



DR. AGARALA ESWARA REDDI: A DYNAMIC AND COMMITTED LEADER



Dr. Agarala Eswara Reddi was born on 28th December 1933 as a second son of Late Sri A. Venkata Subba Reddy and Smt. Mangamma at Thukivakam village of Renigunta (Mandal) of Chittoor district. He holds three M.A. Degrees in Humanities and on the advice of his father; he entered in the public life. Initially he was elected by the people of his village as 'Sarpanch' (G.P. President) and reached the highest position of Speaker of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly. Dr. Reddi was a dynamic and committed leader. As a dynamic leader initially he chose to enter the administrative services. When he didn't get into it, he tried for other jobs, but he didn't secure suitable job. Later, he chose the 'politics' as a profession and continued in it whether he gets a position or not. However, he secured the highest position in the legislative system by moving from Swatantra Party to Congress party. He conducted the House with dignity, decency and decorum for the span of a period of three years i.e., 1979-1983. In 1982 Assembly Elections, Dr. Reddi was set up as a candidate to oppose the

matinee idol, Sri N. T. Rama Rao, who was a founder President of Telugu Desam Party and he lost the election. Though he was promised by the High command of the party that he would be accommodated in a suitable position either in the state or centre, but it was failed to keep up its promise. As a committed leader, he served the society and people by establishing educational institutions, writing articles to the newspapers, magazines and publishing books of varied importance. In this paper, an attempt is made to present a brief sketch about Dr. Agarala Eswara Reddi, his education, aspirations, disappointments, accomplishments and the life learning's. His unique qualities are also described at the end.

Education of Dr. Reddi

Dr. Reddi had his schooling in Peffer Memorial (P.M.) High School run by Christian Missionaries and completed SSLC Examination in 1949. He had Graduation (B.A) with (History and Economics group) from S.V. Arts College at that time it was popularly known as Dabbarekula College located in Kapila Theertham (K.T.) Road, Tirupati. He did post-graduation (M.A.) in Politics and Public Administration from Madras Presidency College in 1955. He also obtained a Law Degree from Madras University and got his Ph.D., Degree in Political Science from Ranchi University.

Dream to enter in to the Administrative Services

Dr. Reddi was interested to pursue Civil Service Examinations to become an IAS or IPS by being inspired from the two brothers of Thondawada Village in Chandragiri Mandal viz., Sri M.Chandra Mouli Reddy, IAS and Sri M.Venkata Ramana Reddy, IPS, who were selected as the Collector of Nalgonda and the Superintendent of Police in A.P., respectively. While studying the Law Course in Madras Law College, he appeared for the IAS Competitive Examinations and Income Tax Group II Services of UPPS, but it was no avail. Many of his friends' viz., Mr. G.S. Prabhakar and Mr. G.K.Reddy were became the IPS and IAS respectively.



Job Searches

When his dreams didn't come true, with the recommendation of Sri Bezawada Gopal Reddy, the then Minister of Civil Expenditure of A.P., Dr. Reddi tried for a position in the State Trading Corporation. After a formal interview, he was chosen for a Junior Officer's Post, which was declined by him. He also tried for the respectable posts by visiting Bombay and meeting his father's friend Sri Govinda Krishnayya, a Big Boss in Burmah Shell Company, but it couldn't materialize and he returned back to Tirupati.

When Sri Madabushi Anantasayanam Ayyangar, who was a leading Law Practitioner and became the Speaker of Second Loka Sabha and contested for M.P. elections in 1955, Dr. Reddi worked as Election agent in his area. At that time, he gave a word that he would take him as a Legal Assistant to the Loka Sabha and groom him to be the Secretary of A.P. Legislature. But his father used to remark always 'if you get a good position in the administrative services like RDO or Police officer, then think of joining such positions or otherwise, you would contest the elections like Sri P.Rajagopala Naidu, who was M.P. of Chittoor Parliamentary Constituency and the leader of Swatantra Party. The Swatantra party was founded by Sri Acharya N.G. Ranga and Sri C.Rajagopala Chari (Rajaji of Tamilnadu). His father further advised Dr. Reddi 'go to village people on foot like Sri P.Rajagoapala Naidu and solve their problems and If elections to be held, contest the elections without spending much of our resources'.

Entering into the Public Life / Politics

On the advice of his father, Dr. Reddi took the politics as career and entered into public life. Initially, he was elected as a Sarpanch unanimously by the people of Thukivakam village of Renigunta Mandal. Later, when the call was given by Sri C. Rajagopala Chari and other party leaders to start the Swatantra Party with lofty ideals and a sound programme for the amelioration of poverty by forming the government at center, Dr. Reddi impressed with the ideology of the party, joined the Party in 1960. He actively participated in the party conventions held at Guntur and Vijayawada. He considered Sri Rajaji and Acharya N. G. Ranga were as his mentors. In 1962 Assembly Elections, Dr. Reddi contested as the Swatantra Party candidate from Tirupati Assembly Constituency against Sri Reddivari Nadamuni Reddy of Narasinga Puram, who was the then Z.P. Chairman of Chittoor district and politically a strong man by heading several committees in the district. In spite of his hectic canvas in the constituency, he lost the election. However, in 1967 Elections, Dr. Reddi won in a triangle contest against Sri V. Srinivasulu Reddy of Reddivari Palli (Congress Party) and Sri P.S.Gurava Reddy of Tirupati Municipal Chairman (as an independent) with a thumping majority by securing 48,750 votes.

Elected to the Assembly and became as Speaker of A.P., Legislative Assembly

After a gap, Dr. Reddi was contested in 1978 Elections as Congress Candidate from the same Tirupati Assembly Constituency in a triangular fight given by Mr. I. S. Vasu (as Old Congress party), who was supported by Sri J.Vengal Rao, the then Chief Minister of A.P., and Sri P.S. Gurava Reddy, who was the Ex. Chairman of Tirupati Municipality (as Independent candidate). He won the election with a comfortable majority and was made as the Dy. Speaker with a cabinet rank by the Congress Legislature Party with the blessings of Sri T.Anjaiah, the then Chief Minister of A.P. Later in 1979, with the blessings of Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then PM, he was elevated as the Speaker of A.P., Legislative Assembly. During the period (1979-82), he introduced the post of Acting Speaker. He proved that he was successful in conducting the proceedings of the Assembly and establishing healthy traditions particularly in giving the Rulings for the effective functioning of the house. It's learnt that he commanded the respect of the entire house including the opposition leaders like Sri Puchlapalli Sundaraiah, Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi, Sri Gouthu Latchanna, Sri S.Jaipal Reddy, Sri M.Venkaiah Naidu etc.

Accomplishments as Legislator and the Speaker

After his election to the Assembly, all 25 elected MLAs of Swatantra Party along with other 62 MLAs formed a 'Democratic Front'. Sri Sardar Gouthu Latchanna was the Leader of Opposition in the house. During question hour, Sri T.C.Rajan, MLA from Palamaneru Constituency and Dr. Eswara Reddi were used to ask LAQs jointly and no question would go unheeded. The other leaders like Sri S. Jayapal Reddy, Sri M.Venkaiah Naidu and Sri Vavilala Gopalakrishnaiah would seize the opportunity and put certain interpellations. As stated by Dr. Reddi in his 'Autobiography', these LAQs got good publicity in the daily newspapers. Sri Tarimala Nagi Reddy, the senior Communist Party Leader used to support them to summon the concerned minister at the appropriate time to get the proper answer to the question. By recognizing his services, he was made the Vice-President of the Swatantra Party of State Unit by its president Sri Gouthu Latchanna.

Dr. Reddi, as MLA, he tried to improve the conditions in the local hospitals such as Ruia Hospital, The Govt., Maternity Hospital, the SVIMS and the BIRRD, which were run by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) and are deplorable. In the hospitals, no weighing machines, laboratory pans, no medicines like PAS given for the TB treatment and Penicillin injections were not given sufficiently. As the Ruia hospital was located in a corner at Alipiri near the foothills far away from the city, staff and patients were not able to commute the hospital and facing difficulty in reaching the hospital. In a Citizen's Forum, Dr. AER participated and listed all the problems and brought to the notice of the then C.M., Sri T.Anjaiah. He held a meeting with officers concerned and solved many problems on the spot and gave permission to procure the Cobalt Therapy unit to Ruia Hospital for which TTD released Rs.2.75 lakhs for the First Aid treatment to the cancer patients.

As the Syndicate member of S.V.University, he served the university for more than 12 years and contributed for its effective functioning and development. When the Srinivasa Auditorium was burnt, Dr. Reddi took pains for its renovation and

made it usable. He was also responsible for upgrading the Ananthapur P.G. Centre as Autonomous Institute and later as a full-fledged university - Sri Krishnadevaraya University. By creating a Charitable Trust on his wife Dr. V. Ramanamma's memory, he instituted the gold medals and scholarships for the meritorious students in S.V. Medical College and about 50 family pensions were given to the destitute and poor women every year.

Positions held by Dr. Reddi

From among the MLAs, Dr. Reddi was elected as a Board Member of the Andhra Pradesh Agriculture University (APAU), Hyderabad for five years. He was also elected as member from the registered Graduate Constituency of Rayalaseema districts to the Syndicate of Sri Venkateswara University (Tirupati), where he served the University for more than 12 years. Also he was elected as member to the Senate of Osmania University (Hyderabad) from the MLAs constituency. Further, Dr. Reddi was elected as Director of the 'Chittoor District Central Bank' and became the Vice-President of the 'District Cooperative Printing Press' and subsequently he were elevated as its president. Dr. Reddi was elected as Executive Council member of the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi and also got elected from among the members of EC as one of the Vice-Presidents. He served as founder president of the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), Tirupati Local Branch.

Institutions Founded by Dr. Reddi

Dr. Reddi set up various academic institutions of high order for promoting higher education viz., Sri Srinivasa Junior College, Renigunta, Dr.AER Degree College & Post-Graduate College, Tirupati, Two MBA Colleges in Rama Puram and Ramachandra Puram and become a pioneer in educational administration. He also founded an Institution called 'Madabhushi Anathasayanam Institute of Public Affairs' (MAIPA) in memory of Sri M. Anathasayanam Ayyangar, a great freedom fighter and the Speaker of Lok Sabha, Governor of Bihar in April, 1991. He conducted periodical meetings and conferences of MAIPA on different issues of national importance by inviting eminent personalities from different walks of life.



Dr. Reddi as a prolific writer

Dr. Reddi authored more than 10 outstanding books on various issues of development viz., Lok Sabha Elections 1977 and 1980 in Andhra Pradesh (which was a pioneering work for his Ph.D., awarded by Ranchi University), Electoral Reforms in India (which anatomizes the basic defects in Electoral procedures and provides valuable suggestions to revamp and uphold the system), How High is Higher Education Today?, (which dealt the reforms needed in higher education), Memoires of a Speaker (which is useful to the legislators, parliamentarians, students of politics), Thus Speke of Dr. Reddy (in English) and Eve Naa Anubhavalu (in Telugu) (which is a compilation of various articles, essays and speeches published in leading newspapers, journals etc., as a book), Handbook on College Administration (1985) (coauthored with Dr.M.Abey). He also wrote a controversial treatise 'The Mudhra Scam and Mr. T.T. Krishnamachari ', which dealt on a financial scam rocked Independent India.

Awards and Fellowships conferred on Dr.Reddi

For his excellent services in public Life, Dr. Reddi was conferred with various prestigious awards and rewards. He was a recipient of 'Shrama Shakthi Award' from the Govt., of India for his Trade Union leadership of INTUC and Cotton Mills Employees' Union. He got the 'Best Community Service Award' from Indian Institute of Public Administration for his distinguished services to the Institute for more than 16 years as Executive Council Member and also got the 'Fellowship' from the Tamilnadu Academy of Political Science. In addition, he got 'Lifetime Achievement Award' for social Service, Seva Ratna Award, Honorary Ph.D., from the American University and D.Litt. (Honorius Cause) by Madras University.

Dreams and Disappointments of Dr. Reddi

Dr. Reddi's public life is unblemished. He had his own good times and bad times. With all his academic qualifications, record of excellent services as public servant and speaker of A.P. Legislature, he faced a series of tragedies and disappointments in choosing his career, family life and reaching the highest position in governance.

Dr. Reddi had a checkered career, which include many changes, especially of education and employment. He wanted to study in Christian College, the best college in Madras noted for discipline, where he studied B.A., Degree with Economics Group and stayed in Shankar Villa, the hostel for the day scholars. He passed in the first attempt along with the seventeen students out of 40. Keeping his specialization, he opted for M.A., Economics from Madras Xian College, but the admission was denied to him by the Principal of the College. Then he was opted for admission to the Madras Presidency College in Branch V with 'Politics and Public Administration' and accommodation was given in Victoria hostel located in Triplicane. Though he was interested in Economics branch, as his bosom friends in the Group V Politics and PA branch, he decided to continue in the same group.

After completing M.A. course in Politics and Public Administration in 1955, he went to Delhi and sought admission in BCL course in Delhi University. During the same period, he also joined to pursue a Ph.D. in international studies from the Indian Institute of World Affairs. As there was an earthquake and with a fear complex and also he was not adjusted with the foods and oils, he discontinued the courses and return back to Tirupati.



As Dr. Reddi failed to secure either IAS or IPS cadre, with the recommendation of Sri Bezawada Gopal Reddy, the then Minister for Civil Expenditure of A.P., he appeared for interview for a Junior Officer's post in the State Trading Corporation, but he was given an Assistantship post, which was refused by him. Similarly, he went to Mumbai to find a job in Burma Shell and other companies, but he could not get the suitable post. He also tried for the job through the Lok Sabha Speaker Sri Madabushi Anantasayanam Ayyangar, who has promised to take him as Legal Assistant. But, he chose to enter in to politics rather than doing in low paid jobs as per his father's advise.

Even in politics, Dr. Reddi was defeated in 1962 Elections and got elected in 1967 and 1978 Assembly polls. When he was in the Speaker's position in 1982, the Assembly was dissolved prematurely and gone for General polls. Sri N.T.Rama Rao, President of newly formed Telugu Desam Party also chose Tirupati as an additional Constituency to contest as MLA. As many seniors expressed reluctance to contest, Dr. Reddi came forward unmindful of the aura around him.

Thus, he was defeated by a margin of 46,879 votes. When Sri NTR resigned for Tirupati Legislative Assembly, the Congress party let down Dr. Eswara Reddi to contest in the by-election by fielding Dr. R. Rajasekhara Reddy of Narasingapuram. Eventually, Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy too was defeated in the by polls. However, the Congress High Command assured him to compensate suitably, but failed to keep its assurance. Thus, he was not chosen for any position of the Cabinet rank by facilitating his election to the Assembly or Parliament or Governor's position to the State of Indian union.

Further, in the family life, Dr. Reddi lost his two 'Saha Dharma Charinis' (wives) - Smt. Padmavathi (the daughter of his maternal uncle) and Smt. Dr. V. Ramanamma (who was chosen by Dr. Reddi) were died prematurely in a short span of 40 years. While writing 'Foreword' to his book 'An Autobiography of Agarala Eswara Reddy', Sri Potturi Venkateswara Rao (Former Chairman, A.P. Press Academy, Hyderabad) noted that 'he could have become a Professor but did not opt for it, he could have practiced an Advocate and would have become a judge or a successful lawyer but did not, had he seriously pursued his civil services examinations he could have become a IAS or IPS officer but he did not!'

Unique qualities of Dr. Eswara Reddi

Dr. Reddi was intelligent, hard working, interested to share his knowledge with friends' students and colleagues. He was with a humanistic nature, practical idealist and benevolent attitude to others. He won the hearts of political leaders, government officials, academics and social scientists through his MAIPA activities. He was rightly recognized by all as an educationist with a deep sense of commitment and dedication. Dr. Reddi was a good planner and had team skills.



Further, he was an embodiment of good qualities such as simplicity, kindness, honest, disciplined, time keeper, gratitude towards specific individuals and truthfulness of action etc.

Dr. Reddi used to associate with the academia and researchers besides political leaders. Another important feature of Dr. Reddi was to maintain the public relations with all the people, who are associated with him. He used to express his gratitude and a warm feeling of thankfulness towards specific individuals, who have supported him personally and politically. In different occasions, he invited the personalities like Justice V.R.Krishna Iyer, Judge of the Supreme Court, Sri N.Ravi, Editor of the Hindu, Dr. V.Shanta, Director, Adayar Cancer Institute, Sri R.Venkataraman, Former President of India, Dr.Subhas Kashyap, Former Secretary General of Lok Sabha, Sri Bezawada Gopal Reddy, Former Governor of UP, Sri C.V. Narasimhan, ICS (Retd.) etc. He used to conduct the important Conferences and Annual days of the institute in big halls at Hotels lavishly by spending from his own sources.

Conclusion

There is one saying that 'Don't live as an ordinary person, Live as personality person, will die one day, but personality will live forever'. Thus, Dr. Reddi lived with personality, record of service and clean public image. Everyone appreciates that even at his 90's he was full of enthusiasm for public service, though his body was not so supportive. He was a rarest of the rare among the politicians. Due to his dynamism and commitment, he was keep on thinking that how to tap the position in a public office and help the people as much as possible for their development. It is true that in the post script of his Autobiography (p.184), Dr. Reddi stated that he doesn't have pessimistic outlook but he was not given what was due to him so that he could have helped some more people and facilitated for their good development. He further said that he led a contented and organized life and he wished that all the people of the state to lead a happy and contented life. After leading 87 years of full life and serving the people in different capacities, he left the world on 16th February, 2020. ■

Reference

Eswara Reddy, Agarala. An Autobiography: Agarala Eswara Reddy, Mudhra Prints, PP. 184.

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