

## Excerpts from interview ...by Mr. Surendra Mohan

Excerpts from interview with V Pradeep Kumar about how he met Venkatram and his impressions of Venkatram:

Venkatram was in the Samyukta Socialist Party [SSP] and I was in the Praja Socialist Party [PSP]. He was the Joint Secretary and George Fernandez was the General Secretary. Kamlesh was the other joint secretary and Karpuri Thakur was the President. When it was decided that the two parties should merge, I was holding the same position in PSP as Venkatram in SSP. I was also staying in the same building where SSP had its office. So I went to SSP office and said, “Mr Venkatram, “Why not come and have a cup of tea?”. He said, “Why not?” Then we went up and within five minutes, we became very good friends. That’s all. I do not think, I have become a friend to anyone in such a short time. For both of us, it was a case of love at first sight. My wife who gave us tea, also said “he is a very very pleasant person” This was in 1971 Though our relationship was only for about ten years, since he died in 1981, it was very intense in respect of feelings, as both of us felt drawn to each other I found him to be a very gentlemanly, soft spoken, courteous and affectionate person.....

I used to come to Karnataka and we traveled together many times. Once we went to Ghorpade mines [Bellary district] where Ramesh Bandagadde was leading a struggle and was badly beaten up. We both went there studied the situation, met Ramesh and got him released. From there, we went to Hubli where Venkatram was invited to speak at the Rotary Club. There he made a very good and balanced speech and was profusely applauded....

During these travels together, he used to speak about literature, culture and we discussed very little politics. In fact we discussed politics only when there was some crisis or when there were meetings of the national executive or national council. Because I found that he had a profound knowledge of culture of not only Karnataka but the country as well. I used to marvel at his deep understanding and knowledge of the cultural issues. It is this understanding which made it possible for him to have so many friends. It was in his company that I met Dr Shivram Karanth, BV Karanth, Suresh Heblikar, UR Ananthamurthy all of whom were his close friends and some were his admirers. In my presence once Shivram Karanth said, “ Venkatram, how are you adjusting in politics?’ and why are you in politics? Venkatram said, “Because it is a noble vocation”. “Yes, with people like you, it can be a noble work” Shivram Karanth said. People with whom he made friendship knew he was deeply interested and knowledgeable. So his friendships were based on a deep understanding of the subject, the culture and art, which Venkatram had. That is how he was very close to people in different fields.....he had a very good knowledge about the Hindu philosophy. And he had very good knowledge about the trees, the vegetation, the soil etc. So he had knowledge of scientific issues, cultural issues, and literary issues. That’s how he had such a large circle of friends.