



Chakravarty Rajagopalachari

Chakravarty Rajagopalachari, affectionately known as Rajaji, was an ardent patriot, clever politician, pioneering social reformer, keen thinker, profound scholar, accomplished author, outstanding administrator and wise statesman. Above all, he was a moral giant and a crusader for freedom, democracy and human rights.

Born on December 10, 1878, in Hosur taluk of Salem district in Tamil Nadu, Rajaji had his early education in his village of Thorapolli. He received his high school and collegiate education in Bangalore and Madras. He qualified himself for the bar and started legal practice at Salem in 1900, when he was just 22. He built up a lucrative practice and also started taking active interest in municipal affairs.

Even before he started his legal practice, Chakravarty Rajagopalachari's mind was getting ready for his eventual participation in the national struggle for freedom. He attended the Surat session of the Congress in 1907. He first met Gandhiji in 1919 and had the first experience of jail life in 1921. Deeply interested in tackling social evils, he first directed his attention to Prohibition. He also popularized khadhi through his speeches and writings. He also led the salt Satyagraha in South India and was eventually jailed for that.

Rajaji was gifted with a rare talent of re-telling stories from the epics and Puranas and applying their morals to the needs of the modern time. His books on the Upanishads, Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, etc. have almost become classics. Rajaji was a karmayogi. He was never afraid of standing alone, and whenever national interest demanded he put himself in her service.

Rajaji became the Prime Minister of Madras Presidency in 1937. He resigned from the congress in 1942 on the issue of Quit India Movement. He rejoined it in 1946 and served in the interim government. After the independence, he became the first Governor of West Bengal. In 1948 he became the Governor General after Mountbatten. In 1951 he became the minister of Home Affairs and was subsequently given the Bharat Ratna in 1954.

Rajagopalachari drifted away from the Congress and formed the Swtantra party which was against socialism involving state planning and control of various economic activities. He went to the U.S. in 1962 as the leader of an Indian delegation to plead against the piling up of nuclear weapons of destruction. He passed away in Madras on Christmas Day, December 25, 1972 at the age of 94.