

A TRIBUTE OF A COLLEAGUE

IT augurs well for Swaraj India that just as she has begun to launch upon planned reconstruction of her social economy, Sri V. Ramakrishna has come forward to place at her disposal his great resources in mind and money, immense experience of men and machine of administration and his genius for planning development and management and his boundless capacity to take the initiative and risks. Many of us who have had the privilege of knowing him for the past 40 years have only one wish that he should continue to be in the full possession of his extraordinary gifts and powers of imagination and construction for at least another quarter of a century to contribute his utmost towards the progress of our Country, prosperity of our people and happiness of our masses.

Very few of our great contemporary industrial builders of India have had such varied experiences and qualifications. Sri Ramakrishna was a District Collector and learnt to manage-offices and officers, to deal with critical situations arising from the impact of our democratic people with the administration and played the role of the top most medium between the representative ministry and

our masses. He was the Dewan, that is, the Chief Administrator of the biggest Zamindari of Jeypore, and did so much in such a constructive way during that decade to increase the forest and agricultural wealth and to improve the communications of that under-developed hilly area.

As the director of Industries of the Madras State, he broadened the foundations for the Sugar Manufacturing Industry and helped it to reach a high level of development. It was his foresight and industrial initiative which was responsible for the Government to make the successful experiments with the coal-gas as the motive power for driving motor cars and lorries and this stood us in good stead during the war when petrol shortage forced us to depend upon coal-gas. He was chosen by the Government of India as the Chief of the Labour Tribunal and Training Department for South India and he had the unique distinction of laying the foundations for the powerful chain of polytechnics, which are so useful today to our plan-minded State. He gained invaluable experience as Labour Commissioner and also as the head of the labour exchanges and of the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation of the Discharged Soldiers and learnt how to appreciate the labour view point, manage labour and offer them timely and honourable assistance and guidance. He became the supreme advisor for Planning and Development to the First Congress Ministry after the advent of Swaraj and was then able to assist it in inaugurating the famous Firka Development

Plan, which has led the way to the present Nation-wide programme of National Extension Scheme. He built up the administrative base for the Khadi Development Scheme. He began to give finishing touches to the State-wide plan for comprehensive economic development, which he had been visualising when he was the Director of Industries and Labour Commissioner. He was indeed the master-mind behind that Government. Through all these functions, Sri Ramakrishna was gaining and sharpening, what has now come to be one of his special merits; his extraordinary ability to convince in the shortest time the most hardened and highly placed Government officials, business magnates and technicians, about the practicability of what so often seem to be highly imaginative, speculative or risky industrial plans and ventures. By having been a member of the Central Assembly, State Assembly and State Upper Council, he has learnt how to view his plans, as legislators are inclined to.

I think it is the good fortune of our Country, that he chose to retire from the Civil Services just as the Government of India was becoming Plan-minded, because, India South of Vindhya has come to have her inspiring and exhilarating experience of industrial growth of the past eight years. Thanks to his contributions. The Government of India too has managed to gain much by drawing upon his ripe experience and bold advice and imaginative ideas for planning and development through the panels of the Planning Commission, the Sugar Development

Council and the Commerce and Industry and Food & Agriculture Ministries.

Sri Ramakrishna is an Indian par excellence of the Nehru type. He has no linguistic or communal inhibitions. He built up the Sugar and Ferro manganese and Associated Industries of Rayaghada in Orissa State and has had excellent co-operative relations with successive Ministries of Orissa. He is building up, what promises to be one of the most progressive and large scale machine-manufacturing, transformer and other large-scale Industrial Plant in Tiruvottiyur in Madras State; besides a Sugar-mill in one of the Madras districts. His colleagues are deeply interested in the Spinning Mills, Printing-Machine manufacturing at Coimbatore. His industrial interests in the Andhra State are expanding at a gigantic tempo.

Sri Ramakrishna has long ago realised—I think, it was in 1920-21 the fundamental role that Basic Industries could play in the development of our country. He has been dreaming, waiting so impatiently—all this time to make his contribution in this direction. He used to be so unhappy, when he was the Director of Industries at the prospects of so much of Sugar manufacturing machines and so much of petrol being imported from abroad, leaving with foreign countries so much of employment and profits, besides the valuable Foreign Exchange. He has been racking his brains as to how to get over this national disability. He used to tell me, as

we were both thinking of our national development, that we should learn more and more from Japanese achievements of diffusion of industries, minimising over-head expenses, and managerial top-heaviness and also reducing managements, dependence upon the environmental conveniences. He has been keen on picking up valuable points from the German, American Technical Organisational and Managerial achievements, but utilising them in India only after courageously and radically adapting them to our financial and managerial climates. He is convinced that we ought not to lay so much stress on capital, intensive-machine, intensive-equipment, in view of our deficiency in finance, machine-manufacturing and also know-how. He has now begun to work on these lines in the varied fields of industrial development he has undertaken to achieve. Many famous Foreign Industrial Concerns have been so much struck with his genius to telescope through the growing complexity of modern industrialisation and management, to go to the basically untied aspects of Scientific Development and Construction and to devise ways and means— almost on the spur of the moment— for achieving quicker and better results through the adoption of simpler or more manageable or cheaper means that they have invited him into partnership so that they could organise their own giant-concerns in India under his general supervision. It speaks volumes to the courage, self confidence and patriotism of Sri Ramakrishna that he has refused to accept such tempting offers, as so many richer, and traditionally equipped

industrial builders of our great commercial centres have done and to have had the infections, self confidence and national pride to build India's industrial foundations through her own resurgent Leader-ship.

I can think of only one other Indian technician-cum industrialist who can be said to be of the same calibre and patriotic but competent independence and interestingly enough, he too hails from South India ; he is Sri G. D. Naidu of Coimbatore. But he lacks the University training and cultural background of Edimburgh and Oxford, that Sri Ramakrishna was blessed with. He has not been able to develop the same abilities and opportunities of winning the cooperation of his fellow Industrialists, Administrators and the Ministries.

As is well known, the Andhra has been singularly unfortunate in the failure of so many of her industrial ventures. The few brilliant Andhras who had the courage to attempt to build large scale industrial enterprises were not able to advance beyond their initial ventures. It has been given to Sri Ramakrishna to successfully venture upon ever enlarging vista of industrial development of the State. He started with the K. C. P. of Vuyyur, one of the biggest and best managed and equipped Sugar-mill in India. Thanks to the wholehearted co-operation given to him by his colleagues on the Board of Management, by the Staff such as Sri Seetharama Rao, Venkataiah, M. L. A. Krishnamurthi Naidu, and by the patriotic labour; he was

able to build a number of associated industrial Plants, to utilise the bye-products of Sugar. Besides the manufacture of industrial Spirits, and Sweets, Sri Ramakrishna is planning to organise a Newsprint manufacturing plant to utilise the bagasse. It is under the auspices of this factory that he is building up the giant Cement Factory in Macherla to supply Cement to the Nagarjuna Sagar construction. Under the auspices of the Rayagada industries, he is setting up a Sugar mill in Repalle taluk of Guntur District. It is under his general leadership, that the Tanuku Sugar Mill was built up and one in Kovvuru, another in Challapalli are being raised. He has already begun the manufacture of the Sugar-mill machinery. He has plans for the construction of two or three small-powered Iron and Steel manufacturing concerns, to utilise the Andhra Iron-Ore and thus demonstrate that through the adaptation of Japanese methods to our conditions we can establish iron manufacturing concerns with much small capital-investment. He has begun work on the manufacture of Linotypes, Monotypes and Rotaries. During the second Five Year Plan period, I am Confident that Sri Ramakrishna will be able to make maximum contribution to South Indian development of basic industries, and thus supplement our Governmental efforts and add to the total national capacity to multiply national wealth.

Why do I feel so confident? Because Sri Ramakrishna is unique in getting 48 hours-work in 24 hours. Because he is capable of infusing strength, dynamism and

patriotic fervour into most of his colleagues and technicians and managers and even the rank and file of his workers. He is constantly think of and devising simpler, better, quicker, or cheaper methods of constructing or manufacturing. He is years ahead, in his thinking and studies and preparations for planning new ventures. He is nearly as good as the ablest 'know-how' experts of Germany or U. S. in understanding and mastering the technical side of the manufacturing aspects of the developmental work undertaken by him, thanks to his University First in B. Sc., (Pure Scienced) and M. Sc., (Mathematics) and his Oxford studies of Economics. There are few economists of India who have studied with such passion the theories and practices of industrial science over the past 35 years and so few industrialists who have tried to think about the economics of India and her industrial needs and competence. Many experts in Government of India's planning and construction set-up are amazed at the confidence with which Sri Ramakrishna had agreed to establish the Cement Factory within an year and is now about to achieve that within that impossibly short-time schedule.

This amazing man can achieve as much as a German or an American or a Japanese industrialist can. How? He has won the confidence of the Union and States Governments for getting things done quickly, honestly and constructively and so, they are glad to aid him in every way. He is admired by some of the best specialists of Germany, America and Japan and so, they are glad to share

their experiences and co-operate with him. He is so determined to make every venture taken up by him, achieve good results and treat decently the share-holders as well as the consumers that the capitalists as well as the Government-sponsored Financial Institutions are prepared to offer their financial assets to further his schemes'. He is so highly patriotic that all his industrial activities are organised only to promote national objectives. There are very few such patriotic specialists, with such a flair for constructive work and such a passion for adventurous achievements. I wish there were many more such giants.

Why am I so much taken up with this industrial magnate, when I am interested in the achievement of Democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj ideal, when I am trying to build up the Co-operative Sector within our Socialist pattern of Society and when I have been a life-long opponent to any system of exploitation, whether it be Capitalistic, or Communistic? It is because I am convinced that Sri Ramakrishna's real passion and mission in life is to serve our country, our people and enrich our national life and not so much to earn profits. Indeed profits have no special attraction for him. I have known him of for the past 37 years. It was he who introduced me to the thoughts, and books of European Socialist leaders and created in me an interest in both industrial construction and Socialist sense of service and justice to the people while we were at Oxford. I was with him when he fell

ill, because of his worry over the awful repercussions of the Mopilla Rebellion on "Swaraj within one year" crusade of Mahatma Gandhi. We both became devoted to Gandhijee's conception of Swaraj, both political and economic. It was because he was convinced that Swaraj India would need patriotic, efficient, honest and dynamic Civil servants that he was content to remain in the I. C. S. and encouraged me to prepare myself for the I. C. S.

Even today he is prepared to welcome India's progress towards Socialism. Indeed he is prepared to do his best to aid her to achieve Socialist Pattern of Society in a constructive manner. Nationalisation of any industry has no terrors for him because, he is convinced that it is a challenge to his creative capacity to venture forth into get other fields of construction as one industry after another is taken over by the State. He does not look upon the Governmental machine, as something of an opponent or a strange thing. He is only anxious that it should be more efficient and honest, more patriotic and constructive and he is willing to supplement its efforts. He has no interest in the exploitative side of private enterprise. He has great faith in cooperative ventures and has helped the Discharged Soldiers to start many co-operatives but he is afraid that too many of our co-operators lack the real cooperative spirit. He is a man of the masses, having sprung from a peasant family and being interested in the human-side of our villages although he is truly cultured in being highly scrupulous and public-

spirited. His passion for social justices, and service is exemplified by his membership and support to the Krishikar-Lok-Party, while it was functioning.

I am glad to say that I was one of the three Indian youths at Oxford in 1920 who came under his influence and that I used to feel that he evinced some special interest and faith in me. We used to go out everyday for evening walks, during that 1920 winter along the village roads around Oxford. During those walks, we used to have Socratic discussions as to how India could become free, how our villages could be regenerated, how the under-employment and unemployment problems of our landowning peasants and agricultural workers could be solved, and how industrial employments commercial openings would be necessary for the educated peasant youths to make a living outside agriculture. We shared common loves for our peasants and workers. We planned for industrial development. We longed for India the same degree of economic and technological development that we found in England and Europe. We were impatient to see our people grow, as the French and the British masses were progressing towards a Welfare State. I was much younger than him in age and much less mature in Western thought but within that one year, during those daily communions and through those studies, he helped me to grow into a patriotic and constructive-minded Socialist.

For many years, thereafter, our lives ran in different directions; himself through the Indian Administration

and myself through the Peasant and Nationalist Movements. But, that happy Oxford year of patriotic communion kept alive our bond of mutual faith and understanding.

That he remained true to his loyalty to Indian interests became known, when he was the Director of Industries and the Deputy Secretary of Government of India, and incurred the displeasure of the British industrial interests and their Government, because of his dynamic steps to develop Indian industrial enterprise. That he was so keen on honest administration was proved by his firm campaign against the racket of bus-owners in certain South Indian districts. That his love for peasants is as strong as it was when we were at Oxford was demonstrated in his treatment of the Sugar-cane growers, even as he was the Managing-Director of the Vuyyur Sugar Factory. He would not allow the interest of cane-growers to be sacrificed and so, he became the author of the famous SISMA formula, according to which the payment to the peasants would be in proportion to the Surose-content of the cane. He made this formula accepted by the South Indian Sugar Manufacturers Association and later on, persuaded the Government of India and the Central Sugar Development Council also to accept it. In this way he has sought successfully to protect peasants.

I recall one other instance in which Sri Ramakrishna pressed his constructive planning into the service of the poor peasants of the Jeypore hills. Finding that they

were being cheated by merchants in their agricultural marketing, he persuaded them to grow on a large scale for their own house-hold consumption, a kind of a root-crop like the tapioca, for which there was no market-demand but which would therefore be left with them for their nourishment even by merchants.

Similarly the affection he developed for labour while in England and under the influence of Socialist thought and also while he was the Labour Commissioner found concrete shape in several ways for the benefit of the workers in the Vuyyur Factory. The new housing colony constructed with the aid of Government is a model of its sort.

He is unlike most of our industrialists, in his belief and practice of ploughing back most of the profits into the industry itself. This is, in itself a service to the nation. He has created additional employment for easily five thousand workers in areas, where in the absence of this source, there could have been no other employment. He tries to encourage to the maximum degree, young people hailing from rural areas and more especially from peasant homes.

He is like so many of us, in his personal life; not caring so much for personal luxuries or ostentations but being entirely devoted to his work and mission in life.

Ofcourse he has his share of the foibles of the great, but they are mostly harmless to society and some of them are such as to provide a lot of mirth to his friends and associates.

It is indeed a romance how I started my Oxford students' career, with him as my Guru and how he has commenced his political career, thirty years thereafter with me as his Guru. One of my happy experiences has been to find this great and good man - a creative and constructive giant among us mortals-accepting the ideals of the Krishikar Lok Movement. To me, he is not merely an industrialist, but also a great builder, an efficient and far-sighted planner of our Swaraj India. He is above all a Humanist and patriot.

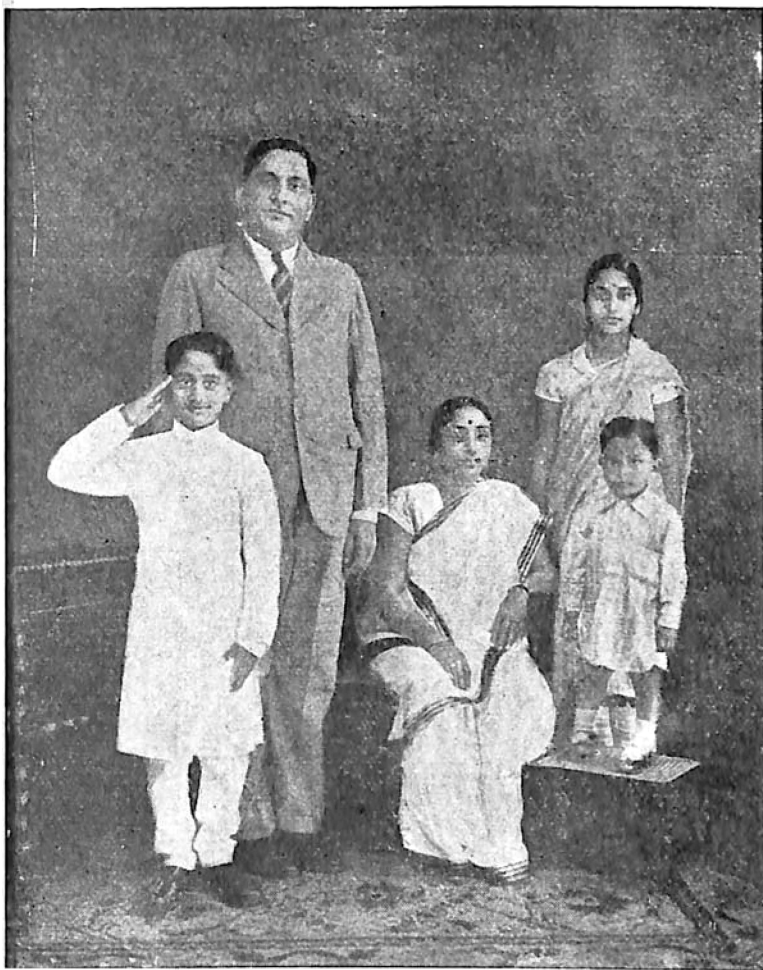
It is fortunate that he finds an admiring, loyal and affectionate Dharmacharini in my sister Srimati Durgamba. Let us all wish them full and happy life for Satabdi and let us also wish for much greater and more glorious services from him and his loyal and brave colleagues.

One word more for his colleagues, associates and peasants and workers. Theirs is indeed a charmed circle; because, to be able to keep pace with his giant strides both physically, financially and mentally and be willing to take the unimaginable risks and to place most of their profits at the disposal of nation-building ventures started by him is a great achievement on their part. To be able to understand the plans and dreams of such an idealist cum planner cum economic architect and to continue to support him needs greatness on their part.

Therefore they deserve the gratitude and congratulations of our country. I am proud of my 37 years of association with Sri Ramakrishna and I am happy to be able to count him as one of my greatest and most affectionate associates in our Krishikar-Lok Movement.



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Sri Ramakrishna's family

When he was in civil service.