

TOP TAMILS

NILKAN PERUMAL

Illustrated

With Three Art - Plates

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To
V. P.
With Gratitude

PREFACE

The Tamils have been, all along, an ancient and great people in history. All through the ages, they produced great Statesmen, Writers, Poets, Musicians Administrators, Philosophers, and Sculptors. Lately, they have also become captains of modern industrial combines.

This book seeks to present some Tamils who are on the top in their respective fields of activity. All of them are alive today except Kavimani Desikavinayakam Pillai. When I planned this book, he was there. However, I must include him in this work on account of his eminence as the greatest Tamil poet of our times. I donot say that my list here is fully representative or complete, but I believe, I have chosen some of our foremost contemporary figures. Each is distinguished in his own sphere of action.

It took a few months of study and research for me to write this book. It is no easy task to write about living people, especially Indians, in an impartial manner. The biographcial art has not come to age in our current literature, and people seem to be rather indifferent about its purpose, which in truth, is its integral role in history. In fixing up my choices in the present book, I looked out more for *charecter* than *genius* in my Subjects. At the same time, I should frankly confess that charecter in human beings in the present-day world seems to be even rarer than *radium*! Sir Archibald Nye, a former Governor of Madras, in a farewell speech once said that whereas genius flourished in abundance like ripened fruits on trees in Madras men of character seemed all too scarce in existence. It is a frank sentiment with which no responsible man

would disagree, taking into consideration what a great American Editor in Horace Greely once said:

“Fame is a vapour, popularity an accident, riches take wings, only one thing endures-Character.”

I need hardly withhold my humble but well deserved tributes to some of the eminent Tamils of today, simply because many of them have a few lapses in their way of life. After all, no human being is finished in full perfection, and invective is not my stronger weapon, either. My outlook generally is; “Be to his virtues very kind, be to his faults a little blind”. Furthermore, I have chosen to write about men whom I had met, with some of them acquainted for long.

In my present self-exiled life in Coimbatore, the five books that I have written during the last five years, were done on the persuasion of well-meaning friends. Even so, this book is attempted in response to *readers' letters* and hints thrown at me by sympathetic reviewers of my books in newspapers. To them all, I wish to express my sincere thanks.

I have done my word-portraits here differently from the usual pattern of writing, as the Reader will clearly see. It is because I want to give as much information as I can within limited space. I have no politics of my own, prejudices nor preferences for the men written about. I have chosen to portray them without fear or favour, neither denying them the due praise, nor withholding criticism where it is necessary. And. I plead with them, as did Socrates in his day;

“Don't take it ill, I beseech you, if I speak my thoughts without disguise and with truth and freedom.”

Nor have I written here anything like a preacher in *cap and bells*, pronouncing judgement. I have merely chosen to give my candid impressions of them, whom I hold in great regard. The Tamils should be proud of them, since each has served people and causes in their own way. I count it a privilege that I am doing this worthwhile, yet thankless job, but I ask fairly in advance of my Readers to kindly forgive me for the faults they may find in my recording.

Then, there is also the time factor in recording *biography*. In a radio-talk last year, the veteran Journalist Pothan Joseph neatly explained it. Said he;

“When the biographer is abreast of his time and ready with a version as an eye witness and a contemporary, authenticity can hardly be questioned.Mahatma Gandhi died on Jan. 30, 1948 but imagine the first sketch about his career being drawn at the dawn of the Twenty-First Century ! Such a portrayal would be different from the figure of the Mahatma as seen by his colleagues and contemporaries. The moralistic tone changes the complexion of any dry chronic of events”.

An author has occasionally his moments of despondency. At such times, my friends Mr. M. Ramasamy and Mr. J. M. Prabhu-both lovers of books and sympathetic towards writers - had put in me cheer. To them, I would like to express my genuine thanks.

Coimbatore }
May 22, 1956 }

N. P.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PUBLIC AFFAIRS	
Dr. C. Rajagopalacharya 	1
Sir. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer 	7
Sir. A. Ramaswamy Mudaliar 	12
Mr. Kamaraj Nadar 	18
Mr E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker 	23
 SCIENCE & EDUCATION	
Sir C. V. Raman 	29
Sir Samuel Runganadhan 	34
Sir A. Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar	39
 THE PRESS	
Mr. K. Srinivasan 	45
Sir R. S. Sarma 	49
 INDUSTRY, AGRICULTURE & BANKING	
Mr. S. Anantaramakrishnan 	55
Mr. C. S. Ratnasabapathy Mudaliar 	59
Mr. V. C. Palaniswamy Gounder 	63
Mr. M. S. M. M. Meyyappa Chettiar 	67
 POETRY	
The late Kavimani	
S. Desikavinayakam Pillai 	73

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

BIOGRAPHY

Rajaji
Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetty
The President
Contemporary South Indians

POLITICS

State Propaganda
Diplomacy
A Hindu Reformation
The Truth About Travancore
Candid Comments

TRAVEL

In A Corner of India
Chettinad

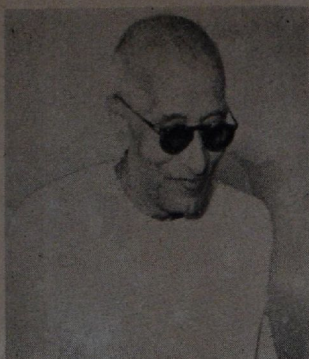
JOURNALISM

News

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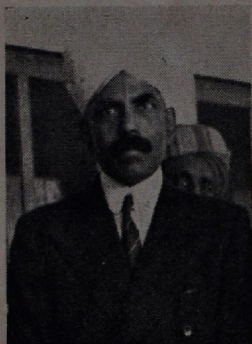
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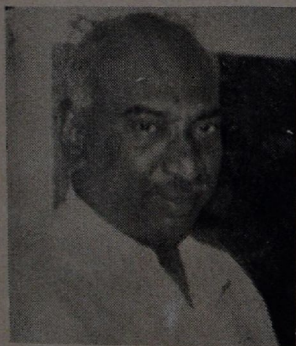
Mr. C. RAJAGOPALACHARYA



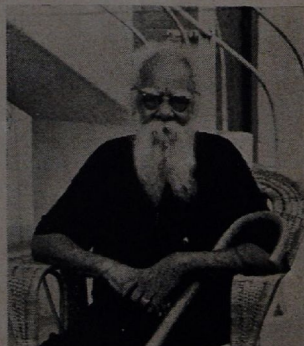
Sir C. P. RAMASWAMY AIYER



Sir A. R. MUDALIAR



Mr. K. KAMARAJ NADAR



Mr. E. V. R. NAICKER

Dr. E. Rajagopalacharya

INTRODUCTION

Does this man need it? He has already attained a story - book fame in his own time. The seventy seven year old, lean built, dark - spectacled Charkavarti Rajagopalacharya is a great Tamil of our times. Reason; he is a genius. Versatile in tastes, he is scholar, administrator, writer, jack of so many pulls on earth. He is an honest man with a clean conduct in life. By himself, he would never do anything wrong, but at times, got influenced by one or two friends for whom he had an especial regard.

He is a type of man rare in our country, though to many a puzzle. John Gunther called him a *Fox*. But, it is not the face and the fur alone that we should take in for judgement. Familiarity with him will reveal a different type of man. He is conscious of his own greatness, but loves humanity which he is keen to serve from the pedestal of a Pontiff. He is always dictatorial by reason of his inner feelings of self - righteousness, small blame to him! Since his ideals are good, he goes after them hammer and tongs, at times, caring little for the means he adopts. One can't blame him for some of his autocratic methods in politics and administration, because he rightly realizes that true democratic ways are not fit for adoption with a people of whom thirty of the thirty six crores are rank illiterates. He is not far wrong in that.

A convincing speaker, gifted debator, and hasty legislator, he has an array of human virtues which any unbiassed thinker would profusely admire. For the last fifty years, his had been a grand parade of public service to his people. As such he has placed us in a debt of gratitude to him.

CAREER

Born in 1879 at Hosur, Salem. Graduated from the Central Hindu College, Bangalore. Took his law degree in Madras. Practised law in Salem successfully. Became Municipal Chairman of his town. Married, had five children, two daughters and three sons. Became a widower in his forties. Took to Congress work under Gandhiji, went to prison a number of times. Became Premier of Madras, 1937. Served in the interim Government Pt. Nehru formed in 1946, New Delhi. Was the first Governor of West Bengal after Freedom Day in August, 1947. Was chosen the last and only Indian Governor - General of India, 1948. Again, went back to Delhi as Home Minister. Became Premier of Madras a second time in 1952 and left in 1954.

COMMENT

A lover of political power for the sake of serving people in his own way and not for any selfish aims Rajaji as an administrator had been the ablest Congressman to be Premier of Madras. His success

in office was entirely due to his genuine passion to place himself at the service of the people, using all his talents. He is proud to be a Tamil and knows his people well. He is thoroughly honest in his intentions to do the maximum good to the people. But he thinks slightly of those who are opposed to his views. He wouldn't play to the gallery, but that is not a fault of his. Intellectuals and supermen don't. Tact he has plenty, but at crucial moments he betrayed that trait in him, as he did with Kamaraj in the matter of a new Congress legislature party leadership in 1954. Small minded and selfish politicians never liked him, all because he was too big, and they, a little below standard. Therefore, there had been intrigues against him, but now he having done his duty, left things to destiny. Wherever he went, villagers and townsfolk still mustered strong to cheer him. Crowds collected to hear him speak. People enthusiastically read the books he wrote, recording the wisdom of his age and valued experiences.

This man would have been still greater in stature, if only he had cared to go abroad atleast once, seeing lands and people, studying some of their virtues. Not having had those experiences, he had been dwarfed from attaining certain human refinements which would have proved an ornament to him. His *Frog in the well* existence in this country in this atomic age often clouded his vision to certain realities he would have readily acknowledged as fine, if he had gone abroad. In his student days, he told a Scottish Professor of his, that India was good enough for him, when the *Don* suggested a scholastic

career at Oxford. His mannerism, at times, betrayed his real greatness. He is sometime offensive in talk, rude in expressions, both in private and in public, but then, at heart, he is thoroughly sound. A little polish and poise in his ways would have carried him far in public estimation. Gandhiji was thoroughly convinced of his integrity and independence in thought and action and no man wept more genuinely than Rajaji when the Mahatma fell a victim to an assassin's bullet.

He should have been India's first elected President, once we turned our country into a Republic. But, even amongst India's Congressmen who eloquently preached the ideal of a *United India*, they have sectarian standards at heart. Rajaji was never elected President of the Indian National Congress, and he did not contest. In 1945, he was even denied the chance of being the Premier of Madras a second time, because of controversies in his own party, but that proved a blessing in disguise for him. Greater honours and avenues of service awaited him in the all-India sphere.

Rajaji, at times, carried on his puritanic ideals rather too far with courage and conviction, but caring little, at the same time, how far they led to unwelcome developments. It is said that *a Diplomat is one who serves in a place to avert situations which would have never risen, if he were not there!* Certain detestable features in the life of the Tamil State would never have arisen if Rajaji always read the signs of the times correctly. In 1954, this man who delights in combats and controversies in politics, suddenly took to a vigorous platform campaign and newspaper commentary in praise of our age old epic *Ramayana*. He had

earlier written a masterly thesis on the *Mahabharata*, but in the case of the *Ramayana* propaganda, he seemed a little overzealous. Now, counter-forces cropped up and the book became a matter of hot discussion amongst the Tamils. I donot think that in this atomic-age, our people living a materialized life, not many really do care to benefit from that ancient book. And, I feel that the real way to revere a book is to treat it sacred and not allow it to be taken to the market-place for cheap discussion by those who venerate it. Again, Rajaji knows the misery caused by drunkenness and all honour to him for his zeal to save the poor from this evil. But, he forgets that abstinence is an anti-thesis to human nature, and that graduated methods should be employed in tackling the question. He hates the Communists, but keeps an open mind when he says that he admires the Russian passion for world - peace. He denounces America's nuclear war materials, but has a warm corner of his heart for that country's capitalist-economy. He turned a Realist by pleading rejection of American-aid to us. He talks too much at times from public platforms, but his letters are brief, beautiful and fit for preservation and publication as high class literature. He jailed a few hundreds of Tamils who opposed his compulsory *Hindi* teaching in our schools in 1937, though I doubt whether he himself, then, knew how to read and write *Hindi* ! He is full of arguments, but some times, his reasoning was similar to the man who said that he slept on a tree in the Park, because it was forbidden on a bench !

Today, Rajaji plays the role of a reformer of humanity and he is eminently fitted for the task.

Toiling, reforming rejoicing, sorrowing, onward through life he goes, as Longfellow had recorded. Still, there is an adage that an "old man gives good advice in order to console himself for no longer being in condition to set a bad example"! But, Rajaji's path had always been straight as the geometrical line, though he does not seem to be understood correctly by the people. If they had, he would have been followed better, and his advice taken with Gospel-seriousness. But then, which Reformer had been successful in his day, even in the past?

Well, this truly great man has an assured and well-deserved place in our history as a leader. And, who is a *true leader* according to Lao Tsu the Chinese Philosopher, who left a definition of it 2500 years ago? Said he:

*A leader is best when people
barely know he exists
Not so good when people obey
and acclaim him
Worst, when people despise him
Fail to honour people,
they fail to honour you
But a good leader who talks
little
When his work is done,
his aim fulfilled,
They will all say :
" We did ourselves "!*

Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer

INTRODUCTION

Soon after a Brahmin child Ramaswamy was born in the battle-field town of Wandiwash in North Arcot District in the 1870s, his father Pattabhirama Iyer consulted an astrologer about the boy's future. The Horoscope - recorder pronounced extraordinary judgement :

“ Your son will be a dunce. Academical distinctions nil. He will have an ordinary commercial career in life ” !

That was enough for the parent ! He took up the challenge bravely with a view to defy the astrologer's forecast. He did everything in his power to shape the life of his only boy to usefulness, by rigorous tuition and enforcement of strict rules in daily conduct. The result was that the astrolger was wrong, and Pattabhirama Iyer was right. That child was none other than the illustrious Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer of today. He is the type of a man born in any country only once in an era.

A brilliant personality, he is now in his seventy-sixth year, but looks many years younger. He is somewhat youthful in shouldering mountaneous work every day. Great scholar, lawyer and administrator, he is one of the famous Indians of the day. Whatever work he did, one saw efficiency in it. Results showed the true eminence of the man. He is a Titan of our times, and the Tamil State is proud of him. As Law Member to

the Madras Government in the 1920s he was mainly responsible for the establishment of the Mettur Reservoir and the Pykara Hydro-Electric Project, both of them giving a fillip to agriculture and industry in the South. They changed the face of the Tamil State and brought sunshine into the lives of millions. Recently, he played the role of an *Acharya*, as the Vice-Chancellor of the historic Benares Hindu University. He is a picture of mental and physical energy. To talk to him is both education and pleasure. To know him is a privilege.

CAREER

Born in 1879, Nov. 12. Father Pattabhirama Iyer was first a vakil, then a City Judge. As a lawyer, C. P. was an outstanding success. He was a Member of the Madras City Corporation, legislator, Advocate General, and then Law Member. He was a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council thrice at different periods. Was Constitutional Advisor and later Dewan in Travancore. Married, has three sons. Member of various Commissions and Committees, Indian Delegations to foreign countries. Travelled in Europe, the Americas, the far East, Australia and New Zealand. Member of the Press Commission. 1953-54. Taught Indian philosophy and culture to the students of a University in California and at Yale in U. S. in 1952.

COMMENT

C. P. has a marvellous, full life in as much as he played a hundred different roles, in each proving brilliant. That established the super-mental calibre of the man. Besides Mettur and Pykara establishment, his work in Travancore was a piece of great achievement in life. Through a series of reforms, efficient administration and new industries, he changed the fortunes of that State for the better. The traveller in Travancore is often told by the people today that C. P.'s Dewanship of the State was their *golden-era*.

His scholastic attainments are enviable. He knows many world languages. He knows world affairs in their true perspective. If the wisdom of Bernard Shaw was found in his plays, the scholarship of C. P. was seen in the hundreds of public speeches he had delivered during the last four decades. He has plenty of humour too, besides readiness of retort. He prepared his speeches well in advance, but on the platform he carried not even notes. The audience got charmed by his performance.

Pt. Nehru and C. P. had been secretaries of the Indian National Congress in 1917. Today, their friendship endures, but politically their outlook differs. Even the British statesman Attlee appears to have wondered why C. P.'s proverbial administrative experience had not been utilized properly in modern India? He could have been at least our Ambassador in Washington, many Tamils felt. But I do not know whether C. P. ever cared for any administrative office any longer.

It might be that he was not prepared to sacrifice his independence of thought and action for the sake of public office. "No one should compromise one's dignity", he used to say. In 1942, when he differed with Lord Linlithgow and Sir Reginald Maxwell on the issue of the Freedom of the Press in war time, he promptly resigned from the Indian Executive Council.

I have heard of C. P. being generous with his purse. When a humble friend of his lost a job, he promptly sent him consoling lines on paper and a cheque for a thousand rupees. To a down-and-out journalist he once wrote soothing words to point out how "democracy, either nascent or actual had not always been a discerning patron of literature and art", Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare and Keats being instances in point. There was nothing indiscriminate about his charities. He had his careful consideration in such matters. True, he never thought much of money, I know, but he also knew how inconvenient lack of it was, at times. Indeed, he was never in want or poverty, but then, even crores of rupees would not have satisfied his needs. He was used to sultanic-pleasures in life. He was no ascetic who admired austerity. He knew life was for living, and he always lived it splendidly.

Few men in South India prize the virtue of loyalty to friends. "Fidelity and loyalty are two cardinal virtues of man, and dogs are the personification of loyal attachment", he once wrote to a friend. And, he always had a few at his feet! Personal courage is yet another virtue of this Statesman. In 1920, when he was threatened with dire consequences if he made his

appearance at a stormy election meeting in Madras, C. P. went there undaunted, with a pistol in hand. Equally bold was he in facing a tormenting situation created by Communists in Travancore during the war-years. In the role of a *Lt. General* of the State Forces, he appeared at the turbulent spot and ordered the military to open fire, shooting down the unruly folk like sea-gulls! It was all done in the true *Gita* spirit of doing one's duty letter-perfect, irrespective of fear, favour or personal considerations. His whole life had been that way!

Sir A. R. Mudaliar

INTRODUCTION

You ought to know well this internationally-known Indian after World War II. He is also the only Tamil ever honoured by Oxford, the great seat of learning in England, with an *honorary doctorate* to adorn his name. Nehru was similarly honoured at Cambridge, his old *alma mater*. Ramaswamy Mudaliar is a Statesman of remarkable status. He has played a renowned role in the affairs of the UNO in the post-war years. He was Indian Representative at the very first inaugural session of UNO at San Francisco and later, become Chairman of its Economic and Social Council. Earlier, he had been thick in India's domestic politics, and for six years held the coveted office of Viceregal Executive Councillor. He also sat in the Imperial and Pacific War Councils in London, along with Sir Winston Churchill, during the war years. A poor man in early life, he was fifty before he permanently grasped the hands of material success in life. Medium built, moustached, black-suited Mudaliar is now in his sixty-eighth year. Today, he is more an industrialist than a politician, though he is a Member of the *Rajya Sabha* in New Delhi.

CAREER

Son of a Government Revenue official Kuppaswamy Mudaliar, he is third of the four brothers. Took to law in life, but to politics, better. Served as Secretary to Sir A. P. Patro,

Education Minister, after Montford Reforms, in Madras. Belonged to the Justice Party whose daily newspaper the *Justice* he edited for a few years. He also edited a short-lived weekly publication in English titled the *Radical*. Was Member of the Council of State, later still was Member of the Legislative Assembly, in New Delhi. Was Chairman of the Tariff Board, then went to London as Member of the Secretary of States's Advisory Council. Appointed Commerce Member of the Government of India in 1939, later Supply Member. In 1946, became Dewan of Mysore for three years. Was Member of several Commissions and Committees the Government of India appointed. Was also Delegate to a few conferences abroad. Presently, he is Chairman of the Industrial Finance Corporation, also the Indian Steamship Co., Calcutta. He holds similar office in a few more industrial, banking and commercial combines in this country. For the last three years, he is also Vice-Chancellor of the Travancore University. Married, has two sons and two daughters.

COMMENT

This man who thought he would make a great success in law courts, soon strayed away, developing greater interest in politics. He gave great promise in the field of politics almost from the start, with his flair for public speaking and felicity for good writing. Still,

the powers of his Party did not consider him suitable for public offices when there were chances. He was, however, Mayor of Madras in 1928. The Justice Party chose new Ministers now and then, whilst holding office, but the able Mudaliar's name was somehow shelved aside! He had ability, but it was unjustly overlooked. Vexed, he left the Justice Party in 1927 and joined the Congress. Even in his new sphere, he did not find the atmosphere congenial. He soon realized what a folly it was to get *King Stork* for *King Log*! He got back to the Justicites. He proved a brilliant Parliamentarian in the Madras and Delhi legislatures, doing meritorious work, but in the 1934 elections, he was unsuccessful, having been trounced by the late Congressite Satyamurthy. It was a major political 'tragedy' of his life. But, Lord Willingdon, the then Viceroy, consoled Muadliar by appointing him to the Tariff Board. Later, he went to London as Member of the Secretary of State's Council. From that time onwards, his star was steadily on the ascent. Fame and fortune began knocking at his feet. In his case, for all the injustices man meted out to him in his early career, a merciful God made up abundantly by blessing him with wealth and power from the noon-day of his life.

Mudaliar is a good man if ever you knew him at close quarters. But, he was all along a man of sorrow, since misfortune dogged at his feet in his early political career and thwarted his victories. Even today, he, a multi-millionaire, has his sorrow-spots in life, I guess. In Madras politics, he was throughout unhappy. He suffered many set-backs. Indeed, those disappointments would never have been his, if only Mudaliar had been

a wealthy man in the 1920s and 1930s. His political career would have been, then, altogether different. His lean bank-balance stood against his merit being properly rewarded by his party in South India, where deplorably enough, money mattered more than anything else even today, in assessing the worth of any individual. The modern Tamil, in most cases, seems to be blind to realities and proper human values in a practical sense, it is such a pity!

In Lord Linlithgow's Executive Council, Mudaliar was the ablest Indian and no wonder, he kept His Lordship in the pocket to do what he wanted. When he pressed the button, Linlithgow croaked. But, Lord Wavell was so different. A Politician can hardly please everybody, and Mudaliar was no exception. When a man told the Viceroy a few of the sins and omissions of Mudaliar in the Executive Council, Wavell promptly replied:

“Listen, we British took this man to the top.
We can't haul him down now.”

When Sardar Patel was in 1945 told of a few things by Mudaliar's enemies, he thundred “Wait, when, we come to power, we shall take note of him”. Yes, when the Sardar and his Congress Colleagues formed a Government, they chose Mudaliar to represent Independent India in the World Councils abroad! An important Congress Cabinet Minister in Delhi explained; “Mudaliar has ability and experience we can ill-afford to ignore”.

As the Dewan of Mysore, he carried on brilliantly, but even in that state, Congress agitations were set up

against him. Today, he has an important place in India's industrial and business world. In British business spheres, he is much respected and his word is taken on trust.

Mudaliar is magnanimous at heart towards his fellow beings. He is generous to a fault. When he was Mayor of Madras, a Moslem Councillor once used vile words against him. Mudaliar helped the same Moslem in many ways during the last war. He has a heart for the poor since he himself knew what was poverty in a man's life.

While I have great regard for his versatility, learning and goodness of heart, I have always wondered about his poor judgement of men and matters, at times. He did not always have a correct appraisal of situations and people. Had he that gift, he would have shaped his political career differently even in 1925. Wrong judgements had been responsible for a few uneasy moments in his life. The man is also spiritually inclined, that he in spite of his busy times in New Delhi as Councillor of Lord Linlithgow, nevertheless found time to visit *God Venkateswara* on the Thirupathi Hills. A Belgian Arms-factory once presented him with a pistol, but Mudaliar declining to take, said that his Hindu *Vaishnavite* faith did not permit acceptance!

Ramaswamy Mudaliar has attained greatness and glory in life through his own luck and efforts, but his people the Non-Brahmins seemed to murmur that he had forgotten them! That is vain talk. The Non-

Brahmins have every cause to thank themselves for their gradual degeneration. No leader can possibly help them, unless they themselves choose the right path. A man like Mudaliar who has become an international-statesman today, can no longer think anything in terms of Non-Brahmin communalism, although we all admit that in his early career, he rode to public recognition, only on the wings of the communally-shaped Justice Party.

Fifty years ago, the late Mr. V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, the one Tamil who had perhaps the greatest record of sacrifice and suffering in his patriotic activities, dreamt of a Tamil running a successful global steamship-line. But, it has been given to Ramaswamy Mudaliar alone to fulfil that fine vision, himself being the first Tamil shipping-magnate in the country, sailing his vessels on the seven-seas, with a world-wide reputation.

Mr. K. Kamaraj Nadar

INTRODUCTION

Tall, dark complexioned, strong-built bachelor Kumaraswamy Kamaraj Nadar is Premier of Madras since April 1954. He is a phenomenon in the present day politics of the Tamil State. He rose from the ranks in the Congress. Only a good servant could be a good master, it is said. He is just that ! He never aspired for any Premiership in life. Circumstances led him to it. Then, he submitted to the dictates of fate. Madras tops other states in a high per centage of literacy and college education. Yet, a man who had never been to college is our Chief Minister! He who has not read Plato's *Republic* or Stuart Mill's *Liberty* governs the affairs of our state somewhat successfully. Since he came into office, bitter political controversies are fewer in the state, and there seems to be no hitch in the cabinet. Generally, he also infused a wave of confidence in the people, but the stock-taking day is still ahead. The only public office he held was a municipal chairmanship in his town Virudunagar for a very brief period. But in the whole of India such prior experience is not seen in a lot of men who are holding important administrative offices today. A great French artist Degas once said: "Painting is not very difficult when you don't know how. But when you know how, ah ! then, it is a different matter".

CAREER

Born June 15, 1903. Parentage was not very eventful. Had only

meagre schooling. Began working in life as a shop assistant, then joined the Non-Cooperation Movement as a volunteer in 1921. Soon shaped himself seriously to political work. Many years worked as Secretary, Tamilnadu Congress Committee, then elected President. Has gifts of matchless organization. Member, All India Congress, also working Committee. Went to jail a number of times. Was a legislator in Madras, was later in the Union Parliament. Elected Chief Minister, 1954. Unmarried. A wholtime politician althrough.

COMMENT

Kamaraj has a way of nestling himself close to his followers, friends and associates. He sees to it that he has their loyalty, love and suport. He gives them back all that. He came up in politics along with Satyamurthy to whose memory he is ever so grateful even today. His followers are proud of Kamaraj as he is of them. They elected him their legislature party leader much against his wish. When the late Sir P. Theogaraya Chetty was asked to become Chief Minister by the Justice Party in 1921, he curtly declined. But, Kamaraj was no Ceasar to turn down the kingly crown that was offered. He had his own reason for acceptance. First, there was none in the party in 1954 who could have commanded the confidence of the people better in that office. Then, the taunt of a political opponent in secret that Kamaraj was

unfit for a Premier's chair had worried him, and he was all for taking up the challenge. He has now proved that he is in no way inferior to some of his predecessors in the same office. He is all courage, common-sense, precision in decisions, and purposeful in action. Plato said: "The only man who may safely be given high political office is the man whose only motive in holding it is a knowledge that, if he does not, some worse man, worse qualified, will hold it in his place". Kamaraj came in only that way to Premiership.

One gets used to any public office in India of the day, even as children get familiar to the taste of castor-oil, after a few dozes. Kamaraj knows public administration from study and observation. Sir Isacc Newton was once asked how he found out the law of gravity? "By constantly thinking about it", was his quick reply. Even so, Kamaraj is successful in administration today by constantly thinking about it. More, like Aristide Briand, he studied his best lessons in life from his wide contacts with people. Many suspect whether he is well versed in English? Did it matter, even if he wasn't? But, he has a good working knowledge of that language, I know. He is also one of the very few Congress leaders in the South who can read, write and speak *Hindi* well.

Kamaraj is a public-relations man *per excellence*. He tours a lot in the state, talking to people, understanding their problems, testing their political pulse, and cultivating their goodwill towards his Government. He who used to speak little in public, now a days speaks a little more, in an effort to explain his government's policies to the people. He tries to comfort

them with pleasing words, but does not paint too optimistic pictures. He is always caution and moderation. Two things are key-notes of his recent speeches. One, the Government should get the support of the people, and then, the communists should be despised. People listen to him, forget their grievances, forget him too, once he vanished from their midst.

Kamaraj has assigned the work in the legislature to be carried out by the leader of the House C. Subramoniam, Finance Minister. He is shaping himself a fine floor-leader in both the Houses of legislature. He has his way in administrative matters, and Kamaraj has given great freedom in a true democratic way to all his Ministers and Secretaries. He is so different from Rajagopalacharya who kept his fingers over every file and figure in the Secretariat and directed affairs himself.

In parlour talks, Kamaraj is brilliant and convincing. He has fruitful ideas, impressive presentation and conclusive arguments. He loves to do much for the peasants, but what he actually could do, is another matter. He is first of all keen not to force reform, but to avoid revolt, and that is something really clever. But, he is genuine in his anxiety to do 'as much as he can for the good of the people. He has a sound memory, can quote figures from finger-tips, never makes vain promises to any, but fulfils if he does.

The Chief Minister is a bachelor. Is it because "when a man decides to marry, it is the last decision he makes in life?" But, he has yet to make scores of decisions affecting the people he serves. Therefore, he will not marry, one might be sure. There is noth-

ing to be surprised about it, since he is already wedded to selfless service of the people for a good many number of years now.

They call him a *King-maker* and the epithet fits him like a glove. Since 1945, he decided the formation of all Congress Cabinets in Madras and chose the Ministers. He sent out of office powerful men like Prakasam, C. R. and Omandur Reddiar on principles he thought were correct. That showed his strength and hold on the people. Many of his actions are based on fine motives, but they at times, give a different meaning to shrewd observers. What they are, this is no place for detailing. The man is so polite and he has gifts of good fellowship. He would not budge an inch from his cherished ideals, and has a way of making converts to his creed in a pleasant way.

By dint of merit, hard work, sacrifices and above all good sense, here is a man who has come up in life successfully from humble beginnings. He has risen to position, prestige and authority. His example should inspire many a youth in the South to following in his footsteps to have success, not at one stroke, but through unbroken efforts, patience and planned moves in life. Kamaraj has shown us that a man of the masses as he, can be anything in life, so long as he carried them with him. It is a delicate art in which no other Tamil politician had ever excelled him. He is what you may call a *People's man*. Pt. Nehru once said of him :

“A great organizer, simple in his life and ways, but effective in work. He has not happily undertaken Chief Ministership. Support him”.

Mr. E. V. R. Naicker

INTRODUCTION

This man in his late seventies, heavy-built, impressive, silvery-bearded is a leader of a section of Tamils - Mr. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker. But, he mocks at his own flock saying that since they had not produced a worthy leader, he a Canarese-speaking specie had to fill up the gap! Like every other people's leader in the Tamil State of today, Naicker too started his career as a Congressman, then turning himself a social-crusader. His chief work in life, as far as I can assess, is that of the man who during the last thirty years stirred up the Tamils to think for themselves on problems relating to our social-structure. We may not like to tow his line of thought, but all the same, we must admit he made us think as to what is good and what is bad in our society. A great orator, he can talk for hours without fatiguing, inspite of his advanced age. He can put forth original ideas with arresting humour and unflinching expressions. He wears a black-shirt as did Mussolini, and asked his followers to do likewise. Like most people's leaders in South India, he too is a wealthy man, but like them, he also asks for a price for his public services from his followers. He makes periodic collections of cash from them. Whilst some leaders are interested in the *flock*, others care only for the *fleece*! His opponents don't take him seriously at all, since he is not their problem. They consider him a mere virsuvius without any virtual harm. I first met him when he came down to participate in the Vykom

Temple Entry-Campaign in 1923, along with his late charming wife Nagamal. He went to jail there.

CAREER

Born in a wealthy family at Erode in 1879, had his early education in high school. After Municipal politics, he later became Congressman. Married Nagama at the age of 19 and had no children. Went to Jail a number of times for the Congress and social reform causes. Visited Malaya in 1930, Europe the next year, including Russia. Last year toured Burma, Malaya and other South East Asian countries. Married again in 1949 - Maniammaier, a close follower of his. His ideal in public life is to carve out an independent Tamil State free from affiliation with New Delhi.

COMMENT

It was the late lawyer T. R. Venkatarama Sastri who once said that it would be easier to set fire to the *Ganges* than raise a revolution in the Tamil State! Yet, Ramaswamy Naicker has somewhat succeeded in sowing certain seeds of revolutionary ideas in our social customs. Steeped in age-old, ancient religious thoughts, cemented by out-dated religious traditions, the Tamils groped in darkness for long. Naicker, once he came clear off the Congress fold, made it his life mission to tell the people that more than political reform what we needed was

social reform. He was not wrong at all, in one sense. Through his Tamil weekly *Kudiarasu* and now *Viduthalai* (a daily) and his inimitable public speeches, he was able to make the Tamils hear his spoken word. His target of attack in the main was Hindu priestcraft, as he began his campaign in the year 1928. In support of his ideals, he held successive conferences over which eminent men of those days like the Rt. Hon Sir M. R. Jayakar presided.

Then, Naicker went to Russia at the invitation of the *Anti-God Society*, along with an intellectual S. Ramanathan. When he returned, he had turned an athiest ! This new creed surprised many of his followers, that some of them left. Now a days, he does not very much stress on his athiestic beliefs before his audiences. To him, I would like to quote a Hollywood movie- caption :

*To those who believe in God,
no explanation is necessary
To those who don't, no explanation
is possible*

When I met Naicker last time three years ago in Coimbatore, I told him, people never talked about a thing which did not just exist. If *brinjals* were't there at all, none would even pronounce that word ! Likewise, if Naicker thought there was no God, where was the need to mention Him at all ? Differently, I was reminded of the Hyde-Park orator whom I heard as he burst out :

“Thank God, I am an Athiest”!

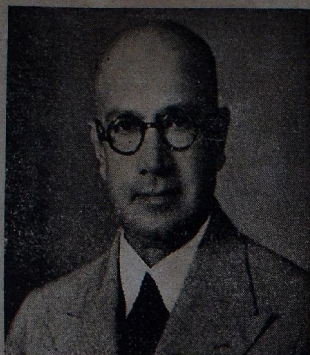
Naicker's second marriage in his seventieth year to Maniammayar a youthful, follower of his creed, brought about a split in his organization. Annadurai, an educated man whom Naicker brought up as a disciple revolted and set up a different group. When Lloyed George married his Secretary a week after the *Dame's* death, the Liberal Party did not split, remonstrating over the issue! Here also, it was purely Naicker's personal affair, and the attitude of his early associates in disowning him on that score, was rather surprising !

Lately, Naicker's campaigns had turned out to be rather amazing. He asked his followers to erase *Hindi* letters on rail-platform boards, to break the stone idols of the Hindu-pantheon, burn books like the *Ramayana*! All these appeared queer to many, just punch and judy shows. But, when he talked of the domination of the Northerner over South India, the Realist would concede that there was some precious little in it. Even the late Sir P. C. Ray had vehemently protested thirty years ago against some Indian trading tribes exploiting the good Bengalee people and no wonder, Naicker understood what it was, and uttered a timely warning as far as the South was concerned.

The tragedy of Naicker is that, he has not even a five per cent following amongst the Non-Brahmin Tamils, though a larger percentage sympathize with some of his ideas, right or wrong, that being a different matter. The *Old Guard* in the meantime, marches on, his tongue glibly preaching his pet theories, his pen recording his best thoughts, but then,

what is the use? He can't accomplish anything in good shape or form, nor will his dream of a seperate hundred per cent *Dravidan State* of his design ever become a reality. Still, he too has served the people in his own way, and nice of him to have done that !

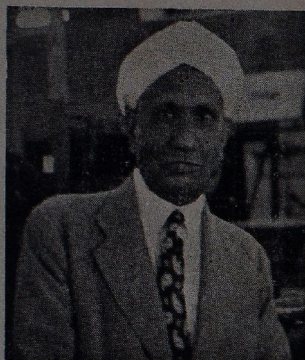
SCIENCE & EDUCATION



Sir S. E. RUNGANADHAN

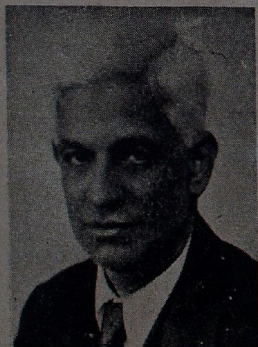


Dr. Sir A. L. MUDALIAR

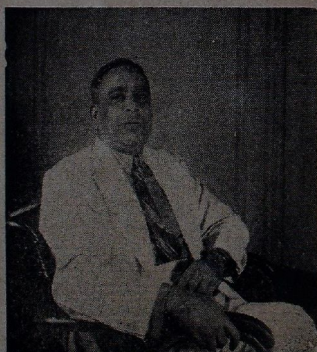


Sir C. V. RAMAN

THE PRESS



Mr. K. SRINIVASAN



Sir R. S. SARMA

Dr. Sir E. V. Raman

INTRODUCTION

What a great universally-honoured name is his ! I am thrilled to pronounce it. When I see his name in print, or think of him, my right hand automatically raises to salute him. He earned for the Indian nation a unique recognition in the world with his unparalleled work as an eminent Physicist. After Tagore in literature, Raman alone got this coveted world distinction of a *Nobel Prize* in India. And, he is one of the youngest in the world to receive this great award. He was just forty-one, then. As long as *Physics* as a subject of study would endure in the world, Raman's name shall also be there, shining bright in letters of gold. It is such type of men who raise the glory and greatness of a nation to sky-limits. In January 1949, our late beloved Poetess Madamme Sarojini Naidu, felicitating him on his sixty-first birthday at the Indian Science Congress Session in Allahabad said :

“You be immortal, you be great, you be good !”

Presently, Raman is occupant of our *National Chair* for Physics, an honour given him by the State. Today, he is working at his own Research Institute in Bangalore. His sixty seven years seem to hang lightly on him, for, he is all feverish activity in the laboratory even today.

CAREER

Born in 1888. Son of an eminent Professor of Mathamatics and Physics.

Mr. Chandrasekhara Iyer. A prodigy in college, winner of several medals for proficiency in studies. Joined the Accounts Dept. of the Government of India in 1907. Resigned in 1917. Worked in the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science at Calcutta. Discovered several theories in Physics during the thirteen years he was there. Elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Science, England in 1922. Most of the Universities in America, Europe and India have given him honorary degrees and medals, for his great scholastic attainments. Director, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore for a time, then founded his own Reserch Institute during the last decade. Has contributed hundreds of papers to various scientific and other Magazines, has addressed the convocation of practically every important Indian University. Married and has children.

COMMENT

A cultivated brain like an arrable land, should be productive of anythings and everything. Raman's fertile brain is not merely that of a man of science, but that of a man of literature, administration, poetry, music, and all the arts. Any subject under the sun, Raman can discuss with amazing originality. "My interests in literature are no less than my interest in science", he once told me. On the platform, Raman

proved a very great speaker. He could tell laymen in clear language all the complicated and elusive scientific theories, so very convincingly and charmingly. What is more, he has sparkling wit and all these attainments on his part, draw crowds when he is on legs. His lectures not only give us education but entertainment as well.

It is said that God having made a mould for a genius, soon breaks it. I have Raman in mind when ever I think of that maxim. His life is unparalleled in the world. It is so very unique. At the age of thirteen he won a prize for writing an essay on *Indian Epic Poetry*. At fourteen, he won many medals for proficiency in Physics. Thus, in him the muses of Science and Arts, both seem to have taken their abode, something unusual with any human being. In his 'teens toiling in the laboratory of the Madras Presidency College, he proved himself an uncommon scholar in scientific subjects. Working on a scientific theory of Lord Raleigh, the eminent British Scientist, he won the admiration of his Lordship with whom the young Tamil got into correspondence. Again, he improved on a theory of Melde, wrote to all the Scientific and Philosophic Magazines of distinction in England and all these he had done before he was seventeen years of age ! Then, he could not get to England for a University education only because bad health came in his way.

Graduation over, Raman became an Accounts Department officer in the Government in his nineteenth year. Ten years later, he was in Calcutta and his

interests in Science persisted. As such, he worked in the Indian Association for Cultivation of Science, in that City. When he was transferred to Rangoon, Sir Ashtosh Mukherjee, that great Bengalee Jurist and Educationist prevailed upon Raman to continue his scientific pursuits and to resign his Government job. For the next thirteen years, Calcutta was the venue of his scientific work. Within that period, he attained international greatness. Raman paid unreserved tributes to Bengal and Bengalees for all the cooperation he had received, for, amidst them he worked and found fruitful results for his labours.

In the early 1920s, once he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Science, invitations from Europe and America came to him and I think in 1924, he went to England and worked in the Faraday Laboratory. Later, he went to Canada, where a speech of his impressed the American Scientist Robert Millikan. He was then invited to visit the United States. Raman went. He loved to work at the Mt. Wilson Observatory in Pasadena, star-gazing a little through the giant telescope there. He said his visit to America was justified by his work at Mt. Wilson. When he visited Russia in 1925, he spoke to the Scientists on *soap-bubbles*.

The *Raman Effect* discovery for which he has given the Noble Prize in 1930 in brief was that "when light falls upon molecules of matter and is scattered by, a remarkable change occurs". A couple of Russian Scientists had been working on the same lines as Raman,

but he preceded them by a couple of months! His discovery and its significance were heralded to the world by the German Scientist Pringsheim. "I just had Rs. 400 worth materials only to work on this great discovery", Raman once told me, with a broad smile playing on his lips.

On August 15, 1947, our Freedom Day, Raman was in New York and he told the Press : "Whenever I am out of India, my heart always travels back to my beloved country". Once he believed that Science was everything to him for study in life. Now, he feels differently. The "human spirit and the soul of man also need intimate study"

Raman is such a charming soul that to meet him is a privilege in life. In spite of his greatness, he is so polite, humble and humane. He has his spiritual side and has a great interest in the well-being of fellow men. I have never known an Indian genius endowed with such a high degree of personal character and clean conduct in life as this eminent man of science. To Will Durant, the American Philosopher who asked for the *meaning of life* two decades ago, Raman wrote;

"The desire to labour, to achieve and to help others do likewise...these are the motive powers which kept me going."

Sir S. E. Runganadhan

INTRODUCTION

Sir Samuel Runganadhan is a revered Educationist among Tamils in recent years. He served in the Indian Educational Service, had been Vice-Chancellor of two Universities in the Tamil State and was later, India's High Commissioner in London for four years. He returned to India in 1947 when Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon took his place. Even now, in his seventy-eighth year, he is ever so active. He is Chairman of the Christian Medical College Council at Vellore, Member of many Christian School Committees in Bangalore, and President of the YMCA Council for India and Ceylon. He is also President of the UNO Association in Bangalore, his present place of permanent residence.

CAREER

Son of a Christian Padre Conjeevaram Runganadhan. Born in Dec. 1877. Took M. A. and L. T. of the Madras University. Became Assistant Professor of English, Presidency College, 1908. Principal Ceded District College, Anantapur, 1916. Professor of English, Presidency College, Madras 1919. Vice - Chancellor, Annamalai University 1929-35. Vice-Chancellor, Madras University 1937-40, Chairman Inter University Board, 1938-39. Attended Congress of Empire Universities at Edinburgh 1931. Member, Madras

Legislative Council. 1936-39. Leader of Indian Delegation to the International Labour Conference at Philadelphia in 1944, at Paris in 1945, at Montreal in 1946, also to the Paris Peace Conference, 1946, Married, two sons and one daughter.

COMMENT

Tall, well-built majestic-looking Runganadhan is more an Englishman in his way of life than an Indian ! He is always meticulously dressed in a European suit of clothing, speaks *English* with better diction than most Englishmen, himself being an authority on phonetics. His manners are even more than a Mayfair nobleman's. He talks less than what he means; even this, is a trait of the Englishman. In brief, his had been a decent, dignified, dutiful life, worthy of emulation by our young folk.

Runganadhan's father came from Mudaliar-Hindu stock in Conjeevaram. As a student in a mission school there, Runganadhan (senior) early decided to embrace Christianity, but his parents disagreed. Therefore, he escaped to Madras in a hay-cart hiding, to outwit there vigil on him and got converted to the blessed religion of Jesus. He was later on ordained in the Ministry. Samuel, his eldest son proved brilliant as a student. After he took M. A. in Madras, he was sent to Scotland for higher education, but the bitter cold at Edinburgh made him ill and he returned home. Then, he took to teaching in Madras by becoming Assistant Professor of English in the Presidency

College in 1901. He spent almost all his educational career in the same college, with a break of three years when he went to Anantapur as Principal of a College there. To hundreds of successful Tamils today, Samuel is their beloved Professor. They all hold him at heart in great respect.

On retiring from the Indian Educational Service in 1929, he was made the first Vice-Chancellor of the Annamalai University. There, he earned for himself a lasting and rare reputation. About his work, the University folk in their *Silver Jubilee Souvenir* published last year, said as follows.

“The University was able to secure the services of Mr. S. E. Runganadhan...His scholarship and administrative experience were a great asset and this enabled him to guide the University on right lines, and to give it an established position among the Universities of India. The University was also fortunate in the fact that Mrs Runganadhan was there to assist her husband in the pioneering work in which he was engaged. She quickened the social life of the University and gave it colour and charm.”

Then, for three years he was also Vice-Chancellor of the Madras University. At the same time, he was a Member of the Madras Legislative Council representing the Indian Christians. He spoke on current problems briefly and brilliantly, with moderation and

wisdom. Then, he was called to England to become Advisor in the Secretary of State's Council in 1940. Three years later, he was appointed India's High Commissioner in London, and his was all a tough job, then. Bombs burst in England as an every-day occurrence and he was himself twice hit, but had narrow escape ! He served the British Food Council and War-Graves Commission as a Member and went out to European countries to visit battle-fields. He looked up Indian troops serving in the scene of action, talked to them and reported conditions to New Delhi. He also met Allied-Commanders like Lord Alexander.

In London itself, he had cumbersome problems to face in the best interests of our people. A number of ship-wrecked Indian seamen had to be cared for, the comforts of *Bevin-Boys* had to be looked into, and the problems of Indian students there needed attention. More, the Indian Community in England had various difficulties, and all these had to be tackled by the High Commissioner. Once the war ceased, a stream of Indian students arrived in England for studies and their admission to various colleges and Universities appeared not easy. Samuel with his never failing interest in students took a personal interest in helping them. But for his good offices, most of those students had no other alternative but to get back home, I was told by people then resident in London. At this time, his younger brother Paul who had a brilliant record of work for Indian students in England for about four decades was also in London doing his best for our people. In the summer of 1955, he was again in Europe attending a Y. M. C. A. Convention.

Samuel has a happy home and usually, a quiet life. His wife Leila, is a well-known social worker. Their eldest son Henry who was in the Indian Air-Force as Squardon-leader died in an air-accident. Mark, the younger one who was in the Indian Army as a distinguished officer, resigned after the war and he is presently in London. His only daughter Sushila after taking her honours degree in literature at Oxford, married Mr. W. D. Padfield, who is now in business in India. Samuel is a devoted father to his children.

He is a great disciplinarian. Usually cool and calm, he ran into a temper if anything about him or around him went wrong. He wanted to see perfection everywhere in this world of imperfections! If he found a fault at the table at meal-time, he flared up and he would'nt forgive any. Yet, no man was more kind to his employees. He contributed liberally to charities, helped the poor and was ever ready to do anything for anybody within his own limits. Deeply religious, he preached moving sermons from pulpits, at times, evoking the piety of Christian congregations. But, he does not deny himself the ordinary pleasures of life on the pretext of religion. He is fond of choice dishes at the table, fine vintages, has a taste for good clothing and parties. Above all, he is a scholar, a voracious reader althrough. To friends, he is ever so loyal, has an amazing sharp memory and those who had known him have always felt much respect for him. He has not only charecter and brains, but even that precious and rare ornament in man—Culture.

Dr. Sir. A. L. Mudaliar

INTRODUCTION

An eminent medicalman and educationist, he is perhaps the busiest top-Tamil today, attending to a hundred things in twenty-four hours! He frequently travels around the country, also around the globe on important public assignments. A visit to London or Geneva for him is just like our visiting the next town! He is one of the best known Indians to the world outside today. Since August 1942, he has been Vice-Chancellor of the Madras University. He plays a great role in the affairs of the World Health Organization and the UNESCO. His book *Clinical Obstetrics* is a standard work on the subject. It is being widely used by medicalmen in many countries. At sixty-eight the Doctor is all vigour and hard work. Even his countless patients in the Tamil State would't spare him! They seek his advice. A subtle Thinker, he puts forth original ideas from public platforms he mounts to address, different types of audiences from doctors to dog-lovers. He is methodical and works on a planned basis in any undertaking in hand. Stout-built, dignified-looking, the Doctor has richly served his country and people in manifold directions, evoking our admiration. As a legislator, his political and legislative wisdom is all to the benefit of the Government of the day. He is the leader of the *Opposition* in the Madras Legislative Council and offers constructive and effective criticisms of Government policies in analytical strain. A man like the Doctor is an asset to the Tamils and

we are thankful, we have such a genius amidst us to serve all-round.

CAREER

Born in Karnool on October 14, 1887. Son of Kuppuswami Mudaliar, Dy. Collector. Father died when the Doctor was a boy. After college, took to study of medicine on the advice of his late elder brother A. Doraiswamy Mudaliar, sometime Chief Presidency Magistrate, Madras, a man of affectionate memory to me. Served for many years in the Madras Medical Service and retired. Was first Indian Principal of the Madras Medical College in 1942. Since then, Vice-Chancellor of the Madras University. Married in 1916. Has three sons and one daughter. Was Member of the Indian University Commission. Chairman, Secondary Education Commission. Was Chairman of the Executive Board of the WHO for three years since 1949. Closely connected with the UNESCO since 1951.

COMMENT

The Doctor's eminence in life is due to God's mercies and his own planned, hard work on careful lines. An outstanding genius in doctoring, his administrative abilities were established both as the Principal of the Madras Medical College and as Vice-Chancellor. In brief, which ever office he filled, he left behind

certain valuable traditions and marks of extreme efficiency. As President Franklin Roosevelt was popular at the *White House* and ran a fourth term, the Doctor is now running his fourth term as Vice-Chancellor. No one dare contest against him for that office, and if any did, they knew they would lose face. But, there are all the same, murmurs against his continuity. Yet, the fact remains that there is hardly a gifted man as he today in the Tamil State, so eminently fitted for the job. The *University's Dictator* some folk call him, but they do not seem to really understand his work and worth. He has not only raised the prestige of his University to great heights in the eyes of the world but promoted the cause of education in our state in several directions. Arts, science, medical and technological colleges have come up in a train during the thirteen years of his stewardship of the University and he is still striving hard for establishing more. For all these great services of the man, the people he served well have not honoured him as much as they should have. But, his University did a wee bit. It erected a bronze statue for him on his sixty-first birthday, also presented him with a volume of appreciation of his services, to mark the event.

The Doctor is reckoned as one of the world's foremost authorities in *Gynaecology and Midwifery*. Today, he is the best known Indian medicalman to the world outside. He has met the best brains in his profession in Britain, U. S. France, Sweden, Norway and other countries. He has little time to serve the muse of medicine these days. His interests are greatly centred around education. He thinks that the English language is a world force, and is indispensable for India for a

good many number of years to come. He is true to his convictions, courageous in expression and takes his stand stout-heartedly, even if he be the only one! And he does not belive in endless talks from every platform. What he talks is always sense, not gas, pregnant with fruitful suggestions. He does not indulge in needless humour either, whilst on legs. Still, he is witty. Once, he was compelled to talk on a subject he was rather unwilling to. Still, he responded to the call and made an excellent speech, satisfying the entire audience, but not touching even a fringe of the subject on which he was expected to speak! I was amazed at this wordy-feat of the Doctor. It was tact, many do not have. Even in private talks, he seldom gives out his views freely, but prefers to listen to others.

To a visiting Britisher at the Madras Cosmopolitan Club a decade ago, the portraits of the Nawabs of Arcot, who had been past-Presidents, were shown by an Indian member with the remark, "and these are the *Arcots*". A jovial person present there, then, wittily asked: "Yes, but from when have they begun to grow beards?" The wit certainly meant the *Arcots* of today, the Doctor and his distinguished elder brother Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar. Some folk laconically refer to them as such!

The Brothers are *twins*, very devoted to each other and that perhaps accounted for they being named in infancy as Rama and Lakshmana, the *Ramayana* heros. They dressed alike in black tweeds, wore the same pattern of white-turban. Many mistook the one for the other, many a time. They are the only famous twins of India.

The Doctor has an honoured place in our current history and he will be long remembered. He is exceptionally *practical* in all that he does in a State where many do read but few descriminate between the good and the bad, few traverse the right path to success in life, and fewer still are those who find opportunities to achieve the deserved results for their honest labour.

Mr. Kasturi Srinivasan

INTRODUCTION

The Managing Editor and owner of India's greatest newspaper the *Hindu* is now in his late-sixties. Mr. K. Srinivasan is the most respected among India's contemporary Editors and Press-Barons. During the last war-years, when the freedom and functioning of the Indian Press was at stake due to the die-hard attitude of the British officials. Srinivasan saved the situation by establishing the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference and coming to a *Gentleman's-Agreement* with the Government. He also helped to Indianize a national news-agency in the best interests of Indian Journalism. His eighty year old newspaper achieved great progress during his editorship commencing from 1934. Presently, he leads a quite life, free from many public engagements; still, he toils at his office desk everyday like any other working editor.

CAREER

Born August, 1887. Eldest son of the late S. Kasthuriranga Iyengar, a great editor, Srinivasan after graduation, came to work in his father's concern as Manger. He visited Europe about half a dozen times on various missions connected with his own business and in the best interests of Indian Journalism. In 1936, he served as Secretary of a Madras Committee which

celebrated the *Silver Jubilee* of accession to the Thorne by King George V of England. He is a turf - enthusiast. In 1955, he was elected President of the All-India Printers' Conference, was President of the Indian Editors' Conference for four years and of the *Press Trust of India* combine for 5 years.

COMMENT

Many ask the question whether Srinivasan is an *Editor* or a *Newspaper Proprietor*? He is both. When he joined the family concern *Hindu* about forty years ago, he gained experience in both the editorial and management sections. Today, whether he writes for his paper or not, it is not important. An owner need not write. He need only keep an eye on what's going on in the office and tell his employees what should be done. He, like an orchestra conductor should guide his paper and supervise its daily working. Srinivasan does all that.

The *Hindu* has great traditions and Pt. Nehru was once all praise for the paper in Parliament, commending its vast services to the nation. It is a *newspaper-empire* in itself! It is the only Indian paper reaching all the countries of the English-speaking world, even France, Russia and Latin-American countries. It has a net work of offices in several world-capitals, also correspondents. It is well-printed and maintains a clear-cut standard. Such a newspaper needs cautious, careful and distinguished guidance, but it is fortunate to have Srinivasan, an editor of exceptional experience and ability, at the helm of affairs.

You wouldn't be much impressed by Srinivasan on your first meeting him ! He is so polite, gentle and humble. He talks little too. At the same time, he has a wealth of information in him, also sound judgement on men and matters. His army of correspondents for the paper are not only expected to report news for publication, but asked to write *private-letters* to the editor informing him of affairs in their respective spot of working. Then, he also studies all the available world newspapers, periodicals and books of importance. He never denies an interview to any. He loves to see people and hear their views. Distinguished visitors to Madras are often entertained by him, but these days, he seldom goes out to attend public functions.

The *Hindu* is famous for its news-columns. In fact, it gives a better coverage of national and foreign news than any other Indian paper. It has encouraged a string of youngmen of its choice to function as reporters from various cities in India and abroad. For several years now, the *Hindu* has a reputation of paying for articles and news published. It has also a large advertisement revenue and everything about the paper is systematized and methodical. For all these perfections, Srinivasan has sweated for years, but today, he seems to take his times a bit easy.

Srinivasan, the man of wealth has his ambition to lead a perfect life on earth. He is staunch in his religious faith. His employees are well-paid and looked after with so many amenities provided. He understands human nature, its virtues and weaknesses. He has

fellow-feeling and kindness towards the less-fortunate. He never fails to recognize merit in those who serve him and his decisions are unalterable.

Some people have remarked that Srinivasan's paper is inclined to place business and advertising interests above editorial ethics. It is also felt that personalities are more cared for than principles in the matter of publication of news and pictures. Still, I know of cases where Srinivasan personally put down personalities to uphold principles of fair publication. A friend of his was involved in a sensational black-marketting case, the court proceedings of which were blazed in the *Hindu* befitting the conduct of a fair editor that Srinivasan is. Then, there is also the feeling in some quarters that the *Hindu* editorials are, at times, not vehement and hot. But, those who feel that way fail to understand that a paper of such greatness can't be expected to voice forth unbalanced and passionate views. "A newspaper that prints the news, all of it that is fit to print, can take any editorial position it desires without loss of prestige or patronage", said the great American editor the late William Allen White.

The powers in the land attach great importance to Srinivasan's words. They consult him on public affairs in private and he also tenders confidential advice. Such a respect shown him is in fact, a rare tribute to the Indian *Fourth Estate* and we of the inky-profession are really proud of it.

Sir R. S. Sarma

INTRODUCTION

This man is very different from the rest I have written about in this book. He is an adventurous type of Tamil. Sarma who hailed from Thiruvavur, Tanjore, is a famous Publicist. Journalism is his profession, and he is still at it. He edits a Railway-Magazine in Calcutta. Starting life as a parrallel-bar player in a South Indian circus, because he had sinewy hands, he later migrated to Calcutta. When Sir Surendranath Banerjee refused to give him an editorial job on the paper *Bengalee*, Sarma flattered him and got it. "I haven't come here to eke out a living, but to learn journalism at your venerable feet", he said. He started as a *printer's devil* on the paper, rose to be a *sub*, edited that paper, and even owned it later on!

Sarma has a glib tongue, and it is very much responsible for his success in life. He went to London in 1919 to be trained at the office of *Reuters*. Training over, Sri Rodrick Jones, then *Reuters'* General Manager, told him that he would be started on a salary of Rs 250 on return to India, and in ten years, he would get Rs. 1250, with an yearly increase of a hundred. Sarma replied: "I am now young, and this is the time to enjoy life for which I need a lot of money. You start me on Rs. 1250 now, and reduce a hundred rupees every year." Sir Rodrick was astounded. He started Sarma on Rs. 750 a month. He is the only Indian to be

dubbed a *Knight* at a Buckingham Palace ceremony, the last act of the Duke Windsor as *King* on the eve of abdication. He is the first Indian to fly to England twenty eight years ago, the first Indian journalist to be knighted, a friend of the great in the world like Hitler, Mussolini, Kemal Pasha, Duke of Windsor, Attlee, Churchill, Nahas Pasha, Roosevelt, the Astors and a host of others.

He ~~w~~ent to Europe a dozen times, once to America and once to Australia. He had ambitions to meet Stalin, but he didn't. When the British sent him as leader of a delegation to tell the Americans of India's war effort in 1943, an American asked him whether he followed Gandhi? "If I did, I wouldn't be here today. My place would have been a prison-cell in India", was Sarma's smart reply.

CAREER

Born in 1890, Son of a *Sub Registrar* Ramaswamy Iyer. Studied upto metriculation. Worked on the staff of the *Bengalee* newspaper in Calcutta from 1910. Went to England for training in *Reuters* in 1919. Was in charge of *Reuters* Calcutta office. Toured with the Duke of Windsor when he visited India in 1921, as *Special Correspondent*. Edited the *Bengalee* and the *New Empire* in Calcutta. Was Manager, Birla Jute Mills. Was nominated Member of the Indian Legislative Assembly. Knighted 1936. Editor

Whip weekly from 1936. Editor, *Eastern Rail Magazine* from 1945. Permanently lives now in Calcutta. Bachelor.

COMMENT

This man's success in life is more due to inspiration than perspiration. As a newspaperman in his youth, he was very clever. Once he went to see Sir Gurudas Banerjee, the great Judge and Educationist of Calcutta to get an advance-copy of a speech. Then they had the following conversation.

G. What is the circulation of your paper ?

S. Fifteen thousand copies.

G. I take it that each copy is read atleast by ten people ?

S. That is so.

G. I also presume that other papers in the country will be reproducing my speech from yours.

S. Yes.

G. That way, atleast sixteen lakhs of people would read what I will speak.

S. Correct.

G. What space would you give for my speech ?

S. Atleast, one full column.

G. How long would it take to read a column ?

S. Atleast, half an hour if it be read leisurely.

G. I see ! In that case, people would spend eight lakhs of hours to read what I will be speaking ! That much of time roughly works out at ninety two years, some days and hours.

But my friend, am I justified in wasting other people's time to that extent? I am sorry. I donot want my speech published in your paper.

Sarma hurriedly fled from the presence of Sir Gurudas!

Here is a person who has contradictory ways in life. When he first went to Calcutta, he was a friend of the political terrorists like Barindranath Ghosh, brother of the great Aurobindo. Yet in 1934, he started a weekly-paper *Whip* with the declared purpose of putting down terrorism, and all the British statesmen of importance in that year sent messages to Sarma wishing his venture suecess. In 1935, he told his friend Sir John Anderson, the Governor of Bengal; "I must have my knighthood next *New Year Day*. Otherwise, I am going back to my old friends the terrorists". Sarma was knighted.

For nine years he sat in the Delhi Legislative Assembly as a nominated Member for Orissa. He once voted against the Government, contrary to expectations. In 1952 when he sought a Parliament seat from his native Tanjore, he lost to a Congress-man, inspite of a tremendous campaign.

Sarma who earned several lakhs of rupees in life spent them all, loved luxuries, good food, fine clothing and unlimited travel. He has a spiritual phase too in his life. He built a magnificent *Kali Temple* in his Mayur village,

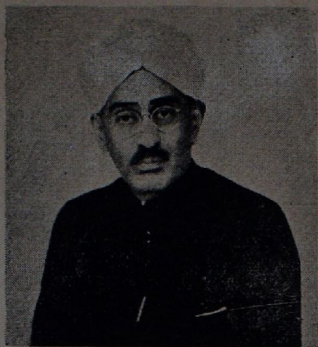
He hired and fired his employees at ease. He lived for the day, is whimsical in his ways. At times, he could be magnanimous as none else could be on earth! He has fondness for books and he is one of our most well-informed of men. To be friendly with him is to have good company, but then, his friendship with a man could always be time-marked! He is aware of the maxim of Mencken, the great American critic, who wrote that "friendship need not be life-long and that we outwear our friends as we do our love-affairs and our politics". He is sportive. When an Indian Reporter once found him walking about in the Rangoon airport with a charming European girl (a fellow passenger), the Reporter whimsically whispered to a companion: "Look at that old man with a young girl!" Sarma overhearing the remark, turned to the Reporter and said; "You can take her, if you like"!

If Sarma has done nothing for his country or people, well he has done no disservice either! That in itself is something to be thankful for. With a hundred fine opportunities he had in life, he should have risen to greater heights and public esteem in the land. That is something which I always thought of, since I am ever thankful to him for a little personal kindness once received.

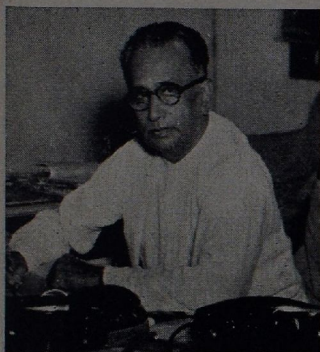
INDUSTRY, AGRICULTURE, BANKING



Mr. S. ANANTARMAKRISHNAN



Mr. C. S. R. MUDALIAR

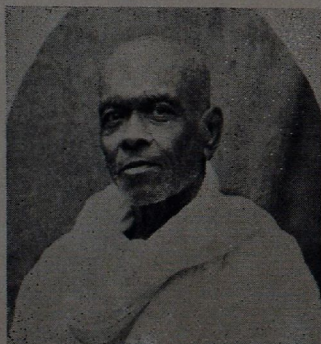


Mr. V. C. PALANISWAMY GOUNDER



Mr. MEYYAPPA CHETTIAR

POETRY



KAVIMANI DESIKAVINAYAKAM PILLAI

Mr. S. Anantaramakrishnan

INTRODUCTION

There was once an old Greek-Financier settled in England and who made tons of money in life. He died in 1936, aged 86. He was called the *mystery man of Europe*. Everything about him was secretive. There is a touch of Zaharoff in Mr. Anantaramakrishnan who runs a net-work of successful business combines in South India today. He is in his early fifties. He is one of the wealthiest among Tamils, a multi-millionaire. One Madras magazine called him *South Indian Birla*! That was on account of his being a *Big-Boss* in the business-world of the South. People generally do not know anything much about him, since he is no *headline darling* in the Press. He never grants interviews to Reporters, never takes the chair in public functions, doesn't believe in attaining posterity through public idolization. He feels that his life is his own and the public has no business to pry into it! He may be, perhaps, right.

CAREER

Not well-known to me. Not even a single *Who's Who* publication in the country gives it! What is known is that he comes from a Tinnavelly village. It is also known that he lives in Edward Elliott's Road, Madras, in the old home of the late Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer he bought over after his death, a home

to which I was a frequent visitor when the great Lawyer-Statesman was alive. Married, has two sons, two daughters.

COMMENT

Anantaramakrishnan is a soft-mannered, deep-thinking, shrewd businessman admired for his head and heart by those who had known him. He has original ideas, and he knows when and where to strike oil. He has imagination, vision and calculation and every move of his is soundly pre-planned. He is one of those thousands of youngmen who migrated to Madras from the districts of South India in search of a living in the early 1920s and whom luck favoured in an exceptional manner. What his academical qualifications were, I donot know. But, they say that he started his working career in life with a British auditing firm in Madras. He pleased his employers. He impressed them with his subtle, sharp brain, capacity to take great pains and finish jobs even before the Boss told him what job he had in mind!. That was sheer foresight!

Then, an opening showed up in 1930 in Simpson & Co., an automobile concern of repute in the City. Anantaramakrishnan went in, on the recommendations of a European who had known his vast abilities. Perhaps, he started as Secretary there, and soon became important. Then came the Hitlerian-war. Many Europeans in the firm were either called away to war-service or some folk like the late Sir Alexander MacDougall retired from India and went home. He was then, invited to join the Board of Directors in 1941. No sooner he went in, he struck new lines of business,

improved the Company's fortunes, brought in fresh business amalgamated to *Simpsons*, and all that meant much sweat and sleepless nights for him. His fellow-Directors were impressed. Since they found in him a man who had the capacity to touch brick and turn it into marble, they allowed him to go ahead with his plans. With his usual confident way of looking at everything before him, the results he achieved in business were stupendous. Indeed, his rise to business-eminence is a romantic story like that of Henry Ford, one might say !

Anantaramakrishnan has an aptitude for adaptability in any sphere of activity. In the family, he is a typical orthodox Brahmin, has his prayers and *pujas*, observes all religious ceremonies and rituals letter-perfect. Outside, he is the polished *British Businessman* in entirety. He is quite at ease at the office luncheon table along with his British fellow-directors in the concern, sipping soup and munching cutlets, even as he was in harmony eating a meal over a plantain-leaf, relishing home-made *Sambar*.

In office, he is strictly business-like, working hard at his table, discussing problems. He never loses temper, forgives wrongs even in erring employees, has a winsome tone in his soft talk, meets everybody but only on relevancy. He has a wry smile on his lips to one and all. It indicated neither familiarity nor indifference. He never sets up precedents, never makes needless commitments.

Everything about him is moderation and principled. When he went abroad, he never strayed away

from strict business activity. He sought not even a day's pleasure during such journeys. He is prompt in correspondence, but if he felt there was nothing calling for a relevant answer from him in a letter, he kept quiet. You wouldn't hear from him ! He might agree to consider a proposition, but never made unnecessary promises about it. He might do a thing for you or he may not. But, he does not make you feel for his indifference. He has a pleasant way of dealing with people.

Speaking at a Chamber of Commerce function at Tuticorin in 1950 he offered the Government several fruitful suggestions on matters of taxation. When I printed them in my papers in Calcutta, I received several letters from readers approving what he said, appreciating his brains. Alike, his analysis of the *Second Five Year Plan* in its relation to the South was masterly. He pleaded for regionalization in our industries and said, that "the South has been neglected in the matter." At times, he talks through the *Radio* in his well modulated voice and fine diction. His talks are impressive both in substance and the manner of delivery.

Success in life has not made him heady. He is ever so polite with people, As he helps himself in life, he also helped thousands, but in his own way. But, he can't be so very indifferent with the world and his surroundings. A man should have some interests atleast beyond his normal daily work in life. True, he lives in his self-created world, but the world is large enough, and a large-hearted man like him should consider his conduct of life from a wider angle.

Mr. E. S. R. Mudaliar

INTRODUCTION

The late Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetty and Mr. C. S. Rathnasabapathy Mudaliar are the two Coimbatore names which enjoyed an all-India reputation in public-life. Mudaliar is a Mill-owner in private life, but he played an admirable role as Municipal Chairman, Legislator, Member of a dozen Committees appointed by the Government of India and leader of Industrialists and Businessmen. Last March, he attained the *Biblical age of three score and ten*, but he is vigorous in life for a man of his years in this country.

Tall, turbaned degnified-looking, white close-coated Mudaliar walks with a stick in hand, but erect. A staunch Hindu, he wears a sandal-paste on his brow always. He has a smile for everyone. His words are sweet, and he is the pink of courtesy in dealing with people. He has got on well with everyone in the country with tact and ability. Starting from humble beginnings, he earned millions as an industrialist, and he was for many years President of the Textile-mill Owners' Association in South India. Perhaps, his services to his home-town, Coimbatore, constitute an eternal landmark in his life, and he may be safely said to be the *Maker of Modern Coimbatore*, in all its progress. The grateful citizens look upto him as a "father"

CAREER

Conjeevaram Sadasiva Rathnasabapathy Mudaliar was born in Coim-

batore on March 9, 1886. Educated in the local London Mission High School. Was Municipal Chairman. Was member of the Madras Legislative Council for ten years from 1926-36. Was President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi, 1940. Has taken keen interest in cooperative and banking spheres. Was Governor of the Rotray (94th Div) and went to the United States to attend the International Convention. Had Membership of innumerable committees and conferences connected with industrial and commercial questions. He participated in the Eastern-Group Conference convened during the war years in Delhi. He was also on the Board of Directorate of the Reserve Bank and Imperial Bank. He describes his recreation as 'travel'. Married, has 5 sons, and 4 daughters.

COMMENT

If Prophets were not honoured in their hometown, Mudaliar is an exception! When he was Municipal Chairman, he brought to the citizens the boon of sparkling, clean drinking water from *Siruvani*, a river twenty five miles away. In health and education, roads and in other directions, Coimbatore improved by leaps and bounds under his town-stewardship. Next, he served the textile industry of his town in manifold directions. He was one of the earliest to construct a mill and then use his personal influence to secure

many advantages to the industry. For many years, he was Chairman of the Mill Owners' Association, an office which he held with great dignity.

There had been hardly any Committee or Commission relating to business and industrial problems in which Mudaliar did not have a seat. His work in particular connected with the Indo-Japanese trade parleys to conclude a treaty in the 1930s, was significant. As President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi in 1940, he did yeoman service. He was also a member of the Court of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, some years ago.

In the Madras legislative council, he took a very keen interest in its work. He spoke with authority on the problems he handled, and in debates, he had a fine share of work. For ten long years his services in the Council constituted a good record.

The British Government appreciated his services and gave him the distinction of *Dewan Bahadur*. His travel suit-case always had his name written "Dewan Bahadur C. S. Rathnasabapathy Mudaliar, C. B. E." CBE merely meant an abbreviation for "Coimbatore", but when he was awarded the coveted title of *Companion of the British Empire* in 1942, he had to make no fresh addition to the words on his travelling-kit! In 1946, Coimbatore folk celebrated his sixty first birthday with much enthusiasam, but then, a man of Mudaliar's vast services to the town of his influence, needed the the honour of a statue erected, and perhaps, that will be done someday.

Mudaliar has a realistic philosophy, all his own in life. He never gets ruffled in spirit even when the worst crisis is at his door. He is always calm and calculative. He is a study in patience and has a sense of optimism which often got justified. He had been liberal in supporting all deserving causes, but of late, he seems to be rather tired of that habit ! Though he still works hard everyday in his industrial concerns, the bulk of the burden seems to be now falling on the head of his eldest son Mr. C. R. Sadasiva Mudaliar who is a very able executive, progressive in outlook.

Mudaliar believes in good fellowship and club life. He is regular at his club each evening and graces social functions with his presence. He identifies himself with popular causes and there is no trace of snobbery or aristocratic arrogance in him. He is accessible to all and talks bluntly, even at the cost of being misunderstood, at times ! No one can deceive him, because he knows mankind at its best and worse aspects. Still, he is essentially a God-fearing, good man whose array of virtues are more than some of his small failings in life.

Mr. V. C. P. Gounder

INTRODUCTION

“When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are founders of human civilization”, Daniel Webster had written long ago. Mr. V. C. Palani-swami Gounder is a gentleman-farmer, first and last. He is so proud of his peasant origin. For six generations his family folk had been peasants. Even today, he lives in a farm-house at his native village *Vellakinar*, near Coimbatore. From his rural home, he journeyed to become a Minister in *Fort. St. George* in 1952 and when he left the Madras Cabinet two years later, he quietly got back to his corn-field atmosphere. He is always happy in his old moorings—ploughing, sowing, seeing the green stalks grow and eventually give out the golden corn. He is also a believer in modernized mechanical farming. A legislator in Madras for two decades, he played a part in the District Board politics in Coimbatore for a while.

CAREER

Born in 1888. Son of Chinna-swamy Gounder of Vellakinar. Had college education in Coimbatore. Took to farming even from youth, and mastered Tamil learning. Widower, has three sons and three daughters. Served the Coimbatore District Board as Member for a term. Interested in Prohibition work of the Congress even from 1920.

COMMENT

Since his brother the late Mr. V. C. Vellingiri Gounder was prominent in the politics of South India, Palaniswamy Gounder was rather reserved and unwilling to enter public life in youth. But he could not escape getting into Taluq Board and District Board. In 1940 he was in the District Board. When the British Advisory Government of those days ordered the hauling down of the Congress tri-colour flag from the Board-Building, he protested and resigned. Four years earlier, he had been elected a Congress legislator. In the 1954 elections he had a 12000. votes majority as against a socialist candidate. After election, he had no thought of a ministership, but it was Rajaji's choice that he was taken in as Prohibition Minister. When Rajaji the Premier, wanted the late Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetty to be included in the Madras Cabinet in 1952, Gounder wondered how a non-Congressman could be taken in? "He is intelligent", Rajaji replied.

Gounder was quite happy in the Rajaji-Cabinet, first as Prohibition Minister and then, in charge of *Harijan-Welfare*. Never did Rajaji interfere with the work of any Minister, Gounder testified. Still, he wasn't satisfied with the way Prohibition fared in the Madras State. What was wrong? I put the question to him. The anti-drink laws needed amendments from time to time to meet the new situations and novel-devices adopted by the boot-leggers. He thought that the Police ought to be more vigorous and vigilant in their Probe against booze-traffickers, he felt. He knew these questions all too well.¹ First, he strongly believed

in eradicating the drink evil from the masses, and even many years before he signed the Congress pledge, Gounder had campaigned against toddy shops in Mettupalayam during the early Non-Cooperation days.

He takes a keen interest in agricultural questions in the state. Six years ago, there was a conference of land-aristocrats in Vellakinar. They, then, wanted to form a separate land-owners' political party to safeguard their interests, and plans for contesting the 1952 elections were also there. But, loyal Congressman that he was, saw through the ruse, even as his friend Omandur Ramaswamy Reddiar did. They would not forsake Congress ideals for the sake of upholding their vested interests.

Gounder's family is the most leading amongst the *Kongu Vellalas* of the Coimbatore District. His elder brother the late Mr. V. C. Vellingiri Gounder was District Board President and Member of the Council of State, Delhi. A younger brother of his, the late Mr. V. C. Kumaraswamy Gounder, was a lawyer by calling and a popular man in his time. Another brother is Mr. V. C. Subbiah Gounder who is active in social and religious movements in the Tamil State. A son-in-law of Palaniswamy Gounder was the late Mr. Sengodayan, the only ICS man from the *Kongu Vellala* community.

Though somewhat a reserved man, Gounder is open-hearted, once he liked a person. He is all simplicity in the way of life and there is a rare charm about him. He is very active even in his sixty-eighth year

now. He has much to do in a day with the problems arising from his farms. He has club-life, but if he went to see a *movie*, it was either a documentary like *Nehru's visit to Russia* or of an educational theme. Efficiency, decency and strict discipline governed the life of this eminent rural gentleman, whom it has been a pleasure for me to know.

Mr. Meyyappa Chettiar

INTRODUCTION

Successful bankers like the late Montague Norman of the *Bank of England* preferred a quiet life for themselves. Mr. M. S. M. M. Meyyappa Chettiar is no different. His is a respected name amongst Bankers in the Tamil State. Some wit has coined a definition of the Banker as *one who lends an umbrella when the sun shines, but takes it back the moment it starts raining*. Meyyappa, I know, might not perhaps lend a sunshade, but he certainly would go to the rescue of a man in his rainy-hour. Unveiling his portrait in a Karaikudi function early last year, Rajah Sir Muthia Chettiar said: "His portrait ought to adorn a hundred places in South India, because of his widespread philanthropy without publicity". At twenty-three, Meyyappa was the *First Citizen* of his town. He was elected Chairman of the Karaikudi Municipal Council. Felicitating him the late Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar commended to the Nagarathars Meyyappa's zeal for public service. On meeting him two decades ago, I was much impressed by his head and heart. What was more, he had sterling personal character, and that is why I have chosen to write about him here.

CAREER

Born in May 1911. Privately
educated. Municipal Chairman, Karaikudi.

kudi, 1934. Chairman, Bank of Karaikudy Ltd., Holds shares in many joint stock combines in the country, on the request of friends. Has large business, banking, rubber and tin interests in Malaya. Extensively toured England, Scotland and Ireland and European countries in 1951. Visited South-East Asian countries, China, Japan, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand in 1953. Married, has three sons and 3 daughters.

COMMENT

Very early in life, Meyyappa understood the maxim of Andrew Carnegie that "surplus wealth is a sacred trust which its possessor is bound to administer to the good of the community". He runs a girls' high-school in Karaikudi, where not only education is free, but even books and stationery for pupils are supplied gratis. At Chidambaram, the famous pilgrim centre, he runs a Sanskrit school. Nearer home at Thirukoshtyur, he maintains a charity dispensary. Space has its limits to record a hundred other items of his philanthropy. Indeed, his rupees could be found in almost all public causes and charities in South India, without a jingle! In giving, he considers the pleasure is primarily his. There is nothing petty or snarling about him in anything that he does.

He wants to be no slave of money in life. He knows that *the man who thinks that money can do*

everything, may as well be suspected to do anything for money, to use an epigram of Lord Halifax. Big-business meant, countless worries and responsibilities to a man, but Meyyappa was all for avoiding them. He is fully satisfied with his lot in life. Still, he works hard each day at his office desk, planning and managing his business interests. He has many servants, but when a thing has to be done, he does not always wait for them. He does it himself, believing in self-help.

Karaikudi, his own town, improved vastly during his Municipal Chairmanship. He changed its face completely for the better. He saw to it that more schools came up, better sanitation and public health prevailed, lighting was improved, cleaner roads made available. He built a maternity hospital at his own cost and made a gift of it to the municipality. Infusing a civic-consciousness amongst the people, he not only put his own money, but made philanthropic minded fellow-citizens also donate funds for town improvement. That was because, he did not always depend on government grants to the municipality. His plans worked successfully. In three years he did for Karaikudi what others would have taken thirty years, and that was entirely due to his personality and genuine spirit of public service. The people understood him so well, that they are all gratitude to him.

In 1952, he and his wife went on a tour of Europe. Travel widened his mental horizon and he returned quite refreshed in ideas. His keen eyes which darted everywhere and seldom missed anything, formed correct impressions of the peoples and countries he

visited. He was particularly struck by the ways of Englishmen, their sense of duty and love of the community. Once he tasted the fruits of travel, he wanted to go again, and then, he went East. He saw the South East Asian countries, China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Whilst in Japan, he closely studied the structure of several large-scale and cottage industries.

This famous Banker has an amazing hunger for information and self-education. He digests all he could gather from newspaper columns, books and radio-broadcasts. He can intelligently discuss political questions in parlour conversations, but does not wish to grant press-interviews or make platform-statements. He keeps himself away from the arena of hot-politics, though he is friendly with all the politicians of the South. They, the Ministers of Government, Governors, all got entertained by him, during their visits to Karaikudi. A perfect host, he always attends to even minute details relating to the comforts of his guests.

He is very much devoted to his family folk. He loves to play with his children in leisure moments. While they have respect for him, they are so very free with him. He gives them scope to grow up their own way, while never relaxing his keen watch over them. He wouldn't even smoke a cigarette in their presence, lest they disapproved it!

What are his faults? Well, I want to record them, but in the conduct of his personal life, I haven't seen any, very glaringly. If he had concealed them from me,

then, I should think he is very clever indeed. Public life, he hasn't much. As such, what have I to say?

Desikavinayakam Pillai

INTRODUCTION

The Poet is dead, long live his poetry and name ! During the first half of the present century, the Tamils had two great Poets-Subramania Bharati and Kavimani Desikavinayakam Pillai Both were September - born. Each enjoyed a unique reputation in different lines. The Kavimani paid Bharati great tributes in a song. In versatality and output, the Kavimani excelled. He did not neglect any aspect of life and his poetry was recorded through sheer inspiration. When a subject struck him and the idea was formed in mind, he set pen to paper. And, he seldom re-wrote his lines ! British Poet Robert Graves once said, that if he wrote three times a line of prose, he re-wrote fifteen times a line of poetry ! He also said that good poetry was distinguished from the bad by its *smell* ! The Kavimani's choice of words and expressions were sweet even to me whose knowledge of Tamil is so meagre ! Was not poetry compared to *pearls* and *honey*, by a wiseacre ? To quote Graves again, "if a poet is obsessed by the *Muse* and privileged to satisfy the demands when he records his obsessions in poetry, this in itself should be sufficient reward". The Kavimani lived up in that spirit, for, all his poetical works in life, did not fetch him anything more than ten thousand rupees ! He was in love with his art, not the rewards thereof. He said that the fame that came to him merely meant, a lot of people approving his conduct of life ! It was something to be thankful for, he felt.

The Kavimani was a *Poet of Beauty* like Wordsworth. The brighter side of human life fascinated him in its many aspects. Its miseries, he moaned in secret. Many a poem of his expressed his feelings within, both ways. Mountains, rivers, *flora* and *fauna* all inspired him to verse. Himself possessed with a child's simplicity of mind and innocence of heart, some of his sweetest verses were directed towards children. He sang on the Gods and Godesses, the toilers; the roses, the *swadeshi* spirit, and even on political *dictators* like Hitler, in sarcastic vein. His immortal poetry shall be the glory of Tamilnadu for ages to come. He had an interest in sculpture, music, paintings, temple architecture and inscriptions. His poetry set to music for the *movies*, gramophone-discs and even for music halls by celebrated singers of the South had been all too popular. Yes, we are proud of the Poet, as he was proud of us, the Tamils. "His poems were outstanding for their beauty and clearness. They enshrined dharma and truth," said Rajaji of the Kavimani.

CAREER

Born in Theroor, South Travancore, on New-Moon Day in September, 1875. His father Sivathanu Pillai, was a Government official in those parts. The Kavimani was the only son. He studied upto the intermediate class, and discontinued due to bad health. At twenty-six, he became a primary school teacher on a salary of twelve

rupees. Later, he was Professor of Tamil in the Maharanee's College, Trivandrum. He retired from that job at fifty-five on a pension of Rs.60/ a month. Married Umayammal in his twenty-fifth year, had no children. Settled in later life at Putheri, a village two miles north of Nagercoil. Was intensely interested in farming, being of peasant stock.

COMMENT

The Kavimani derived a taste for Tamil literature from two sources. His mother Adilakshmi loved to read the *Kamba Ramayana*. Secondly, a Representative of the *Thiruvaduthurai Mutt*, Santhalinga Thampuran by name, then resided in Theroor, and taught the Kavimani in boyhood. His first verses were composed in his seventeenth year on a Goddess of his village. Latter, he sang about his own peasant community folk the *Nanjilnad Vellalas*. Later still; he contributed verses to *Tamilan*, a Trivandrum periodical.

In the 1930s only the Kavimani's fame as a full-fledged Poet was established throughout Tamilnadu. Some Madras Tamil Magazines were responsible for that, as they published his writings. Leading Tamil writers like Mr. Murugappa, Editor of *Kumaran* (Chettinad) the late Mr. R. Krishnamurthy, and Mr. K. V. Jagannathan, the gifted editor of the popular magazine *Kalaimagal*, patronized the poet. They helped to spread the fragrance of his written words throughout the tamil-speaking world. Then, the Tamils honoured

him, as they did no other Poet. They had him in mind as the *National-Poet*. His eight books of verses are quite famous. Two of them are Tamil translations he made, of Mathew Arnold's *Light of Asia* and Omar Khayum's *Rubiat*. One book of his in English is a research into the ancient history of the Tamils, as studied from temple-inscriptions. Only some stray cultural articles he contributed to some Malabar journals in his youth now remain unpublished. He helped the compilers of the *Tamil-Encyclopaedia* in Madras, in recent years, with many wise suggestions. Some research into his poetical works is essential on the part of a gifted Tamil scholar.

The Kavimani wrote his poetry during evening hours, at times in the night. He had no specified time, if it be to write verses to greet God or man. He was all simplicity in his mode of life, a vegetarian. He was quite contented with his ancestral landed properties in the shape of paddy fields, and the pension Government paid him. He was not greedy for money, nor was he inclined to give it away to any. When the late Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar gave him a cash-gift, he declined to accept. To visitors, he gave a plantain fruit and a tumbler of hot-water, expressions of his warmth of heart. Like John Greenleaf Whittier, the eminent American Poet, the Kavimani too profusely loved humanity, never lost temper, nor counted a single man on earth as his enemy.

He was seventy-nine when he died on *new-moon day*, September 26, 1954. Before the soul departed, for six hours he had made a friend read out to him

Thiruvachakam, a Tamil classic. Earlier, he called aside his nephew and heir Kumaraswamy Pillai and blessed him. He was all thanks to the youngman who devotedly nursed him for nearly two decades as the Poet suffered from a skin-malady.

I was sad on the day he died. We were of the same village. In my boyhood, he would not even speak to me! "Mischievous lad, be away from me!", he had once chided me. Twenty-eight years passed by before I met him again. Then, no man could have received me with the love he showed me.

"So, you have made good in life?" he tenderly asked.

"Yes, a little, in some ways, but not in earning money", I replied.

He laughed aloud, called his wife aside, and commented about me.

"Heard what the lad said? He has no money, it seems! How could he have it when he spends a four-figure amount every month? You had better advise him."

The old lady smiled winsomely. She sat there and listened to our talk.

"I never thought you would ever come up in life, if your boyhood was any indication of your youth," he said.

"Nor did I think that an ordinary Tamil *Pundit* would blossom forth as the pride of India, as a Poet of true greatness", I threw back.

Another loud laughter rang out through his thin lips. True, we both erred in our early judgement of each other, we agreed. Then, we talked a little about

Tamil literature, his philosophic ideals, and about ourselves *personally* too.

“So, you write English prose and I write *native* poetry!”, he jocularly said in English.

I saw him once again in 1951. He said he was happy to see me. He was terribly busy that day, since the Trichy AIR folk, had gone there to record his voice for a broadcast. Nevertheless, I talked to him and his wife for half an hour, and then, took leave of them. His face showed sadness and then, he gently parted his lips to speak: “I don’t think I will be here when you come next”, he said in a solemn tone and then, hung down his head. A couple of drops of tears trickled down from his sunken eyes, in all affection. I stood there no more! His prophecy was correct. I thought of it the day he died, when a telegram was put into my hands. Then, the tears were mine, not his, not for a Poet’s death, but for the *man* who was a *gem* in his life-time, and whose memory is ever sweet to me, as it is to millions of Tamils.

THE END