

Ramaswamy Venkataraman: A Profile

A true nationalist, a firm believer in secularism, democracy and Gandhian principle of non-violence, a reputed legal luminary, an eminent trade union leader, a renowned economist, a distinguished Parliamentarian and above all, a humanitarian to the core, Shri Ramaswamy Venkataraman—the eighth President of the Republic of India—has attained the pinnacle of glory as the head of the largest democracy in the world, neither by luck nor by chance, but by sheer force of his personality, dedication, devotion and commitment. He uniquely combines in him some outstanding traits—unassuming simplicity, transparent sincerity and honesty of purpose, which endears him to one and all.

Early Life

Shri Ramaswamy Venkataraman, popularly called 'RV' by his friends and admirers, was born on 4 December, 1910 in Rajamadam Village in the world famous ancient temple city of Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu. Shri Venkataraman's father, late Shri K. Ramaswami Iyer, was a lawyer of repute in the district, known for its rich cultural heritage. Young Venkataraman thus grew up in a traditional but alive atmosphere. This had made a deep imprint on him and helped him develop into a pious, virtuous and dedicated individual. The love of his country made him join the Indian National Congress and take part in the many struggles it had launched for the liberation of the country from foreign yoke.

Shri Venkataraman had his initial education in Thanjavur itself. He did his Bachelor of Laws from the Law College in Madras and obtained a Masters Degree in Economics from the Madras University. A true patriot as he is, after completing his formal education, he decided not to get into Government service and thus be a slave of the British. Instead he chose to practise law and enrolled himself first in the High Court of Madras in 1935 and later in the Supreme Court. Even when he was at Madras, his dedication to the cause of social service remained undiminished and he continued to evince keen interest in ameliorating the lot of agricultural workers in his home district of Thanjavur.

In 1938, he was married to Janaki Devi, whose parents were then settled in Myanmar (Burma). As a true traditional and devoted, wife Janaki Venkataraman has always remained by the side of her husband and has performed her household duties with religious zeal. Soon, theirs became a happy and contented family blessed as they were with three daughters.

Role in the Freedom Movement

Like many of the leaders, who were then in the vanguard of the freedom struggle, Shri Venkataraman too came under the profound influence of Gandhiji, early in his life. The Mahatma and his distinct philosophy had a deep impact on Shri Venkataraman and his thoughts, words and actions provided him a beacon light. So fascinated was he by this colossus of a man and so irresistible was the call given by the Mahatma that he gave up his lucrative legal practice and plunged into the freedom struggle. He took active part in the 'Quit India Movement' of 1942 for which he was detained for two years by the British Government under the Defence of India Rules (DIR). After his release from prison in 1944, and moved by the poverty of the masses, the misery of the landless labour, and the plight of the industrial labour, he became a Trade Union Leader and took up their cause.

His keen interest in the legal matters continued nevertheless. It was in recognition of his legal acumen that he was deputed in 1946 by the Government of India to Malaya and Singapore for defending members of Subhash Chandra Bose's India Independence League who were charged by the British with collaborating with the Japanese. The Panel consisted of eminent lawyers like K. Bhashiyam of Madras, K.F. Nariman of Bombay and P.N. Saprú of Allahabad.

Shri Venkataraman has an extraordinary legal acumen. Once a group of youngsters were sentenced to death for killing a British Officer in a frenzy. Shri C. Rajagopalachari had tried to secure pardon for the condemned boys in view of their tender age, but failed. The date of hanging had been fixed, and all hopes had been given up. However, Shri Venkataraman discovered a legal way to get the hanging stayed. With the help of a Counsel in England, he got a petition filed in the Privy Council which resulted in the stay of the hanging. Rajaji, impressed as he was with Venkataraman's achievement paid him a rare compliment: "a very intelligent lawyer".

From 1947 to 1950, he was the Secretary of the Madras Provincial Bar Federation. His long experience of handling labour matters and his establishment of the *Labour Law Journal* (LLJ)—a prestigious publication—in 1949 turned him into an expert in the field of industrial law. The Labour Law Journal ultimately came to be known as the most valuable reference manual for trade unions and lawyers engaged in labour cases. In recognition of his deep knowledge in legal matters, the Government of India sent him as the leader of the Indian delegation to the Metal Trade Committee of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva, in 1952. Subsequently in 1958, he was appointed the leader of the Indian Delegation to the 42nd session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva. He was also a member of the prestigious United Nations Administrative Tribunal from 1955 to 1979, and remained its President for more than ten years from 1968 to 1979. In a rare gesture of recognition of invaluable services to the UN Administrative Tribunal, he was designated its honorary President for life.

Entry into Active Politics

It is from the grassroot level that Shri Venkataraman has risen to the dizzy heights of his career culminating in his occupation of the exalted office of the President of world's largest democracy. In his younger days, he came under the influence of Shri Satyamurthiji, a doyen in the field of Parliamentary politics. Another great politician and pragmatic socialist, who was mainly responsible for bringing Venkataraman into active politics was late Kumaraswamy Kamaraj. It was the late Kamaraj who had put Venkataraman incharge of the Labour Wing of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC). In a short spell of time, Venkataraman developed an effective rapport with the workers owing allegiance to the Congress and working in urban industries, plantations and estates, ports and docks and railways.

Shri Venkataraman believes in sincere work. In 1957, Shri Venkataraman was re-elected to the Second Lok Sabha and he was offered a place in the Union Council of Ministers. However, when the Chief Minister of Madras asked him to join his cabinet, Shri Venkataraman readily agreed to the wishes of Shri Kamaraj.

Knowing the abilities of Shri Venkataraman, K. Kamaraj entrusted him with various important portfolios like Industries, Labour, Cooperation, Power, Transport and Commercial Taxes from 1957 to 1967. During this period, he also served as the Leader of the House in the Madras Legislative Council. When he took charge as the Industry Minister, Tamil Nadu was largely an agricultural State with negligible industrial growth. But with his dexterity and skilful handling of affairs he soon brought the State high on the industrial map of India. He is, in fact, considered the 'father of industrialisation' in Tamil Nadu. He introduced many innovations, such as, setting up of industrial cooperatives for small tea growers, promotion of cooperative textile mills and encouraged, for the first time in the State, the establishment of large scale industries like paper, aluminium and cement. He also introduced the first long-distance buses in the State. When he left the Industry Ministry in 1967, Tamil Nadu had become the third most industrialised State of the country.

Being an active Congress worker since pre-independence days, RV occupied various party posts. Besides being the Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee from 1952-54, he was also one of the Secretaries of the Reception Committee of the Avadi session of the Congress. He also served on the Working Committee of the TNCC from 1952-67 and established his reputation as an able party ideologue, an efficient leader, a trusted friend and a man dedicated to work.

As a Parliamentarian

RV's parliamentary career began in 1950 when he was first elected to the Provisional Parliament (1950-52) and during these two years he actively participated in various discussions and established himself as an eloquent parliamentarian. The then Speaker,

Shri G.V. Mavalankar, was so impressed with his performance that he nominated him as a delegate to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in New Zealand in 1950. Later, he was elected to the First Lok Sabha (1952-57) and again to the Second Lok Sabha (1957-1962). He, however, resigned in 1957 to join K. Kamaraj's Cabinet in Tamil Nadu (then Madras). He became, once again, a Member of the Sixth Lok Sabha (1977-80) and the Seventh Lok Sabha (1980-84) whereafter, he was called upon to occupy the nation's second highest office—the Vice-Presidentship.

An able Parliamentarian and a forceful speaker, Ramaswamy Venkataraman evinced keen interest in a wide range of subjects. He always used to come fully prepared for parliamentary debates and discussions. His parliamentary skill and eloquence, coupled with a constructive approach to the problems facing the country earned him a prominent place in his Party. Even the members of Opposition admired him for his deep understanding and appreciation of the issues and problems that came up before the House. During his initial years in Parliament, his contribution, even as an ordinary member of Lok Sabha, was indeed remarkable. In the First Lok Sabha, he was one of the founders of a 'ginger group' which mobilised effective backing in the Party to Government's progressive socio-economic programmes and policies. His scholarly contribution during the debate on the Constitution amendment relating to 'Right to property' will always be remembered. He convinced Late Panditji that the change in article 31 should apply to all types of property to ensure equity as between the rural and urban sectors. Pandit Nehru agreed to amend the bill to this effect even after its introduction in Parliament. It was Venkataraman's effective eloquence that impressed Panditji and brought him closer to the nation's topmost leaders.

On general issues facing the country, Venkataraman was quite forthcoming. His parliamentary skills and acumen were well-recognised and appreciated in the initial years itself when he was given the honour to second the Motion of Thanks to the President Shri Rajendra Prasad for his first address to the Joint Sitting of Parliament. Speaking on the motion on 19 May, 1952 he *inter alia* said:

“...Unemployment is a scourge. It is indeed a very unhappy situation that an able-bodied man, a man who is ready, able and willing to work, should be denied work and unless we are able to combat the mass retrenchment and unemployment that are consequent upon fall in prices and the fall in production, the very thing which we welcome as a measure that is intended to benefit the lower classes will prove to be a measure of great harm to those classes...”

Realising fully the efficacy of the Press in our Parliamentary polity, he has always stood in favour of freedom of thought and expression. In his view, the role of the press was very vital in transforming the ideals of the constitution into a reality. Speaking on this issue in the same debate*, he said:

*L.S. Deb., 19 May, 1952.

I am very glad that Government intend to appoint a Press Commission which will go into the question of the organisation of the Press monopolies, if any, existing in it, the conditions of working journalists who sustain the entire organisation and all aspects of the Press, so that freedom of thought and expression which we have embodied in the Constitution will become a reality. Freedom of thought and expression cannot obtain, unless the Press is a strong one, and independent one and is not controlled by merchants, traders and speculators who may use the Press for their own purposes..."

There is yet another instance of his Parliamentary skill which stood highlighted when he spoke on the question of rationalisation in the textile mills. When the Late T.T. Krishnamachari and Gulzari Lal Nanda were locked in a bitter fight over the induction of automatic looms, Venkataraman brought forward a formula of "rationalisation without tears" by which automation would be introduced provided the surplus labour could be otherwise absorbed. It was an impressive parliamentary debate and his compromise formula was readily accepted by Panditji.

His approach to the subjects under discussions in the House, the laborious and painstaking homework which he used to undertake before coming to participate in the discussion, his deep penetrating thoughts, his confidence and straightforwardness contributed in shaping him as one of the most distinguished Parliamentarians.

Owing to his rich and outstanding Parliamentary performance in Lok Sabha, he was elected to various prestigious Parliamentary Standing Committees *viz.*, Committee of Privileges, Committee on Estimates and Committee on Public Accounts.

He has also been a pioneer in suggesting the introduction of the Committee system to make elected governments more responsive to the needs and demands of the people. In his view, the Committees, like Public Accounts and the Estimates, where members deal with matters without any party affiliations and whose proceedings are not published, could help find 'genuine solutions' to some of the glaring problems confronting the nation.

Apart from his ability and eminence as a Parliamentarian, Venkataraman possesses an abundant fund of wit and humour with which he could silence his opponents in Parliament. Once, when the late Jyotirmoy Bosu, a stormy petrel, kept frequently interrupting him, Venkataraman quipped: 'Mr. Chairman, Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu is a very experienced member of Parliament.... In fact, he is so much in the habit of differing that even when I say he is good, he will differ.' On yet another occasion he said: 'Jyotirmoy is like Winston Churchill. He would like to be the bridegroom in a marriage party and the dead body at a funeral' which perhaps silenced Bosu for the rest of the day.

During this period, besides effectively performing his role as an able and active Parliamentarian, he also held various positions in the Party organisation. He was the

Secretary of the Congress Party in Parliament (1954-55); member of All India Congress Committee (AICC) (1952-67); All India Congress Working Committee (AICWC) (1980-84) and the Congress Parliamentary Board (CPB) (1981-84).

In recognition of his parliamentary experience, expertise and oratorical skill, he was sent as a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly as part of the Indian delegation in the years 1953, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1959, 1960 and 1961, where too he made a distinct mark of his own.

As a Renowned Economist

A renowned economist, Venkataraman brought to Parliament his expertise in the areas of finance and planning. He served as a Member, Planning Commission from 1967 to 1971. The subjects entrusted to him were industry, labour, power, transport, communications and railways. Regarding the importance of planning with special reference to industrial development, he once observed:

During the last eighteen years of planning, the economy has been taken out of the traditional rut and a sense of dynamism infused in it. The rate of investment and national income have been substantially stepped up. Structural changes conducive to growth and development have been brought about.

He was a member of the Economic Affairs Committee of the Union Cabinet and also served as Governor of the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Venkataraman's views on economic matters are well-known and are discernible from his Address to the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Calcutta, where he said:

“It is incumbent upon business leaders and managers to do some soul-searching and self-introspection in their work styles—styles of living and styles of problem solving. In our situation, the State must play an active part in the management of the nation's economy, it can do so best through the totality of planning. Planning does not necessarily mean controls, planning means having a vision of the future, having a well thought out approach for development of key sectors, a well articulated policy towards acquiring and developing technologies.”

He called upon economists to formulate time bound targets for the elimination of poverty and completion of work on the design and content of anti-poverty programmes. This is quite evident from the speech he made while inaugurating the 68th All India Economic Conference in Ahmedabad on 25 December, 1975. He said:

“Even though economic progress was substantial since independence, we have not overcome the basic problem of mass poverty. Planning has been instrumental in putting the country’s economy on the path of sustained progress despite severe odds. The problem between efficient use of resources, self-reliance and poverty eradication was not simple.”

While speaking on the ‘Role of Planning in Industrial Development’, on 10 September, 1969, Venkataraman said:

“Soon after independence, we adopted planning as a means to accelerate economic development. To the newly independent countries, political freedom was only first and initial step in the arduous path towards the ultimate objective of improving the economic social status of their large mass of people, steeped in ignorance and poverty and of uniting and welding them into progressive and prosperous nations. Economic development thus became the prime concern of the Governments in the post-independence era in the most underdeveloped countries.”

According to him, the profitability of an enterprise does not depend on the sector to which it belongs but on good management and sound policies. He believes that with the expansion of resources and infrastructure in the country, it is no longer necessary to retain the shackles of controls which have built-in undue rigidities and delays.

Industrialisation, he opines, is *sine-qua-non* for rapid economic development of a nation. It occupies a central and pivotal position in every programme of planned economic development. Industrialisation and economic development have become so integrated with each other that the economic progress of a nation is often assessed in terms of the measure of its success in transforming its agricultural economy into a modern industrial one. Increased production and productivity are the hall-marks of national wealth and prosperity. Industrialisation thus provides the key to rising income, employment, wealth and prosperity.

A firm believer in international economic co-operation among the developing countries, he lays great(er) emphasis on the South-South dialogue, because if developing countries realise their potential increase the economic interaction with each other, they would be better able to minimise the economic dictates and high handedness sometimes resorted to by developed nations.

As an economist in politics, Venkataraman looks back with pride at the striking progress the country has made in the last four decades despite the population explosion. He describes the population explosion as:

“the single biggest factor against the success of our economic programmes, all the more, the population growth rate is even higher than the economic growth.”

As a Union Minister

In January 1980, Shri Venkataraman, in view of his vast experience in the Tamil Nadu Cabinet, was accorded the honour of serving the country as Minister of Finance. By dint of his administrative skills and the far-reaching economic reforms that he introduced, he proved himself as one of India's ablest Finance Ministers and guided the nation in the difficult years along the path of planned economy.

The economic policy that he adopted was sound and two-pronged. On the one hand, he believed in increasing the goods and services to absorb the excess liquidity and on the other, followed a fairly tight money policy, both in regard to credit for non-productive purposes and also to check non-planned expenditure. He was the first Finance Minister who introduced the scheme of Bearer Bonds which netted over Rs 1,000 crores.

A straight forward and pragmatic economist, RV believes that cash assistance and subsidies are inevitable for the development of exports. This is evident from his following observations made in the House on 18 August, 1981 while speaking on the Export-Import Bank of India Bill:

“We cannot do away with cash assistance and subsidies for our export because our balance of payment position is so difficult that unless by a concerted effort at improving the exports, we reach a sort of balance in our payment position, the country's progress will be retarded. Therefore, taking into account the overall needs of the country, it is very necessary to promote exports and that promotion will have to be done by giving a certain amount of subsidies and certain amount of assistance.”

Venkataraman has always argued for the nation's self-reliance in all spheres. As Defence Minister, he emphasised the importance of scientific research in Defence. During his tenure as Defence Minister, he did everything possible to strengthen national defence, without funds being wasted. Not only did he introduce several projects for manufacture of rockets, missiles, battle-tanks and light combat aircraft, but also worked with extreme dedication and constant vigilance, towards achieving indigenous production.

He has had full faith in the patriotic sense of the Defence forces. Reinforcing his faith in our Defence forces while speaking in the Lok Sabha on Espionage Activities Bill on 20 December, 1983 he said:

“As against one per cent of possible blacksheeps in our Defence forces, 99 per cent are patriotic and have the sense of duty and they will not let down this country. The recent events have shown clearly that if ever such an opportunity occurs, then the person who is involved, will bring it to the notice of the higher authorities and then see that this is burst.”

Not only as Minister of Finance and Defence, but in whatever capacity any responsibility was shouldered by him throughout this period, he carried it out with a distinction leaving an indelible imprint of his own.

As Vice-President

RV was unanimously elected as the Vice-President of the Indian Republic on 22 August 1984. It was a measure of his eminence that he was a consensus candidate for this august office. After taking oath as India's Vice-President, he pledged to work for communal harmony and national integration.

On 19 January 1985, when he arrived to preside over the sitting of Rajya Sabha as its *ex-officio* Chairman, he was accorded a warm welcome by all sections of the House. Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, led the Members in expressing the hope that RV would live upto the 'distinguished tradition' set by his illustrious predecessors like Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and with his dignity and sense of humour would continue to maintain the high standards already set. Responding to their sentiments, Shri Venkataraman said that he was aware of the tradition set by persons of the eminence of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Dr. Zakir Hussain and would endeavour to follow their footsteps. As the Chairman of Rajya Sabha, RV enjoyed the distinction of being equally respected both by the ruling party and the opposition. There were several occasions when situations in the House became tense and tumultuous but by his exemplary patience and extraordinary forbearance, he invariably succeeded in defusing the tension and the surcharged atmosphere. By his liberal approach, amiable disposition, largeness of heart and an abiding sense of impartiality, he won the appreciation of all Members notwithstanding the parties they belonged to. The manner in which he conducted the House at the time of debates on certain controversial issues such as the 'President-Prime Minister correspondence', the Fairfax issue etc. evoked friendliness from all quarters. By providing adequate opportunities to opposition Members to express their views fully and with his personal attributes of reasonableness and maturity, he proved to be an excellent moderator between the warring groups of Parliamentarians and established for himself a reputation of fair play and political even-handedness. As the presiding deity of the House, he delivered a number of rulings which will go down as landmarks in our parliamentary history both for their content and literary fervour.

Shri Venkataraman was always conscious of affording equal opportunity to each and every member of the House to express his or her views fully and without interruption. He defended, with utmost concern, the rights and privileges of the members both inside and outside the House. On 8 March 1984, when some members raised the question of interference with the legitimate duties of the honourable members, he intervened and observed:

“You remember that sometime back there was a question raised about tapping of telephones and at that time I gave a ruling. I know that you are going to mention this. So, I again reiterate what I said then. I must, however, say that any *mala fide* action or interference with the legitimate duties of the Hon’ble Members of this House, if proved, will not have the protection of this ruling. I repeat with respect to the observations of the Hon’ble Speaker.”

Again on 6 May 1987, when a Member of the House was shouted down and interrupted in going ahead with his observations which were not to the liking of others, the Chairman intervened to say:

“What is happening is the negation of democracy. Every member is entitled to express his opinion. You may agree, you may disagree, you cannot shout him down. Then there will be no Parliament.”

As the President

Shri R. Venkataraman achieved the pinnacle of glory when he was elected, on 25 July 1987, as the Eighth Head of the Indian Republic. It was indeed a well deserved honour. It was also a colossal responsibility to defend, protect and preserve the Constitution of India. Addressing the members of Parliament soon after his elevation to the highest office of the land, Shri Venkataraman acknowledged, with transparent sincerity and utmost humility, the heavy duty cast on him and observed:

I am deeply conscious of the honour bestowed on me by the people of India. As I enter this office today, in all humility, I wish to assure the nation that I shall endeavour to deserve the trust and confidence reposed in me.... It will be my constant endeavour to play my due role in clearing mistrust, in strengthening the foundations of mutual understanding and confidence and in building bridges of respect between people and institutions. I appeal to all fellow citizens of this ancient land to march with firm unwavering steps towards the goal of a peaceful and prosperous India.

A firm and decisive man, Shri Venkataraman was called upon to occupy the high office at a time when the country needed besides a constitutional and ceremonial Head of State, also a statesman *par excellence*. His election as President was hailed by people from a cross sections of our polity and world leaders. The newspapers, in their editorials, eulogised the choice of Shri Venkataraman and qualities of his head and heart. Welcoming his election *The Hindustan Times* wrote on 17 July 1987:

“Venkataraman assumes office at a critical juncture in the history of the nation. His experience, sagacity and farsightedness will stand him in good stead in fulfilling his responsibilities as Head of State.”

The Patriot, in its editorial, described Shri Venkataraman as 'a symbol of spirit and sanity. His distinguished public life', the paper commented, 'has been marked as much by a high standard of performance in several capacities in which he has served the country, as by an unswerving commitment to parliamentary democracy and its essential norms.'

In the history of the Indian Republic, no Head of the State has perhaps been faced with so many crisis situations, as Shri Venkataraman was called upon to handle during his tenure. With his vast reservoir of experience, coupled with his knowledge of politics and administration, he displayed his judgment, maturity and sagacity in handling sensitive situations arising out of a 'Hung Parliament'. Though he had limited workable options in hand particularly when the Janata Dal Government had fallen and when there was no single party with absolute majority in the Tenth Lok Sabha, Venkataraman proved beyond doubt that the President must have the capacity and wisdom to read between the lines of the Constitution. Displaying rare acumen and statecraft, he took bold initiatives in solving the problems he faced, disregarding the inherent risk of criticism in seeming to step outside the ostensibly restricted framework of his obligations and authorities.

His decision on unprecedented constitutional questions was widely acclaimed because of his disciplined adherence to the path charted out by the Constitution. On one of the occasions, when the Indian polity was in distress, he remarked:

The office of the President is like an emergency light. It comes on automatically when there is a crisis and goes off automatically when the crisis passes.

In his long and multifaceted career, Venkataraman has been successful in whatever position or responsibility he has been entrusted with. Be it the Industries portfolio in Tamil Nadu, the Defence and Finance portfolios at the Centre, Chairmanship of the Rajya Sabha, the Vice-Presidency and the Presidency of the country—Venkataraman has functioned with efficiency and equanimity. It has been his firm belief that ethical norms must be observed by all those who are in public life and it is perhaps because of this conviction that his image has remained splendidous all through his political career.

As a Great Humanist

Venkataraman's greatness lies in his unassuming simplicity and intense love for his fellow countrymen. In his own words, "I am the humble servant of the people". He is also a patient listener, a good conversationalist and has a sense of humour that very few people possess. No one has ever seen him losing his composure even in the worst of situations. As a great secularist he firmly believes in India's composite culture and its **unity** in diversity. Religion for him is not merely dogmatic but a practical one aimed at **servng** the humanity. In his own words:

“Service of our weaker brethren is the service of God. It might do us all a great deal of good to confine religion to our shrines or our homes or, best of all, to our hearts. The temples, mosques, churches and other places of worship so released could shelter millions of houseless people—Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others alike. Even God might be pleased as He would be relieved as a part of His responsibility to mankind. True religion is humanity. And humanity is the God-head.”

This amply demonstrates the great-levels of his thought.

He possesses a rare equanimity, like the *Sthithapragnya*, the *Bhagwat Gita* speaks of. Vicissitudes, personal or political, have left no work on his visage. Even the most complex problem does not baffle him. He gets into the pith and substance instantly. He reminds one of the mythological bird, *hans*, which is credited with sieving from a bowl of milk only its milk content, leaving behind the water. Inebriety of power or egocentrism is alien to his nature. Having expressed his clear opinion, he always abides by the general will.

A great man at heart, Shri Venkataraman has always been concerned with the terrorist onslaughts that continue in the strife-torn states of India. Hundreds of innocent men, women and children are killed brutally and this pains the heart of every true Indian. He, like an upright citizen, believes that communalism, beyond any shadow of doubt is a canker eating into the vitals of the nation. Elaborating his views while speaking at the Defence College in New Delhi, Venkataraman touched upon terrorism that stalks the country today. He said:

Day after day, come reports of death; persons shot down only because they belong to a particular community. If terrorists think that they can compel a state to surrender to terrorism they are either living in a paradise of their own or are ignorant of history. State power is more potent than sporadic violence.

Shri Venkataraman, a great votary of peace and cooperation, is very optimistic about the future of the world but threats of a nuclear holocaust dampens even his spirits. Speaking on the ‘Hiroshima Day’ in New Delhi on 6 August, 1985, he said:

In my view, we should have to educate ourselves as much as others that the possession of nuclear arms does not ensure invulnerability of a nation. It is a colossal delusion to imagine that nuclear arms add to economic or moral strength that it affords security to a nation. It is my conviction that nuclear disarmament is imperative and should precede general disarmament. I feel that there can no longer be a limited use of nuclear weapons. Once it is unleashed, the entire world will be engulfed, irrespective of the user’s intent.

Recipient of National and International Honours

Venkataraman has been honoured with several distinctive Awards for his dedicated service in various fields by various institutions. Amongst his innumerable achievements, some stand out because of their splendour. He was awarded the Doctor of Laws (*Honoris Causa*) by the University of Madras, University of Nagarjuna, University of Burdwan and University of Philippines. He is Honorary Fellow, Madras Medical College and Doctor of Social Sciences, University of Roorkee. The University of Philippines, honoured him with Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*) at a special convocation.

He has been awarded '*Tamra Patra*' for his participation in the freedom struggle when he risked his life for the freedom of his nation. He has also received the Soviet prize for a travelogue of his mentor, Late Shri K. Kamaraj's visit to the socialist countries. Shri Venkataraman has also served the United Nations Organisation (UNO) in different capacities for many years. He was thus awarded the Souvenir by the Secretary-General U.N. for distinguished service as President of the UN Administrative Tribunal. Because of his religious thoughts and pious acts he was given the title of '*Sat Seva Ratna*' by his holiness Shankaracharya of Kancheepuram for services rendered in constructing the temple for Lord Subrumaniam.

All through his life he has accomplished many commendable tasks and has received due recognition for them.

His saga thus aptly epitomises the qualities of a *Nishkama Karm-yogi*. The Bhagwat Gita says:

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते॥

(HINDI)

(Whatever the Best doeth, that the lower kind of man puts into practice; the standard he creates, the people follow).