

ULLAL SRINIVASA MALLAYA

Ullal Srinivasa Mallaya was a Member of the Constituent Assembly of India. Perhaps the seat was earmarked for Kaladevi Chattopadyaya, also from Mangalore, but she along with Jai Prakash Narain and other Socialists in the Congress declined to participate in the Constituent Assembly. She therefore recommended Mallaya's name to Jawarhalal Nehru to select him in his place as she had already found in him a promising leader.

Mr. Mallaya's elder brother Dr. Mallaya was elected as a Member to the Madras Legislative Assembly as at that time Mangalore was part of Madras Province (States were then known as Provinces). When Mangalore was merged with Karnataka State Dr. Mallaya was perhaps one of the Ministers there. Before the first General Elections in 1952 under the new Constitution, Congress President Jawahrlal Nehru appointed Mallaya and Lal Badhur Sastri *as two General Secretaries of the AICC*. Mallaya developed close personal relations both with Sastri and J.Nehru during that period. Sastri used to treat Mallaya as a very valuable colleague, and when he became a Cabinet Minister in J.Nehru's Cabinet.

Mallaya's residence at 17 Ferozeshah Road in New Delhi used to be the hub of all political and social activities for over 17 years. In view of the proximity of Mallaya to Prime Minister Nehru, many Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers and Junior Ministers—from Centre and States—used to come there with their problems and seeking solutions and advice. Even the high officials from Karnataka and Centre in the ICS, I.P.S. used to give him their views and take his political help in running the administration. Several delegations of trade and industry used to visit him and seek solutions to their problems. He was intelligent, persuasive, and a subtle humour. Hospitality was at the peak, Mangalore Coffee flowing like water and the best sweets made of cashew-nuts were plenty. The lunch table could expand to accommodate any number of sudden visitors. Mrs. Mallaya gave him ungrudging cooperation. They used to treat all visitors with equal affection and regard. This system continued till his sudden end on his way to airport in Delhi, when he passed away his wife was away in Mangalore and she got the first news from the All India Radio.

As General Secretary in 1952 and thereafter he had a great say in the selection of Candidates for election for junior Ministers, J.Nehru used to accept his advice. He also used to play a great role in the rapprochement between warring Cabinet Ministers and their juniors, the juniors generally complaining they were not given any work by the senior Ministers. He played a great role in cementing relations *between warring-groups in the States* and their respective *Pradesh Congress Committees*.

Mallaya was close to Kamaraj and he supported Kamaraj against Rajaji. Kamaraj defeated CS in the election to the Leader of the Congress Party in Madras Assembly, and tried to avoid accepting the mantle of Chief Ministership. Mallaya strongly advised him to take the responsibility and sent word in advance to Prime Minister J.Nehru! Mallaya and Kamaraj used to meet very often, Kamaraj talking to him only in Tamil and Mallaya speaking to him in English with occasional Tamil words! Together they were great friends and had sat together in the Congress Working Committee for several years. Thus both had a good grasp of the political situation through the country, and they were watching Morarji Deesai's ambition to succeed

Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister. Both of them totally agreed on Lal Bahadur Sastri for the final choice. These two men from the South were giants in politics

Mallaya had done pioneering work for the development of Mangalore area. One fine morning Mallaya and Chief Minister Kamaraj drove to the residence of Finance Minister Morarji Desai and got sanction of Rs.50 lakhs each for the harbour project in Mangalore and Turicorin simultaneously. Getting sanction for Rs.One Crore was a great achievement in those days. He worked ceaselessly for the promotion of the *Mangalore airport*, several *bridges across the rivers*, roads and the *broad gauge railway from Mysore to Mangalore*, a direct link. He used to describe the blue mountains adorning on one side and on the blue sea and fine beaches on West Coast as a Tourist's Paradise. He had in his mind at that time the coming of the *present Konkan Railway*. He also located the present Technical Institute at Suratkal and fought for its location here.

After his visit to the USA he was greatly impressed by their highways, Hotel-chains, automobile industry and rapid advancement. He used to say that if we permitted the Ford Motors to come to India it will provide gainful employment to a large number. He was opposed to State-trading, used to quote some Sanskrit literature decrying King against becoming a merchant, as it would spell disaster. Many years after his death his dreams have materialized with liberalization direct foreign investment and collaboration in industrial development of India. In many countries State- industries are going back to private sector.

To the administration, he used to say: *nobody should keep a paper for more than three days*. He used to tell story of a man who slipped inside a deep pit; the Engineer will not lift him out unless he gets sanction for the entire expenditure! By the time the sanction is given the man would have been completely drowned! He used to give many jokes.

Our Foreign Exchange was small and there was rigid control on imports. The Cashew-nut exporters from Mangalore had a problem in their packing. The nuts generated worms by the time they landed overseas and consignments were being rejected putting exporters to heavy loss. With the help of experts he found out a remedy, to fill the packing with Carbon Monoxide and asked Government to help the industry with imports of packing devises. V.S.Kuduva, the founder of the Canara Springs had a problem importing raw materials for his factory, he sat in Satyagraha at Udyog Bhavan. Lal Bahdur Sastri, the then Commerce & Industries Minister acted fast and solved the problem! All Mallaya's inspiration and intervention for national development.

As Chairman of House Committee of Lok Sabha, Mallaya was responsible for building about 500 additional flats for Members of Parliament in North Avenue and South Avenue. He made many improvements in the houses of M.Ps. and for their welfare. He was the first to suggest the setting up of the *First Aid Post in the Central Hall* of Parliament with a *full-fledged Medical team*. There was an efficient Doctor in the Government Hospital who had some problem with the authorities. Mallaya found a easy way to shift him out of the Hospital and bring him into Parliament House! The problem was solved. The nucleus of a Medical Centre started by him has in due course grown into a full-fledged Hospital with about 20 specialists serving the Members of parliament on the spot.

At Manipal for the first time Dr.Madhava Pai started a private Medical College. There was great objection from the then Health Minister Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Madhava Pai and his nephew T.A.Pai camped at Mallaya's residence in New Delhi for several days and got his full

support for their noble cause. At that time Madhava Pai was just collecting Rs.2000 per student for admission! There was great objection even for this amount. Today's price runs into several lakhs. Mallaya personally invited the Central Health Minister to visit the Medical College at Manipal in the year 1955, and see for herself the progress of the institution.

He brought Lal Bahadur Sastri to Mangalore at least on three occasions, first time as Minister of Transport & Railways. And it was at that time Sastri laid the foundation stone for the present Institute at Suratkal, and for some bridges. Sastri came again as Home Minister to lay the foundation stone for the Mangalore Harbour. Mallaya was away as he did not want to be praised in public in his own presence. For all the solid work done by Mallaya for the growth of Mangalore, according to a Central Minister O.V. Alagesan, Mallaya deserves to be deified and a temple should be built there in his memory.

He fought three elections to the Lok Sabha and won every time. But during his third election in the year 1962 he won by a narrow margin. At the time of counting he feared defeat and got a heart attack, he succeeded and luckily survived. He felt some of his own friends had turned against him at that time.

He was a great actor. As Congress Secretary he had too many visitors and none would be brief. He stayed inside his bedroom and called the visitor just to listen to him, but the visitor took pity on the leader and went away saying he would come some other time! He was a good conversationalist and generally humorous, positive in approach and helpful. He was also Director of the Canara Bank before nationalization. A poor man borrowed from the Bank Rs. Ten Thousand for his poultry, and all the birds died due to disease, the poor man had no means to repay. Somehow he told the Bank to write-off the amount which was very rare in those days!

Throughout his long period of service as a Member of Parliament Mallaya never uttered a single word inside Parliament, but yet, by performance, he was the most effective Member and achieved more results than the "shouting Brigades". He was also the Deputy Chief Whip of the Congress Party in Lok Sabha and had to be constantly in touch with all Members who wanted to speak, efficiently arrange their timely attendance and presence during voting.