Nation bids adieu to Narasimha Rao

g. Perrovalit !

By Our Special Correspondent

Hoy

HYDERABAD, DEC. 25. The mortal remains of the former Prime Minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao, were consigned to the flames with full military honours amid the chanting of vedic hymns on the banks of the Hussain Sagar Lake here today. His eldest son, P. V. Ranga Rao, lit the pyre.

A large number of mourners bid a tearful and emotional farewell to their "Telugu bidda" (son of the soil), the first one to make it to the office of Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and his wife, Gursharan Kaur, came in a special plane. Others present were the former Prime Minister, H. D. Deve Gowda, the BJP president, L.K. Advani, the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, and the Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram.

As Mr. Ranga Rao lit the pyre, he broke down and was helped by his brothers, Rajeswara Rao and Prabhakar Rao.

Fourteen men of the Gorkha Regiment fired three volleys each in the air while the buglers sounded the last post.

Earlier, amid the recitation of the Bhagavad Gita, mourners trickled in for a last glimpse of the departed leader.

Scores of people from Rao's native village, Vangara in Karimnagar district, came to bid farewell to their *dora* (endearing term for an elder). The funeral rites were performed by the family priests from



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh offers floral tributes at the funeral of former Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao in Hyderabad on Saturday. — AFP

Hanamkonda.

After the pyre was lit, Dr. Singh and his wife consoled the members of the bereaved family.

Earlier, the funeral procession started from Jubilee Hall where the body was kept in state for mourners to pay their last respects. The body was shifted to a flower-bedecked gun carriage for the final jour-

The cortege reached the cremation site at 1 p.m. shortly be-

fore the arrival of the Prime Minister. The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, accompanied the cortege for a short distance.

The Governor, Sushilkumar Shinde, and his Maharashtra counterpart, S.M. Krishna, and Chief Ministers Vilas Rao Deshmukh (Maharashtra), Dharam Singh (Karnataka) and N.D. Tiwari (Uttaranchal), joined Dr. Reddy in paying homage to the departed leader as did the former Andhra Pradesh Chief Min-

isters, N. Chandrababu Naidu, N. Janardhana Reddy and N. Bhaskara Rao.

Others who attended the funeral were Motilal Vora and Ashok Gehlot, Congress leaders who represented the party president, Sonia Gandhi, M. Venkaiah Naidu, former BJP president, K.V. Krishna Rao, former Army Chief, and G.V.G. Krishnamurthy, former Chief Election Commissioner. Several Central and State Ministers were also present.

Rao: The Astute

He was one of those few leaders who changed a country, in substantial ways, for the better fall of India's prime ministers, carnage that followed, often gave the

P.V. Narasimha Rao has left the most paradoxical legacy. He assumed office in the midst of an unprecedented national crisis. Rajiv Gandhi had just been assassinated, the Indian economy was on the verge of a fiscal meltdown, Mandal had created unprecedented divisions in Indian society, and the Ram movement was acquiring the character of a mass movement. To keep India on an even keel in such circumstances would have been a tall order for even the most gifted politician. But Rao, in some respects, converted this crisis Into an opportunity to redefine India's future. He had the perspicacity to see that the old economic order could not continue. He took the bold decision of setting India on the path of liberalisation and integration into the world economy. With hindsight, one can argue that he did not use the crisis to restructure the priorities of the state enough. But there little doubt, as even Manmohan Singh has acknowledged, that India's reforms would have been inconceivable without him. Few leaders can boast that they changed a country in some significant respects, decisively for the better. Rao is one of them.

But in many other respects, his political style proved inadequate to address the various simmering political tensions that he had inherited. The demolition of the Babri Masjid and the

carnage that followed, often gave the impression of a prime minister whose characteristic response to political challenges was to sit on them. Rao's cynical political style only contributed to the growing cynicism about public life. Scams, corruption scandals, and the manipulative uses of state institutions became the staple diet of Indian politics. Rao took fleeting steps to revive the Congress Party by introducing a modicum of intra-party elections, only to revert to a strategy of undermining challengers. Perhaps this was a style that befitted a politician who never had charisma or a mass following, and whose success was premised largely on the politics of manipulation. Even in office, he was characteristically distant from the electorate at large. He exuded a certain kind of inscrutability allowed him to ride out serious crises. But that inscrutability also prevented the country from embracing him as their own. He commanded a cold esteem, but seldom warm affection.

Rao was, without doubt, one of the most intelligent politicians India has had. He was capable of a striking degree of self-reflection about his own actions. When these were put in the service of his considered convictions, as was the case with economic reform, the results were striking. That Rao the astute politician could not quite rise to the stature of a statesman is something many will regret; that he did leave a substantial legacy, few should doubt.

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INDIAN EXPRESS

PV Narasimha Rao

BY RAVINDRA KUMAR

T is unfortunate that the perfectly legitimate claim Pamulaparti Venkata Narasimha Rao had on greatness was blighted by the controversies surrounding aspects of his Prime Ministership. As you would expect of a man with an exceptional intellect, this fact bothered him.

For some reason, this newspaper's criticism of his performance as Prime Minister — especially his handling of the Babari Masjid demolition, the Harshad Mehta affair and the JMM bribery case — troubled him greatly. Thus, some years after his term in office had ended, he sent word that he wanted a meeting and I had gone over to see him at his New Delhi residence.

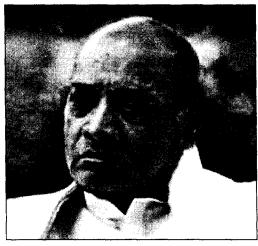
He came to the point straightaway and said that while nearly all newspapers had criticised him, he was aware that most of them did so because they had an agenda to pursue and were unhappy with him for not having given them whatever it was they sought from him.

"The Statesman," he told me, "never sought anything from me when I was Prime Minister. That is why your criticism hurt so much." I asked him if he thought the criticism was unjustified, or if in his view we had treated him unfairly. "Perhaps not unfairly, but not entirely fairly," he retorted. He said he had been misled by a member of his Cabinet, who he had sent to Uttar Pradesh in the days leading up to the demolition, into believing that the state government would ensure nothing untoward happened. The JMM affair, he said, was the culmination of the backstabbing indulged in by some of his own party colleagues. And then, he stopped to offer a suggestion.

"Why don't you go back to Calcutta, review

everything I was criticised for by your newspaper and give me a list of as many questions as you want? And I will answer each and every question," he said. On hindsight, I should have pressed him for more details since he clearly was in a communicative mood. But offered a chance to get detailed answers to every probing question, I went along with his suggestion.

On my next trip to Delhi, I telephoned



Khandekar, his assistant, and was invited to visit Rao the next day. Armed with a detailed questionnaire, I presented myself. But at this meeting, he was perceptibly more reserved, almost gruff. He glanced through the questions, told me Khandekar would contact me when he was ready with the answers, and the meeting ended.

I did not hear from Rao again. Some months later, he was present at the marriage of a former colleague's son. There were BJP Ministers, a CPI-M politburo member and several Delhi power-brokers present at the wedding. But Rao was ignored, almost as if his fall from grace within the Congress party had obliterated the fact of his Prime Ministership.

I went up to him, and asked him why he had changed his mind on answering my questions. He whispered to me in Telugu that because some of the matters he had wanted to discuss were still before courts and commissions of enquiry, his lawyers had advised him against speaking to a newspaper. "Let these cases be over and I will send for you," he promised.

Politicians seldom keep promises, and Rao was as much an enigma as he was a practical politician. On the one hand, there was this desire to clear his name. On the other, there were practical considerations. There was his erudition as a speaker, and there was the

famous pout that, for some years, came to define indecision; indeed it was the image used by magazines to describe his alleged inability to say Yes *or* No.

The pragmatist came to the fore in the ruthless manner in which he engineered splits within parties opposed to him. The romantic reduced himself to a fictionalised parody of an autobiography.

Within these contradictions resided the persona of a man who accomplished more than many others as Prime Minister. He was the architect of liberalisation, and to say that it was part of a World Bank agenda given over to Dr Manmohan Singh to implement, is as unfair to Rao as it would be to say that his Home Minister alone was responsible for the Ayodhya debacle. Or to say that the Berlin Wall fell on its own.

Nearly two decades earlier, I had covered his campaign for the Hanumakonda seat in Andhra Pradesh. Having spent a day talking to his constituents, and having learnt that there had been very little progress in the area in spite of his long spells in office (as Minister and Chief Minister in Andhra Pradesh and as a member of the Union Cabinet), I asked him over lunch at his village home, where several others were present, how he expected to win when his voters seemed so dissatisfied. Rao was furious, almost imperious in his dismissal of criticism. "Don't they (the voters) know that when one is at the Centre, one has to think of the nation?" But later, as I took his leave, he said, "I know this will be a difficult election." In the event, he lost the seat and made it to Parliament from Ramtek in Maharashtra.

Winning from Ramtek when he had lost Hanumakonda, becoming Chief Minister when no one expected him to, emerging as a consensus Prime Minister when he had decided to call it a day and pack his bags, not having a majority yet lasting a full term, transforming an economy when not much was expected of him after a lifetime spent in introspective placidity, Rao was a man who often got second chances from life. To his credit, he always capitalised on them. And there lay his greatness.

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"You sing like an angel"

By Gowri Ramnarayan

UNNING HER hands over her singing throat, the blind and deaf Helen Keller exclaimed: "You sing like an angel!" Over seven decades, three generations of listeners have known the same exaltation had enough before helping herin Madurai Shanmukhavadivu self to anything. But the home Subbulakshmi's vocal magic. was rich in music. The nadaswa-They see M.S. as a saint, even ram players on temple procesgoddess incarnate. Her art transcends the sense and enters the Shanmukhavadivu's home and sacred sphere of light. Living in play their best. Mother made the age when music became a music, while musician visitors packaged product for consume- sang and played instruments Subbulakshmi retained the old tradition of reaching out. Instead of shrinking into elitist classicism as a few purists did, she followed the singing saints of the bhakti cult. She sang in praise. Some of them even ten languages but never one word without internalising its tion to god, respect for elders, meaning. Her own spartan liv- self-effacement and humility ing, and donation of most of her were part of her home culture. arnings to charity, made the Her fawnlike timidity was her singer merge with the ideals she own. She was never to lose it. sang about.

September 16, 1916. Her auspicious Bharani star 'presaged' the conquest of the world. Mother Shanmukhavadivu was a respected but impoverished veena player, supporting a family of three children, uncles, brothers, and their wives, all crammed into the airless rooms of a small house on Hanumantarayan Street. Now the house is marked by a small metal image of the veena nailed above the

Kunjamma (as she was called at home) was to know the perplexities of seeing her lawyer father living with his own family in an adjacent street. But Subfamania lyer was exceedingly fond of his "Rajathippa" (princess). He singled her out to ride with him on the open carriage bearing the portrait of Lord Rama through the streets on the days he offered bhajanai to the deity. It is he who gave Kunja her serene features, and "made gne see that bhakti was everything." Her father had shown her the ardour of devotional singing, much before husband Sadasivam put bhaians on a par with classical compositions.

Sibling bonds with Vadivambal and Saktivel were a source of joy in their restricted life. The children absorbed music from the air around them. Vadiva would play the veena while Kunja sang, and Sakti drummed along. "He was very good on the mridangam," M.S. would say with pride. After his death her voice trembled. "Now I have none to call my own." Bedrid-

yearning, along with Amma and Appa. She had returned to her childhood world.

The family just about managed to survive. Kunjamma knew only coriander coffee and country jaggery, and grew up always checking to see if others sions would rists, often tailored for export, from gottuvadyam to jalatarangam. They invariably asked Kunjamma to sing, and blessed her. Being asked to sing another piece or a cryptic "You must come up well," meant high taught her a song or two. Devo-

Did the child know she was M.S. was born in Madurai on gifted? Beautiful? "Mother was a woman of few words. I remember how irksome she found it when she spread my thick, curly hair over the washing stone and cleaned it with shikai and water. We didn't talk about talent. We were simply told to practise." Singing came to little Kunja as leaves to trees, bees to flowers. Her concentration was phenomenal, it gave her perfect sruti alignment, and raga fidelity. There was nothing else to think about except music. She heard the temple nadaswaram, a few concerts, the neighbour's radio (they didn't have one), and folk song from street beggars. Singing was as inevitable and essential as breathing. Listening to the tambura was rapture.

Schooling was given up after a beating by a teacher, which aggravated her whooping cough. To the family's amusement, an old mendicant pilgrim took upon himself the task of teaching Kunjamma the grantha script, as also Sanskrit shlokas. Formal music lesson began with Srinivasa Iyengar, whose sudden death was a shock to the child. (Years later, she was to be similarly disheartened by the demise of doyen Mazhavarayanendal Subbarama Bhagavatar, who had started training her in

pallavi singing). already begun to sing with her cible laya maestro Dakshina- murti mother's veena on the stage. murthy Pillai not only asked her This happened as a matter of to sing for a family wedding, but course, without fuss and fan- praised her pure voice and emofare. When mother cut a 78 rpm tive approach in public, before a record in Madras the accompagalaxy of musician guests. Veenying child too was asked to do nai Dhanammal was another to den at 87, her mind slipping into her bit — that is how the impose express cryptic approval when unconsciousness, "Anna!" was sibly high-pitched Khamboji in Shanmukhavadivu took her



Caught with the camera. — Photo: N. Ram

'plate'. In course of time, concert notices announced "Miss Shanmugavadivoo" as accompanist to "Miss Subbalakshmi of Madura.'

dressed with provincial gaucherie wore imitation 'jewels' and glass bangles, and a row of medals pinned to her shoulder. "I looked awful, but so did most of us, not knowing any naagarikam (finesse)" she would chuckle. However, Kunjamma began to draw people's attention with her limpid voice, winsome expression, and childlike the security she craved. She had

What warmed her heart, and boosted her confidence - never By this time Kunjamma had from senior musicians. The iras- Hindu, and "Kalki" Krishnathe name she called out in "Marakatavadivu" released her daughter to see the redoubtable

By the 1930s Madras had beorgetown), trying to establish knowing that Thiagarajan Sadasivam would enter into Kunjamma's life and take her away, into dizzying heights of success.

freedom fighter Sadasivam serve every pandikai (religious came to monitor a photography session of the young artiste. His fearless strength promised her ratri kolu or varalakshmi nombu no hesitation in entrusting herself to his care. In 1940, they were married in Tiruneermalai, high - was encouragement with Kasturi Srinivasan, The witnessing the

registration. Sadasivam had lost his job. hundred rupees each per curd rice with a drop of vathamonth, enough to manage," said Kunjamma. She was talking turn. about Sadasivam's family of two daughters, an orphaned neph- M.S. became and remained in-

voice on the gramophone old lady in 'pattinam' (Madras). care, an aged grandmother, and numerous relatives who needed come the capital of Carnatic to be financially assisted, music and Shanmukhavadivu housed, educated, married, shifted quarters (a garage in Ge- treated in times of ailment. Hidebound grandmother Man-The scrawny girl on the stage her daughters' career, little galam was to leave the brood in charge of M.S. with these guidelines before departing to Varanasi: "Make sure that Ambi (the nephew) goes to college. Get the Employed in marketing the girls married suitably. I know Tamil weekly Ananda Vikatan, you are god fearing and will ob-

festival) with customary rites;

remember we don't have nava-

in our family. love she found among the children in her care. She fed, oil-ly when she sang, every note bathed, clothed and showered throbbing with the rapture of affection on them. Her evening devotion. Dungan is credited Ovaltine making was a ritual the children nestling round her called "ethereal" features. That "Surely you and I can earn a on the terrace, as she ladled out quality of course, came from kuzhambu into each hand by

Elder daughter Radha and became reality.

Untouched by

fame

gent child was to become more than M.S.' right hand through the decades of glory. Radha was her vocal accompanist, emotional support and sympathetic companion until her illness in the 1980s, a shock from which M.S. never wholly recovered.

M.S. acted in four films (1937-

47). Savitri was to raise money for Sadasivam and family friend "Kalki" Krishamurthy to launch a nationalist magazine. Meera, the last, made her a national icon, and in a sense, made her know herself. The shy girl from Madurai could hold her own with experienced film actors, Kunjamma thrived on the and make American director Elly when she sang, every note with giving her a new 'look', best treat. Moonlight nights found suited to highlight what he within. Did she not swoon before the Lord in the Dwaraka sanctum? For that moment, film

M.S. was a lifelong learner. ew and niece wholly in their separable. The vivacious, intelli- Until her last concert she conflowing with brikas and gama- quality of prercy.

in several languages from a host of practitioners as varied as Na- nam, or "Kaligiyunte" in rayanrao Vyas, Dilip Kumar Roy, Kiravani. Srinivasa Rao, A. Kanan, S.V. Venkatraman, Papanasam Sivan, Musiri Subramania Iver, Piano Vaidyanathan (who set awards for others!" But M.S. had tum haro" to music for Gand- awards: the adulation of pamhiji), G.N. Balasubramanian, ara (lay) and pandita (erudite) Sandhyavandanam Srinivasa listeners. Listening to her Vishof the great vaggeyakaras in his with the bhakti in the M.S. subreadth swara precision. From south, Subbulakshmi's Tyagaralive in her Kalki Gardens home temple prakaras from Kedar-

fighting shy of any publicity.

When the disciple finally sang a

she did introduce Carnatic music to the West in a significant daughter's feminist leanings. way - first at the Edinburgh tions Assembly, and coast-to-

coast tours of the U.S. the barriers of culture came re- was before his lifesize portrait London, 1963, thought her an chants.

"excellent introducer of the Subbulakshmi would not excellent introducer of the natic Song." The New York "secularism." But staunch in her vocal communication tran- to bigotry. She had known what

tinued to acquire compositions kas prefaced "Sarojadalanetri" in her signature Sankarabhara-

Fellow artiste Rukmini Devi Arundale once quipped, "Kunjamma, you must leave some "Vaishnava janato" and "Hari something more than the rain of Rao, K.V. Narayanaswami, Ne- nu Sahasranamam, Agnihotram dunuri Krishnamurti et al. Sem- Thathachariar could wonder, mangudi Srinivasa Iyer was her "How does she have that flawrevered guru, influencing her to less enunciation we scholars are think more deeply and ripely unable to achieve through sevabout raga and kriti. He taught eral birth cycles?" Householders her the imposing compositions innocent of Sanskrit, identify burnished pathantara. He prabhatams of Venkateswara, judged her to be the best to re- Visvanatha or Meenakshi. vive the forgotten 72 melaraga Though her Hindi bhajans malika, which demands a hair's made her known beyond the the north, Begum Akhtar had ja Kritis too could keep north Inwanted to teach M.S., but it was dians in their seats. Pilgrims Siddheswari Devi who came to thrill to her voice amplified in for six months and taught her nath and Badrinath to Ramesthumri, bhajan and even chhota waram and Kanyakumari. When khyal. It used to be a thrilling ex- she was given India's highest ciperience to watch the two vilian honour, many declared doyennes sing raga scales, Sidd- that by accepting the Bharat heswari Devi rolling the 108 Ratna, Subbulakshmi had conbeads each day to keep count. ferred honour on the award.

Shaped by the liberal humanchhota khyal on the stage, the ist ethos of their youth, the Sabeaming guru was in the hall to dasivams only vaguely realised it had crumbled in meaner For the last 25 years of her life, climes. Sadasivam's own fireher music, rehearsals and re- brand nationalism landed him cordings were monitored by in protests and prisons, and self-effacing Kadayanallur Ven- identified his wife with the freekatraman. He set to music many dom movement. Rousing naof the Annamacharya lyrics that tionalist songs were part of her the Tirupati Devasthanam com- concerts always. The couple remissioned her to propagate, as mained close to national leaders also a host of other M.S. favou- from the Gandhi-Nehru era. rites from "Kandu Kandu" to Their loyalty to C. Rajagopala-"Kurai onrum illai." Theirs was a chari grew stronger in his times special relationship - M.S. al- of adversity. Times changed, but ways wanting everyone to know their values remained constant. his contribution, Venkatraman To M.S., her husband's word was law. Contradiction and ar-Though M.S. did not become gument were unknown. "If you as internationally known as Ravi surrender yourself, there are no Shankar, or later, Zakir Husain, problems left." It was as close as she got to a rebuke for a grand-

Conservative to the core, Subfestival, later at the United Na- bulakshmi performed religious rituals with a meticulous faith. The Paramacharya of Kanchi Nehru's prediction that Sub- had her total allegiance. When bulakshmi's music would cross she lived in the Kalki mansion, it soundingly true. The Times, that her lips moved in silent

beauties and intricacies of Car- have known the meaning of Times exclaimed in 1966, "Her culture, she remained a stranger scends words...Subbulakshmi it was to be poor, insecure and and her ensemble are a revela- marginalised. In the final analytion to western ears." No com- sis it was her empathy for the promises for audiences from downtrodden - in daily life, not circles wider than NRIs. The just in cheques donated on platsame expansive alapana over- forms — that gave her music the

Epitome of bhakti

By Sulochana Pattabhi Rama

"I dwell not in Vaikuntha, not in the hearts of Yogins or in the sun, where my bhaktas sing, there be I, Narada," said the

Lord.

SUBBULAKSHMI, the nightingale of Car-I natic Music, was an epitome of *bhakti* in every sense of the term, expressing with the grandeur of her music, her humility, her simplicity, her humane nature and other countless attributes, that she was not merely a musician born but a devotee ordained by divine decree. M.S. has flown into eternity, but the precious legacy of her song will remain immorsal. The entire spectrum of Indian art and culture has suffered a colossal loss in the passing away of the diva who had the world from the time she was 10 years old till the age of 88. Her magical, mesmerising vocal chords that flowed like liquid gold capturing the hearts, senses and minds of millions of admirers through an amazing time span **has** finally been stilled.

It is given only to a chosen few to leave indelible, impressive imprints in the verdant spheres of any art form. M.S. was an artiste extraordinaire whose music had a powerful joy, contemplation, anguish, impact on one's consciousness, and had the quality to trans- tal surrender to the Almighty. form the ambience from the Her art was never intoxicating; mundane to the divine. She, it was smooth and sublime, soft who personified the quintessence of south Indian music, the success of her magnificent enhanced performance levels to career were efforts to constantly realms of greatness underlining widen her horizons, hours of the quality of bhakti and devotion to the Godhead in no uncertain terms. Her music exemplified the fact that mere vasive searing intensity in her technical virtuosity can only overwhelm the mind, not give peace and solace to the soul. M.S. consciously moved away from overbearing calculations, for she firmly believed that plebeian ostentation was not in keeping with the splendour of Carnatic Music.

To be an artiste is itself a



forming perfection, an immediate rapport with the audience whether the scholar or the lavman, have solidly placed her in an exclusive zone. Her music reflected a myriad of moods acquiescence, but above all toand serene. The key words to practice, unceasing focus, a consuming passion for percentage presentation and an all-permusical articulation. Her repertoire was prodigious, packed with songs of every genre, classical, light classical, devotional, folk music, bhajans in Hindi, abhangs in Marathi, patriotic

She was a stickler for perfect enunciation, checking and rechecking the diction before takblessing but to be an artiste of ing any composition on to the the calibre of M.S., one has to be concert platform. Her dedicathrice blessed. The rich, reso- tion to her vocation and art was nant timbre of her voice, total such that during her long insruti alignment, diction as pure nings as a performing musician,

verses et al.

as the Queen's English, per- she hardly ever felt the need to ing that helped a rasika enjoy refer to notes or books on the the bliss of communion with stage. Her homework was fault- God. less, and indicated absolute, art in all aspects of her musical

bhakti and renunciation. quests were some of the reasons for her stature as an artiste of pre-eminence.

impressive? None of these suportray or do justice to her sing- mi's heart.

The benefit of guidance from disciplined commitment. M.S.' a guru of the distinction of Semart was beautiful and there was mangudi Srinivasa Iyer must have been due to the divine faidiom. It was as though she had vour bestowed on her by the taken a holy pledge to prove Lord of wisdom and learning, that our system of music was a Sri Dakshinamoorti. To repeat sure means to liberate man of the same concept in different his earthly shackles and elevate words normally does pall, but in him to exalted standards of the case of M.S., to emphasise that she had no parallel in the If a face in history could have firmament of Carnatic music in launched a thousand ships, the terms of stupendous achieveface, the glow, the winning ment, monumental popularity, smile and inherent charm of charisma and as a saviour of no-M.S. had the magnetic quality ble causes is absolutely justito launch a thousand more. Her fied. One must also remember dignified stage presence, her in- with gratitude the love and destinctive perception to gauge votion of T. Sadasivam who did the mood of her audience, her not spare himself to help M.S. alertness to the requirements of occupy the highest rung in the the occasion and her spontane- ladder of recognition. Ordinary ous response to listeners' re- people earn to keep but M.S. earned to give.

The timeless, priceless quality of M.S.' music would always How does one describe her remain a glorious chapter in the music — sublime, serene, aes- history of Indian music. The thetic, harmonious, mellifluous, Lord most certainly has lived in the sanctum sanctorum of Sanperlatives would adequately gita Kalanidhi M.S. Subbulaksh-

The world need not learn about

M.S. Subbulakshmi from me. Today her music is relished by people all over the world. National and international acclaim from informed and lay listeners, success on many venues abroad, and the recent announcement of an honorary doctorate, all testify to the special quality of her music. I began to sing many years after she did. I think it would be impertinent on my part to analyse the music of someone who has received praise from my seniors.

I am among those who have moved closely with her. I knew her from my childhood. She too knows me very well. Moreover, my mother Lalitangi and her mother Shanmukhavadivu were well acquainted with each other. They had bonds of affection. As a child, I often met M.S. with

my parents. then. Despite all the fame, she to different cultures and sysretains a child's heart, a smiling tems of music. She introduced face and pleasant speech. Amazingly, she remains as burgh festival in the 1960s, she modest as ever. Celebrity-hood has left her untouched by conceit. Without going against her conscience, she never fails to in London, at New York's Carwholeheartedly appreciate other singers even of moderate standard. M.S. is gracious, she wants others to sing well and come up in life. She and her husband are exceedingly generous. My husband and I have often talked about this with

admiration. Srimathi M.S. Subbulakshmi is extremely devout. Talking to her is to be heedless of time. She talks only about music and about other meaningful subiects. She never makes disparaging remarks about anyone. She is humble, respectful towards elders. She appreciates not only music, but the other arts as well.

I believe that her devotion to God, simplicity, unquestioning deference to her husband, reverence for seniors, her conviction that there is much to learn in the world, and her own desire to learn more — all these attributes have contributed to her illustriousness.

M.L. Vasanthakumari in 1967

voice that enchanted Tyagaraja utsava in Tiruvaiya- ance remained intact. By Gowri Ramnarayan

"Child, you carry the veena in your throat," said veena maestro Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer. "Suswaralakshmi, Subhalakshmi," (goddess of perfect tone and auspiciousness) pronounced Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. Yehudi Menuhin was enraptured by the golden voice. Zubin Mehta was reluctant to take the stage after an M.S. concert. The entire audience of musi-

into standing ovation after her special performance at the Rachmaninoff Hall, Moscow, and followed her with unceasing applause down the aisle, out of the theatre, until her car disappeared from sight. Madurai Shanmukhavadivu Subbulakshmi mesmerised both lay listeners and connoisseurs. More, she won plaudits

She is today just what she was from fellow artistes belonging Carnatic music at the Edinsang for the United Nations General Assembly, for Queen Elizabeth II at Royal Albert Hall negie Hall, and the Kremlin Palace of Congresses. Though sometimes criticised

for lightening the load, her bhajans and songs in different languages made M.S. a pan-Indian favourite. A Marwari industrialist in Mumbai insisted on an M.S. concert to 'purify' his new built home, an Assamese plantation owner's daughter was given a south Indian name because her parents were Subbulakshmi fans, Indira Gandhi declared that the project she inaugurated was assured of success with M.S. singing the prayer, Satyajit Ray said he would come in person to accept an honorary doctorate

the ceremony.

bling anxieties, she prayed for cians and musicologists broke

non-traditional in her Carnatic discharge duties towards fellow renditions of alapana, kriti or human beings. swara. Her grasp of technique and tradition was inexorable. Honours have been heaped

the President's Award, Padma Vibhushan, Kalidas Samman, of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Desikottama and doctorates from several universities, the Hafeez Ali Khan Award and made National Professor, Member d'Honneur by the International Music Council, Producer darshan, and Trustee of the Incame as a real surprise. She was overawed when her guru Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and semusician Subramania Iyer announced the proposal to accord her the Sangita Kalanidhi of the Madras Music Academy. She became the first woman to be so throb of her aural image.

In her twilight years the Kanchi to be sung by M.S. at crowning glory of India's high- the United Nations, became est civilian award — the Bharat her finale in every subsequent Ratna — came with thorns. *concert. The last two lines echo from the university if fellow Husband Sadasivam who had the Upanishadic injunction for nominee M.S. would sing after set her on the shining trail, was control, generosity and comnot alive to see his wife receiv-Raj Kapoor believed that the ing the honour from the Presibest thing at his daughter's dent of India. After his death, wedding was the M.S. recital to M.S. retired from stage and bless the couple with her mu- public life. Her health deterio- by one who practised them in sic. Rajiv Gandhi deviated from rated progressively until the her life. "Kurai onrum illai" she his path through the milling bedridden figure was reduced sang. No regrets? We can only crowds to greet M.S. at the to wraithlike fragility. The radi-

honoured and at the peak of

her career.

Subbulakshmi became a cult Amazingly, M.S. remained figure not only as a singer par untouched by the overwhelm- excellence. She will be rememing adulation she received all bered as one of the most loved her life, from every quarter. representatives of the best in Each concert brought trem- traditional Indian values. Her patriotism was no bar to her divine assistance to pass the belief in universal brotherhood, 'test.' What mattered most to a profound religiosity enher was to stay rooted in her hanced her respect for other tradition. Though she could creeds, and conservatism unswitch from an elaborate "Sri derlined concern for others, Krishnam bhaja" (Todi) or particularly the underprivileged "Amba Kamakshi" (Bhairavi) to and the destitute. She belonged a Marathi abhang or Meera to the generation influenced by bhajan, you never heard the Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave to least trace of anything light or believe that to be human was to

Austerity and sacrifice were no catchwords. They were a way of life. Having known inseupon Subbulakshmi, including curity and deprivation in her personal life, she was happy to be guided by freedom fighter Konarak Samman, the Ramon husband Sadasivam into offer-Magsaysay Award, Fellowship ing her music to the service of others, for benefit performances. This was done easily, without fuss, as a matter of course.

M.S. sang nothing that she the Indira Gandhi Award for did not understand. Weren't National Integration. She was the verses she intoned the outpourings of saintly souls? Whether it was Tyagaraja's "Teratiyagarada" (Won't you Emeritus by the AIR and Door- part the curtain?), or Guru Nanak's "Naam japan kyon chod dira Gandhi National Centre for diya" (Why have you given up the Arts. One of those tributes chanting the Lord's name) the pleas came from deep within. Her bhakti sprang from knowing the meaning, from internalising the bhava. When she celebrated Mother India in a Bharatiyar song, the tears coursing down Sadasivam's face before her made visible the

> "Maitreem bhajata," posed by the Paramacharya of passion ("Damyata, datta, dayadhvam"). You could believe in the utopian dream because the ideals were intoned

GANDHI IN ECLIPSE

Need For Great Moral Revolution In Public Life

By RK DASGUPTA

rahatma Gandhi, who was born on 2 October 1869, I has been in eclipse in the Indian political scene since his assassination on 30 January 1948. Actually the Mahatma was losing his voice in the Indian National Congress even four years before that sad event. In an article published in Harijan on 3 September 1938 he wrote: "I see great danger of the Congress collapsing by the weight of its own weaknesses". Only a year later he wrote in Harijan: "I would go the length of giving the whole Congress organisation a decent burial rather than put up with the corruption that is rampant". On 22 October 1938 he wrote to the same paper: "when the real time comes we shall be found wanting". The prophet of non-violence appeared to be too saintly for a crowd of ambitious politicians wrangling for power. He warned the Congress against this love of office but nobody listened.

Unique greatness

Now the condition of the Congress is far worse. It lost its hold on the national mind almost absolutely when Rajiv Gandhi who succeeded his mother Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister, lost the election in 1989. It now seems to be back to power heading a fragile coalition supported by an uncertain political group in Parliament which, however, chose not to join the government. Obviously, it is unbecoming for the Congress which led the movement with Mahatma Gandhi as its leader and brought us our freedom. Actually, the Congress has no image today. It no longer has the moral prestige with which it began to rule the country in

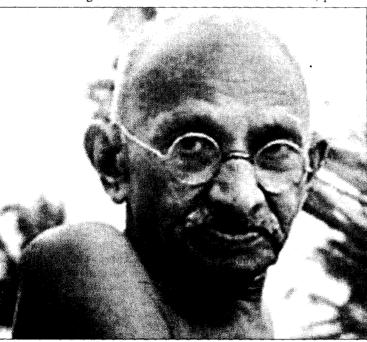
The most important reason for the fall of the Congress is that it does not realise that India and the world valued the Congress because it was led by a statesman like Mahatma Gandhi. But the Congress leaders have no time to think of Gandhi now. They now care for the few other Gandhis who had supplanted Mahatma Gandhi. Which Congressman has written a profound work on Gandhi to say that he is still capable of guiding the destiny of the nation which achieved freedom through a movement led by Gandhi. It is a shame that the best books on Gandhi are being written by Europeans.

The author, an eminent scholar, is former Director, the National Library of India

It is no use compiling remarks of distinguished foreign writers on Gandhi's unique greatness. There are many works where we can find them, the most important of them being *Profiles of Gandhi*, edited by Norman Cousin and published in 1968 and S Radhakrishnan's Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections published in 1949. Perhaps the first great European to acknowledge Gandhi's greatness and the relevance of his message to the modern world is Tolstoy who after reading Gandhi's Hind

of 607 pages published by the Government of India in 1967.

Let us not care much for the praises of Gandhi in India and abroad. Let us only remember the words of Jawaharlal Nehru who said in his foreword to this work: "Gandhiji trained and moulded the Indian people for half a century". But who will train and mould our people today? We are petty men with petty minds. To value Gandhi's non-violence and ideal we must remember that according to Gandhi even ambition, political



Swaraj wrote to him in a letter dated 8 May 1910: "I have read your book with great interest, because I think the question you have therein dealt with is important not only for Indians, but for the whole of Mankind". And the last great European to speak of Gandhi is Einstein who said about him that the generations to come would hardly believe such a man ever walked upon this earth.

Petty minds

Between Tolstoy and Einstein's statements was published in 1924 Romain Rolland's Mahatma Gandhi: the Man who Became One with the Universal Being (Eng. tr., Catherene D. Groth) in which the French writer said: "The indomitable tenacity and the magic of the Great Soul operated and won out: force had to bow down before heroic gentleness". To understand Rolland's response to the personality of Gandhi we one plain question — what is the may read Romain Rolland and essence of Gandhi's message? Gandhi Correspondence, a work Gandhi himself was asked this

ambition, is a form of violence.

We must now realise that if we do not have a Gandhi amongst us we should at least have some people to make us understand what he was and what he believed and what he practised. We cannot expect our young men and women to read 90 volumes of his Complete Works published by the Government of India. Perhaps we do not have the time even to read selections from his writings like HA Jack's The Gandhi Reader or Ronald Duncan's Selected Writings of Mahatma Gandhi (1951) or Raghavan Iyer's The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi (Oxford, 1993). Still it should be possible for us to know Mahatma Gandhi and his message. We must read at least one biography of the man like B.R. Nanda's Mahatma Gandhi which is the finest work of this kind written in the English language.

We must now ask ourselves

question and he answered with a snile, "My life is a my message". This is very true. But we common men and women may not understand the meaning of his life. For him non-violence was a comprehensive concept. It was not for him only necessary in political action. Non-violence is an ideal of the whole of our life. The two political movements he contemplated and led were nonviolent, non-cooperation and non-violent civil disobedience.

If, as a writer on Gandhi says, his non-violence has been a sublime failure it is obviously because his followers did not understand the ideal of non-violence. That ideal is more vital for the world today than it was in Gandhi's lifetime. The Congress would have cleaned and purified the party and its members if they decide to make non-violence their national ideal. For this we don't need to abolish our navy, army and air force. What is needed is a beginning of a great moral revolution in our public life. We have to see that our pursuit of democracy is a pursuit of power.

Fundamentalism

The United States and its allies are approaching terror with terror. International politics is now a horrid spectacle of terror and counter-terror. Unless we are repelled by any show of violence for any purpose we will not understand that the military intervention by a superpower in the affairs of a state crippled by terrorism cannot put an end to that terrorism. Gandhi's non-violence is certainly important for any country today, but our big powers should detest violence and not use it for any

Gandhi was a striking political force in his time. He is even a greater force in our time. This is the substance of David Hardiman's Gandhi in His Time and Ours (2003). The concluding words of this very significant publication are that 'Gandhi rejected an intolerant and hate-filled opposition to the Other, whether it was the white Britisher, the Indian collaborator, the Muslim, or the assertive subordinate".

Gandhi's ideal is now the only answer to our fundamentalists, the knight-errants of Hindutva doctrine who now aspire to rule India. When we root out fundamentalism from our country we will be in a position to remove all forms of fundamentalism in Raja Ramanna passes away

By Our Special Correspondent

MUMBAI, SEPT. 24. The mortal remains of the doyen of India's nuclear programme and noted physicist, Raja Ramanna, who died in the early hours of today, were consigned to the flames here this afternoon.

Dr. Ramanna, who was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of the Bombay Hospital in a critical condition yesterday, passed away at 3.15 a.m. today. He was 79 and is survived by his wife, son and two daughters.

The President, A.P.J. Abdul

The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who had a close associ-



ation with Dr. Ramanna, had specially flown in here last night to enquire about his condition.

Dr. Ramanna, an early disciple of Homi J. Bhabha, was the brain behind India's first nuclear test at Pokhran in 1974 when he was Director of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). Later, he became Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and Minister of State for Defence.

Among the mourners were the former Chairmen of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), H.N. Sethna and P.K. Iyengar, the chairman of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India, S.K. Jain, the chairman of the Heavy Water Board, S.C. Hi-

Benegal.

Dr. Ramanna's son, Shyam Ramanna, took the body to the cremation chamber after a solemn Vedic ceremony. Earlier, wreaths were laid on behalf of the Maharashtra and Karnataka Governments and also on behalf of the Defence Ministry. The Naval Officer-in-Charge of Maharashtra, Commodore Surendra Khanna, represented the armed forces.

Tribute, condolences:

Tribute, condolences: Page 14

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RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE, 1926-2004

THE ABIDING CONTRIBUTION of Ramakrishna Hegde to public life lies in his enrichment of Indian democratic practice. His vision and creativity in developing cooperative federalism will remain an enduring aspect of his political legacy. As Chief Minister in Karnataka between 1983 and 1985 and again between 1985 and 1988, he became an active votary of State rights within a federal set-up, but one who made no concession to regional or linguistic chauvinism. Secondly, he took innovative initiatives in expanding the federal principle within the State, primarily in the area of devolving power to local bodies and in trying to enforce accountability. During his Chief Ministership, Karnataka pioneered legislation on panchayati rai that devolved a substantial degree of financial and administrative powers to a three-tiered structure of local government. In 1984 he introduced legislation to deal with official and administrative corruption through the institution of the Lokayukta.

Mr. Hegde did his best to operationalise his vision of a more responsive and accountable brand of politics in the State. He distinguished himself as a development-minded Minister in the administrations of S. Nijalingappa (1957-58 and 1962-68) and Veerendra Patil (1968-71). He joined the Congress (O) after the party split in 1969. Not surprisingly, he was among the many Opposition leaders imprisoned in Karnataka during the Emergency. He showed that it was possible to have a workable alternative to the Congress that was closer to the people and more sensitive to their needs. From a State leader of considerable dynamism and talent, Mr. Hegde emerged as one of the most influential national leaders of the post-Emergency era. His conviction that there was a space for a non-Congress,

non-Bharatiya Janata Party formation at the national level led him to play an important role in the formation of the Janata Dal in 1988.

Mr. Hegde acquired an aura that extended beyond the State. "Probity in public life" and "value based politics" became phrases popularly associated with him. He appeared to lead a crusade against corruption, demanding that politicians be clean and demonstrably so. His fealty to these principles held such appeal that he appeared always to hold the moral high ground through a turbulent political career that saw some lows in the final years. His political stock of yesteryear and his image saw him through a phase of alliance with the BJP, a somewhat unexpected departure from his professed framework of political partnership. Mr. Hegde's alienation from active politics at the State level began with his defeat in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections. He did not contest a popular election after that, although he was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1996 and served as a member till 2002. Despite the weakening of his political stock, he continued to play the role of elder statesman in the fractious Janata Parivar. With the fruition of a long-cherished dream, namely that of a Third Front taking office at the Centre, Mr. Hegde seemed well-placed to head the coalition. That his candidature fell in the cracks of coalition politics was a disappointment he accepted with dignity. The setback led him on a political trajectory that further distanced him from his original moorings. Although in recent years his ill health kept him away from the political spotlight, he did not for a moment allow himself to be cut off from the mainstream of public life or from issues that mattered. Ramakrishna Hegde was a leader with true mass appeal; he thought interestingly and created new possibilities in Indian politics.

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