

## **K.T.K. Thangamani, Chennai**

Shri Thangamani had his higher education in England. He was born in 1912 (approx.) While in England, and particularly in Singapore and Malaya, he was aware of the Labour and mass movements going on. He came in contact with leading personalities of labour and communist movement in England. His active involvement in politics began when he came in contact with Malayan Communist Party. He had gone to Singapore in 1940 to practice law but also work for TU movement. That was also the war period, and he was aware of the issues involved. He also went to China and many other countries. He organised labour in Malaya, and was in contact with the Indian labor movement.

He returned to India in 1947 and settled in Madurai. It was here that he was actively involved in the trade union movement. Ramamurthy was the veteran trade union leader there. There were large number of transport and other workers. Among them were the TVS and the British owned SRVS. The local leaders and workers insisted on "KTK", as he came to be known famously, to help them organise. They wanted him to become the President of the Union. So he joined the union neglecting the advice of his friend Krishna who was the Manager of TVS.

In those days, Madras Provincial TUC covered Tamil Nadu and parts of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. KTK was the Chairman of the Reception Committee of its Annual Conference held in Madurai in 1945.

Soon Thangamani became the leader of the transport workers' of the south. In 1946, there was a strike in SRVS. The British Superintendent of Police requested Thangamani not to go on strike. But Thangamani refused and the strike started, there was widespread picketing. Thangamani was arrested and put in jail for 3 months. Soon news spread in the country that the agitation was a part of the national movement.

After Thangamani and other leaders of the union were released from jail, the dispute was referred to Industrial Tribunal. Ramamurthy and Thangamani argued the case with the result the Tribunal awarded minimum wages and dearness allowance. This happened for the first time in Tamil Nadu and provided a new opening for trade union movement in that state.

In January 1948 there was a major strike in TVS which turned very violent. Management and Government also became very tough. Curfew was imposed and Thangamani had to go underground. In the end, nearly one thousand workers were removed from service. Thangamani was arrested and put in jail for four years.

After his release in 1952, he entered wider TU field including Port & Dock, general industrial, textiles, etc. In 1957, he was elected to the Parliament as CPI candidate. He represented Madurai in the Parliament and left a deep imprint on the parliament as a prominent parliamentarian. At the same time he remained a prominent all India TU leader. After serving as Secretary of AITUC, he was appointed General Secretary of

Tamil Nadu AITUC. He was also made member of Planning Commission by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Thangamani quickly gained fame as a prolific TU and Communist leader at all India level. His interventions in many questions, both as an MP and a TU leader helped resolve and develop many questions.

He had wide international contacts. He made several visits abroad as a TU and political leader, and in many other capacities. He relates an interesting episode, in which, during his visit to China, many people wanted to shake hands with him because just previously he had shaken hands with Chairman Mao.

KTK is an extremely versatile personality. Very few people know that he represented India in Hockey in more than one Olympic games. He also participated in other Sports. He is fluent in literature, and has even written stories and novels. He was extremely agile. He had, and continues to have, a wide circle of friends. His contacts abroad are of a very broad variety.