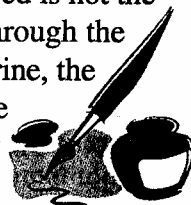




Kulapativani Dedicated Life

Normally, we take a dedicated life to mean a life spent for a cause, a mission, or an idea. But a little scrutiny will show that this meaning has little substance. In those who have lived such a life, we find only too often, conceit, selfishness, ambition, or egoism. I, for instance, may imagine that I am devoting myself to literature because I have dedicated my life to beauty, but, in fact, I may be writing for nothing but fame or money. Again, I may believe that in devoting myself to public life I have dedicated my life to the country; but more often than not, such a belief is a cloak for personal ambition, love of power or an itch to “do”—that aimless urge to be up and doing something or the other which makes modern men and women run breathlessly into lifelong frustration.

It is, therefore, difficult to call a life devoted to a cause, a mission, or an ideal, a “dedicated life.” In dedication, all one’s thoughts, feelings and ambitions have to be offered to something which is not self; to something which is an end in itself; something absolute. Isolated acts offered as sacrifices may be excellent as training but they do not make for a dedicated life. We have to remember that what has to be offered is not the act itself, but the whole of our innate nature through the act. When a worshipper offers flowers at a shrine, the offering is merely a symbol of his complete surrender to the deity. Sacrifice necessarily involves surrender. ■



Editorial RV- Always Above Partisan Politics

The death of former President of India and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on January 28, has deprived the nation of one of the most statesmanly and constitutionally correct Presidents to have guided the destiny of an India deeply disturbed by the prospect of mandateless governments and opportunistic alliances, disfiguring its democratic character.

In five years he saw four Prime Ministers come and go and political stability threatened by short-lived governments and fragmentary politics. The Bhavan family lost a person of public eminence who upheld and promoted values and ideals prescribed and practised by Kulapati

Munshi.

Half a century of holding high political offices with distinction and excellence unblemished by taints that characterise such offices, RV (as he was referred to by colleagues and admirers) never allowed power to corrupt him or make him arrogant.

As Industry Minister in Tamil Nadu he laid the



R. Venkataraman

In every crisis- his presidential tenure had many- he went strictly by rules and was always above partisan politics.

foundations of that State's economic progress. He carried his knowledge of the law and the constitution to put his stamp on every position he held from thereon. In every crisis- his presidential tenure had many- he went strictly by rules and was always above partisan politics.

Above all, he remained free from personal ambitions and familial interests to promote. In his book, 'My Presidential Years', he refers to Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee's offer to step down as Prime Minister, if he (RV) agreed to head a National Government of all parties.

RV writes: 'I told him that the President should not set this wrong and dangerous precedent, as it might kindle

ambitions in future Presidents to meddle and indulge in machinations against the Prime Minister.'

As President of the Bhavan, his one major initiative was to work out a national consensus on keeping criminals out of elections.

He called upon political parties to desist from fielding candidates with records of corruption and criminality. He also collected together persons of high integrity and eminence in public life to advise the national government on finding workable solutions for ending the Kashmir imbroglio.

That his wisdom and sage counsel fell on deaf years did not deter him; what did deter him was physical health. He remained lucid and mentally alive to what was happening in the country until his last days.

The Bhavan family pays its homage to RV for his services to the country and to the Bhavan at crucial moments to both. ■

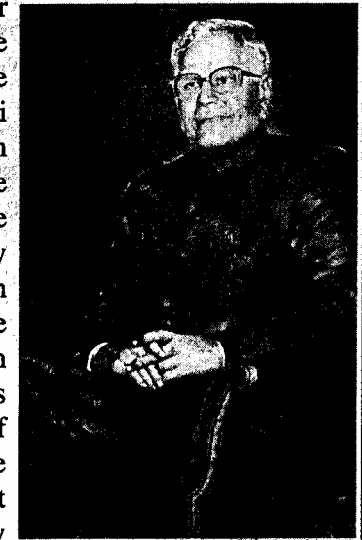
Shraddhanjali

R. Venkataraman

04-12-1910 – 27-01-2009

J. Veeraraghavan*

That which is born must surely die. So says the Bhagawad Gita, as indeed our common sense. But Nachiketas in Katopanishad compels Yama to reveal to him the secret of conquest over death. Yama tells him, in effect, that there is neither birth nor death, if one realises what one is, namely, the immortal self. Such a realisation was given to Ramaswamy Venkataraman, former President of India and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (2000-2003), by the deeply revered late Paramacharya of Kanchi whose Grace was always upon him or perhaps it grew in on him when he chose to study year after year the Vedas at the divine feet of Swami Dayananda Saraswathi at his Ashram in Coimbatore. Whatever the process, RV has attained that state of universal benevolence and identity that could be called immortality even when in mortal coils. Now those mortal coils are gone. One can reflect, howsoever briefly, on his great contributions to the making of our Nation. As a young lawyer he aspired to become a government servant but was persuaded by



R. Venkataraman

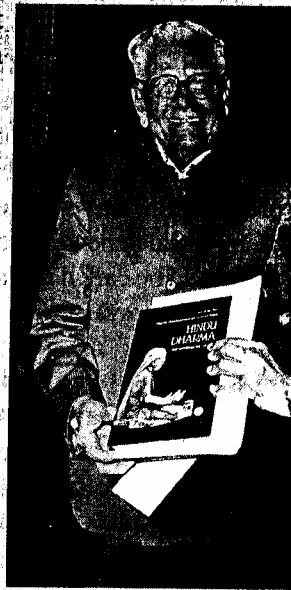
* Director, Bhavan's Delhi Kendra.

Bhashyam and other Congress leaders not to become the slave of a slave; this led him into the labour movement and was connected with railway workers, working journalists, tea estate workers and several other labour organisations.

He actively participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942 and was imprisoned for two years. In 1944, he founded, along with Kamaraj, the labour wing of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and started the Labour Law Journal in 1949. He was also Secretary of the Madras Bar Association between 1947 and 1950 and started his practice in the Supreme Court in 1951.

He was a Member of Parliament between 1950 and 1952 and was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1952 elections. Pandit Nehru was deeply impressed by his hard work, legal knowledge, fearlessness and articulation and his commitment to the Party. As a result, he became a member of the Congress Parliamentary Committee in 1953-1954 and made significant contributions to the legislative process in Parliament.

He was a member of the Indian delegation to the United Nations seven times, almost every year from 1953 to 1961, as Prime Minister Nehru felt that India needed his participation in this world forum. For 24 years, from 1955 to 1979, he was a member of the UN Administrative Tribunal, of which he was also the Chairman. He also represented India in the ILO and the Inter-Parliamentary meets. He held the position of Governor in the IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Bank.



He was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1957 but resigned to join the Ministry of Kamaraj in Tamil Nadu where he looked after the Department of Industry, Labour, Cooperation, Electricity and Transport and Commercial Taxes. Between 1957 and 1967, he did pioneering work to develop industries in Tamil Nadu and earned the title of Father of Industrial Development in Tamil Nadu.

In 1967 he became a member of the Planning Commission. Perhaps it was then that the Venkataraman Committee on Public Utilities laid down the objective of 12% rate of return for such utilities. Had the Indian polity stuck to his recommendations India's fiscal and economic development would have been a different and greater story. But the polity was too weak and fragmented to achieve the objective set forth by him.

After 1971 he became the Editor of Swarajya, founded by Rajaji. He was among the few Congressmen elected to the Lok



J. Veeraraghavan, Director, B.V. Bhavan, Delhi, presenting flowers to Shri R. Venkataraman on the occasion of his 95th birthday

Bhavan President

Shri R. Venkataraman was President of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan from 2000-to-2003. During his tenure, Shri Venkataraman guided the destiny of the Bhavan with great distinction, sagacity and dedication and provided the Bhavan's Family Worldwide with inspiring leadership.

During his Presidentship he served the Bhavan with great zeal and dedication. Under his sagacious advice and direction, the Bhavan maintained its steady pace of progress and intensified its cultural and educational activities.

Shri Venkataraman initiated steps to introduce necessary reforms in Bhavan's Constitution and administrative set-up as also to put up a firm modern system of management at the office level. He has used his great personal repute and contacts to further the interests of the Bhavan and given it new creative ideas and vision to enlarge the scope of the Bhavan's activities.



As President of Bhavan Shri R. Venkataraman receiving the Gandhi Peace Prize from the President of India Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam on March 18, 2003, at New Delhi.

Sabha in 1977 elections and chaired the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament.

In 1980 he became Finance Minister under Indira Gandhi, was Defence Minister between 1982-1984 and held additional charge of Industry and Home.

In August 1984 he became the Vice-President of India and in July, 1987, he became 8th President. The five years he was President were among the most turbulent and eventful and the several Prime Ministers during this period had the benefit of his wise counsel. He tried to lay the foundations of sound conventions of a Cabinet form of Government and set an example by always calling on the leaders of groups to form the Government based on their strength of numbers and strictly in that order so that haggling and horse trading might be avoided.

In addition to his statesmanship and contribution to the policies of his country, his work in promoting Gandhian thought and action has been most valuable. He was always a solid and powerful supporter of Gandhian institutions and ways of thinking.

His contributions to social, cultural and religious institutions has also been immense. The Swamimalai (Malai Mandir) Temple at Vasant Vihar, New Delhi, had his full support and guidance and patronage. When I was Secretary, Culture, in the Government of India, he, as the then President of India, sent for me and expressed his distress at the lack of action on his suggestion for making Kalakshetra of Madras a Central Government Institution. On examination of relevant papers I found there was quite some hesitation in the Ministry as to whether the Government could run such an eminent cultural institution. However I did persuade the Government to take this step, also ensuring full autonomous functioning, so that the great vision of Rukmini Devi Arundale could continue to inspire younger generations. RV was very happy

that this great institution was saved from manipulation by vested interests.

In him we had a statesman whose deep spiritual wisdom, and refined cultural sensibilities informed all his actions in political, social and economic activities. He had great admiration for Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Kulapati K. M. Munshi.

He had friends and admirers in all political parties and all sections of society. It was on December 4, 2008, that Shri Gharekhan, Chairman of Delhi Kendra of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Indira Gandhi Centre of Arts, Shri Ashok Pradhan, Advisor of the Bhavan and I called on him and had his warm blessings in response to our greetings. Little did we know that he was so close to shedding the mortal coils of his immortal self. ■

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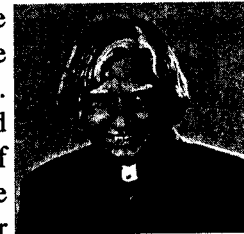
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MORE THAN HUNDRED YEARS OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY

A Letter to Every Indian*

Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

Why is the media here so negative? Why are we, in India, so embarrassed to recognise our own strengths, our achievements? We are such a great nation. We have so many amazing success stories but we refuse to acknowledge them. Why? We are the first in milk production. We are number one in remote sensing satellites. We are the second largest producer of wheat. We are the second largest producer



of rice. Look at Dr. Sudarshan. He has transferred the tribal village into a self-sustaining, self-driving unit. There are millions of such achievements but our media is only obsessed in the bad news and failures and disasters.

I was in Tel Aviv once and I was reading an Israeli

newspaper. It was the day after a lot of attacks and bombardments and deaths had taken place. The Hamas had struck.

But the front page of the newspaper had the picture of a Jewish gentleman who, in five years, had transformed his desert into an orchid and a granary.

It was this inspiring picture that everyone woke up to. The gory details of killings, bombardments, deaths, were inside in the newspaper, buried among other news.

In India we only read about death, sickness, terrorism, crime.. Why are we so negative?

Another question: Why are we, as a nation, so obsessed with

**This was part of a speech made by Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam in Hyderabad on July 7, 2007, when he was still President but all set to bow out. We publish it as a reminder to all citizens of India of their duties and defaults.*