

Though Shri Kanthi had to face many hardships, he devoted himself to whatever work and responsibility was conferred upon him. He did develop the Congress freedom movement to become a mass movement by involving the youth in the freedom struggle, and by virtue of his organizational abilities, he became the District Congress President.

His getting elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly afforded him an opportunity to work along with senior politicians like B.G. Kher, Y.B. Chavan, Morarji Desai etc. His association with Bombay Presidency politics developed in him the required urge for social reform. Bombay Presidency being the centre of Brahmin-non-Brahmin politics, had influenced the very national movement. Mahatma Gandhi also understood the importance of social reforms for developing the masses, without which the Congress Party was a party of elites and not masses. It is this aspect which influenced S.R. Kanthi, because of which he made social reforms his ideal. Education being the key to all other developments, he constantly worked for the same. As an 'Education Minister' from 21.7.1962 to March 1967 he was instrumental for developments in education, a few aspects of which could be stated as follows:

- 1) 1960-61 only 778 secondary schools with 16,973 students.
- 2) 1961-62 890 secondary schools with 1,83,562 students.
- 3) 1962-63 nearly 1,000 secondary schools with 2,00,000 students.
- 4) Government Primary Schools had been opened in all the

rural areas of the State.

- 5) Medical Colleges opened at Belgaum and Davangeri.
- 6) Sainik Schools established at Bijapur and Kittur.
- 7) Banglore University was opened.
- 8) Degree colleges at Ilkal, Hungund, Bailhongal etc.
- 9) T.C.H. College for Men at Hungund, for women at Ilkal.

Before Sri Kanthi became Education Minister, the literary rate was 18%, but in 1968 it rosed to 39%. All these facts and figures bear testimony for the tremendous perseverance with which he worked for the improvement of educational conditions of the region.

A cursory glance through his career will point to Shri Kanthi's interest in developing education. His social welfare measures for protecting the interests of teaching community, namely cheque system and Tripple Benefit Schemes; are really remarkable. His opting for Education Ministry, which is otherwise unlonged for, also speaks for the fact that he wanted to rid the masses of the hardships they encountered in educating their wards. He functioned as Deputy Speaker in Bombay Assembly which developed in him the required insight of the sufferings of the down-trodden masses. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar launched his 'Republican Party', which must have also influenced S.R. Kanthi.

When he worked in Karnataka, all these experiences helped him to stand as a senior politician, because of which S. Nijlingappa, when defeated, had no other option but to ask Shri Kanthi to lead

the ministry. It must be noted here that he did not choose the Ministry but the Ministry chose him. It was only due to his sincerity, honesty and integrity towards the Congress Party that he was honoured with this responsibility. Politicians like Kanthi are far and few between, who realize that the other name of Democracy is compromise. The principle of compromise is the essence of Democracy. Shri Kanthi's politics was always value-based politics.

Shri Kanthi was never disappointed whenever he contested elections. He always enjoyed the confidence of the electorate thanks to his service to this well-known drought affected district. It is through his love for the constituency and vice versa that he enjoyed the positions of Deputy Speaker, Speaker, Chief Minister, Education Minister and Law & Parliamentary Affairs Minister.

The religious bend of his mind has had its impact on his career. He never forgot to visit, organize and be associated with religious activities. Perhaps because of this that the Gandhian aspect of his personality developed in him. Though a Chief Minister for a brief period (of 102 days), he tried to develop the required unity in Congress Party. Naturally such a humble man was subjected to criticism, but this did not deter him from his constructive activities. It is always the constructive approach of his which has paid rich dividends to him. Generally 'Speakership' in Indian politics, comes as a result of unhealthy internal partypolitics. But in the case of Shri Kanthi, it is his nature suitable to the post, that has brought him the Speakership.

Another important contribution of Shri Kanthi can be stated to be that it was he who declared Kannada to be the State language, who faught for the implementation of 'Mahajan Commission's Report and besides it was he again, who submitted the memorandum for Linguistic Re-organization of States'. It seems, at times, Shri Kanthi was put in difficult positions by the State's party organization. A few interesting events are:

1. Though a senior leader he was made the First Speaker of Karnataka State, when the demands for 'Linguistic Re-organization of State' had polluted political atmosphere of the country.
2. As a Chief Minister he was asked to declare Kannada as the State Language.
3. He was asked to submit the Memorandum for demand of separate Linguistic Re-organization of State.
4. He was asked to declare fee-hike in the State, which brought him all sorts of criticism.

These few incidences point that he was always put in difficult positions and was entrusted with responsibilities of solving unsurmountable problems. But every time he came out successfully. This is largely because of his principled life in politics. There were occasions when he stood above petty power-politics. He was away from the worldly luxuries and remained away from corruptive environment.

His principles, in a way, became, at times, stumbling blocks in the political development of his career. Nevertheless, he was the most satisfied politician to relinquish his office as the Chief Minister though he was having various financial problems due to heavy debts. Later his younger son, Dr. Mahendra cleared off the debts..

Shri Kanthi's tour to foreign countries under the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association as a delegate, made him realize many things. He could feel the importance of 'Conventions' and 'Customs' practised in the U.K. and those prevalent in India. As a Speaker, he tried to learn much as a student in Parliamentary Democracy, rather than a politician. He thought of a Democratic India with bi-party system. He thought of discipline in the party affairs. Foreign tours were never sight-seeing trips for him but were educative trips'. He drew notes on his observations throughout his foreign trips.

In conclusion it can be said that Shri Kanthi was a rare kind of politician, always conscious about his duties towards the masses and sense of justification, never indulged in cheap politics and cheap popularity. He never subordinated his interest for the well-being of his constituency, eager to represent the needs of the people. He always studied the needs of the people and planned accordingly and never yielded to unhealthy politics, kept himself away from the limelight and publicity stunts. He always concentrated on welfare programmes, because of which today Ilkal has been

established as an education centre of Bijapur District. When S.R. Kanthi was born, there was hardly a school in Ilkal. Today it has been serving a great purpose of education for the masses. Today there are variety of educational institutions located at Ilkal. A B.Ed. College and Girls High Schools are opened in his name. Ilkal is popular today not only because of Sarees and granites, but also because of Shri S.R. Kanthi.

He worked in his own way for the national cause a small example of which could be found in his contribution to the Defence Fund during Chinese attack on India. Miles away as he is from self-propaganda, he is never in the limelight; he has not thought of writing of his autobiography nor does any biography of his exists. A straight-forward, pious and humble man, Shri Kanthi, will go in the history as an embodiment of ideal politician.

