

Golden Research Thoughts



ABSTRACT:-

Ramasawmy Venkataraman, the eighth elected President of the Indian Republic, was the fourth Vice-president of India (1984 to 1987) under President Giani Zail Singh (15, July 1982 to 25 July 1987). He succeeded as the President of India after expiry of the term of office during 25 the July 1987 to 25 July 1992. Born in family of a lawyer he too attained a law degree and by his own individual merits and talents he attained the position of the President of India. Though he started his service as a lawyer from 1935 in Madras High Court from 1951 he registered himself as a lawyer in the Supreme Court of India. His wide horizon of knowledge enabled him to decide things effectively. So, as he shone in all his prospects

R. VENKATARAMAN, THE VETERAN POLITICIAN

M. A. Sugantha

Keywords:

R. Venkataraman , Veteran
Politician , lawyer , Public Finance.

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of History,
Annamalai University, Annamalainagar ,
Tamil Nadu .



INTRODUCTION

On 4th, December 1910, he was born in a village called Rajamadam of Thanjavur district of Tamilnadu as the son of Ramasawmy Aiyar, a lawyer. The country's "sagacious statesman, an erudite scholar, a great patriot, a distinguished legislator, and one of the most eminent leaders of our country" passed away on 27, January, 2009.

He had his education up to High School at Pattukottai as student of the Board High School. Then at Madras he had his B.A and M.A Degrees through the Madras University. He studied Economics, Banking, Currency and Public Finance. He also became a law graduate through the Law College, Madras. After enrollment as a lawyer he devoted to law practice. Even while practicing law he was impressed by the Indian struggle for freedom against the alien British rule¹.

R. Venkataraman after completing his law degree enrolled in the High Court of Madras in 1935 at the age of 26 and he enrolled in the Supreme Court in 1951. From that time onwards he commenced his political career. He diverted his energies towards the freedom movement of India from the colonial subjugation of Great Britain. The Indian National Congress² celebrated resistance to the alien rule encouraged R. Venkataraman's active participation in the politics of India. The Quit India Movement of 1942 offered him opportunity to involve in it. It resulted in his detention for two years under the Defence India Rule. So before becoming the President of India his role in the National Politics of India should also be analysed to having a full-fledged estimate of that National personality of India.

After his release from the Jail in 1944 the poverty of the Indian mass, the misery of the landless labourers and the miserable plights of the industrial labourers made him to become a Trade Union Leader. Being an active and leading member of the Madras Bar. In 1946 the government of India included him in the panel of lawyers and sent him to Malaysia and Singapore to defend Indian Nationals charged with offences of collaboration during the Japanese occupation of those areas. In the panel R. Bashyam of Madras, K. F. Nariman of Bombay and P. A. Sapree of Allahabad were members.³

He was a member of the Provisional Parliament (1950-1952) of the first Lok Sabha (1952- 1957). Though elected to the Lok Sabha for the record time in 1957 he had to resign that seat and become a Minister in the Cabinet of K.Kamaraj.

In the 1967 election when R.Venkataraman lost the Parliamentary election in the state, he was made as the member of the Planning Commission. As an extension of his work in the state, he was given charges of Industry, Labour, Power, Transport, Communication and Railways. With the beginning of the fourth Five Year Plan he gained a place in the Planning Commission in 1967. But actually it was a plan for three Years which lasted between 1966 and 1969. According to him India adopted Planning as a means to accelerate economic development. He was capable of offering a planning process to India.⁴

By winning the general election in 1977 R. Venkataraman was elected to the Lok Sabha from the South Madras constituency. But the Congress party when received majority in the election of 1980 R. Venkataraman became the Finance Minister under the Prime Ministership of Mrs.Indira Gandhi. To maintain the balance of power he introduced Bearer Bonds and cash assistance and subsidies for exports. His position as Finance Minister enabled him to function as the Governor of the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the Asian Development Bank. (ADB).⁵

While the Ministry of Mrs. Gandhi was reshuffled R.Venkataraman was entrusted with the port folio of Defence in 1982. Between January 1980 and August 1981 and during June 1982 he was Minister for Home Affairs. Even in 1977 itself while there was the non- congress government at the centre he was the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.⁶

In the Presidential Elections of 1984 he was the congress nominee for the office of the Vice-President of India. He was elected as the Vice-President of India on 22, August 1984. He assumed charges as Vice-President on 31, August 1984.⁷Being the Vice-President of India he automatically became the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha of India. Due to his caliber of efficient handling of the deliberations of Rajya Sabha, all the members welcomed his just and unbiased treatment of the members of the House. He also was the Jury of the Jawaharlal Award for International understanding and international Jury for the Indira Gandhi Prize for peace, Disarmament and Development. He was of the Vice-Chairman of the Jawaharlal Memorial Trust and Trustee of the Indira Gandhi Trust. He was also holding the posts of President of Indian Institute of Public Administration and Indian Council of Cultural Relations. He was the Chancellor of the Gandhigram Rural Institute, Delhi and Punjab Universities.⁸

As Central Finance Minister he used to meet the Journalists. His session in the Central Hall of Parliament was called "Coffee Club". Those who were in the Central Hall were also invited to have a cup of coffee. It offered him the opportunity to estimate many things through chats and discussions.

As the Defence Minister of India he did a lot for India. Facilities were made for the construction of weapons factories at different places. Though he had party affinities "he did not possess the zest for political life. Though a Central Minister he showed no untoward loyalty to the then Prime Minister. Even at times of emergency he vehemently opposed the press censorship. He was able to maintain his personal and individualistic traits.⁹

As R. Venkataraman was straightforward and known for his abilities Mrs. Indira Gandhi made him as a Cabinet Member in her Ministry. While giving reply to the welcome address given to him as Vice-President he pointed out that he would execute his duties on the basis of the precedents set by Dr. Zakir

Hussain and Dr. S. Radha Krishnan.¹⁰ Thus he was keen and specific in discharging his duties in a flawless way, he assumed charges as Vice-President of India with commendable political experience and his friends in the political circle also were beneficial to him. As Vice-President in the capacity of the chairman Rajya Sabha he had to undertake many responsibilities and had to take difficult decision. By temperament and ability he was able to discharge his duties effectively.

His personal traits and dedicated services offered him an opportunity to reach a highest pedestal in politics. He was experienced in parliamentary procedures and in law. Though not aggressive on any occasions he had a successful career in the national politics due to his scrupulousness. His exemplary patience enabled him to carry out things with maturity and reasonableness. In the national politics he tackled all the warring groups and was not at all trapped in any discredited controversies. As soon as he became Vice-President and President he became neutral and kept himself away from party politics. He adhered to political traditions and conventions. As Defence Minister he imprinted a global status to Indian Air Force.¹¹ By enriching the Defence procedures with modern devices he made India as a country known for its self Defence.

He was clear that a politician “should strive to become a statesman” and should Endeavour to serve the nation in a better way. He defined that a politician would always think of the ensuring election and the statesman would think of the next generation. Top priority was accorded only to spirit of nationalism. He was clear that even the children of India must be made to know of the strength and weakness of their motherland along with their countries cultural heritage. He had the vision that the people of India should poor the strength and intelligence of the nation together to grow as a stronger power with international reputation and recognition. As an advocate of then non-alignment movement he was clear that it was the check to avoid the third world war amidst the super power rivalry. As he had been a politician he never allowed to be encircled by formalities and security issues when he attained the position of the Vice-President.¹²

R.Venkataraman was belonging to the group of rare politicians. Without bothering his family backgrounds and political career he stood by his own individual merits in politics. He looked at everything in a broader perspective such as nationalism and internationalism. R.Venkataraman, the possessor of the title “Sat Seva Ratna” proved that he dedicated to the cause of the nation. In 31, August 1984 when he assumed charges as Vice-President he openly exposed his idea that he would work for communal harmony and National Integration. Thus he with clean perceptions he confined himself to the National Politics.¹³

Though a politician, R. Venkataraman was a pragmatist He adjudged the condition of India and pointed out that the colonial policy of divide and rule had created schism among the people and that endangered the tolerance of the part of our renounced mother land. So as a democrat, R. Venkataraman was forced to stress on unity in the country known for its diversities.

He looked at everything in a broader perspective. With a nationalistic bent of mind he attached values to the economic uplift and integration in India. After getting recognition for his ideologies and talents he raised to the national politics.¹⁴ Congress, the political party and K. Kamaraj were stepping stones for his gradual upward movement in politics. His indefatigable Endeavour's too caused his success as a national politician. He felt that non-secular obstacles which impeded the progress should be eliminated by scientific progressive ideologies. Being an ideal secular citizen he had an objective consciousness which caused him success and victory. His own technological approaches too favoured his uplift.

Amidst many needs of progress he was keen on eliminating the discriminations through corrective measures with constitutional commitments and recognizing the norms and conventions of political process. He was aware of the fact that national politics was blended with many fissiferous tendencies and such unwanted repercussions must be annihilated in an organized way for the uplift of innocent human beings.¹⁵

He, being a true Gandhian idealist, was a pragmatist and practical thinker Proper reasoning was treated as a highest principle. Without advocating any confrontation he approached the injustices and unwanted activities with love and affection. His rationalistic ideas enabled him to acknowledge such factors. He was aware of the consequences of terrorism and pointed out that the State has more potential powers to overlook horrible violence.¹⁶ His resolute will power thus offered him the scope to be an eminent and victorious national politician and statesman.

R.Venkataraman, due to his socialist background was influenced by Nehru's concept of idealism, socialism and internationalism. He was capable of offering proper guidelines to governments during his Presidentship. He was having a clear perception that Indian integration was an unshakable one because of its secular concepts.

His role in national politics encouraged him to say that India was the guiding star of many nations which obtained freedom after the Second World War. He ever had unshakable faith over the path shown by the elder Indian leaders.¹⁷ He learnt the skill of dealing with people and simple appearance and habits from K.Kamaraj. In the same way Kamaraj thoughtfully offered him the position as Industries Minister of Madras State due to the knowledge of industries and labour issues.

R.Venkataraman well defined economic philosophy allowed him to demarcate clearly that plan proposals accelerated economic development. The proper utilisation of the available skills, knowledge and technology was treated as means for acceleration. His abroad minded national economic policies were the

outcomes of his involvement in national politics. His attachment and affinity to the Indian National Congress too created him national politician as well as a national leader. Like Gandhiji, Nehru, Kamaraj and others influenced R. Venkataraman to look at everything in a broader perspective. His commendable services to the State of Tamilnadu were also stepping stones to be a rememberable of the national politics of India.¹⁸

For the betterment and progress of India he called upon the Indian economists on 28, December 1975 “to formulate time bound targets for the elimination of poverty and completion of work on the design and content of anti poverty programmes.”

R. Venkataraman, the humanist, at his age of 77 when he assumed charges as President of India, with true patriotic character called himself as “the humble servant of the state.” He used to express his view points and advices to the government and others. He felt that it would be his duty to act as per the provisions made available in the government. His activities never embarrassed of wounded anybody and such things enabled him to maintain the personal prestige. As Central Ministers, Vice-President and President of India he was known for his fairly.¹⁹

In the national politics he was worthy to play any role. His stewardship, political knowledge and administrative efficiency made him to be the suitable choice for the President of India at his age of 77. He was believer in parliamentary democracy. He had never raised any controversy regarding the constitutional rights of the President. As he was in the forefront in the national politics of India he was clear that there should be only on center power. There should never be the superiority issue between the President and Prime Minister because in democracy the sovereignty his with the people who are the best judges.²⁰

He was one of the members of the Constituent Assembly which drafted the Indian Constitution. He was a member of the Provisional Parliament of India between 1950 and 1952. From 1952-1957 he was the member of the Parliament. In 1946 itself he was a member of the panel of Lawyers deputed to Malaya and Singapore to defend the Indian nationals who were accused as supporters to the Japanese occupation of the those places. He was the Secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Party during 1953-1954. As a delegate of the workers of India in 1952 he took part in the “Session of the Metal Trades Committee of the International Labour Organisation.” Subsequently he attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held at Newzeland.

In 1967 he was appointed as the member of the Union Planning Commission. In 1977 he became a member of Indian Parliament. Though in the opposition he functioned as the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. He served as Governor of International Monetary Fund, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Asian Development Bank. He was the Indian Delegate of the U. N. General Assembly during 1953, 1955, 1956, 1958 to 1961 Labour Conference held at Geneva in 1958. In 1978 behalf of India he participated in the Inter Parliamentary Conference at Vienna. From 1955 to 1968 he was a member of United Nations Administrative Tribunal. He was the President of that body from 1968 to 1979. These facts reveal that R. Venkataraman, due to his national interest, was capable of maintaining the prestige of India in the international arena. His involvement in the national politics was a stepping stone for him to achieve international recognition. He was clear that “the answer to the problematic issues in the world could be solved by moral and spiritual information by setting aside violence.”

Being a true nationalist having faith over Secularism, Democracy, Non-violence, Trade Unionism, Humanism and Parliamentarian he stood for the uplift of the cause of India. At all levels he was prepared to respond to all the challenges with all scrupulousness without analogizing and opposing anybody. In a broader perspective he believed that the freedom of thought and expression would be possible only by strong press without any barrier from any side. He also was keen and firm in introducing a concept called “Rationalisation without tears” .By that automation was introduced. He introduced a sense of dynamism and structural changes for development. He was always for a well articulated policy of developing technologies. He pointed out that economic development through planning should be the primary concern of India in the post independence period. Industriasation and economic development are integrated and according to him they should provide opportunities for rising income, employment, wealth and prosperity. He was aware of the fact that population explosion was a menace to the economic growth. With those impressions he introduced the scheme of Bearer Bonds which fetched an income over Rs 1000 crores. He was always for economic progress of India through export ever by offering subsidies.

He argued for the self reliance of India in all spheres. As against 1% possible blocks helps in our Defence forces, 99% are patriotic and have a sense of duty and they will not let down this country.” His optimistic views in executing things with all capabilities and responsibilities imprinted indelible impressions in the national politics of India. Only because of that as Vice-President he demanded the members of the Parliament to respect the observances of the house. He was specific in maintaining the decorum of the house and the deviation would lead to the negation of democracy. If a member agrees of disagrees with the views of others he must be aware that they too have the equal rights. So he was keen on maintaining things in a proper order for the cause of the vast country of democracy. He was not at all a petty politician but had integrity and in depth knowledge about his activities which were surely centering on national interest.

He called of the President of the India as an “emergency light” which would play its role at time of ex agencies and necessities. So as President of India he executed his duties to “caution, warn and advice” his

government. As a true democrat, in the 1989 after the election he gave the first chance to Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the single largest party in the new house. When he denied forming the Ministry he invited V.P. Singh to form the government. When he acknowledged the call he was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India.⁴⁶ Thus he saved the Indian subcontinent at times of political crisis.

R. Venkataraman did his best to strengthen democratic institutions of the Indian Republic. He was also critical that a holder of public office should necessarily be a true and correct decision maker and that should never be based on attaining personal popularity. So he was clean while taking decisions on policy matters and that too was for having the well being of the nation as the backdrop.

Without violating constitutional propriety he had his sharp intellect in facts like economic reforms and liberations. For managing the multifaceted and multidimensional aspects of the largest Indian nation, the authorities were expected to have a proper estimate of the fundamental complexities. When violence, terrorism, corruption, separatism, extremism, exploitation were the chief concerns R. Venkataraman stood for the removal of the social imbalances. While playing his role in the national politics of different nature he attached values to pragmatism and practical approaches. In the national politics he was known for his principle and integrity. He contributed to the strategies security of the nation and caused the introduction of "Missile Technology Control Regime" (MTCR). At all levels he assisted the Indian government in launching economic and financial measures with all optimism he was firm that India would overcome all its problems and pointed out that the resources are the contributory factors of resurgence.

ENDNOTES:

1. Prasantha Goswami, The Presidents of India during 50 years, B.R Publishing corporation, New Delhi, 1988, p.101.
2. The Lok Sabha Speakers address in the Parliament on the day of his Demise on 27th
3. January, 2009.
4. Venkataraman Birth Centenary Editorial Board, R. Venkataraman Centenary Tribute, Rupa, Publications, New Delhi, 2012, p. 18.
5. Proceedings of the Superposition on National Planning held at New Delhi, on 10, September, 1969.
6. Prasantha Goswami, Ibid. p.61.
7. Attar Chand, The Great Humanist Ramaswami Venkataraman, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987, p.15.
8. Address on the Parliament on 7, September, 1984.
9. Hindustan Times, 2, August, 1989.
10. Rising Nation, January, 1987.
11. Hindustan Times, 5, October, 1986.
12. Attar Chand, Op.cit., p.58.
13. Madyapradesh Chronicle, 1, February, 1987.
14. Indian Foreign Review, 30, September, 1984.
15. Hindustan Times, 13, June, 1986.
16. Hindustan Times, 6, October, 1986.
17. The Hindu, 6, September, 2011.
18. Address at the Meeting on Role of Planning in Industrial Development held at Delhi, on 10, September, 1969.
19. Address at the Lok Sabha on Espionage Activities Bill on 20, December, 1983.
20. Address at the Rajya Sabha on 8, March, 1984.