

Shri R Venkataraman passed away on 27th January, 2009. “ In his demise , the country has lost a sagacious Statesman, an erudite Scholar, a great Patriot, a distinguished Legislator and one of the most eminent leaders of our country”, summed up the Speaker in his obituary reference in Lok Sabha echoing numerous other condolence statements.

RAMASWAMY VENKATARAMAN

Born on December 4, 1910 in the village of Rajamadam, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu, Shri R Venkataraman married Smt. Janaki in the year 1938. They have three daughters Padma, Vijaya and Lakshmi.

EDUCATION:

Educated locally and in the city of Madras, Shri R Venkataraman obtained his Master's degree in Economics from Madras University with Banking & Currency and Public Finance as special subjects. He won the collegiate and inter- collegiate prizes for elocution.



LAW:

He later qualified in Law from the Law College, Madras. Shri R Venkataraman was enrolled in the High Court, Madras in 1935 and in the Supreme Court in 1951.

While practicing Law, he was drawn into the movement for India's freedom from Britain's colonial subjugation. His active participation in the Indian National Congress's celebrated resistance to the British Government, the 'Quit India Movement of 1942', resulted in his detention for two years under the British Government's Defence of India Rules.

Shri R Venkataraman was an active member of the Madras Bar. In 1946 he was a member of the panel of lawyers consisting of K. Bhashyam of Madras, K.F Nariman of Bombay and P.N Sapro of Allahabad sent by the Government of India to Malaya and Singapore to defend Indian nationals, charged with offences of collaboration during the Japanese occupation of those areas.

In the years 1947 to 1950, Shri R Venkataraman served as Secretary of the Madras Provincial Bar Federation and a member of the Executive Committee of Madras Advocates' Association.

Shri R Venkataraman specialized in Labour Law and appeared very often without remuneration on behalf of Labour and Labour Unions. He also shouldered responsibility as President of the Plantation, Engineering, Commercial employees and other labour organizations.

Encouraged by the then Labour Minister Shri VV Giri, Shri Venkataraman started in 1949 *Labour Law Journal* reporting decisions of Industrial Tribunals and High Courts and Supreme Court.

This pioneering endeavour proved very useful for developing the branch of Labour Laws and Labour Relations in India.

PUBLIC LIFE

In 1950 Shri Venkataraman was elected to the Provisional Parliament of India. In the short period of two years Venkataraman so impressed the Speaker of the Parliament Shri Mavlankar that he chose Shri Venkataraman as a Member of the Indian Delegation to the Common Wealth Parliamentary Conference in New Zealand.

In the General Elections under adult franchise Shri Venkataraman was elected to the first Lok Sabha from Thanjavur Constituency. From 1952 to 1957 Shri Venkataraman functioned as an effective Private Member.

Although re-elected to Parliament in 1957, Shri R Venkataraman was invited by Shri Kamaraj to join the State Government of Madras as a Minister. There, Shri R Venkataraman held the portfolios of Industries, Labour, Cooperation, Power, Transport and Commercial Taxes from 1957 to 1967. His contribution during his tenure to industrialization of Tamil Nadu is universally acknowledged. Guindy and Ambattur Industrial estates and housing projects in Besant Nagar and Anna Nagar, among others are testimonies to his vision and dynamism. Many small scale industrialists in Tamil Nadu fondly refer to his active encouragement. During this time, he was also Leader of the Upper House, namely the Madras Legislative Council for ten years.



Shri R Venkataraman was appointed as a Member of the Union Planning Commission from 1967 to 1971 by the Government headed by Smt. Indira Gandhi. He was Chairman of various commissions such as those on Major Ports and Fuel policy.

After the withdrawal of Emergency, Shri Venkataraman won the prestigious *Lok Sabha* seat of South Madras and functioned as the Main Spokesman on Finance from the opposition. On re-election to Lok Sabha in 1980, when Indira Gandhi formed her government again, Venkataraman was appointed as Finance Minister. Later he became the Defence Minister and was then elected Vice President of India in 1984 and the President of India in 1987.

Shri R Venkataraman was variously, member of the Political Affairs Committee and the Economic Affairs Committee of the Union Cabinet; Governor, International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Asian Development Bank. As Defence Minister he initiated and encouraged the missile development programme.

Shri R Venkataraman served as a member of the Congress Parliamentary Board and Congress Working Committee constituting the Congress High Command.

U.N. COMMITTEES AND CONFERENCES:

Shri R Venkataraman attended the 1952 Session of the Metal Trades Committee of the International Labour Organization as workers' delegate.

Shri R Venkataraman was a Delegate to the United Nations General Assembly in 1953, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1959, 1960 and 1961. He was Leader of the Indian Delegation to the 42nd Session of the International Labour Conference at Geneva (1958) and represented India in the Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Vienna (1978). He was a Member, United Nations Administrative Tribunal from 1955 to 1979 and was its President from 1968 to 1979. On his relinquishing office Shri R Venkataraman was elected Honorary President of the United Nations Tribunal for life.

VICE-PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Shri R Venkataraman was elected Vice-President of India in August, 1984. As Ex-Office Chairman he conducted the proceedings of the Upper House with great distinction.

He was simultaneously; Chancellor, Delhi University; Chancellor, Punjab University; Chancellor, Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed University) Gandhigram (Tamil Nadu) and President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

PRESIDENT OF INDIA:

Having been elected to the Office of the President of India, polling more votes than those available to his party, Shri R Venkataraman was sworn in on July 25, 1987. He was the Eighth President of the Republic of India. He added grace and dignity to the High Office. He worked with four Prime Ministers, appointing three of them.

Since becoming President in July 1987, Shri R Venkataraman made State Visits to U.S.S.R., Mongolia, The Netherlands, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Cyprus, Bhutan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Federal Republic of Germany, Seychelles, Portugal, United Kingdom, Malta, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines and China.

During his tenure at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Shri Venkataraman had banyan trees and avenue trees planted which have grown to their true potential today. He regularly invited noted musicians and other artists to perform in Rashtrapati Bhavan's theatre. He renovated artifacts of historical importance at Rashtrapati Bhavan and along with artifacts presented to him as state gifts during his foreign tours, started a mini-museum for public view. He relinquished the office of the President of India on July 25, 1992.



POST RETIREMENT

Even after demitting Office as President of India, the philanthropist in him propelled Shri Venkataraman to be actively associated with several welfare projects which touch the lives of ordinary citizens. He also established the RV Foundation to grant scholarships to deserving students and to provide medical assistance to the needy.

Shri R Venkataraman served as Trustee of Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, Trustee of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Member of the International Jury for Mahatma Gandhi Peace Prize, Jury of the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding, Patron of HelpAge India and Global Cancer Concern and Chairman of the Governing Body of the Kalakshetra Foundation, Chennai and Gandhigram Trust and an active participant in several public causes. He served as President of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. He turned student to attend the scripture classes taught by Swami Dayanand Saraswathi, Coimbatore.

ACADEMIC HONOURS AND AWARDS:

Shri R Venkataraman has received the Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) from University of Madras. He was Honorary Fellow, Madras Medical College; Doctor of Social Sciences from University of Roorkee; Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) from University of Burdwan. He was also awarded Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) by the Philippines University. He has been awarded the *Tamra Patra* for participation in the freedom struggle. He is the recipient of a Souvenir from the Secretary-General of the United Nations for distinguished service as President of the U.N. Administrative Tribunal. The title of "*Sat Seva Ratna*" has been conferred on him by His Holiness the Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam. Shri Venkataraman played a major role in the establishment and functioning of the Swaminatha Swamy Temple (*Malai Mandir*) in New Delhi.

PUBLICATIONS:

Travelogue on "Kamaraj's tour of Socialist Countries", which won Soviet Land Prize" in 1967. He published a chronicle of events of importance during his tenure under the caption "My Presidential Years" after relinquishing the office.

In a public life spanning well over sixty years, Shri R Venkataraman performed all his duties with distinction, unblemished by private interest. He passed away on 27th January 2009 in New Delhi.