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Men of Soil, Web of Politics and Presidential Memoirs

Dr T Radhakrishna Murty

Abstract

A nation invests so much in its citizens. Citizens empower it through their intellectual and physical contributions. Intellect cannot be gauged by the measure of sheer degrees in education of an institution. There has been many a man of soil who rose to greater heights of governance and served the institution. Among these men of soil and grass roots Sanjiva Reddy and Giani Zail Singh ascended the Presidential throne in the history of free India. Though short in literary value but deep in wisdom, these two individuals authored two texts which offer a phenomenal perspective and ringside view of the polity of the nation. This paper attempts a study of these memoirs to cull their words and thoughts of wisdom.

Keywords: Presidential memoirs, men of soil, vision, politics, governance.

An interesting comment is made on the seventh President of India, Giani Zail Singh, in one of his biographies, *President Zail Singh – A Profile of Dedication*: "Giani Zail Singh belongs to a new class of politicians of whom the earliest example was K. Kamraj, who knew only 'telegraphic English' and who have no pretensions to learning but possesses abundant commonsense and earthly shrewdness. Their learning is not of the genre which Macaulay advocated, namely, the "substitution of Western culture for the Indian.....(for).....the creation of a class of Indians who would be Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect." The two classes of politicians, presently coexisting, mark a transitional stage in India on politics. The Western educated intellectual elite must give place one day to the domestically trained leaders educated entirely through the medium of Indian languages and inspired by Indian literature, art and culture.

N. Sanjiva Reddy was a leader of repute at the grass roots level and served the country as its sixth President from 25.7.1977 to 25.7.1982. He was a follower of Gandhiji and actively participated in the civil disobedience movement of Gandhiji. Known for his administrative acumen and knowledge in legislative affairs he was deeply committed to the development of agriculture and industry for the progress of the nation. As President his decisions in the constitutional crisis of Janata government of 1979 enhanced the prestige of the high office. Giani Zail Singh was a mighty man of the masses and he rose from humble origins to adorn the office of

the President of India. He served as the seventh President of India from 25.7.1982 to 25.7 1987. He was the architect of modern Punjab and deeply committed to the development of the state and the nation. The strong shades of patriotic fervour, religious bent of mind and rebellious attitude towards injustice define his life. His presidential tenure was shaded by some unsavoury incidents like Operation Blue Star to weed out Sikh terrorists from the Golden Temple Complex, the mass killing of Sikhs in the wake of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination and the tiff with the then Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. *National Herald* welcomed the President in its editorial in this fashion: "Rashtrapati Bhavan has had six illustrious incumbents who have brought honour and dignity to the high office they held in their different ways. Giani Zail Singh is the seventh President of the country. He is also more truly than most others, a son of the soil. A man who can ply the most plebeian of trades, he represents the toiling masses more fully than others do. Like most Indians, he had had no time or opportunity for formal schooling, and like them, he is trained in the school of life, learning and growing with each passing day. His native wisdom and sense of good and bad have enabled him to hold high public office with distinction despite all the handicaps of a man who has been in the thick of the nation's struggle from childhood. If there is anyone who can qualify as the poor man's President, it is he." Giani's tastes, and one would add his instincts, are Indian. His non-academic background is what would distinguish him from the previous six occupants of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Zail Singh did not qualify for any of the professions considered 'learned' according to Western educational standards. But he earned the title '*Giani*'

which means, the “learned one” when he trained himself to become a *granthi*, professional reader of the holy *Granth* (holy book of the Sikh religion). This is the symbol of the transition from Macaulay to total Indianness.”

Sanjiva Reddy, a natural leader of action than words, penned an autobiography, *Without Fear or Favour: Reminiscences and Reflections of a President* (1989) which chronicles his life and work at the highest office of the land. Giani Zail Singh’s autobiography, *Memoirs of Giani Zail Singh* (1997) offers the events of his life.

Rich in political sagacity and grounded in earthen wisdom, Sanjiva Reddy made his presence felt in the corridors of power in his hey days. His incisive analysis of the problems, commonsense, home ground administrative acumen and tact in handling men and matters won appreciation from all quarters of the society. His election to the position of President of India is unique in the sense that he was the first president of India to be elected unopposed. He admitted, he owed his spiritual outlook and administrative skills to Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru respectively. Sanjiva Reddy points out that the in the name of the nation’s interest a clear cut division had to be established and maintained between personal relationships and public responsibilities in the discharge of duties. This is imperative in the light of the increasing ‘disenchantment and disillusionment’ of the people in the sanctity of the high offices of the system. There had been a considerable inability of the political leadership to rise and live up to the expectations of the people and fulfil their

aspirations. He opines there was a wide gap between precept and practice.

President Sanjiva Reddy was of the considered and accepted view that it is a healthy practice for the Prime Minister and the President to meet regularly to exchange views on matters of public interest and to provide an opportunity for the Prime Minister to keep the President informed about important political, economic and other developments. Sanjiva Reddy says, "Both Morarji Desai and Indira Gandhi used to meet me off and on, the former oftener than the latter. I should like to see the practice of the Prime Minister calling on the President at regular intervals firmly established so that there may be full rapport between the head of the Government and the head of State and an opportunity available for a full, free and frank exchange of views."

Sanjiva Reddy's tenure was coloured by the events of 1979 in the form of an unprecedented constitutional crisis. He tries to paint the total picture with simplicity and sincerity. During that most tumultuous period in the post-independent India, he stood witness to the series of political intrigue and accomplished constitutional obligations with a mature mind. In that period the country had seen a number of events: the collapse of Janata Government, the formation of a new government by Charan Singh who did not face the Parliament even once, the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, the midterm poll to the Lok Sabha and the return of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to power. In all these epoch making events, Sanjiva Reddy was called on to act as a decision maker and marker. In a normal

course of events, the Presidential position would have been a stamping authority.

Here the public, opposition parties, party in power and press saw Sanjiva Reddy's role, perceptions, impression, actions and words from different perspectives. In the light of conflicting versions, he tries to present his position with utmost care and caution. He justifies his actions by citing the pros and cons of his actions and offers logic for his acts and words undertaken and uttered by him. He himself avers, "I was called upon to examine and decide constitutional questions the like of which none of my predecessors had confronted." The Janata Government had taken its birth from dissensions among its leading members. Here, Sanjiva Reddy hastens to add that he gathered this information from newspapers. He makes it very clear that as President of India he had nothing to do with the party differences. With no precedent available, he pondered a lot over the cases of Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and his constitutional responsibility to follow the tenets of the constitution and appear as an impassioned and objective judge of the situation. He extensively deals with all these issues and answers each question and criticism levelled against him and proves how difficult it is for the Caesar's wife to be above the line of suspicion especially in the circumstances of mixed interests. He expresses his opinion in this manner: "With reference to the decision of mine, I once stated that I had acted in accordance with the dictates of my conscience. Some people criticised my statement and said that what should have governed my decision was the Constitution and not my conscience. What I had implied was that, in coming to a decision, I had taken an objective and impartial

view of the situation and that I had discharged the duty cast upon me to the best of my judgement and ability. I did not then, and do not now, consider that I had done anything in contravention of the Constitution.”

In 1975, Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared emergency. Press censorship was imposed and thousands of detractors of the government were thrown into jails. Zail Singh supported emergency and cited that even though it was opposed by the opposition parties and intellectuals, it was welcomed by the common man. In his view, common people felt relieved because of the discipline it generated in public life and laxity in behaviour it checked. However, he hastens to add, “It was a mixed blessing in some ways. The mishandling, over enthusiasm and imperious attitude of its protagonists including some of the Chief Ministers were responsible for the large scale aversion to the Emergency witnessed in the country.” During the emergency, Zail Singh was forthright enough to make his stand clear to Mrs. Indira Gandhi on Punjab’s rights over river waters. He minced no words to say that as the Chief Minister and first servant of the people of Punjab he could not accept any injustice to the people of the state and added that any indiscriminate would lead to impoverishment of agriculture in the area and would result in uncomfortable and undesirable situation. Later, prophetically, this gave rise to the germination of the Akali agitation.

The existence of corruption at the micro and macro levels had its origin in the very nature of fund collection by political parties, Sanjiva Reddy firmly declares. In the distant past one or two authorized persons used to collect funds for contesting

elections and party activities. Nevertheless, in the recent past Reddy observes that party authorities are using their discretionary powers to gather funds with no accountability whatsoever. In the absence of transparency, there is strong possibility of misuse and abuse of power for selfish ends by individuals. People who donate could not complain because they would have garnered some amount of mileage out of the donation. Sanjiva Reddy concludes: "While they may not thus make formal complaints, they do not hesitate to talk about these matters in private, and the facts become widely known among the public. The existence of corruption on a large scale in public life is thus too well known to be brushed aside." In furthering his argument, Sanjiva Reddy makes a strong statement that "the political fabric of the country today is corrupt." The saner elements in the country look with revulsion upon the doings of politicians of all hues. He pin pointedly mentions the case of Mr. A R Antulay, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, wherein the CM runs a trust in his personal name, exploits his discretionary financial powers to grant indiscriminate quotas to the favoured few and expects them to give donations to the trust that was established with lofty ideals. In this context, Sanjiva Reddy minces no words and says, "the end does not justify the means is a precept which we cannot afford to ignore in public or private life." He raises a valid point that if this goes unchecked and unchallenged who can prevent the number of Chief Ministers siphoning off funds from the public exchequer. Hence he condemns these acts and expresses his anguish at the way the trusts run by politicians are misused and he had brought this to the notice of the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, but laments

that no action has been done. He was very sorry that no corrective action so far had been taken.

Sanjiva Reddy raises his voice on the deterioration in the quality of public life. However, he suggests a pragmatic solution to address the ills of the nation. He wanted honest and patriotic minds of all parties irrespective of their party affiliations however divergent they might be must be consulted frequently to sound out the problems and find out one solution or other rather than sticking to one's own party stand by saying that their stand is above scrutiny. In a way, Sanjiva Reddy, a grass roots political worker, is right in advocating a holistic approach that is devoid of political colours to the problems of India. In this context, he wants the government to seek the counsel of the leading figures and men of repute from other parties. He avers very clearly: "If the top leadership of the ruling party genuinely seeks the cooperation of the Opposition parties as it should, I have no doubt that they will readily respond. Such an approach will vastly improve the political climate in the country." As a President he implores for an atmosphere of reconciliation in order to diffuse the air of divisive politics where in national energy can be channelized for the greater pursuit of the prosperity of the nation and people.

Sanjiva Reddy makes a scathing attack on the largely prevalent system of imposing Chief Ministers from the above especially in Congress Party. Concentration of power and decision-making in the Centre at government and party level is detrimental to the good practices of democracy in this country. When the State legislature's parties are denied their

right to choose their own leader and are asked to prostrate before the central leadership and take a leader-imposed form the top – it leads to a corruption of the principles of democracy. He clearly explains the predicament of those chosen chief ministers and calls them as nominated chief ministers with no freedom to choose his cabinet colleagues and colleague treat them with scant respect.

President Sanjiva Reddy considered himself as a link between the ruling government and the opposition parties. He always made it a point to lend an ear to the voice of the opposition parties and passed on his wiser counsel to the Prime Minister. He laments that the attitude of ruling parties betrays an unhealthy intolerance of the Opposition parties. In his view, the all-comprehensive attempts by the ruling party to keep the opposition party at bay do not reflect the respect for democratic values and predict ill for the future. In spite of the criticism that he was a rallying point for the opposition parties against the ruling government, President Sanjiva Reddy always considered his meetings with opposition parties as purposeful vehicles to ventilate their emotion and opinion that may not be possible in the restricted Parliamentary atmosphere.

The presidential memoirs of Sanjiva Reddy – cautiously outspoken in its tone and naturally plain in its expression – presents detailed descriptions of the events and episodes that happened during his tenure. It thus lays the laid ground for a relationship between the President and the people of the Republic with reference to politics and history. Readers are given the simple happiness of seeing an eventful five year

period of presidency marked by consensus, controversy and concern through the eyes of a person of humble origins. Sanjiva Reddy was a self-made man of integrity and principles whose seasoned experience and well ground wisdom are of contemporary relevance. A feasible vision and a map to get out of the chaotic political atmosphere of the country are presented through his writing. Hence, his writings demand much closer attention and practice. His work though simple in its structure and light in treatment tries to direct the public attention to the need for a solid relation between the President of India and the Prime Minister as advocated in the Constitution.

In 1982, when Presidential elections were due, there was much speculation about the possible candidate. Zail Singh's name was in the air. Many of his supporters pleaded with him not to accept the candidature as the position of Home Minister was more powerful and important. There were others also who expressed their happiness at the prospect of Zail Singh becoming the President. They advised him not to hesitate a moment and accept it readily. He states, "It goes to the credit of some of my friends in the Congress party that they tried for my nomination. What influenced me to some extent not to oppose this move was the realization that I was overburdened with work in the Home Ministry. I persuaded myself to let things take their own course. If the choice ultimately fell on me, I should not decline it. Without much surprise I found my old political opponents busy working overtime for getting the move in my favour scotched."After many confabulations within the Congress party, he was nominated as party's choice

for the position and he was sworn in as President of India on 25th July 1982.

In the beginning, Mrs. Gandhi made it a point to meet Zail Singh and discuss major events of the nation. She used to call on him before embarking on foreign tours and brief him after the visits. Later Zail Singh realized that she had developed some hesitation to discuss the Punjab problem which by that time had acquired alarming proportions with the Akali demand for a separate Sikh state. Even during his Home Ministership, he had a confidential arrangement with Mrs. Indira Gandhi, which allowed the Home Secretary to report directly to the Prime Minister. During that period the then Chief Minister of Punjab, Darbara Singh wanted a free hand in handling the Akali Movement without the interference of the Home Minister who happened to be Zail Singh, a Sikh. From then onwards, Zail Singh stopped tendering advice to Mrs. Indira Gandhi on the Punjab matters but as a President did point out to her that all was not well with the government of Punjab in handling the agitation.

Zail Singh opined that vacillating tactics of the Punjab government resulted in Akali agitation getting out of control. He looks at the Anandpur Sahib Resolution as a document having elements of separatism because it envisaged a special status for the Sikhs in the region. He felt alarmed about the Alkalis' opposition to the Indian Constitution and their open defiance of its tenets. He termed the stand taken by the Akalis over article 25 of the Constitution as highly untenable and condemned their act of tearing the Constitution. He expresses agony: "Had the Akalis shown a measure of maturity they

could have highlighted their viewpoint in Parliament. Instead of using such an effective forum, they chose the sanctity of the *gurudwaras* to burn a portion of the Constitution.”

During the agitation, hundreds of agitators were arrested and put in jails. Darbara Singh government adopted a stern and inhuman attitude towards the agitators, which made the situation worse. Zail Singh volunteered to advise Mrs. Indira Gandhi on how he had handled the same type of situation during his Chief Ministership. He issued verbal instructions to his police officers to arrest the agitators, take them to the premises of the jails, keep them there with their vehicles and send them away in their own vehicles in the evening. The interesting but shrewd logic offered by Zail Singh was that the arrests would give the agitators some psychological satisfaction and at the same time, their return without proper detention in jail would save the government of the obvious strains. He told the police: “I would not like the detainees to use jails as study circles at the expense of the Government and it was best that they, after enjoying the satisfaction of having courted arrest, should return to their homes.”

Zail Singh opposed the Centre’s move to impose President’s rule on the plea that this would embroil the Central government in the imbroglio. Nevertheless, Mrs. Indira Gandhi seemed to have made up her mind already on the issue and asked him to endorse it. As the situation worsened the Central government had sent two ordinances for the Presidential sanction without any prior consultation. One of the Ordinances was aimed at sanction of unlimited powers to the Governor to declare any area as disturbed area and deploy the

military forces. In retrospect, he termed the Ordinance as a blunder on the part of the Government. At this point also, he offered some positive suggestions to end the deadlock but Mrs. Gandhi really was in no mood to receive any sort of advice. He said, "I told her that this ordinance would be construed as a measure of repression and would cause deeper cynicism. And this is what actually happened. The attitude of the Akalis hardened and they called for greater sacrifices from their followers proclaiming that the struggle would be a long-drawn affair. The Akali leaders led their trusting adherents downhill towards lower levels of pessimism and to uncertainty of a solution and prompting them for greater sufferings in the name of religion."

Zail Singh found fault with the Alkalis' confabulations with Sikh ex-service men. This would give wrong signals to the Sikh people in service and simultaneously tarnish the image of Sikhs in the eyes of the nation. He advised the Akalis to withdraw their resignations from the State Assembly. They in turn asked the President to resign. He told them: "I was not inclined to do so, as I was not elected by the Akalis alone, but by a vast electoral college consisting of Members of Parliament and all State assemblies. People professing all religions belonging to all castes and coming from all parts of the country had voted me into office."

Zail Singh castigated the ill-advised moves of the Akalis to stall the Asian games planned in New Delhi. In the security checks that were followed, several innocent Sikh citizens, lawyers, women and many others who have no sympathy for the agitation were subjected to physical frisking and

humiliation for no fault of their own except for being a Sikh. He concluded that they felt the pinch and started lending sympathy to the hard-boiled elements, who were the primary cause of this debacle. He precisely analysed the machinery of communalism in India:” The agitators and militants had adopted the strategy of publicity offensive among this class of people and had been substantially successful in inciting communal passion, feeding them on exaggerated accounts of atrocities on and discrimination against the Sikhs. But the government had not taken sufficient notice of this propaganda blitzkrieg. The Akalis were stirring communal sentiments of the Sikhs settled in foreign countries, because they were well-to-do and could be liberal with their money in the name of religion.”

During 1984, the Akali agitation reached a flash point with militant Akalis using the Golden temple complex as their shelter and stock point for arms. Mrs. Indira Gandhi pondered over the option of flush out of militants by police action. Zail Singh advised her against this disastrous move. She appeared to have heeded the advice. After a week she ordered military action code named Operation Blue Star in the Golden temple complex without informing Zail Singh about it. There were thousands of devotees inside the complex to attend the anniversary of martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth guru of Sikhs. Hundreds were killed and many temples of the complex were destroyed and damaged. Zail Singh got the information through other source which was tragically confirmed by the government. The fact of not informing him beforehand coupled with military attack against his religious symbol pained him a lot. However, he was in a helpless situation. In

anguish, he asked Mrs. Indira Gandhi what the intelligence agencies were doing when arms build-up was going on. He fumes, "Mrs. Gandhi had obviously no plausible answer. With a distant look in her eyes, she replied feebly that it was the duty of the Punjab Government to take care of these aspects." In his presence, she slipped into a reflective mood and felt remorseful.

Later Zail Singh personally visited the Golden temple complex and could feel the stench of human flesh in the air and corridors. He felt that no amount of cleansing could have wiped out the strong smell of so many decomposed bodies in that scorching summer heat. He wondered at the fanaticism and destructive instinct of the militants, who had caused their most important religious spot to be brought to this state and at the lack of wisdom and discretion on the part of the Government, who took such ill-advised, drastic action without proper assessment of its ramifications. He was informed by the head priest that a bullet had struck the Holy Book. Rage and pain equally enveloped the President. In the wake of the military action, Zail Singh was under tremendous pressure to tender his resignation. He gave his mature reasons composedly in this manner: "Had the Sikh community as a whole raised its voice against the sinister moves of a few short-sighted and misguided persons, all this humiliation and suffering could well have been avoided. Of course, the Government too could not be exonerated of the damage caused by its policy of drift, indifference to reality and the ultimate debacle, but I did not think, my resignation would restore the lost glory to the Sikhs. It was quite likely that in the event of my resigning from the Presidency, I would earn the

community's approbation and be lionised by some people, but had they given thought to the damage it might cause to the country as a whole, including the Sikhs. In the first instance, I had taken the oath as the President of all Indians and I was not the President of the Sikhs alone. Moreover, my resignation might bring more harm to the Sikhs than gain. Since I was the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, my resignation might generate a sense of guilt among the serving Sikh members of the forces, giving rise to a feeling of persecution and a desire to square up things with the authority. As President, it was my duty to defend and not to endanger the integrity of the nation. I had to look after the interests of the whole country. I could not be sentimental while taking a momentous decision to resign or to stay in office to perform my duty."

In the wake of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination, throughout India, there was widespread arson and massacre of innocent Sikh people as a vengeance against the killing of Mrs. Indira Gandhi by two Sikh bodyguards. Zail Singh felt anguished at his helplessness in the face of deaths of thousands of Sikh citizens by hooligans and arsonists. He was dismayed at the mayhem created, apathy of the government and the complicity of the police in the dastardly act. He termed the whole episode as a taint on the psyche of India.

The relations between Zail Singh and Rajiv Gandhi can best be described as most acrimonious and tragic of all relationships of the Presidents and Prime Ministers of India. Right from the beginning, Rajiv Gandhi demonstrated his aversion to maintain the custom of meeting the President regularly to

seek his counsel or to brief him on important matters. Rajiv Gandhi simply dispensed with the practice. Zail Singh says, "After three or four days, it was a Sunday when I sent for Rajiv Gandhi, but my Secretary was informed by the Prime Minister's Secretary that Rajiv Gandhi would call on me in a couple of days time and that he wanted me to take rest on a Sunday. I was surprised at this suggestion. But he never came, and in the following days and weeks I realized that he had started avoiding me." He told Rajiv Gandhi in one of the official functions that there should not be communication gap between the Prime Minister and the President. Zail Singh was hurt at Rajiv Gandhi's casual treatment of the senior Ministers and opined that the young Prime Minister was in need of mature and experienced counsel.

Zail Singh sensed an undercurrent of hostility replacing the formal demonstrative courtesy. Even worse, he came to know that there were moves a foot to impeach him and ease him out of the Presidency. There was denial of regular and formal information to the President. His foreign visits were also not approved. He exasperatedly asked Rajiv Gandhi whether the government had lost trust in the President and he offered to walk out of the Rashtrapati Bhavan if his stay was not to the liking of the Prime Minister. Rajiv Gandhi never expressed his real feelings to the President, spoke sweetly and gave false promises. He observed that, "Rajiv Gandhi did not translate these promises into practice. When a news man asked him at press conference as to why he had not been observing the convention of meeting the President, he replied that he had broken hundreds of conventions." He wondered at the psychology of Rajiv Gandhi to get piqued readily and his over

defensive reactions to the normal and elderly advice tendered by him. He discovered sharp divergence between Rajiv Gandhi's words and practice.

In his *Memoirs*, Zail Singh takes strong objection to the way the office of the President was sidelined and denigrated. There ran detailed exchanges between him and Rajiv Gandhi government about the constitutional provisions and conventions regarding the relationship of President and Prime Minister. During the height of the Bofors scandal, he got memoranda from several quarters to grant sanction to prosecute Rajiv Gandhi for his misdeeds and corruption. Though he was satisfied with the constitutional position of the President to sanction prosecution, he made it clear that he had no such intentions to upset the government. However, Rajiv Gandhi was worried about his motives. In the last stages of his Presidency he clearly assured Rajiv Gandhi, that he had no intention of running for the second term.

The pain and the suffering that he went throughout his life are visible in these words. The numerous vicissitudes that Zail Singh had experienced and the undaunted spirit with which he faced them can be reckoned as remarkable qualities of a stoic politician intent on doing some good to the people. The wisdom ingrained in his deep study of the religious texts appears to have made him conscious of the ultimate reality. The truth that service of people and fight for their cause are equal to the service of God for which his father longed to dedicate his son, is reflected in the writing of the former President.

Rooted in practicality, Zail Singh never lost sight of his vision and mission. He accepted the physical humiliation of his imprisonment in the Faridkot jail and the emotional isolation - alienation from his own people, his mentor, Indira Gandhi and his Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi - of his Presidential years in the Rashtrapati Bhavan with rare equanimity of mind. His first hand perception of the people he came across and the objective analysis of the problems he encountered offer a rare insight into the circumstances of the times. Zail Singh's narrative of the machinations and intrigue at the highest office attempts to separate the personalities from their public image. His incisive comments on Presidential relations with the Prime Minister demand serious understanding and deeper study. His concern for the people's welfare is pervasive in the text. His visionary programmes for the development of his state and the observations he made when he recollected them in his book of memoirs can still guide the governments of the day. The earthy wisdom and realized knowledge of *Memoirs of Giani Zail Singh* shall be an invaluable part of literature. I.V. Chalapathi Rao says about Sanjiva Reddy, "He was not flamboyant. Although he appeared to be homespun and low-key, he exercised a strong influence on the course of events in the post-Nehru era of Indian politics. Decisions were premised on considerations of logic and well-thought-out principles. He never exuded power; he contained it. Lofty morality was not a ground rule in politics, but he tried to maintain high standards and balance. Here in lies the true measure of his greatness. The measure of greatness lies in the mind and the thoughts and consequent acts by which they stood for testing the tides of time.

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Dr T Radhakrishna Murty

Dr T Radhakrishna Murty is a Professor of English at Vignan's Institute of Engineering for Women, Visakhapatnam, with twenty two years of experience in the field of engineering education training Engineering graduates in areas of Language Communications Skills and business English. Having studied at the University of Madras and Andhra Universities, he has done pioneering research on the writings of Indian Presidents - a first of its kind in Indian Writing in English. Dr. Radhakrishna Murty has been a frequent contributor to literary journals on aspects of Indian writing in English and Commonwealth Literature. He published a book on Presidents of India, Anchored Visions of Indian Presidents – A Diplomat and A Scientist.

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