

Venkatram - A Family Friend

...by Mr. YS Subramanya [BATA]

Our contact with Sri S Venkataram was both political and personal. On the personal level one sentence is enough, the contact built nearly 50 years ago is still surviving with all his family members.

Venkatram came from Bombay to settle down in Bangalore permanently, somewhere around 1952. He was politically inclined and influenced by the thoughts of Trotsky who broke away from the Communist Party of Russia. Venkatram was working in Bombay under labour leaders like Sri D Mello and George Fernandez. When he arrived in Bangalore he began contacting all persons who were involved in Socialist movement. He came to the Party office in Balepet and could meet a lot of youngsters. Parliamentary elections were on and Sri C.G.K. Reddy had contested and Venkatram involved himself in the election campaign. The results were though not heartening.

A word about the Socialist party. We were influenced by the ideals of the Socialist movement and were under the influence of Sri Nagabhushan and Basu Krishnamurthy. When JP, Achyut Patwardan, Acharya Narendra Dev and Dr Lohia who worked as a group within the Congress felt that they have to come out of that organization if at all something in socialist movement is to be achieved. They formed the Socialist Party. Bangalore also opened a branch in Balepet. Forming new labour unions in different factories, working in youth and student movements, the SP was attracting a lot of young dedicated people. The Socialist party was growing. Socialist thought - can we say - emerged as a separate thought and entity after being influenced by the Communist manifesto and writings of Mahatma Gandhi.

Venkatram took up Socialist movement in all seriousness in Karnataka and had gained a lot of political friends. Many of them came later in the political field and occupied powerful positions. Being the Secretary of the party, he came into very close contact with political stalwarts like Sri Gopal Gowda, Sri J.H.Patel, Sri M.Nagappa of Raichur, Sri Mulka Govinda Reddy, Sri Shivappa, and others. On the cultural front also he had some good contact with people like Snehalata & Pattabhi Rama Reddy, Sri Kalinga Rao and Sri T.N.Seetharam.

During emergency, he was also arrested in Mangalore along with Sri M Chandrashekar, Sri P Venkoba Rao. Bangalore jail was full of political big wigs and he interacted with most of them and retained many of them as his personal friends.

As soon as he came out of the jail, he activated work in the labor field. He was advisor to NGO Association, was president of the Govt Employees Association and continued to lead the Minerva Mills labour union. In this process of building labour unions, he built up a chain of friends in different parts of Karnataka. Sri Dasan Solomon in labour field, Sri Nagappa, Mandya in the agricultural labour field, Srikanta Sharma in Mysore and Ramakrishna Rao in Bangalore of the Hotel and Agarbatti workers Union, TI Mahadvan in the defense in CIL and command workshops. All these worked under the Socialist banner.

The time under which the Secretary of the Socialist Party was working, is to be remembered. Those days there was no money forthcoming from anywhere. Paying rent for the office was a problem. Leave aside rent; the problem existed with electricity bills.

There was no money to print posters, handbills. Even traveling from one place to other was difficult. Only members of the party had to pitch in. A weekly started by Venkatram had to be closed after a few issues.

Personally, he was one who was out spoken, soft at heart, easily approachable with any problem, encouraging others to come.

These were all his good qualities. He was an able organizer and a very good writer. He was very clear in his ideas and expressed the same in group meetings or in writings which were easily understandable.

He read several books and when he felt that they were good, he would recommend others to read. It was not mere political books but good literature either in Kannada or English. He used to see a lot of good dramas and much inclined towards music too.

We are happy that we had a close association with a person like Venkatram

— YS Subramanya [BATA]