CHAPTER-I

Childhood and Early life
Carlyle said that history is nothing but the biography of great men. He laid great emphasis on the role of great men in history who were depicted as being really responsible for moving the wheels of history. It is really applicable to Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy. N. Sanjeeva Reddy played his role in his own way in shaping the country. He belonged to the galaxy of outstanding leaders produced by the Indian National Movement. No leader in political life is fully understood and universally appreciated by his countrymen, especially in a democracy which is centered in party government. Distance of time will always lend a clearer perspective for a true assessment of one’s services in the field of public life. So it is with Dr. Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy. The true value of work and leadership will be fully recognized by posterity when the heat and dust of the controversies in contemporary politics settle down.

His career in politics has proved the well known maxim “slow and steady wins the race” His instance established that a common peasant from the farmland can become the president of a Nation.

That this man of self-made success slowly rose from a humble starting point to prestigious posts of political power and eventually climbed to the highest position in India-President ship is an illustration of the common man’s conquest of life with will and skill. He had none of the advantages which flow from affluence and ancestry. Nor did he have, a good-father to help him by ‘pull’ and ‘push’ and give him a ‘lift’. He rose to eminence by his own ceaseless effort, creative genius and sacrifice for the sake of cherished ideals.
which overcame all difficulties and every adverse circumstance. After a short spell of political oblivion Dr. Reddy marched to Delhi straight from his farm to occupy the Rashtrapathi Bhavan, with his memorable elections as president of India in 1977. For astonished outsiders it was indeed an act of God nothing short of a miracle; and it yet it was not an impossible feat in the eyes of those who know Dr. Sanjeeva Reddy’s prowess and perseverance. The first important factor which influenced Sanjiv Reddy’s character was his family background. He was born on May 19, 1913 in a rich and enlightened “Kisan (agriculture)” family of a remote village, Illuru in Anantapur district. His ancestors were traditionally village “Munisiffs”. His father, Tarimala Chinnappa Reddy and his maternal uncle Tarimal Subba Reddy (Father of Nagi Reddy, a farmer communist leader) were also village “Munisiffs” of their respective villages, Illuru and Tarimela. Even today his family has the privilege of “HEADMAN” over his village community. They also enjoyed the right of “ISUMDAR”. Moreover these two families (Neelam and Tarimela) were influenced by Gandhian ideals.

Sri Sanjeeva Reddy’s father, Sri Chinnappa Reddy, with a desire, to give him value-oriented education, admitted Sri Sanjeeva Reddy for primary education in Adayar School, Madras, one of the famous institutions run on the lines of Tagore’s Shanti Niketan, where most of the young leaders of the future were shaped. It was a school that nurtured free thoughts in its pupils.
When Sri Reddy was studying in Adayar School, he had broken his right hand while playing Hockey. Fearing that his father would withdraw him from that famous school, Sri Reddy did not write a letter to his father about what happened. However, his father came to know everything about it, and withdrew him from the school. The spiritual atmosphere of the Theosophical School had an early impact on his mind. Annie Besant was then in the thick of the Home Rule Movement. Sanjiva Reddy had inclination towards spiritual views and spiritual thoughts. These must have helped him in strengthening his mental power self confidence and self control.

He had his collegiate studies in the long-established and ever-popular Government Arts College, Anantapur, the only college in Rayalaseema then. Even during his collegiate days he used to give evidence of his leadership qualities and a sense of restlessness at the prevailing state of affairs during the oppressive British rule.

Sanjeeva Reddy had an early experience of Gandhi "Darshan" when he attended along with his father and uncle a public meeting addressed by the Mahatma at Tadipatri in 1921. His father and uncle got impressed with the Gandhiji’s programme of non-cooperation and the ‘Triple Boycott’ as the means and the instruments for achieving the goal and immediately enlisted themselves as the followers of the ‘prophet freedom”. Later these two brothers-in-law with the direction of Pappuri Ramacharlyulu, first guru of Sanjeeva Reddy propagated the Gandhian ideals. They made their own ‘Singanamala’
Firka\textsuperscript{3} as a centre to implement Mahatma Gandhi's Village re-construction programme. They established contacts with the other village officers and exhorted them to follow Gandhian ideals. Further, they did yeoman service for the propagation of Khadi Movement. With the help of the workers they used to weave the Khadi in their homes and wore them. He has imbibed the qualities of his father and uncle and also adopted their ideal way of life. Thus he became an adherent to the Gandhian ideals.

Another event which brought good reputation to their family in Rayalaseema was their achievement over "\textit{Devarla movement}"\textsuperscript{4}. There was a superstition of sacrificing animals to the village goddesses. In those days the tendency of sacrificing animals increased year by year. Holy temples used to drench with the blood of the animals completely. Though there were reactions from all the corners no-body dared to stop it and so it continued unabated for years. The elders of Sanjeeva Reddy took bold steps against the animals sacrifice and sent letters to each and ever village Munisiff asking them to prevent the practice of the sacrificing of animals. Later with the cooperation of the local ryots, they opposed the British attitude of double taxation over pennar ryots and organized no-tax campaign.

The secret behind their success in all these movements was nothing but their close relationship with almost all the Munisiffs of the villages of Rayalaseema\textsuperscript{5}. Thus with all their dedicated efforts and services towards
national movement these two families got a political significance as the first nationalist families in Anantapur District.

Sanjeeva Reddy belongs to a group of professional politicians who are self-educated like LalBabhu Sastri, Kamaraj and Atulye Gosh etc. According to Koch neck, a famous political scientist "the generation which stands out most sharply in the educational category is the generation of the thirties, which was caught up in the Gandhian Boycott of schools and was drawn predominantly from the rural areas." Therefore, it shows the lowest educational attainment. When he was a student at Anantapur Arts College he was caught in the whirlwind of the Swarajya movement and gave up his studies in 1931 to become the follower of Mahatma Gandhi. As a responsible citizen of this country what Sanjiva Reddy had done is right. It indicates his selfless patriotism. "He did not regret to give up his collegiate education in favour of service to the country". He used to say "I am not a college graduate but I am a graduate in life, that is what my colleagues in the movement said".

The next important factor which moulded Sanjeeva Reddy's character was his active participation in the national movement. As an young active soldier of the freedom movement he followed his father and uncle, who were inspired by Mutnuri KrishnaRao (Editor of KrishnaPatrika) and Kalluri SubbaRao (Anantapur district congress leader) and propagated the national movement among the masses. It was in the same year Sanjeeva Reddy's father passed away and the entire family responsibility fell on his shoulders. He had
to look after his agriculture and also discharge his responsibilities of a village Munisiff. Even though he was a farmer he never stayed aloof from the political parties. After two years as a village Munisif he could not compromise with British officials and this became a great hurdle for his future programme. So as a sincere freedom fighter he submitted his resignation. His uncle Subba Reddy who was aiming at bringing up his son Nagi Reddy got despaired with his son’s involvement in leftist politics. So he favoured Sanjiva Reddy and encouraged him in every political step which he attempted during pre-independence era. Sanjiva Reddy married Smt. Nagarathnamma who was daughter of Tarimela Subba Reddy on June 08-1935.

The first phase in the political life of Sanjiva Reddy started with organization of Ryots (farmers) association at Singanamala and district youth association at Anantapur. The youth league under his leadership propagated the national movement in the rural areas of Rayalaseema. As president of the league he maintained seventy study circles and also opened a summer school at Hindupur. Political students from different regions joined the summer school and were trained in the field of economics, politics and industrial studies. Thus he had his apprenticeship in organizational work and displayed his qualities for leadership which in later political life proved so advantages and helpful to him. His active participation in national movement and his understanding of national problems naturally led him to the level of a collective leader and became an inspiration of the youth of the day.
Another factor which helped Sanjiva Reddy to mould his character and to become a respected leader of the people was his humble beginning as a rightist in the congress organization. Though the Justis party was not in majority, the rich people in Rayalaseema were in support of it who practically dominated the entire political scene of the region.

Pattabhi Sitaramaiah* (rightist leader) was popularly known as Pattabhi, wanted to suppress the leftist movement in Rayalaseema. While touring Rayalaseema he searched for an young leader from a noted politically conscious family to neutralize and encounter the Justis party. As leader of the youth league, Sanjeeva Reddy accompanied Pattabhi and addressed the gatherings at different places of Rayalaseema. Pattabhi soon realized Sanjiva Reddy's whole hearted patriotism and keen interest in public and political affairs and blessed him for his success. Thus he became a strong follower of Pattabhi. Later he was unanimously elected as APCC joint secretary. From then onwards Sanjiva Reddy remained as a rightist in the congress organization.

The ideological differences and factionalism in congress as right and left wings polarized into different groups. Similar changes had occurred even in the family of Sanjeva Reddy. Sanjiva Reddy, Rajasekar Reddy (brother of Sanjiva

* Pattabhi Sitaramaiah was author of history of Indian National Congress. He was defeated by Subhash Chandra Bose in 1939. He became president of Indian National Congress in 1948.
Reddy and ex secretary of the CPI party) and Nagi Reddy were all brought up together under one roof. But they joined different groups. According to C.V. Bhargava” Sanjiva Reddy is the least emotional of them all. He is almost placid, rarely perturbed of positive purposes and not given to the ways of agitation. If he wanted to, he too, could have acquired the knack of mouthing Marxist slogans. His I.Q. is none the worse for being a congress man from the start14.

At the end of the Second World War, caste and party politics slowly crept into the congress organization, and thereby polluted its purity considerably. Inside, a personal rivalry raged between two prominent Telugu Brahmin politicians, Pattabhi and Prakasam (leftist leader) 15. Though SanjivaReddy was a strong follower of Pattabhi he never opposed Prakasam. He had his own regard for Prakasam. Regarding his relationship with Prakasam he once said, “Towards him I always maintained a certain reverential aloofness” and that “in his massive presence one felt like a child16”. During 1946 and 1953 they were in opposite camps. Though he was distant from him politically, Reddy always respected the ‘Andrakesari’. Thus he followed both Prakasam and Pattabhi and considered them as political gurus.

Following the Ramagarh AICC resolution, the APCC met on 19th October, 1940 at Anantapure. It discussed and checked out an intensive programme towards Satyagraha movement. It was in this conference, Sanjiva Reddy favored individual satyagraha and himself decided to participate as
“satyagraha”. At that time, it was fortunate too for the nation that Gandhi was allowed to remain free, to control, direct and organize the movement. Gandhiji after careful scrutiny of the lists submitted by the district committees made certain drastic changes by taking into account the personal life of certain members. There were very few whom Gandhiji permitted to offer individual satyagraha, but among the few was SanjivaReddy, the youngest political soldier to participate in this campaign.

On December 21, 1940 at 6 p.m. the District congress members and nearly five thousand neighbours’ gathered at Chennakesava temple at Illuru to see Sanjiva Reddy, as “satyagrahi”. The superintendent of police who was on the spot immediately arrested SanjivaReddy and handed him to the Deputy collector of Anantapur who sentenced him for six months rigorous imprisonment and with a fine of Rs.500/- or in default to undergo further imprisonment for six months. He was detained in the Vellore and Tiruchinapalli jails. Whatever might be his experience in jails, he had an opportunity to have an “Association with aged”. After his release he was immediately arrested under the Defense of India’s rules and kept in detention again in the Vellore jail from 31st June 1941 to 18th March 1942. In this connection, Sanjiva Reddy had a painful recollection “I was literally released and rearrested at the same time. It was a painful experience not because I was immediately rearrested but because I could not greet my wife and two little children who had come all the way to welcome me but who had to run away.
even without having a word with me. Re-arrest was a rare phenomenon. The British rearrested Sanjiva Reddy because of his prominence in the congress organization.

After his release from jail, Sanjiva Reddy attended the AICC meeting at Bombay in his capacity as joint secretary of the body. While he was returning with determination of making Quit India movement a grand success he was arrested in the train itself he was travelling in somewhere near Bombay and was taken to jail and kept detained till January, 1945, in the Vellore and Amravati jails. During his long stay in the jails he had the unique opportunity to interact with the top ranking leaders of the freedom movement. He utilized his time in reading and in understanding the organizational and governmental problems and thus cultivated national outlook. In jails he had been silently studying personalities, the things and the interests on the political stage. In short, he learned infinitude of things during this period of political apprenticeship.

Later Sanjiva Reddy turned his attention to implement constructive programmes in the villages. He opened camps in several places to train volunteers to go round the villages and formed special committees to look after the problems dealing with Ryots, laborers and Harijans. These activities endeared Sanjiva Reddy to the masses and provided a firm base for future political rise.