

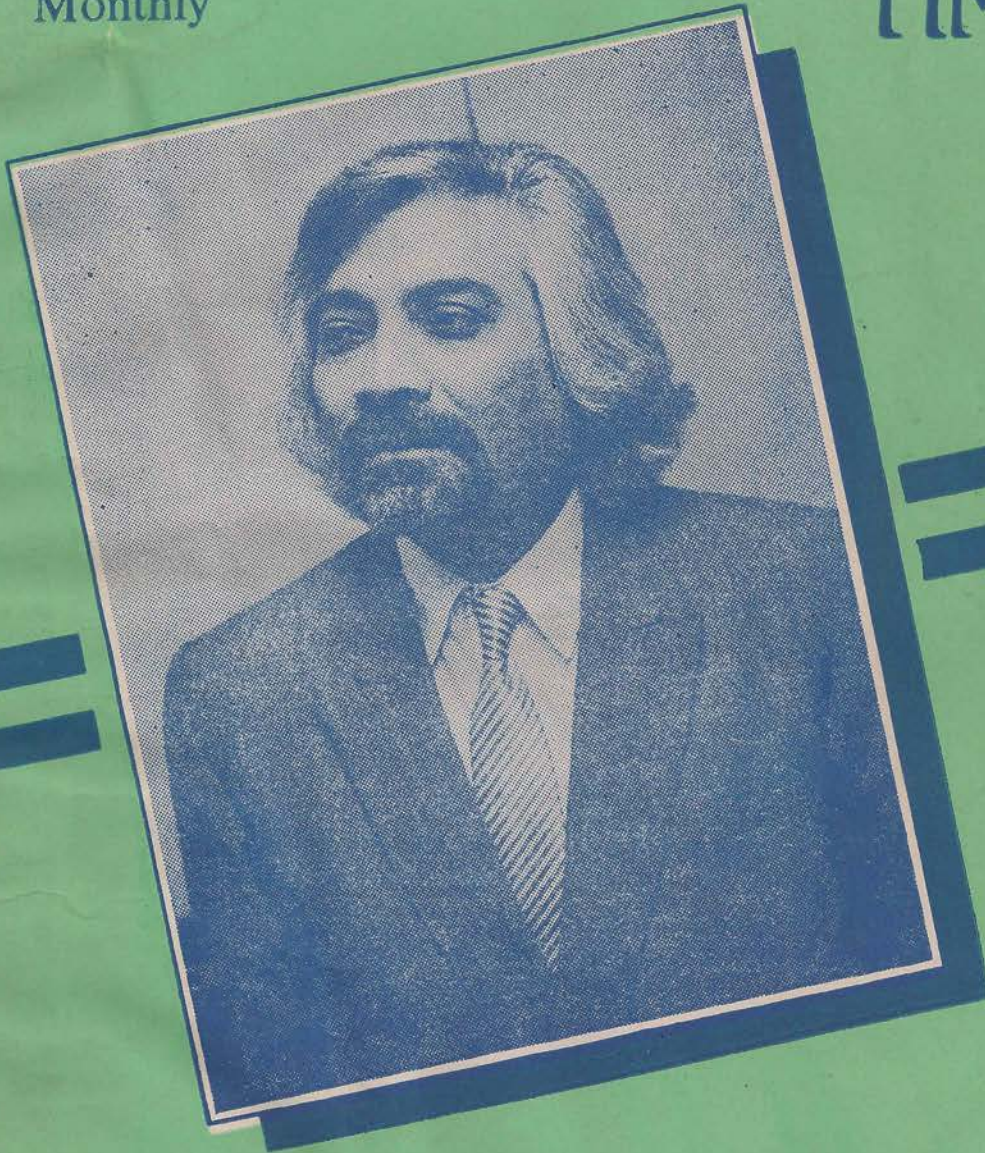
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Opposition in disarray

Sam Pitroda - High Priest of Indian Technology

Why Single Out Astrology?



View Point

SAM PITRODA— Technology High Priest of India

To be at the right place at the right time with the right people is not given to everyone. The hand of destiny is seen in such cases. One such person seems to be Sri Sam Pitroda who burst into the Indian sky like a meteor, charged with the task of accomplishing technical missions. His name was an unknown name in India till sometime ago but it now adorns the cover pages of prestigious magazines with his long, fascinating biographical details, from his romantic name, his humble beginnings bereft of wealth or patronage, to his emergence as if a technological messiah so far as India is concerned. He could have chosen to have a cushioned life in U.S.A., with the name and fame he earned, but he chose to come to India the hard way and made several trips at his own expense only to get an opportunity to serve his motherland.

So much has been written on Pitroda during the last six months in the printed media that it hardly stands repetition. Sam would have gone on and on in U.S.A., going from one company to the other (as it happens in Uncle Sam's land) and too higher and higher but for a news clipping sent to him on one fine morning about Mrs. Indira Gandhi appointing a Commission to look into Telecom modernisation, headed by Sri H.C. Sarin, ICS (Retd.), one of the ablest Civil Servants India has produced, who undertook difficult tasks and succeeded, which were as Himalayan as his Himalayan Mountaineering work. Misled by his American style name, Sarin felt here was a foreigner who wanted to sell something and the need was n't there. But when Sarin was told that he was no

other than an Indian, Satyen Gangaram Pitroda, a Gujerati carpenter's son domiciled in Orissa and was a brilliant example of success story, Sarin with an eye on merit, gave him an interview. Need for self-reliance Telecom, rural communication and "we can do it on our own" was Sam's message. Sarin caught the message, shrewd he is. Talking of Sam Pitroda recently Sri Sarin remarked "I like him. He has both courage and initiative and I earnestly wish him all success."

Sri Sarin felt he should meet Mrs. Gandhi and explain. Dr. P. C. Alexander, then Secretary to P.M. (now Governor of Tamilnadu) promised to get an interview for Pitroda. Finally, Sam could give an hour long, what in modern parlance called "presentation" to Mrs. Gandhi who was impressed. Sri Rajiv Gandhi who was present evinced keen interest in what all he said, fascinated always as he is, with Science and Technology. On the spot enquiries by a team of Government of India in USA showed, Sam was one to reckon with in the Telecom world. The strong point with Sam is that he has no eye on money but on achievement and service, to get fame as won by Bhabha or Sarabhai, whose names are synonymous with Atomic energy development in India. So would Sam be for Telecom—Mr. Telecom.

Today C-Dot is a beehive of activity under Sam, a dynamo. He has a well-knit devoted and committed team at Akbar Bhawan, New Delhi striving to achieve and accomplish what seems to be a

Herculean assignment with great success. Sam is now in high demand for inaugurations and speaking sessions. He believes in work. Time is his essence. He feels time is running short and still he has miles and miles to go to conquer "many worlds". I have not been able to meet Sam despite a few attempts probably on his busiest days. It is not due to his disinclination to meet people. He is ever on the move. But after a great deal of effort, I did speak to him. He sounded warm, full of understanding, as one who means, business, but helpful. I am told by a young telecom entrepreneur who met him at my instance that he is considerate and helpful, frank and free. That fame and as Advisor to P.M. of the rank of Minister of State, has not gone into his head, is shown eloquently, by the fact, he opened the door for the youngman to take leave of him.

To do so by such a breathtakingly busy man indicates his human qualities and extreme courtesy. My impression of him in a couple of minutes, talk over the phone is that he is not the one to make promises not to fulfil or give a word not to be implemented. But, he keeps his door ajar, the windows of his mind open to take in fresh ideas. He maintains bonhomie with his colleagues, no superior air, he puts on.

Judged from what he has achieved so far, he may be expected to help India take a high jump in Telecom arena. Without political ambitions and treading on any one's toes, (as did Dr. Dharma Teja, then considered to be a new luminescent star on industrial horizon, who fell into abysmal depths of inconsequence and died a disappointed man). Satyen Gangaram Pitroda can establish himself as a Technology high priest of India.

Rajiv emerges Taller

It is a far cry from Kamaraj's Avadi session to Kamaraj Nagar Congress Session at Madras, when Sri Kamaraj Nagar was as dominant in Tamil Nadu politics as MGR in latter years to another session the venue of which was named after him by a party which he disowned. If Avadi was known for its famous socialist resolution, Kamaraj Nagar will go down in the Congress history as one which gave a bugle call to demolish the opposition "tactics" and for its strident notes. It was also for the first time that from the august platform of the ruling party which had elected a congressman as President of India, the very same party characterising him after the expiry of his term as a "dangerous security risk" during his tenure as President—a sad commentary both on the previous occupant of Rashtrapathi Bhavan and the party which tolerated him. For, the highest office in the land should be kept above controversy. Any washing of dirty linen after the fare does not do credit to either, for being tolerant when one is in office and unsparing when out of office. The game was first started by the former President, Sardar Giani Zail Singh himself a by levelling serious allegations in respect of some of the present and past Ministers and the Congress leaders including Home Minister have made an open attack on Sri Zail Singh for the happenings in Rashtrapathi Bhavan "for subversion of constitution" when the Giani was the constitutional head.

Sri Rajiv Gandhi emerges from the Kamaraj Nagar Congress session a little

taller and more confident of his total supremacy, as no other leader was any where near him. In fact, some of them went out of the way in heaping plaudits on Sri Gandhi as grandly combining the finest qualities of his grand father, mother and also Kamaraj. No doubt, Sri Gandhi overshadowed everyone else and it was he who was the cynosure of all eyes and he proved it to the hilt. Every thing centred and revolved as if round this "central sun". All others appeared a trifle dwarfed.

But, what was the impact of the congress session on Tamil Nadu electorate? The electrifying effect which the ill-conceived posthumous conferment of Bharata Ratna on MG Ramachandran created was wiped out by the dismissal of Janaki MGR Ministry. The split in AIDMK has strengthened DMK and its Fuehrer Karunanidhi. The possible alignment of Janaki MGR group with DMK will leave Jayalalita faction weaker. Already, the initial glamour and her pulling power have been diluted. She is left with no alternative but to sail with the Congress unless its hot-heads are able to prevail and Congress goes it all alone. After 20 years of wilderness during which period Congress allowed DMK or AIDMK to rule the roost in Tamil Nadu, with its roots weakened, the national party cannot expect to stage a sudden come-back. It will have to take one more jump. But, definitely prospects of Congress improving its position in this Southern State are bright.