

Dr. M. Channa Reddy

“I am indebted to the people and
The only way I could redeem my
Debt to the masses is to be born
Again in order to serve them”

Dr. M. CHANNA REDDY

A Brief Life Sketch Of Dr. M. Channa Reddy

Born on January 13, 1919, in a small village near Hyderabad, Channa Reddy had his schooling in Hyderabad, staying away from his parents from the tender age of five. He was a very bright child and showed great promise.

From an early age Channa Reddy nurtured a strong ambition to become a medical doctor so that it would make him ultimately economically independent to pursue his political work. Even from his student days Channa Reddy was involved with people and their welfare and problems. His intense political awareness was apparent right from that time.

Channa Reddy graduated from the Medical College with distinction and after a brief stint with Medical College with distinction and after a brief stint with the Hyderabad (Nizam's) Government Medical Department; he set up his own medical practice. Dr. Channa Reddy could not do justice, to his growing practice and the increasing urge of the people, to espouse their cause in their fight against repression, at the same time. He gave up his medical practice and plunged headlong into the turbulent waters of public life. There was no looking back after that.

First it was the Andhra Mahasabha – the earlier version of the State branch of the Indian National Congress, of which he was the General Secretary. His organizing capacity was very effectively demonstrated during the conference of the Hyderabad State Congress in 1946, when Dr. Reddy was only 27 years old. He came into contact and developed rapport with many senior leaders of the country. He journeyed to Delhi to seek the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi whose influence on Dr. Reddy was profound and has been lasting. A little later he launched a political weekly – ‘Hyderabad’ and used it very effectively to spread his message to the people.

The first big recognition that came Dr. Reddy's way was after the Hyderabad State became a part of the Indian Union and its members were invited to the Provisional Parliament of India –the Constituent Assembly, in 1950. At 31, Dr. Reddy was the youngest member nominated. All the stalwarts of the Indian freedom movement were members of that body. Within a week of his joining the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Reddy attracted the attention of Jawaharlal Nehru and other important leaders by his dynamic qualities and fiery speeches. He was at once nominated as a Party Whip. Dr. Reddy's speeches were so eloquent and penetrating that they attracted the front page attention of the country's leading newspapers like the Hindustan Times.

Thereafter, he was appointed as a Minister, at the age of 33, in the Hyderabad Government, after the first ever general elections on the basis of universal adult franchise in 1952, when he was successfully returned to the State Legislature. He was entrusted with the very difficult and delicate subjects of Food and Agriculture. That was the time when the food supply situation was very precarious and the insight that Dr. Reddy developed into the whole situation and the measures that he had initiated are a record that any politician would envy. He led an Indian delegation to the Conference of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers at Rome in 1953 and was deputy leader of the Indian Delegation to the F.A.O. Conference also at Rome in 1955.

Between 1957 and 1962, he was outside the Government but was very effective in the Legislature, heading various committees and making very useful contributions.

Between 1962 and 1968, Dr. Reddy was once again an important member of the State Cabinet and also the Central Cabinet of Mrs. Gandhi and held a very wide range of portfolios including Planning, Industries, Panchayathi Raj, Finance, Education at the State and Steel, Mines and Metals at the Centre. His contribution to the State of Andhra Pradesh and to the country during the tenure of the different offices that were held by him during this period has been monumental and awe-inspiring.

The period between 1968 and 1974 was a very significant one in Dr. Reddy's political life. During this period there was a great turmoil and tumult among the people of Telangana-one of the three regions of the state (Andhra Pradesh), as a result out of various grievances. This was followed by the formation of the regional party- Telangana Praja Samithi, the leadership of which ultimately fell on Dr. Reddy's shoulders. He led this party to a landslide victory (for the seats contested in that region) in the Parliamentary elections of 1971 over Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party, which literally swept the polls elsewhere in the country. This period established Dr. Reddy as an undisputed mass leader.

Dr. Reddy held the Office of Governor of Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in India, from 1974 to 1977 with distinction. The period immediately following his decision to quit the gubernatorial assignment in 1977 was a very significant one in the political life of the country and also to Dr. Reddy personally. The Congress Party was split, with a majority of the party men opting to stand by Mrs. Gandhi. Dr. Reddy had a significant role to play in this. This followed the developments that took place in the wake of Mrs. Gandhi's total defeat in the country's parliamentary elections in early 1977. Dr. Reddy led this Congress party to a handsome victory in the election to Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly. This was very significant because different parties opposed to Mrs. Gandhi were in power both at the national and state levels. Here is a quotation from a book published in 1979 by the University of London (Centre of South Asian Studies) "Political Identify in South Asia", from page 148 – "The victory can be only partly explained by the support Mrs. Gandhi still enjoys among Harijans and Backward Classes in Andhra Pradesh. (where the cruder policies of the Emergency were not implemented). It is also due to Dr. Channa Reddy having forged a coalition of enemies of both Brahmananda Reddy (then Congress President) and the (then) Chief Minister Vengal Rao. Last but not least Dr. Channa Reddy is a dynamic and skillful organizer of election campaigns (as he demonstrated in 1971 as leader of Telangana Praja Samithi)."

Dr. Reddy's contribution to Andhra Pradesh as Chief Minister has been outstanding. Never before had the state seen such a large number of development schemes conceived and implemented. The pace at which various plans were executed was indeed remarkable. All this was done in spite of heavy political odds and Dr. Reddy finally quit as Chief Minister in October 1980. The events leading to this and following this are now a part of history,

leading to the present – a total defeat of the Congress party in the elections to the State Assemblies (including Andhra Pradesh and neighboring Karnataka States) in January 1983. Meanwhile Dr. Reddy was offered a gubernatorial assignment in Punjab, which Dr. Reddy accepted in April 1982. Just nine months later (the normal term is five years) Dr. Reddy resigned as Governor of Punjab, on the very day of the polling to the State Assembly in January 1983 and returned to his home state to be with his people. Even when he was the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, (1974-77), when he was once described as “a restless swimmer in the ocean of comfort and pomp.”

From the day of his resignation or even from the day it was rumored in the press that he was contemplating to resign the question which is very prominently talked about and discussed all over the country is – “What are his political plans for the future?” When confronted with this question by the press, by his friends, by his well-wishers, by his followers, Dr. Reddy in turn seeks their advice. In a democratic set up the main test is the number of people one represents. Dr. Reddy wants to seek the opinion of as many friends, colleagues and followers as possible and only then shape his decision. Dr. Reddy has mentioned several times that he believes in God and wants to be guided by the people!

Dr. Reddy married Savithri Devi on May 3, 1936 and ever since she has been a great source of courage and support. She is a total picture of singular devotion and one rarely gets to see the like of her. She sees to everything that Dr. Reddy needs and to her this is the most important mission in life. Dr. Reddy, has two sons and a daughter. The elder son, Ravindra Reddy, is in the printing business. The younger son, Shashidhar is in poultry farming and feed business. Daughter Vasudha’s husband Sudarshan Reddy is also in the printing business besides packaging and chemical industry. Dr. Reddy has two grandsons and three grand-daughters to date.

When Dr. Reddy survived the Boeing Plane crash in Hyderabad on December 17, 1978, everyone thought that God, in his mercy, has given him a new lease of life so that he could render even greater service to the people and the nation.

**Excerpts from
“Dr.M. Channa Reddy Shastipoorthi
Abhinandana Sanchika”***

· A Collection of articles by various prominent personalities paying tributes to Dr. M. Channa Reddy on his 61st birthday in January 1979 and published in a souvenir.

*"Though trained for the medical profession. Dr. Channa Reddy was too restless to keep himself from entering into the pulse and passions of the political life. Believing that he had a party to play in the world of public affairs, he unhesitatingly plunged into its very mainstream. What amaze his political opponents is his extraordinary resilience and his uncanny ability to make his presence felt, even when he is seemingly espousing a lost cause."

**Dubbed a stormy petrel fairly early in his political career, Dr. Channa Reddy has shown a rare courage to make any sacrifice in the achievement of his objectives, which in historical retrospect appear impeccable in that they have tended to promote virtues, which the

people could ignore only at their peril –virtues, like self –sacrifice, self-respect and sense of justice. His political success has not been ‘a flash in the pan’ but the outcome of an agonizing, unremitting struggle for the realization of what in the ultimate analysis would make for dignified and progressive living for the people at large.”

*”His life is full of vicissitudes. He had to face a formidable opposition throughout his political career. Even to become a Secretary of the City Congress Committee in the early forties, he had to struggle. His own sound common sense and his sincerity had stood him in good stead. When giants strode on the political scene, Dr. Reddy watched their performance, their approach to problems and their ability in solving them. He has tried to imbibe their good points to advantage.”

*”One quality stood out prominently. The greater he is repressed, higher he rises. Any amount of calumny, organized attempts to eliminate him from politics could not succeed.”

*”What is taught by Gita is put into practice by Dr. Channa Reddy. He conducts himself in the true fashion of a karma yogi. He believes in doing his duty and leaving the rest to the Almighty. By regular Sadhana he has been able to maintain his physical vigor and dynamism. The clarity in his thinking, writing and expression is the envy of many.”

*”His outstanding trait is providing leadership. What is leadership? It is not everybody that can provide leadership. Mark Twain in his characteristic way had observed “An army of stags led by a lion is far superior to an army of lions led by a stag”. For every cause he has managed to collect an impressive following with concrete results. He has also shown resilience to changing situations. In the Telangana agitation of the early seventies, he showed outstanding political leadership.”

*”With dauntless valour he proceeds from one intricate detail to another in order to find a suitable solution to many a bunting problems relating to the uplift of the downtrodden and the needy. That birth is a sheer accident is amply proved, if one wants to know the humble origins of Dr. M. Channa Reddy. Destiny is neither created nor deleted by any other human agency, save the individual himself. Dr. M. Channa Reddy is the architect of his own life, guided by the inner dictates. What he deems to be the right action that alone is pursued.”

*”His intuition at times surpasses his intelligence. Decisions taken on such occasions have come to stay as important milestones in his life. He is brilliant as an analyst and silver-tongued as an orator in four languages- Telugu, English, Urdu and Hindustani. He gets emotionally involved with any topic instantaneously. The extempore speeches are quite an evidence of this unique trait in him. He reads a lot and thinks much more unlike many politicians, whose utterances are tailored to the occasion by the ghost writers.”

*”Knowing one’s own limitations is to know about one’s own strength. Dr. M. Channa Reddy never presumes his capabilities more than his limitations. That is why he is too proud to be humble.”

*”Ambition is the term often misconstrued to self-confidence and vice versa. Some venture, at times, to pronounce Dr. Reddy’s confidence as sheer ambition. Opinions differ according to personal motivation’s.”

*"Dr. Reddy's life is an uphill task, but worthy of emulation by posterity. Treading on the path of obstacles and unpromising circumstances, the progress he made is, indeed remarkable."

*"A leader should be able not merely to receive change but also anticipate it or even forecast it. But what distinguishes him most and marks him out from others is his ability to create change and, above all, to manage it successfully. And change not for its own sake. Dr. Reddy belongs to that category of leader statesmen for whom change is, to use Plato's language, the pursuit of virtue: change that will materially alter the quality of life. For him change is achievement, results a Promethean passion embracing every activity, every idea. And, in that passion, every moment for him becomes a life-time and every milestone yet another challenge."

"In this pursuit of change, power to Dr. Reddy is a means for its attainment, not a goal in itself. If power was an end in itself Dr. Reddy would not be spending restless day and nights to achieve results as if time was fast running out, but resting on his laurels."

"This desire to change things for the better has guided his endeavors throughout his political career. In this pursuit, he has always displayed a highly practical and pragmatic approach. Ideology has not blinded him, nor theories clouded his vision. He asserted recently at a function releasing a new range of domestic appliances, some of which are considered items of luxury, 'Socialism for me does not mean distribution of poverty. In a Socialist state of my dreams, I would like prosperity to reach every home.' This statement in a way sums up his social and political philosophy. Very few political leaders would have the courage to make such categorical statements, which can easily be distorted. Courage, Kennedy had said, is the stuff of which leadership is made of. Courage of conviction, courage to take the leap forward, courage to take two steps backward when necessary, courage to accept reality, courage to pluck success from failure etc. Courage in all these meanings, is one of the highlights of Dr. Reddy's character."

*"Another outstanding trait of Dr. Channa Reddy is his capacity for work. He seems to be working all the hours of day night and I do not know t this rate how long his reserves can stand. However, some men grow stronger with work and he seems to belong to that category."

*"Even his detractors no person is worth anything if he has no opponents and critics – grudgingly admit that ' he works like a galley slave' for 15 to 16 hours a day."

*"My association with Dr. Channa Reddy is rather limited: but then, it is not difficult to distinguish a jasmine from an onion flower, though both are white. The little I know him, only makes me to know more of him."

Working with him, I have learnt to admire and appreciate his daring, drive and dynamism, his mastery over facts and clarity of thoughts, broad vision, bold decision and prompt action. Complacency is anathema to him. Hard work is his lifetime habit."

*"Dr. Reddy is a very well-informed person. He is a mine of information on various subjects. He has an astonishing memory for certain things and he has mastery over the subjects he handles."

*"Dr. Reddy can be hard, even very harsh, and at times he is hard out to crack, but if you think that he can be vindictive or malicious, you will be disappointed. He loses temper when one is inefficient or casual, but his anger vapors away very quickly. He has so many and such frequent fits of magnanimity that at times one is inclined to feel that he follows the policy of 'forget and forgive' a little too liberally. He has a touch of relevant ruthlessness too about him which is, perhaps, necessary for a successful politician."

*"After nearly two and half decades, Dr. Reddy succeeded in becoming the Chief Minister by his own right and in his own steam . it is a saga of human endeavor and innate faith in his own destiny. He has inviolable faith in God's will and that is the reservoir of his strength."

*"A true leader must submerge himself in the foundation of the people.' Said Lenin. How true is this even today! It is more relevant in a democracy.

The test of any government – implementation of its policies and programmes and its success-lies in the quality of the leadership. On the capacity of the leadership to carry along with it the party, the opposition and the people, depends the success of a government.

Judged from this stand-point, Andhra Pradesh is indeed fortunate in having a leader of the caliber of Dr. Marri Channa Reddy. His dynamism, imaginations, quick thinking, speed in implementing, his displeasure at bureaucratic delays and procrastinations and, above all, his humanism stand out clearly in his administration."

*"The Special Employment Scheme it a novel venture and probably the first of its kind in the country. The response to it so far has been very enthusiastic and it is sure to go a long way in bettering the lot of the weaker sections.

One can see in this scheme as in myriad others, the healing touch of the feeling doctor that Channa Reddy has been and the driving force of the motivated politician- administrator that he still is."

*"The most scarce resource in India to-day is the politician-administrator. It is a matter of Pride for us in Andhra Pradesh that in the person of Dr. M. Channa Reddy the country has an eminent and perceptive politician-administrator.

He is not hide-bound, conservative and cautious, elusive and obscure, afraid of innovation and adventure, trailing the path of precedent, signing on the dotted line fortified by half-a-dozen other signatures. Far from conforming to the current images of a successful administrator, he is a man with vision, a living example of the concept of a developmental administrator, as the initiator and agent of change a catalyst and administrative reformer in the class of Cornwallis and Curzon, Arthur Cotton and Mountbatten, Rajaji and Sardar Patel, Legendary names, these: and linking Channa Reddy with them might make it sound a hyperbolic panegyric; but the aura of history a part , placing him in that class is based on solid factual data."

*"Being a medical man by training, he is methodical and meticulous in tackling the ailments of humanity with a missionary Zeal. It is possibly this facet of his personality that has captured and captivated the imagination and esteem of common men women in the countryside."

*"Like any other politician, Dr. Reddy is also a man with many faces. But, unlike them, he knows what face to display and when. I have watched him at work in a diversity of roles and my admiration for him increases with every new role that he chooses or is called upon to assume. He re-emerges again, always soaring higher and higher, with every 'kick' that he receives from Fate which is only another name for circumstances. Every crisis is God sent for him. He knows how to cash on it, not at the expense of others, but in putting to better use his own inherent strength and acquired skills. There are some politicians who are best kept in office and others out in the larger interests of the good of the nation. Dr. Reddy belongs to the former category because of his vision, drive and sense of social responsibility. Out of office he can be a serious embarrassment to any government, however strong and cohesive, because of his impatience with mediocrity and muddle-headedness. Essentially he is a rebel whom only power with responsibility can contain."

*"A vivid personality is always an enigma. Definitions of a personality generally satisfy only those who make them. It would be easy to pick up from the life and character of a man with such colorful life and conglomerate of the qualities that have endeared him to his colleagues. Dr. M. Channa Reddy is an incorrigible optimist, a great humanitarian, and friend of the people. Perhaps, I can best sum it up by saying that the very mention of his name elicits an affectionate and warm admiring smile. It goes without saying that the same name stirs ripples of scare and awe in the minds of his anti-poles."

Despite compelling emotions due to fights among motivated anti-poles, Dr. M. Channa Reddy retains perfect naturalness and honesty with himself. Always deeply involved in politics, he feels strongly, clearly and acts with high courage, never swerved by his own interests of the changing fashions of opinion. Political chicanery is foreign to his character. He sticks to his convictions. He hates all shams and hypocrisy. Living in the troublous times, he is the stormy petrel of politics, an enemy of selfish bureaucracy and a champion of the people against their oppressors."

*"The story of Dr. M. Channa Reddy makes real legend and lyric of sincerity and ballad of purposeful heroism. He enjoys every moment he lives, irrespective and unmindful of vicissitudes and fluctuations. Occasions are many, when he was isolated by the very people who pushed him into action, yet he turned the sod of impossibilities all alone and made the deserters realize their folly ultimately. Defeats outnumber the winnings in the game of politics. But he sports a smile on his countenance, always keeping above the privations and elations. For a man of purpose, what matters in the ultimate analysis is the good, not the pasture of traverse."

*"It will not be far too wrong to state that he is more an institution than an individual and a multifaceted personality. Over the years, he meant several things to several people. He denies any precise description both by his admirers and adversaries. He has been an enigma and a Chinese puzzle to his friends and foes alike, as he does not conform to any personality characteristic or pattern. But it cannot be denied that he is original in outlook,

incisive in intellect, sharp in reacting to a situation and a strategist par excellence with an element of suspense and surprise to baffle even his staunch supporters.

Another fact that is sometimes overlooked is that Dr. Reddy is simple, sincere, service-minded and singularly devoted to the welfare of the State and its people. He is deeply religious and a great votary of Vedic traditions and culture of this great country.”

*”The most striking feature of Dr. Reddy is that even in adverse circumstances, he never loses his cheerfulness and remains ever willing to serve the people in some capacity or other. He has unshakable faith in God. There have been many occasions when his indomitable courage and righteous action had converted the most hostile crowds into docile gatherings, the moment he rushed into them singly to the dismay of his supporters.”

*”He placed great faith in truth and frankness – a rare virtue for a politician.”

*”Whichever position or office he held, Dr. Reddy held each one of them with distinction and left an indelible impression of his ability and efficiency.”

“The life of Dr. M. Channa Reddy is a profile in courage and principles; a life of solid achievement in whatever high position he was placed. He had not sacrificed his principles for expediency.”

*”Reform should be brought about with a vision coupled with proper direction. Progress thus becomes the synonym for reform. The leader is mature. Whose personal vision relates itself to the problems of collectivity. Dr.M. Channa Reddy is endowed amply with such vision which has endeared him to the masses and leaders as well.”

*”Even his severest critics-there are quite a few of them-concede that there is at the base of all his public activity, incredible courage, generous impulses a fierce hatred of humbug and sham and, above all , a tenacity of purpose that brooks no interference from any quarter.”

*”His rare gifts of oratory whether it is in English, Telugu< Hindi or Urdu-personal magnetism, remarkable foresight have made Dr. M. Channa Reddy an outstanding leader, loved and respected by one and all.”

*”To be an astute politician and parliamentarian a distinguished and dedicated minister of government, an eloquent speaker, a successful Governor and an unflinching champion of the down-trodden and under-privileged classes would seem too idealistic to be realizable. Yet such is Dr. Channa Reddy, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and his present position is but yet another milestone in his distinguished political career spanning over four decades.”

*”Dr. Reddy is a rare combination of a thinker, a visionary, a manager, an administrator, a politician and a statesman. This is what marks him out as the Man of Destiny,”

*”The Indian society is casting off its old garments, standards, aims and institutions which were generally accepted even a generation ago. Old motives are weakening and new forces are springing up. Anyone who has an insight into the mind of the changing age is

vividly conscious of its restlessness and uncertainty, its dissatisfaction with the existing economic and social conditions and its yearning for the new social order which is yet to be realized. It is in this context that one has to look at the impatience or 'restlessness' of Dr. Channa Reddy. He has an uncanny knack of combining knowledge that delves into the past with a large and free outlook that would make the past a tributary to service of the present and the future.

*"Where temporal authority is vested, it must be exercised and exhibited. It is a symbol of our sovereignty – a promise for our future. Dr. M. Channa Reddy lived like a Governor and acted like a Governor and Uttar Pradesh remembers him with great love and affection."

*"The statesman-like rapport that Dr. Reddy developed with the people of the North and the South, his scholarly proficiency in the major languages of our country and his abiding faith in the Almighty, will elevate him to the galaxy of our national leaders. His emotional involvement in the materialization of the irrigation and power projects in the State and his deep commitment to achieving socioeconomic progress would spur him to further action in making a reality of the cherished national water and power grid in the realization of his above dreams, Dr. Reddy's razor –sharp intellect, memory of an elephant and courage of a lion would stand him in good stead. His endless efforts to build a new India, with socioeconomic prosperity for the poorest man of our country, may be described in the words of H.W. Longfellow-

"The heights of great men reached and kept
We're not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
We're toiling upward in the night"

*"Dr. Reddy is never reluctant to measure words with the mighty. But he plans his political strategy very well. He knows how to advance and make a thrust, but is equally good in the art of masterly retreat if the occasion demanded it. It can be safely said that in his case, the best is yet to be. He is a remarkable man in many ways. He is a hero in his own right."

*"Of great many people, a few can recognize a problem; still fewer are the people who are capable of thinking of a practical solution to the problem –rare and fewer still are those who can see a problem, devise a solution and put it into action. Such is the man Dr. Channa Reddy."

My Conviction is that our
Glorious past should dovetail
Into a more glorious future.

DR.M. CHANNA REDDY

