CHAPTER-3

A PROFILE OF RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE
Doddamane Ramakrishna Hegde is one of the most precious contributions of Karnataka to the national leadership in India. He is one of the greatest assets of Karnataka. Ramakrishna Hegde had experienced pre-independent India, suffered her innumerable sorrows and problems, and then could present to the post-independent generation a beautiful India. His dreams were conceived in pre-independent India and they were realised in the post-independent period. He dedicated his whole life to the cause of rural India's revival and tried to realise the dream of Gandhiji,Though a politician, he was a social reformer, a protagonist of rural life, a loyal discipline of national leaders like Mahatma Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Vinobha Bhave. Ramakrishna Hegde's entire life was based on the Gandhian ideology.¹

Ramakrishna Hegde was a full life. Born into a family of freedom fighters he was committed to society and the poor. Worked for the welfare of rural India. Many are the facets and dimensions of Hegde's life. Each of which is colourful and each of which is a power that has changed the pace of national life. As the freedom

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1. In an interview with the Researcher in February 2000
fighter lawyer, president of district congress, journalist, writer, intellectual he has served the Nation.

BIRTH CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

Ramakrishna Hegde hails from the North Canara District of Karnataka. His family was famous in the District by the name of "Doddamane for the role it played in the freedom struggle of Karnataka. This family plunged into the freedom struggle to the call given by Mahatma Gandhi during 'NO TAX' campaign. Ramakrishna Hegde was born on Aug 29 1926 to Mrs saraswathi and Mr. Mahabaleshwara Hegde. He had his school education in the Taluks of Sirsi and Siddapur of North Canara district. During his high school days he visited the ashram of Acharya Vinobha Bhave along with his sister Mahadevi. Here he was attracted to the Gandhian way of life. He was graduated in law from the Benaras Hindu University, Benaras.

ENTRY INTO PUBLIC LIFE

Ramakrishna Hegde began his lawyer profession in Sirsi and also entered into political life at the age of 27. He showed in the beginning itself that he was a politician with a difference. He started

2. Challenges faced by Hegde by srivatsa Hegde 75 Felicitation committee. Bangalore, 2001 p.3
'Sirsi Samachar' Newspaper.\textsuperscript{3} He also organised an exhibition to showcase industrial and agricultural resources of North Canara District this entry into public life through journalism of Hegde was inspired by the great pre-independent political leaders such as Gopala Krishna Ghokale, Bala Gangadhar Tilak, M.K. Gandhi, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad.

**ENTRY INTO LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Ramakrishna Hegde won from Sirsi constituency in the 1957 legislative assembly election for the first time. He was sworn in Nijalingappa’s cabinet as the Deputy minister for planning.\textsuperscript{4} Since then Hegde remained loyal to Nijalingappa. This cost him his ministerial post when internal party bickerings between Nijalingappa and B.D. Jatti resulted his ouster during latter’s Chief Ministership.

During 1958-62 though Hegde lost his Ministership but he showed interest in building the party. As the general secretary of Mysore Pradesh Congress Committee he worked towards

\textsuperscript{3} Srivatsa, challenges faced by Hegde, Hegde 75 Felicitation Committee. Bangalore 2001, p.4

\textsuperscript{4} Hegde 75 Felicitation Committee, Evolution of a personality in pictures, Laxmi printer, Bangalore 2001, p.22
strengthening party cadre. His organisational skills compelled Chief Minister Jatti to compromise with Nijalingappa Group. This resulted in the inductions of H.K. Veeranna Gowda, Veerandra Patil and Mohammed Ali into the Jatti's cabinet from Nijalingappa group. If Hegde wanted he could have easily joined the cabinet but he wanted his mentor to be the Chief Minister again. In this respect he evinced keen interest in the party work and was in touch with party cadre regularly.

Nijalingappa again became the chief Minister in 1962. His first priority was to induct Hegde into the cabinet. Hegde and Veerandra Patil were considered as the two eyes of Nijalingappa. And this pair was popularly known as 'Lava-Kusha' of Hindupuranical fame. Nijalingappa had great love and affection towards Hegde. He wanted Hegde to be the Chief Minister of Karnataka when he left National Politics in 1966. But the powerful Lingayat lobby forced Nijalingappa to elect Veerendra Patil as the Chief Minister. But Hegde had made a name for himself for the Panchayati Raj and co-operative act during Nijalingappa's tenure as the Minister for co-operation and Panchayati Raj.

Ramakrishna Hegde was well trained in the Gandhian
Economics, Between 1965 and 1971 as the Finance Minister he presented six budgets which restored the financial condition of the state from adverse to better. During the tenure of B.D. Jatti finances of the state were in a bad shape.

In the 1971 Lok-Sabha elections congress faction headed by S. Nijalingappa suffered heavily losing 27 of the 28 Lok-Sabha seats. Chief Minister was reluctant to resign owing moral responsibility. The Late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi offered to continue the Chief Ministership on the condition that the entire cabinet defected to her folk. But Hegde expressing his loyalty and faith in the leadership of S. Nijalingappa prevailed upon the Chief Minister to resign.

Hegde served to his best capacity as the opposition party leader in the Legislative Council. He was as competent as famous opposition leaders namely; Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, and Shantaveri Gopala Gowda.5

EMERGENCY AND RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE

1975 June 25 can be considered as the Black day in Indian democracy. On this day late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi Proclaimed

emergency in the state of India. This dictatorial rule was opposed vehemently by Lok-Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan and Ramakrishna Hegde both of them were disciples of Acharya Vinobha Bhave, a great Gandhian. Opposition leader J.P. Hegde, Jan-Sangh's A.B. Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, Congress's S.N. Mishra, Samajwadi Party's J.H. Patel were all arrested during emergency.

The prison life of two years were very fruitful for Ramakrishna Hegde. Because he could clearly understand and internalise Gandhian principles. Hegde believed that only concerted opposition can take on the might of Indira Gandhi. His view point was the foundation on which the new 'Janata Party emerged in 1977.6

Ramakrishna Hegde contested from North Canara Lok-Sabha constituency in the 1977 elections unsuccessfully. But he was not deterred by this defeat but involved himself in strengthening the Janata Party. As the General Secretary of Janata Party he accompanied president of the party Chandrashekar when he marched all over India on foot. Hegde shot into limelight as the spoke person of Janata Government during 1977 and 1979.

In the run upto the 1983 Legislative Assembly Elections

people of the state of Karnataka wanted a non-congress government. Ramakrishna Hegde was elected the first non-congress Chief Minister of Karnataka. His tenure was epoch making in Karnataka politics. He was considered as number one Chief Minister in India. His notion of value-based politics brought name and fame to him.

Hegde played a key role in electing V.P.Singh as the Prime Minister of India in 1989. V.P. Singh had ceded from Congress to head the second Non-Congress Government in the state. Janata Dal which was founded by Hegde was helpful in this regard.

In the 1994 Legislative Assembly election Janata Dal came back to power with a thumping majority. Leadership issue brought the political tussle to the streets. Inspite of this Hegde announced that H.D. Devegowda to be the Chief Minister and J.H. Patel Deputy Chief Minister. But when Deve Gowda become the Prime Minister of India, the differences between them widened the gulf. But considering the seniority and party MLA's mood he played key role in making J.H. Patel as the chief Minister of Karnataka. It was unbecoming of the Prime Minister Deve Gowda to expel R.K. Hegde from the Janata Dal. But Public mod was sympathetic towards Hegde.

Hegde. Hegde formed 'Rashtriya Nava Nirmana Vedike' a non political forum, which became very popular. Later on 'Lok-shakti', a political party emerged under the leadership of Ramakrishna Hegde which clearly showed his influence in the state.*

Political compulsions made Hegde to join NDA in the 1998 Lok-Sabha Elections. Because Congress party was ready to concede just three seats to the Lok-Shakti. The B.J.P. and Lok-Shakti combine won 16 seats. B.J.P. gained a lot from this understanding by winning 13 seats for the first time in the state. Hegde's decision to align with the communal B.J.P. was a big political mistake in the entire career of Ramakrishna Hegde. This was evident in 1999 Legislative Assembly elections when congress (I) won the elections with a huge margin.

Jnanapitha awardee U.R. Ananthamurthy comments on Ramakrishna Hegde as follows "Ramakrishna Hegde's political career spans through a turbulent as well as a creative period of India's history and he has played a dynamic role in shaping this history. His contribution, in particular in the field of democratic  

decentralisation will be greatly remembered.

Hegde is both a politician and a statesman and brings to all his actions, his speeches and his writings a self-reflexive quality which is rare in a politician. His writings, collected here, are therefore invaluable for political activists as well as students of contemporary Indian history.⁹

According to G. Narayan former president of Kannada Development Authority to quote his own words. "There are different meanings of statesmanship, a diplomat, politician, intellectual. Ramakrishna Hegde as a statesman combines all these. As a politician, journalist, administrator, Kannada activist, popular Chief Minister he was able to carve a niche for himself in the National level politics. He has gained respect from all political parties. His contribution to the state during chief ministership was valuable. He has fostered the growth of kannada and culture. World Kannada conference was held during this period for the first time. He is known for efficiency. He is a charismatic leader. Even today public, officer, businessmen, throng to meet him"¹⁰

⁹ Hegde, Ramakrishna, Thought and vision. Hegde 75, Felicitation committee. Laxmi printer. Bangalore, 2001, p.468(Rare Page)
¹⁰ Srivatsa, Challenges faced by Hegde, Hegde 75 Felicitation Committee, Laxmi Printer, Bangalore, 2001. p. Fore word
In the words of M.P. Prakash, well known political leader from North Karnataka "In epoch making life Sri Ramakrishna Hegde has come a long way from a remote village of Siddapur to the centre stage of the state and national life. This crisis and challenges makes the life worth living. He is a graceful person and grace involve responsibility that too socio-political responsibility.

When the history of our state and the nation comes to be written the name of Sri Ramakrishna Hegde will continue to shine as one of the examples of the profound follower of true values of passionate love for freedom, courage of conviction, abiding faith in decentralisation of power, above all love for life."

This great leader passed away on January 12, 2004 at his residence following a stroke that caused brain haemorrhage at the age of 77. His entire life can be summed up in his own words: "I have no regrets in my political or personal life at all. I would like to resolve on my birthday to dedicate the rest of my life in reforming society through constructive means till the last ounce of my energy."


12. Hegde, Ramakrishna, facing ups and downs with clarity in mind, on the eve of 75 birth day, Times of India, August 29, 2001.