CHAPTER VI

THE LEGACY OF SUBBA RAO
When Subba Rao passed away on 26th December 1973, he was acclaimed by one and all not merely a freedom from Rayalaseema, but also an elder Statesman of Andhra desa. There cannot be two opinions about this view because, Subba Rao's own life and struggle for over half-a-century in the cause of the nation itself is proof of his high legacy. Subba Rao was not an individual, he was an institution. From his youth he had made the Country's service his religion and his patriotism was no narrow cred. It is impossible to think of a single public movement in which he was not to be found. By his death was left a void in the public life of Andhra Pradesh which could never be filled. But providence so willed that before he left us he made a rich and priceless legacy to the country. His was a precious legacy of a high and selfless patriotic endeavour.

One may judge him by any standard and one will come to the conclusion that he was great. His ardent patriotism did not, confine his unexhaustible energy to any particular channel, but found avenues for useful work in almost every sphere of life which goes to build a nation. He loved his country intensely and worked for it incessantly and unselfishly.

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He translated his patriotism into several concrete things. Neither domestic responsibilities nor physical sufferings nor his long terms of prison life could prevent him from his unflinching service to the country and his region. He was a Karma Yogi. He was a man who would make no compromise at the expense of ideals. So, his life was one of constant conflict. Almost every movement, every segment of the population in his region found a friend in him.

Sagara Rao the Man

Sri C. Rajagopalachari, the former Premier of Madras Presidency once said about Kalluru Subba Rao these words:

‘Sri Kalluru Subba Rao is really the greatest of the great born in Andhra. He is not only extremely patriotic in his activities, but he is full of integrity and moral values and common sense.’

Sagara Rao was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He was an ordinary and simple man. But there were certain qualities in him which made his rise to be one of the foremost leaders of our days. He was a rare person, ‘who feels most and acts best’. The Vijayanagar culture pattern and its lingering mood formed his emotional core.

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He combined in himself the religious fire of Swami Vivekananda, the moral fervour of Gandhi, the political vision of Tilak and the practical genius of Nehru. Subba Rao was a giant of a man in the best traditions of the Indian Renaissance. He was a profound student of public affairs, philanthrophist and a great social reformer. He had in him that tireless self-transcending power which is the true element of a pioneer. Subba Rao is the most agreeable because he is the least pretentious. Once he took a group of visitors to his native Kalluru and said 'Sixty matriculates of this village are settled down in good jobs outside. I am still a hanger-on because I am a non-matriculate'.

Deeds of heroism as the one he exhibited as a school boy in rescuing a class-mate from the tank at personal risk, typified his character. He reacted sharply to the call of danger. In the grim hours of upheaval he did not renounce the honour of his country.

The most striking fact of the Saga of his life was his austere and self-sacrificing discipline. By the time he entered the freedom movement, he was already married. His parents were very old. There was not much hereditary property. What little he had also gradually began to decrease by 1925. His family was in debts. But in the

midst of such bad conditions Subba Rao never lost his
spirits. If only he had given up politics and public service
there was every chance of his family getting rid of the
debts incurred. But finally he decided to sell away some
of his lands, clear the debts and not to get into debts
again. Simultaneously Subba Rao also took a fine decision
not to give up political life and public service under
any circumstances.  

Subba Rao never put his personal or family interests
above the calls of the nation. He neglected his wife who
was ill and turned away from his children who needed his
help. He seemed to work out his political destinies at the
expense of his family. His prison life tore then apart
seven years. Once he found the kitchen were not lit and
his wife, who was expecting a baby, did not have a crust of
bread for days. He searched his pockets and found a
four anna coin. He tried to buy rice, but failed. When
his wife considered her hunger nothing before his service
to the nation, tears rushed into his eyes. Subba Rao knew
that his wife died in circumstances of hunger and neglect
which made him feel guilty. But she had only become a star
to light the path her Gandhian pilgrim. His wife
Laxmanamma never used to reveal these facts to any body.

6. Y.C. Krishnamurti, The Gandhian Pilgrim, Kallur
However the Congress workers came to know about the family conditions and used to supply voluntarily the necessary food stuffs.

On the death of one of his sons, when his friends tried to console him, Subba Rao used to say people should weep for those who were living and struggling and not for those who were dead. He lost his wife when he was just 40 years old. She died of consumption, Subba Rao was at the prime of youth, quite strong and healthy. But he finally decided against a second marriage and turned down the requests of his friends and relatives. He preferred to be remain a widower for the rest of his life that he might serve the nation better. During his last days he was attacked by paralysis. His family was in bad straits to meet even the medical expenses. Only towards the end some freedom fighters' pension was sanctioned to him while in public service in active politics he never aspired for any power and position. His disciplined life was a boon to many younger generations.

A Leader of Leaders

Subba Rao was leader of rare qualities and high moral calibre. In the early days of his career he came under the spell of Annie Besant and Tilak. Later Gandhi had an irresistible appeal to him. He became his faithfully discipline. Rao's ideal was Indian Nationalism for which
he worked, suffered and died. To his patriotism went an immense love of liberty and justice and the happiness of all. At a public meeting at Anantapur in 1936, he declared that any body could become a leader as a result of education and wealth but leadership without character cannot last long.  

It was this soul force which Subba Rao injected into the national movement and thus elevated it to the level of an inspiration and ideal which could move individuals stir the masses to the great sacrifices in the case of the motherland - the cause of right and justice. A lover of justice, equality and freedom, Subba Rao hated the distinction based on race and caste. He called upon his fellow citizens to unite, regardless of their religion, province, sect, language, caste and profession. He was fearless and forthright. He boldly declined to betray his fellow country men the, Reddies even before a ruthless bureaucrat like Rubherford. He was a staunch Hindu, but never a Communalist. He was a friend of all. He was a man of the masses. He spoke to them in their language, so powerfully and intelligibly.

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8. Personal interview with I. Sadasivan (Freedom fighter), Anantapur, 12.11.1936.
Subba Rao, above all, was a born leader of men. He could assuage their passions. Even now his speeches are of enormous interest to the readers and nothing will nourish better the roots of democracy than his ideas. He taught the doctrine of self-reliance of action, unity and the new spirit of courage. He vitalised the Congress in the district level. His patriotic fervour generated in the young followers a love for the country and public service. He was the political guru of future leaders and patriots like Sri Sanjeeva Reddy, Sri Damodaran Sanjeevaiah and Vidwan Viswan9.

A Constructive Genius

Subba Rao was not leader of the ordinary level. He was highly constructive and practical. He made the people think and act. He was not an imitator but an innovator. He was devoted to his Indian heritage and believed in the possibility in both the cultural and political spheres so as to remake India in her own image. He was a man of vision. He submitted a blueprint for the economic development of Rayalaseema. In the forums of legislature he voiced the grievances of the voiceless and fought for their rights.

He was one of the pioneers of Indian politicians to deal with problems of farming, agriculture, welfare the peasants and irrigation. For his social reforms were not a fad, but a creed based on Social justice. His Seva Mandir and Keesava Vidyashram were products of his creative genius. It was not easy for him to accept Communism as a panacea for India's ills.\(^\text{10}\).

**A Man of Vision**

Subba Rao dreamed of creating a brave new world on the bed rock of Neo-Gandhism. He believed that nothing grows in this world without its proper environment. He asked how could man develop his best self in the shrinking realms of mind and spirit. When the well-springs of love and truth were poisoned men turned to the apparatus of horror. He rightly believed that ignorance, crudities, greed and famine were due to man's imperfect understanding of himself and nature. It was the impact of Science on society and the eloquence of truth that could prevent his freakish escape into new traps and nostrums.\(^\text{11}\).

Was the forward-looking mind of Subba Rao a hinterland of despair. A crude question perhaps, but it is provoked...
by the picture of the inner man. In moments of political
cynicism, he develops spiritual certitude. When there is
tumult in his soul he politically braced. His eccentricity
is subtly revealed in his desire to break the surfaces of
daily life. When the crucial moments are gone, he plunges
into fantasy. He escapes to Hardwar without money. He
has both a nostalgia and distaste for a life surrounded by
familiar symbols. His flight from realism soon ends in a
recovery of his dynamic self. He is more conscious now
of all the layers of Society, their charm, heat and
conflicts. Thus his life view gains in its maturity and
can capture the toxic atmosphere of the day\(^12\).

In Subba Rao there appears to be a failure of vision
and the contradictions of mood. It is difficult to predict
his mood or movement. This may be due to his enormous
vitality or a sensitive reaction to environment. When
the air is rife with rumours of his ministership he shows
no desire at all. Next moment he is in Anantapur rubbing
his Alladin's lamp for a Railway ticket. This kind of
uncertainty and lack of stability is characteristic of
revolutionaries. Such hero types dazzle the country when
there is a fusion of their insight and discipline. The
coherence of their plans vanish when they are in the grip of

forgiving sensations. Viewed in this light, the career of Subba Rao is the story of heroic and forgiving impulse.13

Adventure had been the key note of his whole life and activities. He derived his strength of ideals from it. As his idealism had never its limits we can see the exciting events of his life in perspective. He was buying stones as it were in advance for his blue prints. Some at least of the gathered stones must build an obvious land mark of our history. The achievement of Subba Rao is the man himself. He will retain till the end his almon-drakrant life-urge and its consequent strength.14 He was indeed a Gandhian pilgrim.

A Symbol of Integration

Subba Rao was a patriot par excellence. His only aim of life was to see India free and remain united. He worked for the attainment of his goal, acted according to demands of the day and the dictates of his conscience. When the country needed agitators to rouse public opinion, he played the leading role. When the country needed reformers, he worked heart and soul for social uplift and reform. When non-cooperation was regarded as the only method to attain Swaraj, he participated in it. Throughout his life he played the mediator and tried to unify the different forces for the country's cause.

One of his best assets was the capacity to make friendship with one and all. He had the best of friends in the composite state of Madras among the Tamil leaders. He had royal followers in parts of Andhra, Karnataka and Madras. His mother tongue being Kannada, he was able to speak fluently in that language. Mysore leaders like K.C. Reddy, Hannumantappa, Nigalingappa and K.T. Bashear were his great friends. He was in great demand to address Congress meetings in Mysore. During the Constituent Assembly days he made friends with the eminent leaders of North India. They all liked his simplicity, fervour and constructive leadership. They visited Rayallesens and Anantapur at his behest. The Government honoured him with Padma Chakri, Tamara patra and so many pensions. They all looked so poor compensation for the selfless sacrifices of the man who had only the nation's welfare at his heart.

**The Legend and Legacy of Sibba Rao**

The name of Sibba Rao has become a legend in the history of freedom struggle in Rayallesens. The legacy which he had left behind is precious and footprints on the sands of time to the coming generations. He was a king maker, but never aspired to be the king himself. He was the most unselfish patriot of his time. He

was frank and fearless. He was a first class orator and sacrificed everything for the nation. He treated his associates like his own sons and wanted to make them a leader like himself. He had clear ideas about the development of Rayalaseema. His philosophy of education was rooted on the needs and culture of the country.

Subba Rao was a man of multifarious activities and a many-sided personality. His nationalistic thought was but a synthesis of many socio-political and economic strands of ideas. The present generation owes and the generations yet to come shall always owe a debt of gratitude to a patriot like him whose memory can be kept alive only by emulating his example. Truly speaking, he served his country at the district and national levels with his pen and tongue, from inside the legislative and from outside. The goal of a united and powerful India, was also the India was also the India of Subba Rao's dreams.