



# A RAMASWAMI MUDALIAR

(1887 - 1976)

## Foundation Fellow

### INTRODUCTION

A RAMASWAMI MUDALIAR was born on 14th October, 1887 in Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh to Chidamma and A Kuppuswami Mudaliar who belonged to a middle class Vaishnavite family. He was one of the twin sons of Kuppuswami Mudaliar and his brother was Dr Sir A Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar. Kurnool which was the birth place of Ramaswami was a small, insignificant village in Andhra in the later part of the nineteenth century. It was here that Ramaswami spent his early years. Kuppuswami Mudaliar brought up his twin sons properly inculcating in them the qualities of honesty and virtue.

At the age of two Ramaswami lost his mother and this gave a jolt to the family. The twin sons, Ramaswami and Lakshmanaswami had to depend on their father for the tender and solicitous care. Though their father bestowed on them affection and care, he brought them up in a disciplined manner.

### EARLY CAREER

Dr Sir A Ramaswami Mudaliar and his brother had their early education in Kurnool. Their father died at the age of fifty-two, when they were about to pursue their higher education after they matriculated. From this time onwards the elder brother's influence became far more important and he began to take care of the twins, Ramaswami and Lakshmanaswami.

In 1903, the twin brothers joined the Madras Christian College which was then in the busiest part of Madras. Ramaswami stayed in Caithness Hall, a nearby hostel and pursued his higher studies with great devotion.

While at College Ramaswami and Lakshmanaswami developed varied interests. They read voraciously and indiscriminately in the expansive fields of English literature. They also organised student groups interested in debates. They were attracted towards the powerful speeches of Swami Vivekananda who during that time thrilled the people of America by his exhilarating speeches on Indian culture. His voluminous speeches unconsciously laid foundations for their powerful eloquence which was one of their precious traits.



After the FA (Old First Arts) Course Ramaswami took to law and joined the Madras Law College and Lakshmanaswami took to Medicine. They completed their courses successfully and after taking their degrees began to shine in their respective fields.

Ramaswami, after acquiring his degrees in Law enrolled himself as a Lawyer in the Madras High Court in 1911 and joined the Chamber of Mr Richmond, a Barrister-at-Law. Within a short span of five years he established himself as one of the prominent lawyers of Madras. His fluent speeches and finer skills attracted many political leaders at that time. In 1916, Sir P Theagaraya Chettiar and Dr TM Nair, the Justices greatly admired Ramaswami Mudaliar's talents and invited him to enter political life. As a result, he joined the Justice Party in 1917.

### HIS INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

Ramaswami Mudaliar was one of the most enthusiastic members of the Justice Party. The leaders of the party extensively used his intellectual skills, writing abilities and oratorical gifts to improve the popularity of the party. His abilities as a politician quickly gained for him great recognition. In 1919 he was selected as a Justice Party delegate to give evidence in London before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reforms for India. This was his first trip to England. After this he went abroad several times and his trips undoubtedly brought benefits to the country.

Ramaswami Mudaliar's entry into politics marked a turning point in the history of the Justice Party. Under the Government of India Act of 1919, the first Ministry was formed under the Raja of Panagal. Ramaswami Mudaliar exerted a powerful influence on the Justice Party Ministry. In 1920, he was elected to the Madras Legislative Council and he became the Parliamentary Secretary to the Chief Minister, the Raja of Panagal. He was the member of the Madras Legislative Council for two terms between 1920 and 1926.

Ramaswami Mudaliar played a vital role in formulating and implementing the programmes of the Justice Party. The progressive measures introduced in the field of education in the Madras Presidency during the 1920s were all due to the deep interest evinced by Ramaswami Mudaliar. He was instrumental in bringing into operation the Madras Education Act of 1920. This Act empowered the local bodies to raise additional funds by a levy of an education tax for the purpose of improving and expanding the elementary education. Further, the act made provision for compulsory education also. The higher education too attracted the attention of Ramaswami Mudaliar. The Madras University Act of 1923 came into operation due to his efforts and this Act conferred a substantial measure of autonomy on the University. It also freed the University from Government's control, empowered it to frame its statutes, rules and ordinances without obtaining the approval of the Government and made it the sole authority for the affiliation of colleges. It also defined the functions of the Vice-Chancellor and laid down rules for his selection.



Ramaswami Mudaliar was not only a powerful orator but also a good writer. He was the Editor of the Justice Party's Organ "Justice" from 1927 to 1935. This daily had a powerful hold on the minds of the people in those days. The students read the Editorials with interest which were from the pen of Ramaswami Mudaliar for their good style in English. He was the first to introduce the practice of "publishing cartoons" in India. His effective and convincing writings and the cartoons and the spicy ways of presentation of the party's programmes attracted the people towards the Justice Party.

Ramaswami Mudaliar paid much attention to the activities of local self-Government also. He served as a Councillor of the Corporation of Madras for many years. He was elected President of the Madras Municipal Corporation twice (1928-1930) and he showed a remarkable skill in the municipal administration of the city of Madras.

In 1930 he was elected as a Member of the Council of State. In the next year he took a prominent part in the Round Table Conference which was summoned to decide the future constitutional set up of the country. His political acumen again gained for him membership in the RTC Federal Structure Committee and in the Central Legislative Assembly (1931-34). During the period between 1931 and 34 he served as an important member in many committees. In 1932 he was appointed member of the Lothian Franchise Committee. He was Chairman of the Army Retrenchment Committee from 1931 to 32. He was also made Member of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, Railway Statutory Board and Reserve Bank Committee. As member in all these committees, he made his mark through his effective speeches and appealing arguments. He grew with the Indian Political scene and even his defeat in the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly at the hands of the Congress stalwart S Satyamurthi did not deter his progress in the Political arena. But this defeat turned out to be a turning point in his career.

His intimate knowledge of public affairs combined with his oratorical gift impressed the British authorities of the Government of India. In 1933 he was appointed the Leader to the Indian delegation to British Commonwealth Relations Conference at Toronto. The British authorities regarded him as an astute politician. They first appointed him as the Member of the India Council in London which he held from 1936 to 37. Later, they made him the Adviser to the Secretary of State for India, London, which position he held from 1937 to 1939. His brilliance and his good role in the Round Table Conferences impressed Lord Willington who was then the Viceroy of India. As a result, Lord Willington made him the Member of the Tariff Commission.

Ramaswami Mudaliar's political wisdom and administrative skills became well known and his rise to prominence was steady. His administrative abilities were often utilised by the British authorities. In 1939 he joined the Viceroy's Executive Council and he was incharge of the portfolio of commerce till 1942. In that capacity he also impressed successive Viceroys. He served the Viceroy's Executive Council for one more year as a Member without portfolio and was later appointed Supply Member of the Government General's Executive Council and held the post from 1943 to 1946. During this time



was incharge of planning and development. His supply policy and its execution was considered vital for the defence of the country during the Second World War. During the Second World War he was also appointed as Member of the Imperial War Cabinet of Winston Churchill (1941). Ramaswami Mudaliar was the first Indian to have this rare distinction. He also represented India in the Pacific War Council during 1942-43.

After the second world war he was appointed Diwan of Mysore which he held successfully between 1946 and 1949. His useful advice for the integration of the Mysore State with the Indian Union at the time when the British paramountcy ended in India was an act of patriotic statesmanship.

Ramaswami Mudaliar also had the unique honour of leading the Indian Delegation to the Pacific Relations Conference at Mount Tremblant, Canada (1942-43) and represented India in various international conferences. He rendered valuable services in the League of Nations and was later associated with the United Nation's activities. He led the Indian delegation to the UN in 1945 and his notable speech at the UN Conference in San Fransisco evoked much appreciation from the world community. His significant stress on world peace and harmony caused ripples of emotions among the leaders of the world. His view that inter-dependence of Nations was more essential than independence of nations received the commendation from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

Ramaswami Mudaliar's political ingenuity further secured for him greater positions at international levels. He was elected the first President of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in 1946. He was the first Asian to have this rare distinction. Ramaswami Mudaliar was also associated with the International Civil Service Advisory Board since 1949 and he became its Chairman in 1959. He also had the honbur of leading the Indian Delegation to the United Nations Maritime Conference and Conference on Freedom of Information. He was selected by Sardar Patel to lead a delegation to the UN Security Council. On this occasion he defended India's police action in Hyderabad in 1948 and justified Sardar Patel's actions on the Integration of Indian States. Further, his clear views on Kashmir issue and India's stand in that tangle not only convinced the leaders of the world but also raised the prestige of India in the International arena.

### HIS WORK IN DIFFERENT SPHERES

Ramaswami Mudaliar's astounding popularity was not only due to his involvement in politics but also due to his abiding interest for the welfare of the masses. He served the nation in many ways. His contribution to the sphere of social and economic activity is quite note-worthy. His work in these fields enriched the nation and projected the image of India in the international arena.



During 1920s he took great efforts to introduce primary education in rural areas. He knew fully well that education plays a dominant role in the progress of the people. He was, therefore, instrumental in introducing the Madras Education Act in 1920 which provided for compulsory education. Further, he felt that this measure alone was not sufficient to spread education among the masses. He imagined the plight of the half starved children and brought out a scheme in 1930. This was the Mid-day meal scheme which encouraged greater number of children to attend the school and get the benefit of education. In the field of higher education also his recommendations formed the basis for the enlargement of the functions and powers of universities. He was also one of the pioneers who advocated utilisation of surplus funds of temples for education and other useful purposes. The introduction of Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam Act (1932), the establishment of the University in Tirupathi and subsequent developments in education in the Madras Presidency were all due to his strenuous efforts. Further, as Vice-Chancellor of the Travancore University from 1951 to 1959 he rendered great services in the Kerala State to the cause of education.

Another remarkable contribution of Ramaswami Mudaliar in the field of social reform was the introduction of the legislation regarding the Age of Consent. This was a far-reaching social measure which extricated the young India girls from the evils of early marriage. He also went further in pleading for the grant of rights to women.

Ramaswami Mudaliar always denounced the caste system and was critical of the preponderance of certain high castes in social as well as in political, administrative and educational spheres. Further, he advocated equal rights for all irrespective of caste and creed in every field of activity. He also worked for the welfare of the Harijans and as the President of Madras Youth League he appealed to the youth to exert themselves to remove untouchability and caste distinctions.

As the Editor of "Justice", Ramaswami Mudaliar enlightened the people about the developments around. His excellent style and effective writings in the editorials captivated everyone and particularly the student community. Many of the students of his days emulated his unique style of writing. His editorials threw light on social problems, evils of caste system and many issues that confronted the society. He also advocated remedial measures every now and then for these problems.

Ramaswami Mudaliar was also noted for his interest in civic affairs. As a Councillor of the Corporation of Madras he did so much for the civic administration of the Madras city. Later, as Diwan of Mysore he undertook several measures to improve the condition of the people of that region.

Ramaswami Mudaliar's contribution was equally noteworthy in the field of science and industrial and economic activity. He had been associated with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research almost from the time of its inception. As a member of the Governing body as well as Chairman of the Executive Council of the National Laboratory



he played a very notable role in the development of science in India. His recommendations during his Chairmanship of the Third Reviewing Committee were fully accepted as guidelines for the development of the functions of the National Laboratories.

After India gained Independence, he began to devote much of his time for the economic regeneration of India. His contributions in different capacities won for him global reputation. He was the Chairman and Director of many big industrial units in India. He was the President of the Indian National Steamship Owners' Association in 1961. He was the only shipowner from Tamil Nadu with an international business reputation. He was a student of Economics and Public Finance and his interest in them sustained throughout his life-time. It is this interest that made him draft several schemes for founding new industrial concerns all over India. He also contributed a great deal to the development of trade and industry as one connected with the Board of Trade and Industries Licensing Committee. Furthermore, as Chairman of the Sethusamudram Project he brought much technical knowledge to bear on the deliberations.

Two other notable activities of Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar which will be remembered with gratitude by posterity are the creation of facilities for the compilation of an upto-date and standard Dictionary of raw materials in India and the publication of the journal of Scientific and Industrial Research which brings to light the progress achieved in Indian Scientific and Industrial Research.

Ramaswami Mudaliar's work in these fields considerably raised the economic prosperity of India. He is a noteworthy figure among many who laboured hard to project the image of India among the developed nations and brought development in the fields of Education, Industry, Science and Technology.

## A PROFILE

Dr Sir A Ramaswami Mudaliar was one of the illustrious sons of India. He was a great orator, a brilliant writer, a keen educationist, an able administrator and an outstanding man in the domain of human activity. He was considered as a most accomplished of men and most eloquent of orators. Fearless and undaunted he always espoused the cause of truth and justice. His dynamic personality, perpetual cheerfulness, immense patience, amiable disposition and breezy candour inspired everyone. He was a person of action and independence. His qualities, services and achievements won for him international renown. He helped the poor and the needy and worked for harmony among men. He served the country well and his patriotism was of a high order.

Dr Sir A Ramaswami Mudaliar did not labour for honours but honours were thrust on him. In 1930, the British Government which recognised his merit and his services people honoured him with the title of "Diwan Bahadur". He was knighted in 1937 and



was made KCIE in 1942. The Oxford University conferred on him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Civil Law in 1946. The Maharaja of Mysore conferred on him the special title "Raja Manthra Chintamani" in 1947. The Durham University conferred on him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws. The Osmania University, the Travancore and Mysore Universities also conferred on him the Honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. Many Indian Universities invited him to deliver convocation addresses. Further, the Government of India also honoured him in 1970 with the "Padma Vibhushan" award.

Dr Sir A Ramaswami Mudaliar was a deeply religious-minded man. In view of his high standing in public life he was requested to accept the Presidentship of the Sri Ranganathaswami Temple Renovation Committee, Srirangam. Even at that advanced age he accepted that responsibility. He served the nation in many ways and throughout his lifetime. It is very difficult to find a parallel to him among men.

Dr Sir A Ramaswami Mudaliar's rise to great heights was in no small measure due to his wife Kamatchi Ammal whom he married in 1910. She was a pious and generous-hearted lady who gave her full support to her husband throughout. The couple were blessed with two distinguished sons Dr A Krishnaswamy and Thiru A R Damodaran and two daughters. He passed away on 17.7.1976 leaving the nation to mourn his death deeply and to pay homage to him for his illustrious services to humanity and to the nation.

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