

A K ANTONY

A. K. Antony was born at Cherthala, near Alleppey in Kerala, as the son of Arackaparambil Kurien Pillai and Aleykutty Kurian. He lost his father in 1959 and self-financed part of his education through odd jobs. Antony is known for his incorruptible record and simple personal life and his intolerance towards corruption in public life. He has assiduously cultivated a public image that turns his perceived weaknesses into strengths. He was ranked among top 10 Most Powerful Indians for the year 2012 by the Indian Express.

He completed his primary education in Holy Family Boys High school (Lower primary) and Government Boys High school (Upper primary), Cherthala (both are mixed higher secondary schools now and the latter has changed its name to Sree Narayana Memorial Government Higher Secondary school) and completed his Bachelor of Arts from Maharajas College and Bachelor of Law from University of Kerala.

A.K. Antony entered into politics as a student leader in Cherthala Taluk (Alleppey District) as an activist of Kerala Students Union (KSU) under the guidance of M. A. John. He has been an active leader of many strikes like *Oru Ana Samaram* (Single Penny Strike). He became the youngest president of Kerala Students Union in 1966 and also served in the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) before becoming an All India Congress Committee (AICC) General Secretary in 1984. When he became KPCC president in 1972 he was the youngest person to hold that post. He was elected again as KPCC president in 1987, and was defeated by Vayalar Ravi in the KPCC presidential elections in 1991.

Congress (A) was a political party founded by Antony when he split from the Indian National Congress (Urs) a splinter group of the Indian National Congress (and opposed Indira Gandhi in inner party politics during the time when she was prosecuted by the Morarji Desai government, splitting off from the parent party with Devraj (Urs) The party was primarily active in Kerala and joined the LDF ministry headed by E. K. Nayanar during 1980-1982. After the fall of the Nayanar ministry, this party merged with the Congress in 1982, but Antony was not given any office until the death of Indira Gandhi. The members of the party have continued as a faction in the local congress afterwards.

On accusations in the Rajan case, K. Karunakaran resigned and Antony was made the 8th Chief Minister of Kerala. Antony thus became the youngest Chief Minister of the state at the age of 37 serving from years 27 April 1977 to 27 October 1978. Again, when K. Karunakaran resigned in connection with the ISRO case Antony was made the 16th Chief Minister of Kerala serving from years 22 March 1995 to 9 May 1996. He was the Leader of Opposition in Kerala Legislative Assembly during 1996 to 2001. Antony was elected and served the third term from 17 May 2001 to 29 August 2004. He failed to retain power on the first two occasions as Chief minister. In 2004, immediately after the Congress in Kerala suffered a total rout in the Lok Sabha elections amid factional politics and infighting within the Congress Party, Antony resigned as the Chief Minister of Kerala. He was succeeded by Oommen Chandy.

It was at his behest that the decision to construct the new Legislature Complex was taken in 1977. During his tenure, he introduced the Unemployment Allowance, Festival Allowance for the State Employees, Prohibition of arrack and the steps initiated to revive the economy of Kerala. He also took some initiatives in the field of Higher Education, Science & Technology, Bio-Technology, Information Technology and other related areas.

He was a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha between 1985 and 1995 and was the Minister for Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution for a year in 1994 during the tenure of Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao. He resigned on moral grounds as food minister in 1994 when his ministry was involved in a sugar import scandal, despite there being no allegations against him. In 2005, A. K. Antony entered the Rajya Sabha and was inducted into the Union Council of Ministers as Defence Minister following Natwar Singh's expulsion from the Congress and Pranab Mukherjee's transfer to the Ministry of External Affairs. After the Congress again won the elections in 2009 and formed the government once again under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Antony retained the portfolio of Defence for the second term becoming the longest serving Defence Minister of India in a continuous stint for 7 years.

Antony is married to Elizabeth, a Syrian Orthodox and a Kerala High Court lawyer. They have two sons named Anil Antony who is a graduate of Stanford University and Ajith Antony who is a graduate of St. Stephen's College, Delhi.