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A Gem Passes Away

December 25, 1972 was a sad day for India. On that day another great son of modern India passed away. In fact, Rajaji was much more than that. He had political brilliance, intellectual ability and a courage of conviction, almost unmatched in India.

Rajaji propounded what was right at all times and on all occasions. He was undeterred by the criticism of those in power, in pursuing any idea or policy that he believed was good for the country. In a land where political morality has been thrown to the winds and where many great men have stifled their consciences and compromised their principles to appease those in the higher echelons of power, Rajaji was a lonely star that outshined the others as if in mockery.

When the Congress began to follow a path which sought to harm the unity of India, Rajaji had no hesitation in quitting the party in 1942. In fact had the Congress leaders of that time accepted what is now called the CR formula, much of the bloodshed caused by the subsequent communal riots would have been averted.

The adoption of the so-called socialistic pattern by the Congress at Avadi was the last straw on the camel's back. Rajaji, a far-sighted man, realised that India's hard-earned freedom was in danger of being jeopardised by an economic policy that allowed little freedom for individual growth.

In order to instil in his countrymen patriotism and love for their country and educate them on the values of democracy and a free society where anybody with skill and imagination can grow uninhibited, Rajaji formed the Swatantra party in 1959, at the ripe old age of 81.

Though he was a constant critic of the Congress government's policies, Rajaji's criticism was always coupled with concrete suggestions, and were not hollow and malicious. Unfortunately, his practical and wise counsels

were seldom respected by our "infallible" men in the Congress, who wanted to project themselves as the "progressive" leaders who were fighting the "evils of conservatism" with their weapon of "socialism".

Though the ruling elite succeeded in fooling the people by masquerading as the "progressives" they have not been able to take the country anywhere towards the road to economic and social progress.

For the youth, Rajaji was a beacon of light in a sea of darkness, polluted with corruption, political immorality and ignorance. The best we can now do to honour this great sage is to follow his honest, simple and yet pragmatic approach to life. He was one of those rare Indians to be universally respected and admired.

Farewell, beloved Rajaji. India will forever remember you as one of its greatest sons and founding fathers.

Albert Colaco (18)
Salcete (Goa)