

## P r e f a c e

Chakraborty Rajagopalachari, popularly known as "Rajaji" or "C.R.", played an important role in the saga of India's freedom struggle. During his long and eventful political career, he rendered yeoman service to the country and left an indelible impress on contemporary Indian politics. C.Rajagopalachari always fought for liberty, fundamental rights, rule of law and social justice. He was against any structural social changes and favoured social and moral reforms, albeit within the long-standing and prevailing social structure. But he realised that the neglect of moderate social reforms would only invite more revolutionary change in the future. This belief prompted him, during his Premiership in the Madras Presidency, to undertake some progressive legislation in the field of agrarian reforms, the question of temple-entry and prohibition. His concern for these social problems was genuine. Though a traditionalist, his adherence to social custom and tradition was not uncritical.

C.Rajagopalachari's relations with Gandhiji were marked by mutual respect and dependence. Gandhiji was to find in C.Rajagopalachari one of the best adherents of satyagraha. Also, it was perhaps only C.Rajagopalachari in the right-wing of the Congress leadership who was to take up on a large scale various programmes in Gandhiji's constructive movement. Gandhiji called C.Rajagopalachari his 'conscience keeper'.

C.Rajagopalachari lacked many of the attributes which are considered as requisites for political success. He cannot be said to have possessed the charismatic qualities of Gandhiji. He never succeeded in building up a mass following either at the local or at the national level. He never came to power as a consequence of popular demand. C.Rajagopalachari's contribution lies in his conservative political philosophy and in seeking to fulfil those Gandhian economic and social beliefs. He saw in Indian tradition a set of relevant values to maintain social discipline both as a defence and an alternative to the encroachment of the modern socialist state. During the 1950s and the 1960s, C.Rajagopalachari became a leading ideologue of the Swatantra Party and a critic of the Congress government.

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