career was the management of the election of Jawaharlaljee's successors, namely, Sastri, Indira. This was about the only feather in his cap as Congress President. Nadar's term of office has been witnessing the richest crop of squabbles and dissensions within the Party and by the time he plugs in one hole the Congress dyke springs a leak elsewhere. The President is overworked persuading dissidents to quit fighting the ministerialists in U.P., Bihar, Mysore, Gujarat, Punjab, Orissa, Andhra and Rajasthan. Nadar was the architect of the Kamaraj Plan which was enunciated with the ostensible view to wean Congressmen from love of power

and to induce love for organisational work among them. But the Plan is lying in ruins today, its purpose has been defeated and in fact has exposed the hollowness and ineffectiveness of the Party. The Congress President, known for his simplicity and preference for action to words, has not been able to inspire Congressmen with honesty and spirit of selfless work.

During his presidentship, Congress has come to lose its control over 9 out of 15 State Cabinets and initiated the immoral device of defections of M.L.As. from their parties and created the political monster of Defecting Legislators.

Congress leaders had to go in search of a possible successor and at last stumbled upon the Mysore Chief Minister Nijalingappa. How could they blind-fold Indian public to the Sharavati Dam scandal, and dissident Congress M.L.A's. chargesheet against his ministry ? Like all his five post-Nehru predecessors, he has yet to develop an all-India vision and outlook as his first lesson and contribution to this high post. One Delhi Daily drew the following apt conclusion on this hunt for the latest president :—" 'Law jinks in high places' adequately summarises the prolonged pantomime.....It is the latest example of the unprincipled cynicism'. (4-12-67).

The one redeeming feature of the Congress scene is the emergence of a few bold Congress dissidents who are ready to break away from the party as so many of us did in 1951 and 1959. But the comparison stops there. While we quitted Congress on ideological grounds, the present-day dissidents seem to be motivated more by frustration than by ideology. These dissidents went to the electorate not to put forward fresh and bold alternative programmes but only to claim that they would implement Congress plans more sincerely, honestly and efficiently. They had little experience in organising an independent political party or conduct electioneering in opposition to the Congress nor did make common cause with other democratic parties which arose from similar splinters of the Congress. Opposition is rendered ineffective by the proliferation of such weak little parties. While the country is groaning under the corrupt, inefficient Congress rule and could do with a period of respite from its domination, would it not be too much to expect the Congress itself to encourage the

emergence of a strong democratic opposition ? When the dozen tiny political parties that dot the Indian political scene find it difficult to come into two or three effective opposition groups, it is staging a tragic-comedy for these dissidents and defectors to venture to group themselves into yet another Kranti Dal. Verily Congress has brought our politics to this brink of moral bankruptcy. No wonder the then President Radhakrishnan had to deplore the advent of the "crisis of spirit".

The Congress did not choose to adopt our suggestion to form Coalition or all-Party Cabinets in such problem states as Kerala, West Bengal, Punjab, Haryana, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, where obviously the British-type of Cabinet regime has proved unsuitable. Instead, it is creating another political anachronism, if not a monster of minority Cabinets propelled and propped up as puppet shows by its own State Assembly Parties. This is yet another unholy manoeuvre of the Congress, which is degrading Parliamentarianism and destroying peoples' faith in democracy.

When I broke away from the Congress in 1951 after being fed up with its immoral methods, I observed that the Congress Party bade fair "to rot from inside and collapse all too suddenly and burst into bits like a rotten fruit". I warned that this would make India unsafe for democracy "making a free gift of our country to communists" and that the country might unfortunately have to go the way of some of the Asian countries. Subsequent events have made these warnings almost prophetic.

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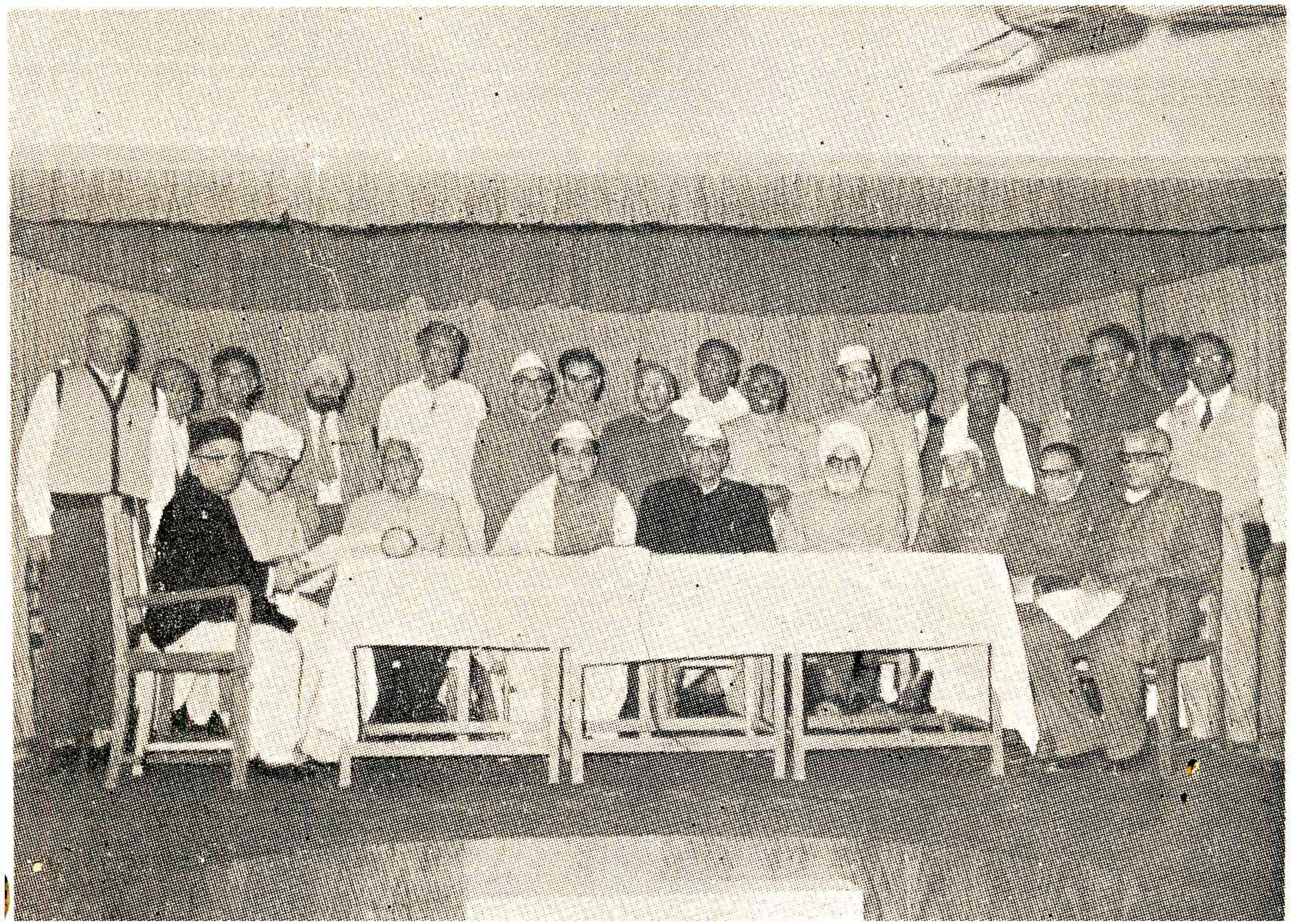
## *Vinobha Versus Peasants—Andhra Kisan Demonstrated against Gramdan Move of Vinobhajee (12th July, 1957)*

The 12th of July 1957 was a very cool and pleasant morning in Vijayawada. More than 100,000 people, mostly peasants, gathered ; I was told at that junction of four roads of Vijayawada and on the broad Krishna canal banks on the three sides of that Conference and the ancient trees on those banks were filled tier by tier with people. In that atmosphere of joy and fulfilment felt by those masses for their beloved Kisan and artisan movements and the ideal of K.M.P. Raj, Sri S.K. Patil, the Union Minister, the leader of Bombay, said, while unveiling my statue, that it would stand as a symbol of the national, peasant, artisan and rural people's movements.

They felt that such a permanent symbol of their faith in the ideals, movements and causes for which I have toiled for so long and with the devoted support of hundreds of thousands of workers might come to be the biggest educative influence among the generations to come, in favour of our ideals and causes. Dr. G. Dimitrov, the Secretary General of the International Peasant Union, who presided over the function, indicated its



Ranga who presided over Bharat Kisan Conference at New Delhi
on 14-12-1958 photographed with other delegates

significance in the world cause of peasantry and agricultural masses.

The Andhra public have been more keen than any other people in India upon raising the statues of national leaders and it is a common experience for anyone, going through the Circar Districts to find by the roadside wherever a village or town happens to be, the statues of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Netajee Subhash Chandra Bose or Potti Sreeramulu. It is in that tradition that the life-size bronze statues are raised at Vijayawada for the two of us, Prakasam and myself by popular contributions and with the wholehearted acclamations of the Andhra masses.

I have not been in favour of such personal symbols. For a long time, I resisted the idea of my good friend and benefactor of many a social movement, the late Sri G.V.S. Naidu of Gudur that a marble statue of mine should be allowed to be chistelled by the well-known Madras sculptor Sri Nagappa. But when I began to realise the educational value of such visible embodiment of people's faith in the cause of which one stands I agreed to give the necessary sittings.

Sri G.V. Subbayya, President of Andhra Kisan Sammelan, A. Sitaramayya, the K.L.P. Legislators N.V. Naidu, G. Latchanna, V.V. Ramana and many others set about the idea of installing a life-size bronze statue in Vijayawada itself. The statue installation committee came to be thus constituted in 1952 and the Municipal Council allotted the most important island for it. Almost all important leaders including many Andhra ministers associated themselves with the committee and whoever could contribute made their donations. Thus it became a popular movement all over Andhra. No wonder when at last the auspicious occasion came for installing the statue, there were such phenomenal and heartwarming demonstrations by huge concourse of people.

Why were people so keen on raising the statue ?

My outspoken criticism of the Nehru plans against peasant proprietorship was appreciated by the Kisan masses. The threat of disciplinary action that was hurled at me by Congress leaders was resented by them. My bold opposition to the politi-

cal exploitation by Congress of Vinobhajee's Gramdan idea pleased them. That controversy set in motion the chain reactions, both on the side of the Congress and on that of the Kisan masses. The Congress disciplinarians were wondering what steps should be taken against me; while to a much greater degree and with more intense loyalties, the peasant masses, wherever they are awakened, have begun to rally to our standpoint.

Our fight against controls, quotas, permits, licenses, compulsory procurement was anathema to Planning Commission, and our attitudes and activities regarding rural peoples' aspirations and interests were not in favour with Pandit Nehru and his Governments. Though the K.L.P. section have made the biggest contribution to the Indian-wing of the world cause of Democracy, the planners looked upon us as the strongest obstacle in their nominally democratic rush to achieve the collectivisation and co-operativisation of India's agriculture and arts and crafts.

Therefore these demonstrations of peoples faith in our work were noteworthy; more especially at that juncture, because we of the Krishikar Lok Party have had to range ourselves, ever since the beginning of the plan era, against the planners' schemes for the replacement of peasantry and the economy of the self-employed masses by co-operative farming, collectives, etc.

## Kisans' Resistance to Vinobha's Gramdan Move

I had the good fortune of witnessing the loyalty of Kisan masses to the Kisan cause through the phenomenal mass gatherings that greeted me in Masulipatam in October, in Gudiwada in November and in Nellore on the 29th of December of 1957. Processions of bullock-carts organised by peasants have been the traditional and typical rural honour shown to any leader. These three places excelled each other in the exhibition of this popular honour; there were 58 pairs in Masulipatam 116 in Gudiwada and more than 200 in Nellore and the correspondents of the Conservative English dailies, the *Hindu* and the *Mail*, recorded that these processions were the largest ever witnessed in those respective towns. As for the people who took part in those meetings, following upon the processions moderate estimates put them at more than 45,000, 50,000 and 50,000 at Masula and Gudiwada and Nellore respectively.

When Sri Ganapati, the leader of the Backward classes of Krishna and G. V. Subbayya, Andhra Kisan leader extracted the promise from me a few months earlier to go to their District Kisan Sammelan's Session, there was not a suspicion that the Congress leaders including Jawaharlaljee would agree to Vinobhajee's conception of Gramdan and to use their great political influence and greater powers of the Government, to convert Bhudan into Gramdan and against peasant economy. There was, however, an atmosphere of resentment against the Union Government's opposition to peasants and peasant economy and against Jawaharlaljee's obvious avoidance of welcoming their leaders' advice and comradeship in the highest councils. And whenever people nursed such strong grievances against the powers that be, they had been accustomed since 1936 to turn to me as also to Sri Prakasam. The astounding success of that Machilipatam procession and conference set the pace for the next two processions and conferences held at Gudiwada and Nellore.

Why did they all vie with each other in demonstrating thus their loyalty and comradeship with me ? I held no cabinet position. I did not promise nor did they hope, to capture any personal position either in the State or in the Union. I did not offer to gain the ear of leaders in the Union Government or in the (A.I.C.C.) Congress and thus promote the interests of (power-seekers. There were no prospects of any of my followers in the K. L. P. gaining any ministerial position : I had no such extra-territorial sources of strength, either ideological for financial as Communists, nor did I encourage our colleagues to gain power in Panchayats, cooperatives.

It was because of general appreciation of my role in Indian public life and for peasant economy. The yearning of the public for honest administration and freedom from beauracratic controls and from exploitation by the Ruling Party was so strong and all-pervasive that the masses and their leaders of both Machilipatam and at Gudiwada responded to my call to fight against the growing statism. The Municipal Councils of both these places, which were being led by the P. C. C. and ministerialists also presented their welcome addresses ; a high-water mark of public appreciation for the path, type and tempo of our political service. The 'Krishna Patrika', the famous Andhra weekly published

from Machilipatam drew particular satisfaction that all those myriad masses had gathered there, not in the hope of gaining any immediate or ultimate personal advantages but to demonstrate in a spontaneous manner their latent sense of loyalty and appreciation of the Kisan Movement.

I expressed opposition through that Conference to the call of Yelwal Conference convened by Vinobhajee's disciples for inaugurating the Gramdan type of Panchayat landlordism over all the lands of any village, displacing or dispossessing all the peasant proprietors and tenant cultivators.

In Gudivada speech, I reiterated not only my faith in peasant family economy and in the democratic and socialistic significance of the self-employment status of Indian peasants and artisans but also called upon the series of audiences of that day and the public of India as a whole to avow their faith in those social ideals and politico-economic approaches. It was certainly a great day of dedication for me, my Kisan colleagues, Bharatidevi, Latchanna, Gorrepati and the masses.

Nellore Conference (31.12.57) gave me the opportunity of holding forth on the vital issues I supported ; the peasant economy and self-employment status of all toilers as being the best foundations for democracy. I deplored the indecent, ungrateful and undemocratic advantage being taken by the Andhra P.C.C. and Ministry of the trust placed by the K.L.P. in the democratic and Gandhian bonafides of Congress leadership. I condemned the misuse of ministerial power by the Congress to exacerbate village factions, to interfere in administration and courts and to turn Government into a hand-maiden of the ruling party and its local bosses.*

As sure as anything, the Andhra P.C.C. and ministerial chiefs reacted to that speech in a vigorous manner and wanted the A.I.C.C. leadership to take action against me. But Vinobhajee expressed admiration for my courage in opposing his move and thus daring Congress and wondered how I could have broken

*B. Ramachandra Reddy and Chenna Reddy were present on that dias but while the former became a founder-member of Swatantra Party the latter drifted from Swatantra platform into Congress Ministership in Delhi.

away from the usually tight Congress discipline. He must have been disappointed at my revolt because it upset his assumption that once the Congress and leftist leaders agreed to his formula, however drastic, it would be meekly agreed to by all its leaders and workers. Sri Khasa Subbarao, Editor of the English weekly '*Swarajya*' wrote strongly in support of my stand.

The Delhi group of Kisan intellectuals led by Kodandaramiah Sreeman Honorary Fellows of the Peasant Institute brought together my speeches and statements on the question of Gramdan into the brochure "The Panchayat Landlordism *versus* Peasant Economy" and helped the Institute to publish it by the New Year Day (1958). Lal Singh, Munshi, Khasa Subbarao and the veteran statesmen, Visweswarayya, Rajajee, C.P. Ramaswami, General Cariappa, have come out with strong criticism of the Planners' fad of cooperative farming.

On that very day of celebrations at Gudivada (7.11.1957) I was invited by phone, to join India's delegation to the C.P.A. Conference and be ready to fly to Pakistan on the 11th November.

The Delhi public also celebrated that birthday and the distinguished publicists, Sree Iswara Dutt, Chaturvedi, M.P., K. Rama Rao, administrators Sree B.V. Nath, Sardar Lal Singh, Supreme Court Judge Jagannath Das, Dasappa, who later joined the Cabinet and many economists and research scholars and members of Parliament expressed their appreciation of the bold stand taken by us regarding land and Kisan problems and high standards of public service maintained by us.

Thus together with the tour of George Dimitrov in India in support of our Kisan movement and the receptions at Vijayawada's Masula, Gudivada, Nellore the opening of the Ranga Bhavan in Hyderabad and my tour in Bulgaria, Pakistan and Ceylon, on behalf of Indian Co-operative and Parliamentary democratic movements respectively and demonstrations of Kisans' opposition to the anti-Kisan plans of Nehru and Vinobhajee the year 1957 proved to be one of the landmarks in India's Kisan Movement.

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# *Rajajee's Invitation to assume Swatantra Leadership*

**In opposition to the Leadership of Congress.**

That was a bright, warm morning of Madras, the beautiful city of gardens, tanks, temples and beaches of golden sands and silvery crests, music and kalakshepas. We gathered at the Woodlands by the broad road, bedecked by Sireesh Kusum bowers (Rainbow trees) clusters of flowers, so much loved by Kalidasa, on the fourth of June, 1959 in response to the invitation of All-India Agriculturists' Federation and Kisan Sammelan. I knew who were all being invited in the first instance on the suggestion of Rajaji and myself and a few friends who had assembled in Bangalore five or six weeks earlier and also on the initiative of Sardar Lal Singh, Jinraj Hegde and Ramachandra Reddi and several others who had been in touch with Rajaji and some of the Bangalore friends.

We were waiting for octogenarian Rajaji to come. Word came that he arrived. I hastened to greet him at the head of the stairs. How slowly, and carefully he walked up with the support of that goldwhite stick! He greeted me so affectionately, clutched at my hand and asked me to sit to his right and act in unison with him. I had no idea what he had in his mind. I could know through my talks on the previous day, with Sri S.Y. Krishnaswami, B. Ramachandra Reddi, and Jinraj Hegde, the draftsman of the Agrarian Programme, Vice-President and General

Secretary of the Agriculturists' Federation respectively only about the draft statement of principles of economic policy and national approach towards land and peasant problems. We also discussed the Agrarian Plan prepared for the Federation by its President, Sardar Lal Singh. So, I was under the impression that we were going to discuss on that fourth June only the Plan and the Statement and publish them to elicit public criticism and meet at a much later date to concert what else we were to do, in order to protect and promote the interests and cause of our agriculturists as well as the urban masses.

When we sat down for the meeting what actually began to take place was entirely different from what myself and Sri Hegde had thought of on the previous day as being possible. After some preliminary talks I suggested that we should request Sri Ramachandra Reddy Vice-President of the Federation, to make his inaugural observations. But some one asked as to who would be the President. A number of us simultaneously said that Rajaji should preside. But he was inclined to demur, and so I rose quickly saying that in that case there would be no use of having our meeting. Rajaji held me by left arm and tried to dissuade me, but had eventually to agree to preside. That co-operative gesture of his gave me immense pleasure and satisfaction, because when I and Bharatidevi had last met him on 31-1-1957 in his long rectangular but narrow room, the utmost favour we sought from him was just that he should be kind enough to preside over such an inaugural meeting and bless our efforts to raise the banner of revolt against Jawahar's leadership. He was then disinclined to agree and place himself in opposition to Jawaharlaljee.

After Sri Reddy had welcomed the delegates and explained how we had met to concert measures for the protection of our agriculturists against the threat of Sovietism hurled by the Congress from its Nagpur platform, Rajaji took up the reins of our discussions.

It did not take long for him to bring the conference to the discussion of the need for a new political party. All were agreed that there should be such a party, if the country was to be protected from the growing tentacles of Statism, the all-embracing extra-constitutional and totalitarian plans and powers of the

Planning Commission and the growing ambitions of the Government to encroach upon the freedoms of the people. Then Rajaji and others began to moot the idea as to who should be the leader. We wanted him to shoulder that responsibility. He would not hear of it. He said that someone else should be and would be made the leader. Then he took us into his confidence as to what efforts he had made to sound a number of prominent leaders at the national level and with what results. He mentioned prominently the name of Sri Jayaprakash Narayan also and informed us that he was soon going to join us in our deliberations. When actually Jayaprakashji came and was appraised of our thoughts, he gave his reasons for not undertaking any such responsibility in political parties. So, Rajaji proceeded to suggest that I should be asked to undertake that responsibility. When I repeatedly suggested that he should agree to be the leader while I would stand by him and give every possible assistance, he said to the meeting that he would certainly be glad to lead the leader if he would allow it. Eventually all hailed it as the best possible solution. Thus arose the party and its leader and the leader's leader

We then took up the consideration of the draft principles of the proposed party, and indicated it in detail how to achieve prosperity through freedom.

Somebody suggested that we should give a name to our party. Then I took the initiative and requested Rajaji to bless the party by performing the *namakaran* ceremony during the public meeting which was to be held that afternoon, symbolically enough in the Vivekananda Hall at which Sri Masani was also to speak. He agreed. Thus closed the first stage of the birth of our party.

The conception of our party took place in the Vivekananda Hall, commemorating Swami Vivekananda who activated the spiritual soul of our national freedom movement. Rajaji declared on that day and in that Hall all so fittingly that while Sri Jawaharlal was keen on keeping out God from his politics, the Swatantra Party would pray to God in the Vivekananda's fashion to become its senior partner.

**Before and after Swatantra Birth.**

Sri Masani had been mooting the idea of a "middle of the road party" for some months past. He organised a couple of

Rajajee felicitating Rangajee after his re-election for the 4th term as President of the Swatantra Party (25-11-1967)...Seated from Left Dandekar, Ranga, Rajajee and Masani.

informal meetings in Delhi during 1958 and 1959 for this purpose. He was also in touch with Rajaji through correspondence and was trying to persuade him to give the necessary lead. He was fortunate like so many of us to be present on that day when Rajaji christened our party as the Swatantra Party. My brochure "Why Ranga Resigns from Congress" was published at that function.

Sardar Lal Singh, the President of the Federation who was responsible for that meeting and Sardar Udham Singh Nagoke, the leader of the Punjab Kisans and Dhehati Janata Party played the key role in the success of the now famous Punjab Kisan Conference held at Doraha on the 31st of January, 1959. I had the honour of presiding over that mammoth Conference of more than a lakh of Kisans. I then warned the country publicly against Sri Jawaharlal Nehru's Soviet-oriented campaign against the freedom-loving Kisans and dukhandars through his unfortunate lead given to Nagpur Session of the Indian National Congress. I called upon peasants to organise themselves to resist the communistic trends within the Congress leadership. I offered to continue to be in their vanguard in their struggle against the threatened governmental campaigns for co-operativisation of agricultural production and management. I was associated in that platform with General Cariappa. Sardars Nagoke, Pheruman, Basantsingh offered to provide the needed phalanxes of the heroic Kisan fighters in the struggle that we were to wage against the Congress programme, in the same manner in which the Punjabis had fought for our national freedom. It was in the wake of that Conference that these brave Sardars and myself have been pressing Rajaji repeatedly to come to the rescue of our Kisans. So Rajajee utilised those 4 months to contact, consult other leaders and come to his decision to found the Party on a broad national basis to stand up to Congress and Jawaharlaljee and provide an effective democratic alternative.

Sri Masani and myself found ourselves on a similar common platform on the 28th February in Belgaum organised by Sri G.D. Patil, ex-M.P., who has later become the President of the Mysore State Swatantra Party and we took the same stand *vis-a-vis* the Nagpur resolution of the Congress and offered to organise opposition to it on all fronts. In fact, Sri Masani was the first among our parliamentary politicians to appreciate my opposition

to the threatened co-operativisation of agricultural production and to offer to stand by me in my defence of our Kisans. When I was in the Congress and came to function as the Secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Party and he was attempting to develop an independent political platform as against the communistic trends within the Congress, I used to sit on the front bench and he on the second bench and just behind mine in Lok Sabha and we were coming nearer to each other. We were able to exchange thoughts so often. It is a fortunate coincidence that after the advent of the Swatantra Party, we have been working together with myself as the leader and he as deputy leader of our Party in Parliament.

It would be interesting to note that prior to this Madras meeting, Rajaji has held a couple of meetings with a number of friends of Bangalore. They also mooted the need for such an independent party for safeguarding and strengthening the freedom of the people. Leaders from different parts of India and associated with various sections of people gethered there and they all felt that the time was ripe for the development of such a party. But who was to be the leader? Who were all to join it? What were the main common points of agreement? Where were the funds? Who could mobilise cadres and active workers? They were agreed that if only Rajaji would agree to lead the country there would be universal response.

It was at the last of thoseprepa ratory gatherings that Rajaji gave his historic call to the people that they should concert measures "to protect the farm and family". It has ever since become one of the most effective slogans of the Swatantra Party.

Rajaji has been thinking for a long time before he gave this call to the nation of developing a national front for the protection of our national Dharma and the propagation of the Gandhian ideals. He espied years ago how the Union Government aided by the Planning Commission had been trying to encroach upon the autonomy of the States as envisaged by the Constitution. Therefore, he pleaded for a campaign in favour of States' autonomy. He found it necessary to ask the people to resist the growing passion of the Congress and Government for more and more doses of Statism. When I felt constrained to protest in October 1957 against the political use that the Congress and government wanted to make of the Yelwal Conference decisions in

favour of so-called Gramdan and offer to start Kisan Satyagraha against the threatened Panchayat Landlordism to subvert peasant economy, he was good enough to raise his voice in my support against co-operative farming. The SWARAJYA of Madras which has by now come to play the same role in our movement for freedom as the YOUNG INDIA used to play in the National Movement hastened to strengthen me when the Congress leaders threatened to take disciplinary action against me for that protest. Therefore, Rajaji's "call for the protection of the farm and the family" was based upon his two-year long championship of our peasants' struggle for survival in the face of the Congress manoeuvres against peasant economy, under the guise of Gramdan and Co-operative Joint Farming.

We found another great ally in the veteran leader Sri K M. Munshi. Steeped as he is in the scholarship and spirit of Indian culture, he too visualized the totalitarian tendencies underlying the Congress proposal of co-operative farming and therefore made bold to protest against the Nagpur Resolutions. His lead gave us much encouragement. But we had to wait till our August Convention before we could gain his comradeship in our new Party.

I went on the 6th June to Ongole Taluk with the three Gujarati leaders, Dadubhai Amin, Bhailalbhai Patel (Vice-Chancellor) and Ramachandra Amin, to inaugurate the Peasants' Institute Forum on Peasant Economy *versus* Co-operative Farming organised by N. Vankayya, M.L.A. When returned to my home "Gobhumi" on the 8th found that Rajaji called me to a Conference in the Gokhale Hall at Madras on the 9th. Rajaji's special representative met me at the station, and that grand gesture of his has set the pattern of the relations, exquisitely dignified and affectionate that have come to prevail between all of us in the executive levels of our new party.

The Gokhale Hall commemorates the services of Gopala-krishna Gokhale, the champion of India's demand for freedom. It was built under the inspiration of Annie Besant, another champion of our freedom. The Hall was packed to the full when we reached there. Rajaji quietly asked me whether I had made up my mind to accept the leadership of the Party. I assured him that since there had been a decent interval after our Vivekananda Hall ceremony and the despatch of my resignation to the Congress President and the publication of the brochure "Why Ranga

Resigns ?", it would be appropriate for me to declare to that meeting that I would take up the responsibility at his behest. He was pleased with that gesture. That is how I came to be installed in the Gokhale Hall as the President of the Swatantra Party.

During those first six days, the Swatantra Party succeeded in hitting the headlines of the Press and the Radio. The leading British and American as well as the Indian Press hailed it as heralding a wholesome, and progressive Freedom Movement, calculated to strengthen Indian democracy and broaden the area of resistance to totalitarian Statism. Rajaji's lead was welcomed by many a statesman. His decision to give this new lead and emerge from his self-imposed political retirement and to march in the vanguard of kisans, kalakars, dukhandars and professionals in defence of the home, family, farm and crafts was admired as an unparalleled heroic act of the oldest statesman. Most of us felt therefore that we were justified in pressing him to undertake this onerous responsibility because he alone could launch such a new party upon our political arena with the requisite appeal to the classes and the masses and also to all those who have been yearning for political atmosphere of integrity, efficiency, wisdom and Gandhian spirit in both the administration and legislature as well as national life of Swaraj India.

Three weeks after the conception of our Party, when we reached Bombay, we were pleasantly surprised by the response given by the educated people, businessmen and students and youths at every one of the public meetings. We could see how within such a short time the public in Bombay came to welcome the birth of a new political force in their midst. Bombay rallied to Rajaji as it used to rally to Bapu in days of old. The packed audience at the public meeting held in Jehangir Hall reminded me of the inaugural meeting of the Forward Bloc held in the same hall in 1939. The two former Governors, Sri Modi and Sri Munshi came to welcome Rajaji. Thousands of Bombay's youths and students came again and again to our meetings to greet Rajaji as a veritable saviour from the evils of controls and inefficient, corrupt and wasteful administration, and also from opiamatic propaganda about Nehruism.

From Bombay platforms, Rajaji thundered against the growing and wasteful plan expenditure on State enterprises and bureaucracy. He criticised the ruling Party's misuse of adminis-

trative machinery and governmental power for its own ends. He warned the people against the encroachments of administration over the areas of their essential and basic freedoms. He stressed the need for respecting the Rule of Law and independence of judiciary. He declared that Swatantra Party was the party of agriculturists *par excellance* and also of all freedom loving peoples and their free and independent professions. He assured that if only the independent entrepreneurs with small, medium-scale and even large-scale capitalists, who would number many millions, are encouraged and assisted by Government, there could be much greater and more rapid industrial development and more widespread employment opportunities and greater production and wealth. In this vein, his messages went out from that highly political minded city of commerce and industry.

No wonder, the Press responded to this timely call of this Bheeshma of Swaraj India. But it excited the anger of the Prime Minister. So he stepped beyond the bounds of decorum and decency and proceeded to abuse the Press and the Swatantra Party. He alleged that ours was a party of princes and millionaires and other vested interests, whereas not one prince or millionaire joined us for months after its foundation. He called the Swatantra Party as the Conservative Party, while we declared ourselves as the Liberal Party. When he ventured to attack our Party as the projection of the Forum of Free Enterprise, Rajaji denied the charge and said that the Prime Minister should remember that Ranga, the Kisan, happend to be President and catalic force of our Party and that anyhow there could be nothing wrong with either the free enterprise approach or its Forum, so long as they could call their souls their own.

We decided to meet in Bombay on the 1st of August, the birthday of Lokmanya Tilak, to hold our preliminary Convention and thus invoke the blessings of that Martyr to the Cause of Freedom.

During those seven weeks we went on receiving from all over India response from people of different callings and experiences. Small donations began to pour in by thousands. Units of Swatantra Party began to take shape in different parts of the country and our office at Bangalore had a hectic time in coping with that rush of organisational activity all over India.

On the second day of the session of our Convention in Bombay Sri Munshi decided to join forces with us and thus rally to our banner all those who have been feeling forlorn because of the Nehru-inspired arid campaign of secularism.

The sessions of the Convention were attended by more than a thousand delegates hailing from different parts of India. They all came so spontaneously in answer to Rajaji's appeal. I felt during those two days of our deliberations that they were all as completely attuned to the principles and spirit embodied in our statement as the members of the A.I.C.C. used to be whenever Mahatma Gandhi used to call its momentous sessions. The great majority of the delegates were the erstwhile Congressmen who had taken prominent part in our national struggle for freedom. It appeared to most of them that our present struggle is only a continuation of the earlier struggle, and, therefore, their response was also equally passionate, heroic and persistent.

Our Convention had the good fortune of the prayer and benediction songs sung by that famous artiste, Srimati Subbalakshmi. Srimati Kurshid Ben, the grand daughter of Dadabhai Nouroji, also came to assure us of the support from the spirit and soul of that founder of the National Movement for Freedom.

The most inspiring event of the success of this Convention was witnessed by the delegates and the public when Rajaji, rich in age and wisdom, rose on his feet to deliver his concluding message. For full thirty minutes he stood on his feet and made his vigorous and passionate appeal to the country to respond to the call of the new Party. The public were wonder struck at his energy, strength and moral and physical verve. Not many weeks earlier, Bombay people were wondering how he could stand the strain of hours of committee work and public speaking, even while being seated. But at that Convention, they were amazed to witness him standing for so long and speaking with such vigour. No wonder they had reason to congratulate themselves because it was their enthusiastic response to the message of the Party that has reinvigorated Rajaji and proved to be Kaya Kalpa. I am glad to say that ever since Rajaji has found a new zest in life, he has been able to draw more and more strength from the inner springs of life and his communion with God and Gandhiji's spirit and give to the country and the Party the inspiration, moral

strength and guidance which are far beyond the capacity of much younger people. Such indeed is the contribution made by the lakhs of people who have been rushing to many of his public meetings held all over India during the succeeding two years and I had the honour of accompanying him.

From Bombay, we went to Ahmedabad. The public meeting on the 5th August broke many a record and the sight of those lakh and more cheerful but determined people in the affectionate evening sunshine of Gujarat was both pleasing and inspiring. Rajaji was particularly struck with the huge concourse of golden heued women and youths.

On the fourth of August, 1959, we paid a visit to the Sabarmati Ashram. It was a sacred visit to us, as we had the privilege of visiting it on so many occasions when Bapu was alive. Rajaji was visibly moved. He told us all about his first visit, when Bapu played the host. Our party was thus ceremonially launched as from the Sabarmati Ashram and the banks of the venerable river Sabarmati.

Thus yet a new phase begins in my public life from the foundation period of the Swatantra Party on the 4th of July to 1st of August 1959. The autobiographical account of the national and international events, as witnessed and acted upon by me since then are to be recorded hereafter. My speeches at the successive Swatantra Party Conventions (at the National and State levels)* and in Parliament and Writings and Reports bear witness to my work and public life since 1959. It is my great good fortune to have been enjoying the fullest confidence and advice of Rajaji, this sage among our statesmen during all these years in the cause of Swatantra we inaugurated.

Jawaharlal himself testified (24-7-1948) more than ten years earlier that "Rajaji represents fundamentally the highest type of the mind of India" Addressing Rajaji on 26th January, 1950, as he laid down the office of the last Governor-General, Nehru said, "Not only our affection but the need of the country will call you to other services for the country you have lived in and served for so long" As fate would have it, we have had to call Rajajee to come into active politics again because of danger posed to our farm and family by Jawaharlal Nehru.

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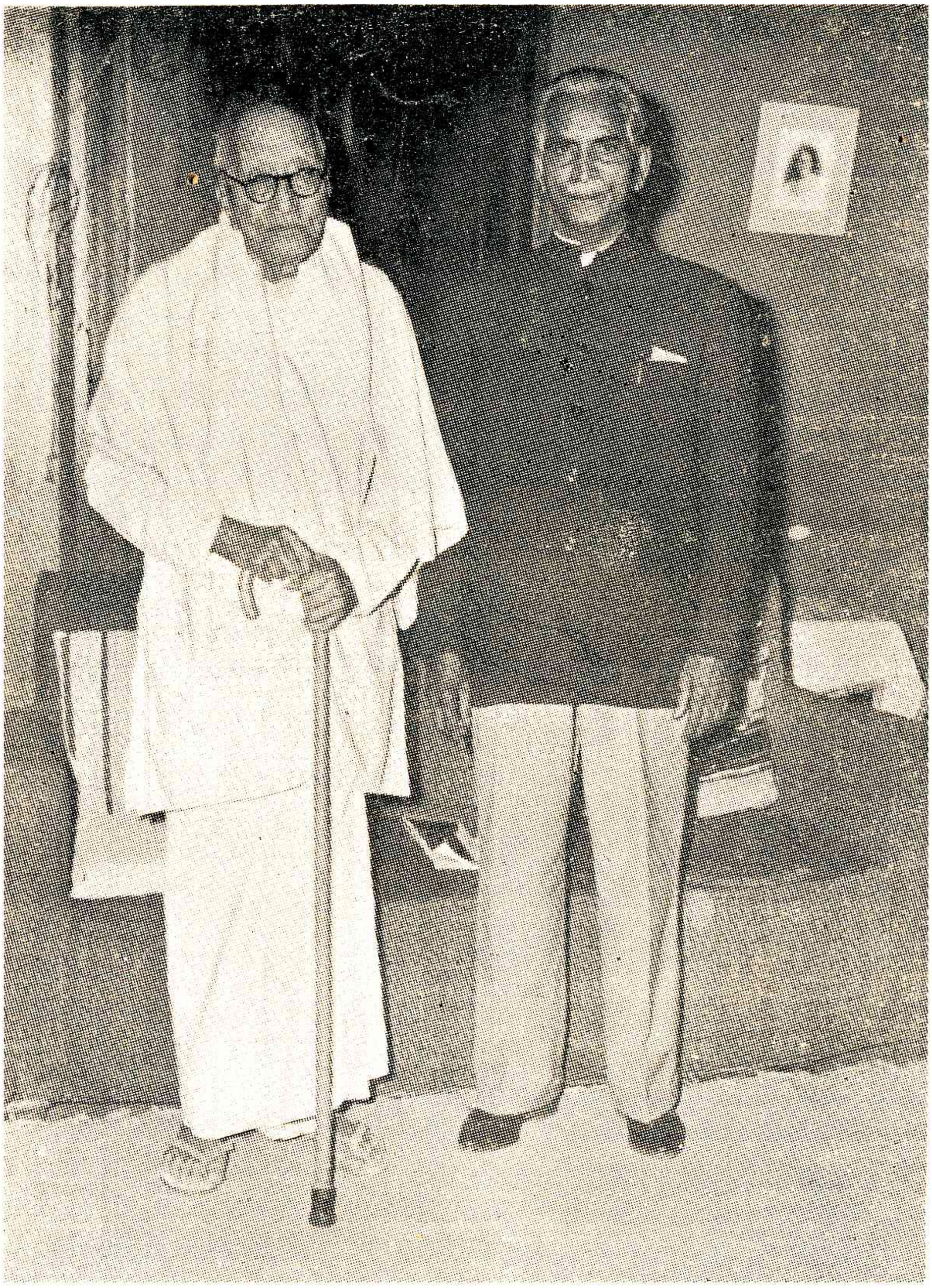
*These were included in the "Freedom in Peril" published in 1963.

"This cause of Swatantra (Freedom First), and the cry for Swatantra is an ageless one ; it is as old as soc.ety in its relations with its individual members and their groupings. From the days of our Rishis, long before the age of Ramayana and Mahabharata down to the era of Socrates and Athenian democracy, sages and statesmen were obliged to debate and their peoples had to struggle with successive types of rulers, as to the nature and quantum of Swatantra the people in their homes, associations and citizenship should achieve for their spiritual and material progress, consistently with their need for the State to assure them of the basic national security, peaceful existence and social harmony. Plato and Aristotle argued from opposite sides over this essential question as to what would conduce most to the happiness of people ; to give more power to the State or to allow more Swatantra to the individual. The schoolmen of Europe of the Middle Ages had to reconcile themselves to what is known as pluralism in social structure in which various guilds of craftsmen, and city corporations were allowed to enjoy the freedom of corporate organisations free from interference by the State.

In India too the conception and practice of Dharma were evolved through several centuries and popularised through the didactic treatises including the popular Epics, Bhajan Songs. Our kings, their ministers and the whole hierarchy of officials had come to accept it as their inviolable code of conduct. According to that Dharma, the rights and privilege of internal autonomy in almost all social and economic matters of self-governing guilds of craftsmen and professionals, and panchayats of peasants and villagers were fully assured and respected, and peasant proprietorship and craftsmen's economic freedom were accepted as warp and woof of the fabric of our social economy. Almost all the people of our country were encouraged to achieve self-employment and thus attain social and economic independence irrespective of the personnel of the rulers. Whenever encroachments were sought to be made directly or indirectly by the rulers upon those individual and group freedoms, there were revolts from the people concerned as well as others against the power-mad rulers. The British Bill of Rights, the French and American Charters of Natural Rights of Man came to take their shape as a result of such revolts and revolutions. We of these two generations, have been through the past seventy years of national struggle to achieve, once again,



With Rajajee on 27-11-1967, at the time of Swatantra Party General Council Meeting at New Delhi.

these rights and freedoms from the encroachments made by British imperialism. European peoples of Western systems of governments made common cause during the Second World War to fight and defeat fascism.

In the inter-war period, the champions of freedom came to organise themselves internationally also and fight for national independence and human freedom for peoples of all countries and called themselves anti-imperialists. Later on, they took up the role of anti-fascists, during the second World War. Ever since the Soviet powers have refused to accept the United Nations Charter of Human Rights and began to envelop countries after countries in Eastern Europe and Asia with their suffocating Communist overcoats denying human rights and depriving the peasants of their holdings and self-employment and oppressing the intellectuals and professionals by opposing their freedom of thought, speech and writing. So all freedom-loving people have been obliged to face this Communist challenge and fight for the Swatantra of the Indian conception embracing human rights and freedom and national independence of people, as individuals and members of concentric circles of self-governing groups and associations. *It does not need much display of heroism for rulers to retain power and expand their control over others. But to question their authority, arrest its expansion, to keep it under control, guide and regulate its use for the benefit of people and also for the expansion of privilege has always demanded all the moral and physical courage and material sacrifices from the noblest of all nations. This is the role that the Swatantra Party has now taken up. This is the mission it has chosen to fulfil.* It is unfortunate that Jawaharlalji should have mistaken this heroic role and noble mission for a lost cause of the nineteenth century. However, we shall continue to march ahead under the leadership of Swatantra Party and Rajaji, with the full confidence that our mission will protect and promote the invaluable human rights, self-employment and other social and economic freedoms and privileges of our masses. This is indeed the most progressive and the latest contribution to the *ageless human struggle for freedom* and independence against the equally ever-recurrent manoeuvres of those in power over the lives, freedoms and free associations of people."

(Extracts from my presidential speech at the First Convention in Bombay 1-8-1959).

# *Refused to Resign from Parliament*

**Extracts from my Reply**

The quotations given by the Congress Party from our Minority report to the Agrarian Reforms Committee of 1948 with the intention of damaging my stand can only prove how I was trying to champion peasants' interests in spite of the greatest pressure, exercised by collectivist-minded majority. It would be seen how we both Sri O.P.R. Reddi, former Chief Minister of Madras and myself have insisted upon the indispensability of the Government and Co-operators making experiments with Co-operative Joint Farming on Government lands before recommending it to peasants. It was never contemplated, nor has any large body of publicmen imagined that the Congress and their Government would be so unwise, as to launch upon a nationwide campaign (as has the Nagpur Congress come to decide in 1959) in favour of Co-operative Farming and proposing to utilise their present campaign for service co-operatives as the necessary preparation to decoy peasants into co-operative farms without making sure of the success of their experiments. So soon as I realised, from the discussion we had both before and during the making of First Five Year Plan the designs of Government and Planners against our peasant economy and how they would only accept the drive of Kumarappa's majority towards co-operativisation, I hastened to warn Government against their dangerous

moves, in my speech in Parliament made on 10-12-52 and actually walked into the opposition lobby to express my dissent from their plans on the so-called Land Reforms. In fact it was the Congress Party which proposed to me on 22-12-52 a re-union between us even after that very significant opposition of mine to their plan. I took care to draw their attention to that important vote of mine, yet they persisted in asking me to rejoin them; so anxious they were to give me freedom of action on this vital matter so that they could save themselves from being overwhelmed by the Communist Party in Andhra.

**I opposed even the First Plan**

I declared in Rajya Sabha as long ago as 10-12-52 that "I am not able to associate—the farmers or the artisans whom we (K.L.P.) represent with the collectivist plans that are suggested in the Plan". I complained that "from one end the Communists and from the other the Government wish to squeeze out the smaller holdings from our land economy and so I warned that "It is wrong for the planners to decide against small holders"

I stated my opposition to the various kinds of so-called land reforms of which the Plan to be organised "with or without" the co-operation of peasants, because I espied, "from the implications behind the recommendations the planners wanted to gain control for the State over the economic and social activities of every individual and every group in rural India".

I demanded that all the Government lands and Bhoodan lands should be placed at the disposal of the landless agricultural workers and also parity between the rural and urban people. Even today the Government is not prepared to make any approach towards these desirable ends. I concluded that the Plan "would not become a Gandhian Plan. It would only become pale imitation of the Soviet Plan".

It was the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee who wrote to me on 20-12-52 that "we should consider a coming together of progressive forces" and said "Parliament has approved of the Five Year Plan, which throws great responsibilities on all of us". In my reply I took care to say "You say

Parliament has approved the Five Year Plan. But I have had to vote against it because I could not agree to the planners' approach to the interests and problems of our 180 million small-holders" and they "failed to appreciate the social advantages such as the present diffusion of ownership of land among more than 120 million small holders, the opportunity the cultivation of such boldings gives to more than 150 million small peasants to assure themselves of some employment on their own and to display their initiative, enterprise etc." I also said "the planners seem to be keen on centralisation, authoritarianism even when they care to suggest the utilisation of the Co-operatives and Panchayats". So I cautioned that "If you and Jawaharlaljee feel that there is scope for proper reorientation of these important aspects of the plan then my party will be quite glad to place its resources at the disposal of the Congress".

In answer to this, the Secretary of Congress echoed the attitude of his leadership that he could hardly ask Jawaharlaljee to "change the plan now a few days after we passed it. But as I have said the plan itself has scope for advance in any direction that appears feasible". In the light of this it is for the public to see whether Jawaharlaljee and Congress have made any advance at all towards meeting the legitimate need for protection of our peasants, in spite of my support to the Congress for full four years after defeating the Communists in Andhra General Elections of 1955.

## United Congress—Main Basis for my Role in Congress since 1955.

The Andhra had the unique experience of having to go through the mid-term General Election for its Assembly in 1955, after the Congress Ministry was defeated in November 1954 on a vote of No-confidence moved by Latchanna, leader of the K.L.P. The Communists made an all-out attempt to capture power. I wanted to prevent their capture of power so did the Congress and Jawaharlal, Prakasam, the Grand Old Man of Andhra. So, we all formed the United Congress. It was under leadership of that United Congress, the Communists were routed and reduced from having been the single largest party to the small minority of 16 in a House of 196. Shri Dhebar, the then President was glad to say

to me on 7.3.1955 "I must congratulate you for the great part you played in achieving the result" and addell "the alliance at the time of the election has been very fruitful". Jawaharlaljee and Dhebarbhai were keen on the K.L.P. joining the Congress to improve the "electoral alliance" and the former expressed his happiness over the decision of our K.L.P. to join the Congress, that is, after having won the election, under our respective and different symbols. Even at that stage, I reminded them that the K.L.P. has fulfilled one of its objectives, namely "to protect our democracy" needed by our "peasantry, artisans and intellectuals" and the K.L.P. agreed to join the Congress to "safeguard our democracy and work for the Gandhian ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj". I also enclosed my earlier correspondence with the former General Secretary of the Congress (1952) all of which was acknowledged to have been read by Jawaharlaljee.

Moreover, the Election Manifesto of the United Congress made no mention or reference to any of the Congress Election Manifestoes and stated in categorical terms, that peasant proprietorship and economy were to be protected and only strengthened by Co-operatives of the Service type.

## Varying Designs of Congress Manifestoes against Peasants

Moreover it is to be noted how the Congress has had to go on moderating its ambitions regarding Co-operative Farming and designs against peasant economy as could be seen from its successive Election Manifestoes from 1945 up to 1957 possibly in the light of the experience gained and additional information being available about the pitfalls of the Soviet offensive against peasants and its own growing experience with Indian people and their democratic institutions like the peasant economy. For instance, the 1945 Election Manifesto, framed before attainment of power by the Congress said that "Progressive agriculture as well as the creation of new social values and incentives require some system of Co-operative Farming suited to Indian conditions". By 1951, the Congress made bold to say, that "small and uneconomic holdings stand in the way of rapid advance in agricultural production. The line of advance should therefore be Co-operative Farming with the objective of making the whole or a substantial part of a village a unit of Co-operative Management". Several

of us protested against this anti-peasant offensive, left the Congress and formed the K.L.P. So by 1957, the Congress Manifesto came to speak in more moderate terms, and contented itself with the statement "it is desirable to encourage intensified methods of cultivation on a Co-operative basis". The latest Election Manifesto is supposed to supersede all other earlier Manifestoes. So it could not certainly be taken as a sufficient warning to the crores of Kisan voters that they would be giving power to the Congress through that Manifesto, to launch a national campaign in favour of Co-operative Farming with the pooling of holdings and removal of boundaries in preference to the "individualist farming or peasant proprietorship" which were assured to be continued as per 1945 Manifesto. How can Nagpur and Bhavnagar Congress declarations be treated to over-ride the Manifesto itself which said that land is to be owned, after the removal of all intermediaries "by the cultivator himself". Therefore, it is indefensible for the Congress or Jawaharlaljee who has sent me on 27-7-1959 the relevant extracts from those Manifestoes to claim justification for their Nagpur Resolution on the basis of the 1957 Manifesto which has superseded the most dangerous and obnoxious 1945 Manifesto. *Let it be realised by all, that the Nagpur Resolution is a new lead given independently of the Election Manifesto.* As I have said in my Presidential speech at the Convention of the Swatantra Party on 1.8.1959, the Congress leadership ought not to have made the unjust demand on its docile legislators and rank and file that they should allow themselves to be committed to every statement made in the Election Manifestoes, whether it is mentioned separately or as a part of a sentence or an argument used in those Nehru thesis. Let it also realise at least now, the dangers of allowing one or two leaders, who have been ideologically attuned to Marxism and Statism and Controlled Economy to draft these Manifestoes and utilise the Planning Commission and the A.I.C.C. to hatch their undemocratic plans for greater control over self-employed social economy under these disguised statements in the Manifesto.

## Kisans have been Protesting for long against Congress Moves

Jawaharlaljee in his Press Conference (7.8.1959) said perhaps with an intent to redicule the critics of his passion for Co-operative

Farming that they had kept mum during all these years while successive Election Manifestoes were being released by the Congress and they have suddenly seen wisdom to oppose the Congress threat to organise Co-operative Farming in place of peasant farm economy. It only means that he had been keeping himself strangely ignorant of the continued agitation that the Bharat Kisan Sammelan, Federation of Rural Peoples Organisations and myself have been carrying on for so many years against this dangerous move of himself and the Congress. Surely he must have read annexure to my letter of 19-1-1959 written to him, protesting against the Nagpur Resolution, indicating the books and brochures I have written since 1955 to warn him and the Congress against such a drive. It cannot be peasant's fault or mine, if he was kept ignorant of the editorial of *Hindustan Times* of Delhi entitled "Bold Lead" of 25 12.1956, commending the warning sounded by the Federation of Rural Peoples Organisations on 20.12.1956 against "the initiation of hasty campaigns against small holders in order to mislead them and induce them to join co-operative farms". And as recently as 14.12.1958, the Bharat Kisan Convention which was held in Delhi and was reported fully in the Delhi Press warned Government against the moves of so many Congress leaders to get the Congress commit itself to this dangerous and disastrous national campaign.

Incidentally it is noteworthy that the Congress had to accept my candidature for Lok Sabha even in the face of my persistent opposition to Co-operative Farming, as voiced repeatedly in Parliament, governmental conferences, through the publication of chapters of my book on "The Peasant and Co-operative Farming" in 1956 and last but not the least through the resolution of the F.R.P.O. of December 1956, two months before the 1957 General Election, which was highlighted by the *Hindustan Times* Editorial and which was also noticed by International Farm Organisations.

**Congress ignored its moral responsibilities to Peasants and their K.L.P.**

Surely if Government had cared for peasants' welfare and wished to attach importance to my views and warnings borne out of my deep study of peasant economy and long espousal of

peasants' cause, its leaders would not have so recklessly committed themselves to the Yelwal Conference's decision in favour of transforming our peasant economy into Gramdan economy under State leadership, patronage and propaganda. Hence my protest against that decision and complaint to Jawaharlaljee on 25.10.1957. "I was most unhappy like many other peasants over Yelwal agreement on this socially dangerous and economically unproductive move reached *without consulting those of us who have been in intimate contact with peasants and their organisations*"

How is it the Congress leaders conveniently skip over these inconvenient facts, though they are all published in their proper context in the brochure "Why Ranga Resigns" which was sent to Jawaharlaljee along with my last letter of resignation.

The Congress was wise enough to invite and welcome the support of my colleagues, myself and millions of Andhra peasants who followed the K.L.P. during the 1955 General Elections, because the Congress saw no chance of getting a majority all by itself. We placed all our resources at the disposal of the United Congress, which was much bigger than the Congress, as it was a coalition of the K.L.P., Praja Party and Congress, because of our passion for democracy and for peasant economy and our opposition to Communism.

If that coalition had not materialised, Andhra would have had the first Communist Ministry in 1955 alone and God alone could know how many more States, besides, Kerala and Andhra would have gone that way in 1957 and 1967 General Elections. The Congress leaders acknowledged the statesmanlike role I and the K.L.P. played in that anti-communist struggle and suggested a complete re-union between us and the Congress. When we agreed to that, how did the Congress leaders respond to our gesture ? By keeping out of their Andhra Pradesh Ministry, every representative of the K.L.P. and by smuggling into the Ministry one of our weaker members without the blessings of K.L.P. leadership, through the dishonourable plea that since we chose to strengthen democracy by joining Congress instead of remaining as K.L.P. within the United Congress, the Chief Minister had perfect right to invite or refuse to invite any of our M.L.As. into the Ministry. By

ignoring my right to be consulted before such serious inroads or attacks on peasant family economy as the Gramdan and national campaign for co-operative farming were decided upon. By refusing to heed my repeated warnings against their one-sided proposals for imposing ceilings and for fixing the ceiling limits at too low a level. And by declining to give proper or just representation to the erstwhile Andhra K.L.P. leaders and workers in the selection of candidates for Lok Sabha in 1957 General Elections despite my protests. By its Ministers in the State and at the Centre including Jawaharlaljee carefully abstaining from entering my constituency during the 1957 General Elections, though they hovered around it for the sake of their favourite candidates and by not taking any action against those Congress leaders who had done their worst but in vain to prevent my being elected.

Verily political gratitude seemed to have been assiduously dismissed by the Congress leaders in their relations with us of the K.L.P. Why ? Could it be because the K.L.P. of Andhra was the first to force the Congress to eat the humble pie and confess its need for a coalition with us, before it could achieve a majority or could it be because Jawaharlaljee could not get over his chagrin that it was on the initiative of the K.L.P. that the Andhra Congress Ministry fell on the first successful vote of No-Confidence ? Or could it have been because of my incorrigible opposition to the Planning Commission's manoeuvres against our peasantry ? I choose to continue to fight for our peasants so effectively by leaving the Congress in continuation of my eight years long struggle and against their anti-peasant machinations. On the other hand, the Congress M.L.As and M.Ps. hailing from the Andhra would have no moral right to retain their seats in the legislatures and Ministries, after having so dishonourably broken all the pledges given to our peasants regarding their proprietorship and family economy and to the people about forming a representative and truly united and broad based Congress Ministry.

So far as the General Election of 1957 in Andhra is concerned, its results are consequent upon the results and activities of the United Congress of 1955 Mid-term Andhra Elections and Election Manifesto and my well-known and oft-repeated stand in support of the peasants' family farm economy.

Fortunately, I have always asserted my legitimate freedom to espouse the cause of peasants. Hence my strong opposition

voiced in Parliament in July 1957, that is, soon after the General Election, against Governments' and Planning Commission's designs to introduce Co-operative Farming, through the Second Five Year Plan etc.

Let me clinche this reply to the Congress Party's letter and Jawaharlaljee's broadsides hurled at us through the Press, by reminding them that such great national issues as this, whether India can benefit best through family farming and self-employed peasantry or through Co-operative Farming cannot be settled by the "Discovery of Congress Election Manifestoes" and peurile threats of asking for resignations from dissenters, but by giving to all members of the Congress in Parliament and outside freedom of voting and to let anyone resign from the Congress Party, without having to think of reprisals, unworthy of any great national party.

I think the Congress Party has stumbled upon its untenable demand for my resignation, not merely for its own sake but also for the ulterior purpose of creating a precedent in favour of an imaginary convention against members of legislatures crossing the floors without resigning their seats in the hope of preventing a large number of Congress legislators leaving the Congress Party at the Centre and in the States as a protest against the latest developments within the Congress ; its policies regarding land and peasants, its failures in Governments and its growing encouragement to statism and beaurocratic control of our social economy. It is a notorious fact how the Congress has not thought of establishing any such convention when it was enticing away so many legislators from other groups through its powers of patronage and punishment. In fact it has gone to the extent of stealing two of our K.L.P. M.L.As without our permission to make Ministers of them. Never did it occur to Jawaharlaljee to ask any of them to resign their seats and seek re-election as Congress candidates. Therefore, I trust that as many of those Congress legislators as are feeling so strongly against the Nagpur Resolution and other equally objectionable policies and activities of Congress and its Governments, would not allow themselves to be in any way inhibited by this meaningless and indefensible demand made on me by the Congress Party and will take time by its forelock and resign from the Congress.*

*The Law Minister Govinda Menon declared in the Lok Sabha (on 24th November 1967), on behalf of Congress Government that my resignation from Congress should not be equated with the 1967 crop of defections because I resigned on the basis of fundamental differences of principles, whereas 1967 defectors resigned for no principle at all but only for power.

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