

J. C. KUMARAPPA

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World Constitution and Parliament Association
India Chapter

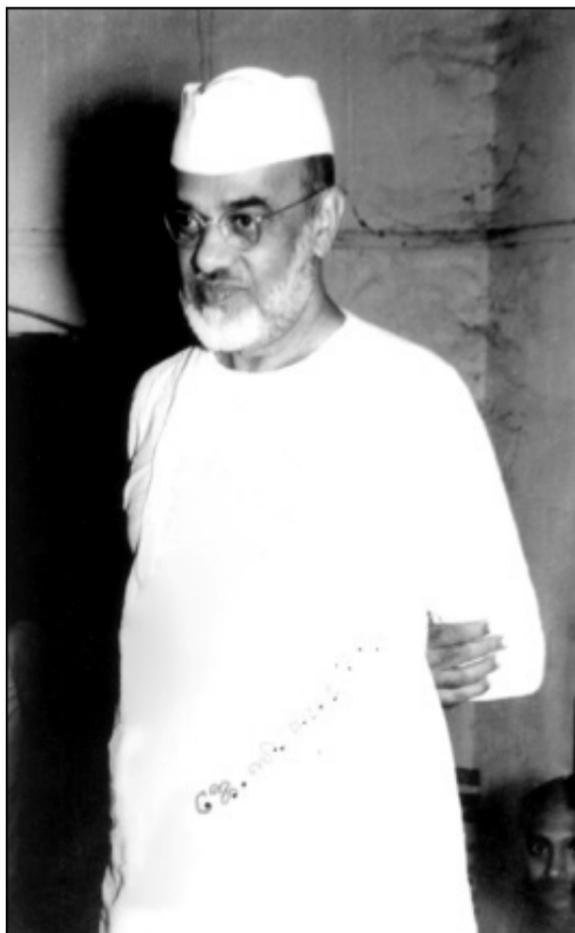
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J. C. Kumarappa
(Joseph Chelladurai Cornelius Kumarappa)
4 January 1892 – 30 January 1960

J. C. KUMARAPPA

It was an exhilarating for India; yet it was an agonising period for the world. The humanity was half way between the two terrible world wars; yet the Indians were approaching the threshold of a new civilisation, full of vigour and determination, hopes and dreams. One of those days, two great minds met in a mud-hut by the side of river Sabarmati, a hot summer afternoon. A highly westernised mind, brainwashed by the exploitative economic theories of capitalism, meeting with the mind of an intensely eastern humanitarian revolutionary turned out to be an epoch-making event. That 2.30 p.m. of the 9th of May 1929 laid the foundation of an ever lasting friendship and commitment between the two minds, providing inspiration to the rural millions of the second largest nation in the world which was being trampled and ruined materially, morally and spiritually, by the greatest colonial power on earth where the “Sun never set”.

And they clicked and clung to each other instantly. “All those who have come in contact with Kumarappa will recognise that he always sticks to principles and will never compromise”.

recollects the young man's sister years later.

Gandhi was in search of exactly such brave volunteers for his non-violent battle against the colonial 'masters'. Without waking up the entire suffering and starving masses this was impossible. The language they understood had to be relevant to their day-to-day life and struggle for mere survival. In one stroke J.C. Kumarappa understood the meaning of charkha and village industries. His creased trousers gave way to simple dhoti and kurta of handspun yarn. And India found the message of self-reliance more and more meaningful. The nation recognised him as the Chief Economic Advisor and purse-keeper for the freedom struggle. His earlier admiration and acceptance of capitalist economic structure got buried under the avalanche of more relevant and meaningful economic culture of the 'Soviets' and the 'Communes' which Kumarappa found as beacon lights for liberation of the millions under hunger and exploitation around the world. His 'Peep Behind the Iron Curtain' reinforced his conviction that until the rural masses were awakened and activated, his 'Economy of Permanence' would not be allowed to survive and assert itself for the better civilization of the humanity.

"The main trouble with man arises out of the

fact that he is allowed with a 'freewill' and possesses a wide field for its play. By exercising this gift in the proper way, he can consciously bring about a much greater co-operation and co-ordination of nature's units than any other living being. Conversely, by using it wrongly he can create quite a disturbance in the economy of the nature and in the end destroy himself", Argued Kumarappa vehemently in defence of an ideal system of economic activity for human society which is possible only if humans work in complete alignment with nature.

As J.C. Kumarappa transformed himself into Gandhi's line of thinking in the interest of the multitude of Indians, he articulated the five stages of economic development of any society which could lessen violence and wars.

- 1.Parasitic stage (a tiger eats another animal straight)
- 2.Predatory stage (a monkey eats fruit). In these two there is only consumption without contribution.
- 3.Enterprising stage (a bird eats fruit, carries seeds, builds nests-a consumer and producer at the same time).
- 4.The Honey-Bee stage- they produce for the whole group and consume with justice and fairness.

5. The Service Stage-as the mother bird picks up food and takes to the baby in the nest without expecting any return.

“The moment we are able to develop people towards the ‘Service Stage’, we are reducing the need and chances of war”, Kumarappa emphasised. The first two could be characterised as primitive; the next two as modern’ or ‘human’ stage; the last and most advanced could be called ‘spiritual stage’. The first is definitely transient and violent; the second is transient and non-violent; the third makes for peace, permanence and non-violence”, he continued to explain.

As Kumarappa was an analytical thinker, intensely pained and concerned about the plight of the poor masses, his appreciation for Gandhi’s economic theory increased very quickly. Centralisation of industries promoted concentration of wealth in fewer hands, while decentralisation promoted equitable distribution of wealth to everyone. Yet, he was convinced that unless there was simultaneous decentralisation of political power also, the distribution process would suffer. Therefore, he looked at critically the Soviet and Chinese systems where concentration of political power was a main factor. Hence, he agreed with

Gandhi and emphasised: “I would suggest that we put centralised method of production and of court completely”.

Thus, if and when a decentralised political and economic structure within a Marxist-Gandhian philosophical framework is achieved, that alone would redeem the nation of poverty and misery, he visualised. Such an economic order should have five main purposes.

- 1) Create wealth as efficiently as possible.
- 2) Distribute wealth widely and evenly.
- 3) Supply the needs of people first and later comforts and luxuries.
- 4) It should be a means to elicit all facilities of the worker and to develop his/her personality
- 5) It should be conducive to peace and harmony of society.

Being a non-dogmatic thinker Kumarappa could stand equidistant between Karl Marx and Gandhi and put forward his theoretical conclusions in the best interest of the whole society. “Of course, on key industries and public utilities, there is no alternative to centralisation. However, this can be possibly done either co-operatively or by socialising such industries. When we attempt to plan production in our country to satisfy our needs, we have to

be careful to choose the most scientific method and the most progressive ways”.

Kumarappa was very pragmatic and foresighted in his attitudes and arguments. Supporting the basic philosophy of nationalisation, he warned the nation: when the government of the land is in the hands of tried patriots, who will be trusted to hold the interests of the millions as their first care, then alone can we claim to have a National Government and ‘nationalisation’ will then ensure that the interests of the masses will be taken care of.

In the absence of a village-based and controlled Central Government, nationalisation may lead to greater exploitation of the ‘have-nots’ by the ‘haves.

His deeper involvement in the life and problems of our villages, under Gandhi’s influence and encouragement, brought him to realise the integrated nature of British exploitative machinery over India. Education was another convenient instrument the British consistently manipulated and used. Calling their system imposed on India as ‘indentured education’, JCK says, “The surest way of keeping India in political bondage is to stop the boys and girls from thinking on liberty and freedom”.

If we were to relate that statement to our present condition of education, after four decades of Freedom, we can say, “Now our system stops our boys and girls from thinking on Freedom and Responsibility”.

“The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. It is an indescribably painful state which has got to be experienced to be realised. I have found it impossible to sooth suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for only one poem - invigorating food. They cannot be given it; they must earn it. And they can earn it only by the sweat of their brow”, Gandhiji wrote in 1921.

After seventy-six years, still today one-third of our people are in the above state of existence. How can they ‘earn it’, if we have not provided the means for ‘sweating their brow’?

The task is ours, here and now.

“LET US UNITE AND MAKE IT POSSIBLE”.



E P Menon or fondly known as EP a Writer, Educationist, Gandhian and political thinker was born on Sept 10, 1936 at Thrissur, Kerala.

He participated in movements led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan for 7 years, Marched on foot around the world protesting the nuclear weapons, which took almost 3 years.

His passion has been talking to youth on Humanistic values and preparing them for a better future and make efforts for a borderless world