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ORIGINAL ARTICLE





POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF S. BANGARAPPA IN KARNATAKA POLITICS

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Abstract:

Since from independence, Karnataka has seen many colourful, intelligent and charismatic leaders occupying the position of chief ministership. But no other politician has made a big impression on the minds of people as S. Bangarappa made through his colourful, charismatic, intelligent and visionary politics. Modeling his political career on the paths of socialism and under the guidance of socialist leaders like Ram Manohar Lohia and Shantaveri Gopalagowda, he never forgotten his socialist roots when he occupied the high seat of power, but used the position and power to provide long awaited justice and relief to the Dalits and Backward Classes. Though his innovative and often visionary welfare programmes, he tried to bring the social justice in the society without making any bias in favour of particular caste, creed and community.

KEYWORDS:

 $Political\,Leadership\ , Life\ and\ Political\,Career\ ,\ socialist\ ,.$

INTRODUCTION

Time and again he has proved that, he is invincible in the district of Shimoga irrespective of the political party he represents in the elections. Shri S. Bangarappa has also backed out from the different political parties, whenever there was threat to his personal ideologies, thinking and values. Hence, here an attempt has been made to understand the life and achievement of S. Bangarappa and his leadership as well as his contribution to the backward class movement in Shimoga district.

II. LIFE AND POLITICAL CAREER OF S. BANGARAPPA

Shri S. Bangarappa was born on October 1933 in the Kubutur village of Sorabaa taluka of Shimoga district. His father was Shri Kallappa and mother Smt. Kallamma who belongs to a poor family of backward class. Shri S. Bangarappa began his primary education at Anavatti village and completed his secondary education at Shiralakoppa. Later he completed his intermediate education at Davangare and joined the Maharaja College of Mysore for studying B.A. Degree for which he chosen Kannada language as the optional. Shri S. Bangarappa also completed his law education from the Sharada Vilas College of Mysore and even got his diploma on social sciences. After the completion of his education in 1958, he began practicing law as a profession apart from the family tradition of agriculture. In the year 1958, he married Ms. Shakuntala, the daughter of Tirukappa Naik, of Mulangaon village of Shirasi taluka. While practicing law, Shri S. Bangarappa came to know the different problems and ailments of the common

people in the district, especially the problems and insecurity of farmers of Sagar whose land has been

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submerged under government projects. He fought relentlessly for the due facilities and compensation needed for the aggrieved farmers and helped them to get those compensations. While fighting for the cause of aggrieved farmers, he realized that to solve the problems of the poor and downtrodden people, it becomes necessary to grab the political power and the same demand was also raised by his followers in the Shimoga district. As a staunch believer in the socialist philosophy, he naturally came under the influence of Shri Shantaveri Gopalagowda who had a significant influence on the young minds and revolutionaries of Shimoga district. He also assisted Shantaveri Gopalagowda in strengthening the socialist party in the district of Shimoga and contested for the Sorabaa constituency from the United Socialist Party in 1967 assembly elections. Shri S. Bangarappa was also a staunch supporter and the dedicated follower of Shri Ram Manohar Lohia and modeled his political career in the lines of his idol and leader. 2

When Shri S. Bangarappa, was fighting the assembly elections in 1967, his political godfather Shri Shantaveri Gopalagowda was suffering from serious illness and was admitted to the hospital in Bangalore. Irrespective of this setback, he was further motivated and won the assembly election of Soraba constituency by the strong support and cooperation of large socialist activists, backward classes and minorities of Soraba constituency. In year 1972 also he repeated his victory from the Soraba constituency. The then Chief Minister, Shri Devaraj Urs has recognized the socialist ideas and attitude of S. Bangarappa and made him the Home Minister of Karnataka State. In his maiden tenure as a Minister, Shri S. Bangarappa has utilized this opportunity and worked for the welfare and development of common and poor people of Karnataka state. During the same government he also worked as a Public Works Minister and has given special interest on the small and major irrigation projects and built hundreds of bridges and roads across the state of Karnataka. 3

In 1978, he contested for the Soraba constituency from the Indian National Congress Party and completed his hat-trick of victories in the Soraba constituency and proved that he is invincible in the Shimoga district. In year 1979, recongising the organizational skill, dedication and charismatic personality of Shri S. Bangarappa, he was appointed as a President of Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee, and was given the in charge of 1979's parliamentary elections. Due to his strong organizational skill and leadership qualities, he organized the congress workers at the gross root level and succeeded in bagging the 27 parliamentary constituencies out of 28 in the 1979 parliamentary elections and proved his worth to both his followers and the opponents. In 1980, Shri S. Bangarappa became the minister for Revenue and Agriculture in the congress government led by the then Chief Minister, R. Gundu Rao. As a Minister for Revenue and Agriculture, Shri S. Bangarappa helped the causes of tenants, landless farmers and agricultural labourers. In 1982, Shri S. Bangarappa came out of Congress party in protest against the indifference shown to him in the party and joined the "Kranti Ranga" founded by the Ex-Chief Minister Devaraj Urs to counter the influence of Congress (I) in Karnataka. To strengthen the newly founded "Kranti Ranga", S. Bangarappa toured the Karnataka state extensively even to the remote parts of the state. When, Shri Devaraj Urs was died on June 6, 1982, he admitted his full support to the Abdul Nazeer Sab who replaced Devaraj Urs at the Kranti Ranga. Whereas, in 1983, he supported the Janata Party which was under the leadership of H.D. Devegowda and others and played a instrumental role in bringing them the land sliding victory. Irrespective of his pivotal role in the victory of Janata party, Shri S. Bangarappa was denied the post of Chief Ministership but was offered the Deputy-Chief Ministership under the then Chief Minister, Shri Ramakrishna Hedge. The offer was not accepted by Shri S. Bangarappa as he thought it is humiliating to work under the Chief Minister who is not a legislator and backed out from the Janata Party, which shows his strong ideology and integrity.

Likewise, he contested the next assembly elections in 1985 and 1989 from the Congress party and once again proved his popularity and hold over the constituency of Soraba by winning the both elections. During the period of 1983-89, Shri S. Bangarappa worked as a leader of the opposition party and worked constructively for the development of the state. In the 1989, assembly elections, Congress Party have achieved a comprehensive victory due to the failure of earlier Janata government and the chronic infighting in the Janata Parivar. Though Shri Veerappa Moily and S. Bangarappa were on the fray for the Chief Ministership, it was Shri Veerendra Patil who became the Chief Minister and S. Bangarappa obeyed the decision of Congress High Command and was appointed as a Minister for Agriculture and Horticulture. During the same period, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri Veerendra Patil suffered stroke and his physical illness had resulted in the widespread infighting and dissidence in the Congress Camp. While considering the widespread infighting and dissidence, the then Prime Minister of India, Shri Rajiv Gandhi has instructed S. Bangarappa to take control of the reins of the state administration as a replacement of Shri Veerendra Patil. Shri S. Bangarappa has reached the climax of his political career, when he became the Chief Minister of Karnataka state on October 17, 1990 and worked in the same position till November 19, 1992. During his reign of Chief Ministership he devised, designed and implemented different innovative projects for the empowerment of common, poor and downtrodden people of the state. During his Chief

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Ministership, he not only made a unique and significant contribution but also had laid a strong impression on the people of Karnataka.

But after his dismay and differences over the internal matters of Congress party, he felt disheartened and founded his own political party "Karnataka Congress Party" and contested the assembly elections of 1994 and won the election once again. Thus, he contested and won the seven assembly elections consecutively from the Soraba constituency and became an influential political leader in the district of Shimoga. Apart from his strong following and bondage with the voters of Soraba constituency he also had a big impression in the politics of Karnataka state and tried to expand his horizons in the national politics by contesting and winning the Parliamentary elections in 1996. But unfortunately he had to taste the defeat in the parliamentary elections of 1998, when he contested the elections on the ticket of K.V.P. His unexpected defeat in the parliamentary elections, has not only puzzled the political pundits of the Karnataka state, but also has sent the shock waves into the national politics. But Shri S. Bangarappa had his sweet revenge in the 1999 parliamentary elections when he contested and won on the ticket of Congress Party. His victory in the parliamentary elections has once again proved the invincibility of Shri S. Bangarappa and discouraged his political detractors and opponents. But owing to his rebellious nature, he once again revolted against the high command in protest of disrespect, negligence and bad treatment meted out to him the state politics. Sensing the polarization of political forces in the Karnataka state, he joined the Bharatiya Janata Party, after a long persuasion and consultation with the then Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. No doubt, Shri S. Bangarappa was in appreciation of the elder statesman like Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and constructed a strong base for the B.J.P. in the Shimoga and made it one of its strongholds. But in the long run Shri S. Bangarappa could not withstand the communal agenda of the B.J.P. and helplessly found himself tied to its communal ideology, which was against his socialist roots and principles. Moreover, the frankness and the fearless stand of Shri S. Bangarappa on events of national politics especially the communal agenda of B.J.P. made their leaders more uncomfortable and vulnerable. Feeling helpless and uncomfortable in the company of B.J.P. he once again cut his association with the B.J.P. and decided to join the Samajwadi Party of Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav. His decision to join the Samajwadi Party is quite natural and obvious, when considering his lifelong socialist ethos and principles. Shri S. Bangarappa has provided a superb launch pad for the Samajwadi Party in the South Indian politics by winning the parliamentary election from the Shimoga constituency which became vacant after his resignation from the B.J.P. Now as a President of Samajwadi Party in Karnataka, he is touring different parts of Karnataka exclusively and is pursuing his cherished dream empowering Dalits, backward classes and poorer sections of the Society.

$III.\,SHRI\,S.\,BANGARAPPAAS\,A\,CHIEFMINISTER;$

During his less than two years of chief ministership it can be said that he gave a good administration to the public of Karnataka. When considering his short tenure as a Chief Minister, and the different developmental projects brought by him it could be said that he had a vision for the development of Karnataka, but was not given enough time to concentrate on his development projects, in which some of them were scrapped after his resignation from the Chief Minister post. Considering the rampant infighting and non-cooperation of his cabinet colleagues during his tenure, it could be assumed that he could have achieved more and performed better without these problems. 7 Some of the achievements of Shri S. Bangarappa as a legislator, minister and Chief Minister are explained as under,

- 1.Shri S. Bangarappa has popularized and implemented the Land Reforms Act as a result around 50,000 people of Shimoga and Uttar Kannada became the landowners.
- $2. Shri\,S.\,Bangarappa\,constantly\,fought\,for\,the\,cause\,of ``Bagar\,Hukum"\,farmers.$
- 3. When Shri S. Bangarappa was Chief Minister, he brought a revolutionary change in the Police Department, by promoting the police constables and Dafedars for the Sub-Inspector post.
- 4.Shri S. Bangarappa has distributed around 50,000 coconut plants to the poor farmers, dalit families and general public in the district of Shimoga.
- 5. Shri S. Bangarappa has distributed around 11,000 tons of rice, paddy seeds, maize to the famine stricken people of the Shimoga district, even when he was just a parliamentarian when the central and state governments were failed in their duties.
- 6. When he was a Chief Minister, he popularized the theme of Bagar Hukum farming and even organized hundreds of committees for providing the land rights to the Bagar Hukum farmers in the revenue and forest lands. Under this programme, lakhs of poor people have been given the lands for the farming.
- 7. When the Areca was listed under the poisonous products by the government, Shri S. Bangarappa presented a strong protest in the Parliament and removed the name of Areca from the list of poisonous products.

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8. For the first time he established the "Malenadu Development Corporation".

9. For the development of twin cities of Shimoga-Bhadravati, he established the city corporation.

10. For converting Shimoga-Taleguppa tack into the broad gauge he sanctioned Rs. 5 crores.

11. Shri S. Bangarappa has also brought revolutionary changes in the field of Electricity and irrigation in Karnataka state. He brought and implemented the Upper Tunga Project, Markandiya Mahadai, Pinakini and other projects in the Karnataka state. He also brought Rs. 8.76 Crore worth Moogur Upper Lift Irrigation project, and Rs. 7.50 Crore worth Moodi Upper Life Irrigation Project.

12. He also donated Rs. 1 Crore for Shri Satya Sai Heart Hospital at Shiradi.

13. Shri S. Bangarappa has also donated the machineries and instruments worth Rs. 5 Crore to the Kidwai Hospital, Bangalore.

14. Established the Agriculture colleges at Shimoga and Bijapur districts.

15. Constructed 299 Community Halls for the backward classes in the Shimoga Constituency.

16. Provided Basic Infrastructure facilities to the Tribals in the Shimoga District

17. Established the Malenadu Education Trust, which has been providing the quality education to the people by establishing school, colleges and hostels in the Shimoga district.

18.Establishment of Chandrahasa Trust and organized the marriages of around 15,000 couple in the Sorabaa taluka of Shimoga district.

19. Established Kuvempu Trust at Kuppalli.

20. Established Kannada University at Hampi of Bellary District.

IV. WELFARE PROGRAMMES LAUNCHED BY SHRIS. BANGARAPPA:

Shri S. Bangarappa has been considered as an innovative leader and administrator when he occupied the position of Chief Ministership, even for a very short period. Irrespective of the many distractions and hurdles he faced in his short stint as a Chief Minister, he proved that true to his socialist roots, he devised and implemented various welfare programmes for the empowerment of Dalits, backward classes and poorer people of the state.8 Though, many of his innovative programmes have been scrapped or stopped after his removal from the chief ministership, but they were highly popular and successful in Karnataka. Some of the welfare programmes devised and implemented by S. Bangarappa are explained as under,

1. Akshaya Yojane:

Akshaya Yojane was designed and implemented during the tenure of S. Bangarappa's Chief Ministership. The main aim of the project is to achieve the complete literacy in the state. This project has also helped to bring the poor children in the villages to the schools. Under this project every school going children were given Rs. 1 per day to discourage them from the child labour practice. This programme was hugely popular in Karnataka state.

2. Ashraya Yojane:

This project is widely popular among the poorer and poorest population of the Karnataka state. Under this programme, every poor family will be given a residential plot, woods and other materials for the house construction. Apart from these things, they were also given some amount of money for house construction. Under this project, lakhs of houses were constructed and 4 lakh residential plots were distributed. Later the size of the residential plot was increased from 20 x 30 to 30 x 40. During the tenure of Shri S. Bangarappa around, 12 lakh sites were distributed to the poor and poorer sections of the society.

3. Shushrusha Yojane:

This project has reached the every doorstep of Dalits, OBCs and other poor people in the state of Karnataka. As per the programme, the Dalits, backward classes and other people will be given the free diagnosis and free treatment for their ailments. Because, the poor people living in the rural areas cannot afford the diagnosis and treatment of diseases like Cancer, Diabetes, Heart diseases and other ailments. Therefore, under this programme, the diagnosis and treatment will be provided to the doorstep of the patients and the entire expenditure will be borne by the government.



4. Aradhane Yojane:

In the Aradhane Yojane, opportunity was provided for the construction of religious structures for the people belonging to the different religions. It means the people of the different religions could construct their buildings under this project. There was also a provision for the renovation of temples and each temple was given Rs. 20,000. An amount of Rs.5 Crore was reserved for this project. Finally, this programme was successful in renovating the old temples and allowed the poor people of different communities to build their own religious constructions.

5. Vishwa Yojane:

The main objective of the programme is to develop and renovate the rural industries and handicrafts of the Karnataka state. For the implementation of this programme, government has reserved Rs. 500 crore. According to the guidelines of the project, around 1,000 industrial sheds were made and were donated to the rural artisans and entrepreneurs. Under this scheme, leather work got maximum support and the foot wears made by artisans under this scheme were very popular during that time. Unfortunately, that scheme is not in existence now.

6. Bhagya Jyothi Yojane:

The main objective of the Bhagya Jyothi Yojane is to provide the electricity facility to the poor households of Karnataka state. It was estimated that the average expenditure for providing electricity to rural household is around Rs. 500. Therefore, annually 1,000 Bhagya Jyothi Yojane were sanctioned in the every constituency of the Karnataka state.

7. The Provision of Rural Weightage:

The provision of rural weightage to the students of rural areas in admission and competitive examinations is the revolutionary action taken by S. Bangarappa during his tenure of Chief Ministership. Because, the rural students cannot be afforded to compete with the students of urban areas due to lack of exposure and facilities. Therefore, to remove this handicap, his government has sanctioned the provision of special weightage to the students who studied in the rural areas for the admission in school and colleges as well as in competitive examinations.

8. Seeds Distribution for the Poor Farmers:

On 20/4/2004 Shri S. Bangarappa as a Member of Parliament has organized a function to distribute the Paddy seeds to the hundreds of famine stricken farmers of Sorabaa taluka of Shimoga district. In his own expenditure he purchased and transported hundreds of truckloads of seeds for the distribution to the farmers. While distributing the seeds to the farmers, he opined that the district of Shimoga has not seen such famine in the last few decades and there has been no better and coordinated efforts by the state and central government in addressing the problems of the famine stricken farmers. He also explained that his personal distribution of seeds to the farmers of Shimoga district is for the small and poor farmers but not for the capitalist farmers. He also opined that this small helpful gesture is a token of gratitude towards the people but not as a act of politics. On the same occasion he assured them that there were further shortages of seeds, he would further purchase and distribute them among the needy farmers. This act shows his generosity and commitment towards the welfare of the poor people and farmers.

9. Organization of Mass Marriages:

For the last three decades, Shri S. Bangarappa has been organizing the mass marriages for the poor people of Soraba taluka of Shimoga district. For this purpose he has established a Chandrahasa Trust ® and has been organizing the mass marriages in the Bankasana village of Sorabaa Constituency for the last 25 years. So for, he has organized the marriage of around 4000 pairs in the Soraba taluka and is planning to conduct some more with the cooperation of general public. Under this programme, the bride and bride groom should get certified by the Secretary of Gram Panchayat and should have the blessings and permission of parents from the both sides. The false couples and false cases will be treated as illegal and will be prosecuted as per the rules.



10. Coconut Plant Distribution:

Shri S. Bangarappa is having a special liking and love for the coconut tree and used to develop them in a nursery and distribute them among his followers, farmers and general public, since the days of his public life. As a Chief Minister of Karnataka, he had a special concern for the environment and regularly used to organize functions for the distribution of coconut plants for the farmers, friends and the poor people. Even when he was just a legislator from the Sorabaa constituency he distributed around 20 thousand plants to the farmers' houses. Due to his passion towards the coconut plants, he brought around 10,000 high quality coconut plants from the Chikkanayakana Halli of Tumkur district. As for as his passion towards the distribution of coconut plants are considered, he believed that the art of politics should be nearer to the heart of people, but not just for the sake of votes. In continuing his passion for the environment and trees, he organized the "Hasiru Sundara Sorabaa" on 29/06/2002. The main objective of the programme is to plant the trees in the vacant grounds of government offices, schools and hospitals of the Sorabaa taluka.

V. CONCLUSION:

Thus, Shri Bangarappa has given the stupendous contribution for the Shimoga district in particular and Karnataka state in general as a legislator, minister and Chief Minister of Karnataka. When he was in power at different positions, he devised and implemented the different welfare programmes for the empowerment of Dalits backward classes and poorer sections of the society. Among these welfare programmes, Akshaya, Ashraya, Shushraya and Vishwa Yojane are very effective and hugely popular among the poorer sections of the society. The people of Karnataka state will never forget the people oriented welfare programmes, subsidies to the farmers, weightage to the rural students, the distribution of seeds for the famine stricken poor farmers, and the organization of mass marriages. Whenever, the people of Karnataka and Shimoga needed him, he always stood for their welfare irrespective of his position and power, even when he was a simple legislator or parliamentarian he still worked for the empowerment of the people of his constituency and state. As for as his political achievement and status in Karnataka is concerned, he can be compared to the medieval period statesman Machiavelli for his statesmanship and shrewdness.

Finally, it could be said that Shri S. Bangarappa has launched various programmes for the empowerment of Dalits, Backward classes and poorer sections of the society; there was not much progress in the situation of these classes.

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