

# South India *to* North America *Journey of Journalist*



**Narisetti Innaiah**

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## 1. Childhood - Sweet and Sour

My father Rajaiah Narisetti maintained a diary where he noted the birth of children according to that information I was born in the early mornings of Saturday, October 31, 1937 in Pathareddy Palem, (Chebrole Panchayat, Tenali Taluk, Guntur Dist. Andhra, India.). It was colonial British rule. There was no state for Telugu people Madras Presidency comprised of Andhra, Karnataka, Madras, and Part of Kerala. In Madras city was the capital all Telugu daily papers used to become in Madras only.

My village Patha Reddipalem is in Chebrolu panchayat (township). Another village Kotha Reddipalem also included in the panchayat. Vasireddi Chandrasekhara Rao was then the president of the panchayat. He and my father were good friends.

I vividly remember my paternal grandmother, Mariyamma. By the time I was born, there were no other grandparents around.

My grandma was very active until her demise. She was very affectionate towards me. I walked along with her to the far away wetland in which our family raised paddy, pulses, and jute. There was a Roman Catholic primary school in the village. A teacher who happened to be a bachelor, Kotilingam, raised white rats as pets. People offered him coffee every day as he was the village teacher.

Mallavarapu Innaiah was a childhood friend of mine. His son Anantha became close to me while I stayed in the US. His father Lourdaiah and my father were good friends. Another friend Anthaiah hailed from Parasthallur village. Ganapathi Venkateswaralu, another friend of mine, lived in a house on the tank bund (earthen dam).

I studied for some time in the primary school in Chebrole. Kornepati Seshagiri Rao, the teacher, was from our village.

The annual fair in our village took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January and in Mutlur village on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December. There was a lot of fun with relatives arriving, the chariot being taken in procession, and the bursting of fireworks at the end of the day.

The entire village had an Ayurvedic (Herbal) doctor named Paradesayya. His son Basavayya was a friend of mine. My aunt's son Martenayya also joined us in playing all sort of sports.

For the three villages, we had one high school named after Suryadevara Narasayya. Headmaster, Mallampati Madhusudhana Prasad taught English. He was good player of table tennis, badminton and a great stage actor. At one time he played role of Krishna in the green room. The makeup person asked him to remove his moustache. But he refused to do so. He asked for evidence that Krishna was always without moustache. He was also an expert in teaching grammar. After retirement he bought land near Madras and visited me couple of times at Hyderabad. Ramaiah and Venkataratnam taught mathematics, while Seshagiri Rao taught English. Murahari Rao taught Geography. Another teacher Venkataratnam Telugu and Rajagopala Rao taught general studies. There were two Hindi teachers. A teacher from Suddapalli taught Telugu. Devabhaktuni Narayana Rao taught us science and English. Later we became friends and continued till his death. He settled in US and died around the year 2000 at his daughter's place in New Jersey.

Goli Nageswara Rao was a close friend of mine in high school. Coming from Mutlur on bicycle daily, he used to give me a ride to the school. Other students from Mutlur were Jojulu and Rajulu. Sundara Reddy in

the village was a good friend of mine. We used to walk to the nearby Chundur fair.

We enjoyed swimming in the village canals and the nearby Buckingham Canal.

Cholera struck my granny when she was on a visit to the farm one summer. She was brought home in a cart. Even as she tried to quench her thirst, she fell down dead. It was a tragic incident in my life.

Sebastian, my uncle (father's younger brother), was a physically disabled person. He sat in a mini-cart and kept the children engaged in some activity or the other. The children pulled his cart. He passed away very early in life.

We had both wet and dry lands. In the dry land, we raised groundnut and peas. Palm trees skirted our farm. We enjoyed the juicy flesh in palm kernels both at home and on the farm. We relished roasting groundnuts in the hay fire and eating them in the farm.

I played volleyball and badminton at school and in the village during summer vacations. In addition, we enjoyed playing all the native games like *vennela kuppalata* and *koti kommachchi*. We enjoyed rotis made of bajra flour in the rainy season.

During the Dasara festival, we went round houses sporting bows and arrows, singing and eating jaggery and puffed bengal gram dal. Gnana Prasumnamba (second daughter of teacher Kornepati Seshagiri Rao) and I sang Dasara songs together.

We owned horses. My father and brother were good at horse riding. My brother frequently gave me a horse ride. We had a Rajasthani horse-drawn cart. Going about the entire village in the cart was a matter of pride for me.

We hired out the horses for occasions like marriages. Stringing together beads for decorating the horse was interesting. Two men from Medikonduru

stayed in our house and tended the horses. They made the horses dance during weddings by singing and playing drums. We enjoyed eating boiled horse gram, the feed for horses.

We had a radio, a luxury those days. I listened to film (movie) songs broadcast by Radio Ceylon.

My father, Rajaiah used to read *Andhra Prabha* every morning by sitting on the raised platform in front of our house. The villagers joined him soon to share the news. Early in life, I started reading *Andhra Prabha* and *Bharati*. I went to Chebrole to fetch the paper if its delivery was delayed.

I was the only child living at home. My sister studied at convent school either at Nellore or Guntur or Madras, and my brother in high schools at Tenali or Kollipara or some other place. They came home only during vacations.

All of a sudden, we sank into poverty. My father had to sell his land and even the buffalo that gave us milk. Later on I learned that a huge loss in raising tobacco forced us to sell the land. Thereafter, I had to go round relatives' houses to fetch milk and buttermilk. My name was often struck off from the school register as I failed to pay the monthly fee on time. No wonder, hence my name figured at the bottom in the attendance register. When my dress suffered wear and tear, I yanked the lace curtain off the door, wrapped it around my shoulders, and attended school for six months in that manner. My father struggled hard to ensure that my sister and brother living far away did not undergo any privation.

One day as I was about to go to school with the lace-curtain around my shoulders, Tanguturi Suryakumari visited us. She was famous singer and cine actor. She was daughter of Tanguturi Prakasam's brother. Serving her grape juice was my duty. I proudly shared the news with colleagues in school. Suryakumari



and my brother studied senior Matric (11<sup>th</sup> Grade) together. She had come to nearby Mutlur to give a concert. On her return journey, she dropped in at our home. Thirty years later when I was with Ravindranath at Kala Jyothi Press in Hyderabad, Tanguturi Suryakumari happened to come there. To my pleasant surprise, she instantaneously placed me as the boy who gave her grape juice many years ago and inquired of my welfare. She had by then settled down in England.

My brother contested for the post of president of Chebrole panchayat. He had already cut his teeth in politics by joining the Forward Block founded by Subhashchandra Bose and addressing public meetings. I canvassed for him by blaring movie songs from our horse drawn cart.

Political consciousness in Chebrole was high even then, with people reading all the newspapers. Politicians of different parties addressed meetings in the village. I attended those meetings and took part in mock Parliament sessions in school. Our headmaster went about villages collecting donations for the high school. By 1951, I had completed my schooling.

For college education, I left for Guntur. By then, my brother took care of the family since our father had no income. Living in rented houses, I embarked on my college education. Our parents and sister too lived with us. The milk powder and edible oil that I collected frequently from my Christian missionary friends came in handy.

Logic and history were my optional subjects in Intermediate (1<sup>st</sup> year – freshman) at A. C. College.

During the final year of school education at Chebrole, I witnessed the Forward Bloc conducting political classes. My brother Vijaya Rajakumar sang the songs he penned and addressed the classes. I met people like V. L. Sundara Rao from Bapatla and Palakodeti Surya Prakasa Rao from Rajahmundry.

My brother translated into Telugu, the election speeches of Sarathchandra, the son of Subhashchandra Bose's brother. Our teacher Murahari took part in such meetings.

I vaguely remember elections with restricted voting taking place around 1946. There were different color boxes for different parties for voters to drop their ballots.

Among the magazines that were available at Chebrole those days were *Ankusam* (Annapragada Kameswara Rao), *Mulukola* (Bandi Butchaiah) *Telugu Desam* (Suryadevara Rajyalakshmi), *Vahini* (Ranga's magazine) and *Kalainesan* (cinema magazine from Madras).

I had the opportunity of listening to national and regional party leaders including those from the Communist Party then. Vemulapalli Srikrishna, Kolla Venkaiah (screeching voice), Koratala Satyanarayana and Ravi Ammaiah were among them. I also listened to speeches by Devabhaktuni Narayana Rao, our English and science teacher. His younger brother Nageswara Rao opened a bookshop and popularized Soviet and Chinese literature. Since he happened to be a high school friend of mine, I sat in his shop and read books like Gorky's *Mother* and Chekov's *Short Stories*. Soviet Bhoomi was one of the magazines then available.

Public meetings in those days were spiced with political songs and *Burrakathas*. I listened to Nazar's *burrakatha* then.

I watched movies and circuses in touring talkies during my school days. There was lot of Tamil influence in those days. Movie goers were provided floor, bench, sofa and even boxes for seating.

Loudspeakers mounted on horse-drawn carts blared recorded music to publicize movies. The music suffered breaks and pauses as the cart negotiated pot-holed roads. Handbills carried the notification, "If the

movie could not be screened for any reason, there was no refund of money for the tickets. The ticket holder may watch the movie the next day. If the hall was full, the ticket holder would sit on the bund (an earthen slope) in the rear. A movie in color those days was described as a rainbow picture.

A person standing in the midst of the hall translated the dialogues from Tamil to Telugu. His narration had, of course, little to do with what went on the screen.

Movie watchers had to withstand the ordeal of frequent interruptions as the film reels snapped. Women had separate enclosures.

I witnessed the first general elections in the country in 1952 in our village. Alapati Venkata Ramaiah of the Congress trounced Ravi Satyanarayana of the Krishikar Lok and Ravi Ammaiah of the Communist parties in the election to the Assembly.

Tenali, Guntur, Ponnuru, and Nidubrolu are all within a radius of eight miles from Chebrole. Our nearest railway station is Vejendla. Private buses plied in the area.

During my high school days I observed the practice of untouchability in society. In my village, Madiga and Mala community live away from the village since they are not allowed in the main village. But they serve in main village daily. Malas and Madigas also lived separately and don't mix among themselves. Not only Hindus but also Christians observe untouchability in all walks of life. In the Catholic Church upper communities sit away from Malas and Madigas. This is very repulsive practice. I felt bad about this social evil and thought that is inhuman to treat another human being as an untouchable.

## 2. Twists and turns at college level

I graduated in 1953, by completing Secondary School Leaving Certificate course. Then I joined Andhra Christian College, Guntur, for Intermediate studies. It is called father of arts (F.A.). It was then one of the two reputed colleges in Guntur, the other being Hindu College. I chose British history, Indian history and logic as optional subjects. Switching over from the Telugu medium of instruction to English, I had to struggle for some time before I got used to it.

The college atmosphere was rejuvenating. Herbert and G. L. Benny were our logic lecturers. Isaac bored us with his Indian history lectures. Paulus, Yelavarthi Rosaiah, and Thomas taught English. V. V. L. Narasimha Rao, Jandhyala Papayya Sastry, Jammalamadaka Madhavaraya Sarma, Telikacherla Venkataratnam and Maremanda Nageswara Rao taught Telugu. People like Guttikonda Narahari and A. B. Shah addressed meetings organized by the Telugu Saraswata Mandali once a week during the college assembly.

T. S. Paulus, Principal, was a disciplinarian. Christian girls from far off places came to study at the college, by staying in hostels. The college attracted Hindu students too from Rayalaseema.

Among my classmates in the Intermediate were Polu Satyanarayana, Thotakura Srirama Murty, Mallela Srinadha Choudary, Sakhamuri Raghava Rao and Thotakura Venkatrayudu. Siddabattula Ramakrishna was a literary friend. I read books in the well-stocked library and shared my insights with friends. During examinations time, I stayed in my friends' rooms and helped them with their studies. In return, they bought whatever books I wanted since I had no books of my own. We followed guides in addition to textbooks. Sobhanababu was a batch mate of mine. I, however, did not become close to him, among other batch mates were Vasireddy Durga Prasad (later on an NCC officer),

Jangaiah (son of M. L. N. John) and Venkatarao (later on Thumapudi munsiff).

We became friends with Yelavarti Rosaiah gradually. We learnt a lot by calling on him at his home and enjoying his hospitality.

As a disciple of Rosaiah, I became a Humanist. I met Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy through him. Although he was an English lecturer, we learnt a great deal from him about people like M. N. Roy, Tripuraneni Ramaswami, Tripurana Venkataraya Varma and Johnson. He was equally knowledgeable on Telugu writers like Chinnayasuri, Pingali Suranna and Bhattu Murty. He enlightened us on the raging controversy over literary versus spoken language and exposed us to grammar. I learnt of Duvvuri Venkata Ramana's *Ramaneeyam* only through him.

By humanist I mean one who values human freedom, equality of human beings, respect ethical values, and keep personal belief at personal level without bringing them into public. I also mean that scientific method is the best means to prove nature discover musings and progress endlessly. Scientific method follows self corrections which take human beings into right path and take them away from blind faith. I also firmly stand by the human dignity and plea for avoiding child abuse. Parents should not automatically bring their faith, religion, blind beliefs to their children. That is how I started my humanist phase during my college education.

Thanks to V. V. L. Narasimha Rao, we read the works of Gonugunta Punnaiah and Etukuri Narasaiah. *Sphoortisri* Bhaskara Rao reported extensively to newspapers on speeches delivered by people like Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy and Kondaveeti Venkatakavi in the college. He along with V. V. L. Narasimha Rao delivered beautiful talks on folk literature. Their lectures taught us many lessons in life.

Siddabattuni Ramakrishna (son of Durgaiah in Repalle) and I contributed articles to magazines as twin writers. He took the pen name of Radharani and me, Sulapani. *Prajavani*, *Vahini*, and *Krishna Patrika* carried our writings. I felt proud when Katuri Venkateswara Rao complimented me on an article of mine critical of Viswanatha Satyanarayana.

I was in A. C. College from 1953 to 1958, a year longer than warranted because financial problems forced me to discontinue studies for a year.

I did B. A. (Philosophy), with Western and Indian philosophies, logic and ethics as main subjects.

As part of college studies, we had exposure to Milton, Shakespeare, and modern writers. We studied American literature too. I studied John Dewey's *Reconstruction of Modern Philosophy*. Induction, deduction, ethics, and modern Western philosophy formed part of our studies. We had lessons from Edison and Steel.

Rosaiah's lectures on Shakespeare, Milton were extensive. As a result, he completed only half of the syllabus by the examination time. We had to study the remainder on our own. He dealt thoroughly with whatever he taught. We obtained passing grades when we answered the questions on topics covered by him. Rosaiah dwelt at length on geography, history, ideologies, and even pronunciation as he handled those subjects. He not merely touched upon the histrionic talent of the actors in Shakespeare's plays but also lived their roles. He played the role of Ghost in *Hamlet*. He could complete only half of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Some program or the other often took place in A.C.College those days. The Telugu Department staged plays. I played a small role in Narasaraaju's play, *Ee Illu Ammabadunu* (This House is for Sale).

The Philosophy Association invited guest lecturers like Hindu College Principal Vallbhajosyula Subba Rao and Women's College logic lecturer Parvati.

We visited the homes of Jammalamadaka Madhavaraya Sarma, Jandhyala Papayya Sastry and V. V. L. Narasimha Rao. We irritated Papayya Sastry, by then a reputed poet, by calling him as Ghantasala Papayya Sastry, implying that playback singer Ghantasala thrust greatness on him by rendering his poems in mellifluous voice. They were all part of our college pranks. Telikacherla's non-detailed lessons were dry and devoid of any attraction. Maremanda Nageswara Rao, hailing from our village, was adept at making a lesson difficult to comprehend. For instance, he took delight in calling the knife a rapier.

L. A. K. Murthy and M. G. Thomas were good at teaching English.

Herbert was good at expounding philosophy while Benny taught without any passion. By then, T. S. Paulus had stopped teaching philosophy and became the Principal.

There were Bible classes for Christians and moral classes for non-Christians in A.C.College. J.B.Williams, Warren, Devadanam, Isaac, Thomas and others engaged those classes.

Devadanam taught us British history interestingly. Varadanam was popular as a chemistry lecturer. Many jokes concerning his English did the rounds.

T. S. Paulus spent an evening every year at his home with philosophy students. Sypes was then the college Dean. Paulus later on entered politics and assisted Kotha Raghuramaiah. He also addressed public meetings.

A. C. College thus laid a good foundation for my education and taught me many lessons in life.

### 3. College life is not that smooth (1953-58)

During 1953 within a year of entering A. C. College underwent many vicissitudes in life. I learnt more outside college than within, the urban setting.

I developed a close relationship with Prof. Ranga and his followers because of our family's attachment to him. A by-election to the Assembly from Duggirala, near Tenali, took place in 1953. Mr. Anche Venkateswarlu, a teacher, contested on behalf of the Krishikar Lok Party (KLP) against Avuthu Rami Reddy of the Congress. Since the KLP had successfully organized its conference at Tenali earlier, it expected its candidate to win. Narasimharao (Takkella-padu), Appalachari and I toured the constituency on bicycles. Running into KLP leaders here and there, we savored the campaigning trends. The KLP lost the by-election.

Shortly thereafter, a by-election to the Assembly from Marturu near Chilakaluripet took place. Mr. B. V. (Bandlamudi Venkata) Sivaiah of Narakoduru was the KLP candidate. Prof. Ranga campaigned extensively on his behalf. Then too, Gurunatham (brother of Veerachari) and I went round the constituency. Although Narakoduru is far away from Marturu, the electorate plumped for Sivaiah. A fighter for farmers' causes, he served tobacco growers a lot. I had the pleasant experience of witnessing elections in both upland and irrigated areas even as an Intermediate student.

*Prajavani* weekly, published from Guntur, enjoyed a good circulation when I entered college. Vattikonda Rangaiah was its editor. I was elated when it carried a small political piece I did, on its first page. "The myriad faces of Anantasayanam Ayyangar" was its title. Elected to the Lok Sabha from Tirupati, Anantasayahnam Ayyangar became its Speaker. I wrote



my first piece under the pseudonym Anantaraj Kumar, suggested by Sastry, a friend of mine at Pedakakani. It was a combination of the names of my brother (Vijaya Rajakumar) and my mother. Shortly thereafter, I began writing in my own name.

One day I called on Vattikonda Rangayya at the *Prajavani* office in Arundelpet. Once I got acquainted with him, I began to write to the weekly regularly. BSR Krishna used to contribute the lead story for *Prajavani* every week. He had already been editing a monthly, *Pogaku Lokam*, published by the Tobacco Board. Kalluri Veeraiah, a farmer from Brahmanakodur and Ranga's disciple, was Tobacco Board Chairman. Ranga, who did a pen portrait of Veeraiah, visited Brahmanakoduru and enjoyed his hospitality.

Occasionally, I used to collect BSR Krishna's lead story from his residence and hand it over at the *Prajavani* office. Krishna had already completed B. A., worked for some time in *Vijayaprabha* daily at Madras, and returned to Guntur. Krishna was the son of the munsiff of Siripuram village in Sattenapalli taluk. His full name was Bandlamudi Siva Rama Krishna. A follower of Prof. Ranga, he wrote under the pseudonym of Sailendra. He worked for some time in *Vahini* magazine too. Puranam Subrahmanya Sarma likened the tall BSR to a single column in newspaper jargon. An idealist, he married a widow in the 1950s. My association with BSR continued until he breathed his last during the year 2000. He retired from United States Information Service, Madras.

Those were the days when the then largest circulated *Andhra Prabha* daily did not carry news reports sent to it. They ignored even large public meetings. Sitting at *Prajavani* office one day, we wanted to play a trick on *Andhra Prabha*.

We faked letterheads in the name of Guntur District Artistes' Association with BSR as President and

me as secretary. We used the letterhead to announce the organization of a conference with participation of top artists like Akkineni Nageswara Rao and sent it to *Andhra Prabha*. The daily featured the news with a four-column heading, much to our amusement. Somayajulu was then the Guntur correspondent of *Andhra Prabha*. The daily would perhaps have not carried the report had we routed it through him. That was how we played pranks with Narla Venkateswara Rao's style of journalism.

It was around that time I got acquainted with Daruvuri Veeraiah. Much later, he and BSR entered into a marital alliance for their children. Veeraiah and I formed an organization called Yuva Karshak, comprising Ranga's followers. Veeraiah was its President and I, its Secretary.

We conducted its first conference in a movie theater in Guntur. It was a success as the leaders like Kandula Obula Reddy and Gouthu Latchanna took part in it and addressed the gathering. But that was the end of the organization. Daruvuri Veeraiah started off as a disciple of Ranga, but became a follower of Kotha Raghuramaiah and finally became close to Ranga once again. Veeraiah reported Ranga's 1955 election speeches to newspapers. He published an encyclopedia of Guntur district and some research-based books. I continued my friendship with him for a long time.

A fellow writer of mine in *Prajavani* for a long time was Vasireddy Satyanarayana. He was senior to me. He studied in Hindu College, Guntur. He used to come to Guntur daily from Lam village. We called him Satyam. He worked closely with Latchanna in Prof. Ranga's Krishikar's Lok Party. He also worked in Vidyarthi Sammelan. I visited him in his village many times. He wrote many articles on contemporary politics in *Prajavani*. He and I spent time together. Later on, he moved closer to the Communist Party and worked for the CPM. After marriage, he settled down in Vijayawada

and started publishing *Cheraku* magazine with the help of KCP Sugars. We continue to be close friends.

Garden Press in Guntur printed '*Prajavani*'. Rangaiah proofread the magazine. His wife, Vattikonda Visalakshi, wrote novels and short stories. Rangaiah tried his hand at lyric writing. Visalakshi hailed from our Chebrolu village. They had no children. Rangaiah earned a lot and bought some buildings after the magazine folded up. He belonged to Veerulapadu in Krishna district. He disagreed with the Communists. He ran a Congress magazine, founded by Sanjiva Reddy, from Madras. Falling out with Sanjiva Reddy, he shifted to Guntur and founded '*Prajavani*'.

Contributing to '*Prajavani*' until 1962, I joined as its employee in unusual circumstances.

By the time I landed in Guntur, Andhra had become a separate State. Kurnool became its temporary capital amid a controversy. Madala Timmayya was a classmate of mine in the Intermediate. His elder brother Madala Peda Timmayya and Vaddegunta Venkateswarlu, a follower of Latchanna, gave rickshaws on hire. The rules then prevailing in Guntur stipulated that a rickshaw could not carry more than one person. In contrast, officials in Vizianagaram permitted rickshaws to carry two persons. They wanted to make a representation to the State police chief Nambiar on the discrimination against rickshaws in Guntur. They wanted me to accompany them to Kurnool in the belief that I would help them communicate their views to the police official in English. My command of English was rudimentary, I accompanied them. After submitting a memorandum to Nambiar, a Tamilian, I tried to speak to him in halting English. He realized my plight and agreed to allow rickshaws in Guntur to carry two passengers. Those who brought me to Kurnool were elated. Having come to Kurnool, we felt we should call on people known to us. We called on Gouthu Latchanna at his bungalow. His two personal assistants, Gandhi

and Simhachalam took us to the second show of Muddu Bidda movie and entertained us with their running commentary and jokes on Jamuna.

Among those whom we met at their bungalows were Bezawada Gopala Reddy, Kandula Obula Reddy, Govada Parandhamayya (MLA), the Raja of Muktyala and the Raja of Challapalli. We later returned to Guntur.

There was a dramatic change in the political scene at Kurnool thereafter. After the collapse of the Prakasam Ministry, Governor Chandulal Trivedi began to rule the State. Meanwhile, the Krishikar Lok Party under the leadership of Latchanna launched a Satyagraha movement demanding the scrapping of Prohibition as recommended by Sonthi Rama Murthy (ICS– Indian Civil Service). A number of satyagrahis courted arrest in batches. Vijaya Rajakumar, my brother, happened to be one of those who courted arrest. Since he was the sole breadwinner of our family, financial problems overtook us. I dropped out of college and began to look after a book shop my brother had opened on the LVR & Sons Club premises opposite AC College.

I had to shut the shop since it became unviable. My parents, my sister and I lived in the house of Saraswatamma in Gunturuvari Thota in those days. None of us has any income. Against such a backdrop, Vattikonda Rangaiah conceded my request for a job on a daily wage of one rupee. I used to get up early in the morning and went by foot to his residence at the end of Brodipet fourth line. We came to Sankar Vilas and had breakfast of idli and coffee and attended to office work. We got movie magazines like 'Screen and Cine Advance,' etc, published from Mumbai. Baburao Patel used to write movie reviews. Reading all of them, I wrote captivating tidbits. I continued like that for six months. The rupee's (Indian currency) value those days was so high that we could buy our daily groceries with it.

Once Chandulal Trivedi took over reins of Government, he released satyagrahis including my brother from the Rajamundry Central Jail. The satyagrahis toured the region and narrated their experiences to the public. I joined the tour and covered it for *Vahini*.

We reopened the bookshop after my brother's release from jail. As it did not pay, we closed it again. Liberated from the responsibility of running the family, I resumed my studies in A. C. College. Although I gave up my job in *Prajavani*, I continued contributing articles to it.

Shouldering the responsibility, my brother married off our sister to Cherukuri Venkata Subbaiah. That was indeed a relief.

My sister Kamala and brother-in-law Venkata Subbaiah joined as clerks in the High Court set up at Guntur as a temporary measure. Off and on, I accompanied them to the High Court and watched the proceedings. Avula Sambasiva Rao was practising as an advocate in the High Court then.

My brother's marriage took place in 1955-56 at Saraswati Mahal (cinema hall) in Railpet, Guntur. I distributed the wedding cards. I handed over a card to Kasu Brahmananda Reddy at his residence. He did not turn up. My brother married Kanyakumari, daughter of Venkatappaiah, the Tenali correspondent of *Andhra Pratrika*. Prof. Ranga and Kotha Raghuramaiah attended the marriage. Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy delivered a nice speech, and conducted a non-religious marriage administering oaths to the couple in Telugu.

In 1955, when elections were held for the Andhra Assembly, it was a watershed in Andhra political history. The consensus was that Communists would win 120 seats, assume power with Putchalapalli Sundaraiiah as Chief Minister and turn the State red. To defeat the Communists, the Congress, Praja Socialist and Krishikar

Lok Parties fielded candidates jointly. All national leaders campaigned in the elections. Attending those meetings and hearing top leaders was a great experience. My brother Vijaya Rajakumar impressed audiences with his fiery speeches and challenges to Communists for open debates. Leaders like Veerachari, Sunkara Satyanarayana and K. Rosaiah took part in the campaign. Nazar's burrakatha and Praja Natya Mandali's performances were great attractions.

N. G. Ranga undertook a whirlwind tour of the State. *Andhra Prabha* carried reports sent regularly by Daruvuri Veeraiah. The editorials by Narla Venkateswara Rao played a great role in influencing the election outcome.

My brother asked me to go to Karamchedu and supervise the campaign in Ammnabrolu constituency. I camped at Inkollu and toured surrounding villages. Jagarlamudi Chandramouli was the Congress candidate and Jagarlamudi Lakshminarayana the Communist candidate. Staying in the house of Bangaru Babu in Karamchedu, I went round the constituency in a car. I addressed small meetings, because I had had only a limited experience by then. The Communists bagged only 15 seats. The United Congress came into power.

Communists dubbed my brother Vijaya Rajakumar and Veerachari as Ranga's greyhounds because they mauled the Communists with their no holds barred campaign. S. K. Patil (Congress leader from Bombay) came down from Bombay and stood as a bulwark for the Congress. People turned up in large numbers to listen to Neelam Sanjiva Reddy (State Deputy Chief Minister), Bezawada Gopala Reddy (State Chief Minister), and U. N. Dhebar (All India Congress President). Attending Jawaharlal Nehru's public meetings was a great experience for people like me.

Communists excelled in organising processions. Makineni Basavapunnaiah (Leader of the Communist

party) was the star speaker at their meetings. Basavapunniah's reported assertion that once the Communists assumed power, they would yoke the rich and fat women and make them plough the fields, created quite a sensation. Whatever be the truth in the report, weekly magazines like *Mulukola* of Bandi Butchaiah latched on to it to tear the Communists into pieces. Enraged Communists beat him up. Communist publications attracted attention with their screaming headlines.

There was wild speculation on the election outcome. The forecast of some that Communists would end up winning 15 seats proved correct. The results dealt a death blow to the Communists. Never recovering from the setback, the party split into two.

Post-1955 elections, Bezwada Gopala Reddy assumed office as Chief Minister at Kurnool. He appointed Neelam Sanjiva Reddy Deputy Chief Minister. I visited Kurnool for the second time after the Ministry formation. In the new Ministry, Gouthu Latchanna was Minister for Power and Kandula Obul Reddy, Minister for Agriculture. I met them and also some newly elected MLAs like Neerukonda Rama Rao representing Rajahmundry. The new Ministry did not last long.

I accompanied Gouthu Latchanna and Kandula Obula Reddy on their tours and sent reports to newspapers. Obula Reddy declared that either he or Sanjiva Reddy should continue in the Ministry. Within six months, Obula Reddy was shown the door.

Andhra later on became Andhra Pradesh. Sanjiva Reddy became the Chief Minister. He likened the post of Deputy Chief Minister to the sixth finger and did away with it. The capital moved to Hyderabad. So did the High Court from Guntur. My sister and brother-in-law moved to Hyderabad along with the High Court. Accompanying them, I visited Hyderabad for the first time in 1956. High Court employees were given single

room army quarters at Sanathnagar. We used to go to the High Court in a double decker bus by paying a fare of two annas (pre-independence Indian currency).

As long as I studied in Guntur, I visited my friends' places during summer vacations. That was how I visited Rayapudi on the banks of the Krishna, the village of Mallela Srinadha Chowdary, Paladugu of Sakhamuri Raghava Rao, and Kommur of Jyoti Prasad. Of all places, I liked my sojourn at Santaravuru near Chirala. Three of my classmates – Thotakura Srirama Murthy, Venkatrayudu and Polu Satyanarayana — hailed from the village. We conducted some activity or the other in the village. All of us who became Radical Humanists thanks to Y. Rosaiah organized meetings by inviting prominent Radical Humanists to Santaravuru. Among those who took part in such meetings were Malladi Ramamurthy, Ravipudi Venkatadri, S. V. Brahman, Ch. Raja Reddy, Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy, Gorantla Raghavaiah and Kondaveeti Venkata Kavi.

My brother dabbled in tobacco business at Guntur for some time. I assisted him in his business. He undertook tobacco grading at Abbineniguntapalem. I stayed there during summer vacations. Then I visited Palaparru and met Radical Humanists like Lavu Ankamma.

My maternal aunt's son, advocate Pudota Souraiah joined my brother's tobacco business. Mallavarapu Anthaiah (my paternal aunt's son) from Ravipadu too was there. Although my father Rajaiah tried to help my brother in his business, he could not do much because of ill-health. My brother bade good-bye to the tobacco business as he found himself ill-equipped. At that time we were staying in a house opposite Eka Anjaneyulu's house in Old Guntur.

In Guntur, I came to know of Guttikonda Narahari, a tobacco trader. There, I came in contact



with Bachina Subba Rao. Narahari was the State Secretary of the Radical Democratic Party in the 1940s. He was an orator. He worked with Ranga for some time and became close to Kotha Raghuramaiah. He soon fell out with Raghuramaiah and started abusing him. Finally, he lodged cases in a court. I learnt a lot about M. N. Roy from him.

Dr. Kasaraneni Sadasiva Rao was our family doctor. We approached him for whatever the ailment. His love for literature made us friends. We continued our friendship without allowing politics to come in our way.

Bhattiprolu Hanumantha Rao, hailing from Kuchipudi, taught history in Hindu College, Guntur. He was a Radical Humanist. The history books he wrote in association with Kalluri Basaveswara Rao became college textbooks. He studied Buddhism in depth.

I met him at his Brodipet residence and engaged with him in discussions. We invited him for Radical Humanist study classes. Thereafter, we met in Hyderabad when he visited the Telugu Academy. A number of volumes of his writings were published. He translated M. N. Roy's experiences into beautiful Telugu. I met Royists like Puvvada Nageswara Rao and Vasireddi Siva Lingaiah. The bookshop, Globe Traders, run by Krishnanad was a meeting point for all of us.

Encouraged by Rosaiah, I visited Tenali occasionally and met people like Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy, G. V. Krishna Rao, Koganti Radhakrishna Murthy, Koganti Subrahmanyam, Meka Chakrapani, and Achyutaramaiah. Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy addressed meetings of the AC College Saraswata Samithi at my invitation.

I took part in student association meetings. My Guntur stay provided me food for thought. Unmindful of my frail health, I completed my college education.

Education at Guntur provided me rich experiences. I was closely associated with a number of N. G. Ranga's followers. Although I mingled with politicians of all hues, I did not join any political party or student organization.

After losing his Minister ship, Kandula Obula Reddy frequently played cards at the residence of Kommineni Venkateswarlu. I chatted with Kandula Obula Reddy there. Later on, Venkateswarlu left for Kothagudem to venture into business.

I became very close to Koneru Kannaiah in Guntur. An active politician, he campaigned well but lost in the elections. He fought for the construction of the Nandikonda project. It took shape as Nagarjunasagar project later.

Konuru Kannaiah met Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi to plead for the Nandikonda project. Assisting him was Pudota Sowraiah, my cousin. Because of his association with Kannaiah, he too contested in elections and lost. My brother Vijaya Rajakumar too had a similar experience. I used to draft pamphlets and points for Kannaiah's public meetings.

Our mother's elder sisters were from Thurakapalem. We used to walk to that village near Muppalla in Vinukonda taluk. During holidays, we went to Pudota Souraiah's place. He married Ratna from the Gaddipati family in Tenali. I took part in all events concerning his marriage beginning with the girl's selection.

When my cousin Souraiah was practicing as an advocate, I stayed with him. He too dabbled in the tobacco business and lost.

By the time I completed college education in Guntur, I had become accustomed to reading humanist literature and also writing and translating.

## Senate story

When I was about to complete my college education in Guntur, my brother Vijaya Rajakumar contested as a Senate member of Sri Venkateswra University. Collecting ballot papers from local bodies was an arduous job. With my brother placing a car at my disposal, I went round villages and collected ballot papers in his favor. Otherwise, many panchayat presidents would have thrown away the ballot papers. As a result of such effort, my brother won.

At that time, university Vice chancellor Govindarajulu Naidu proposed conferment of an honorary doctorate on Chief Minister N. Sanjiva Reddy. He took the decision without taking permission from the Senate. In addition, there was the angle of the VC trying to ingratiate himself with the Chief Minister.

As a Senator, my brother objected the move. Ignoring the objection, the Vice Chancellor went ahead and conferred the honorary doctorate. Mr. Sanjiva Reddy became Dr. Sanjiva Reddy. Responding to our request, Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy of Tenali filed a petition in the Nellore court questioning the VC's decision. One Mr. Gupta was his assistant advocate at Nellore. Fighting against a Chief Minister those days was not an easy task. Since my brother happened to be in the Opposition, he was not afraid of the Government. Bhagvandas was the Chief Secretary. Realizing the gravity of the situation, he issued a circular to the effect that Sanjiva Reddy's name should not be prefixed with Dr. until the court gave its verdict. The Nellore judge declared that the case did not come under his jurisdiction and suggested that we approach a court in Tirupati. Fed up with the exercise, we did not follow it up.

College education in Guntur provided me rich experiences. I wanted to study for M.A. later on but I did not have the resources. Fortunately, the conditions

turned for the better. My sister gave up the High Court job and joined the State Women's Welfare Department. She was appointed Visakhapatnam District Women's Welfare Officer. Staying with my sister in Vizag, I studied M. A. Philosophy at Andhra University. I used to go to college by university bus. I met a number of new people. My health continued to be poor. I learnt typewriting and shorthand in Vizag. I visited the tribals' shandies in places like Paderu and Lambasing, observed Girijan life and enjoyed the beauty of nature. I visited Araku Valley frequently. Lazing on the Vizag beach was refreshing.

#### 4. University Education

While pursuing Post Graduate studies with Philosophy at Andhra University, I lived with my sister Kamala in Daba Gardens, Viskahapatnam. She was then serving as the District Women Welfare Officer. My brother-in-law Venkata Subbaiah Cherukuri was an employee in the Andhra University office. My parents too stayed with me.

I took part in Visakha Sahiti programs as long as I lived in Visakhapatnam. D. V. Subba Rao (advocate, who became Vizag Mayor much later) was its President and Akella Satyanarayana the Secretary. Thummala Chowdary of Gudivada attended the programs along with me. Chowdary and I addressed the gatherings only in Telugu while all others spoke in English. Our speeches in Telugu were a special attraction for the audience. As I left Vizag, friends gifted me many books including those by Arthur Louis Fisher, and congratulated me on my persistence in making speeches in Telugu.

There used to be some program or the other in the university all the time. I met Vasireddi Venkatappaiah at one of the programs. He was active in Communist Party programs. Social Science Lecturer Patrudu was full of enthusiasm.

I used to meet Rajeswari, a Telugu lecturer doing research, at her quarters. Prof. Kotha Satchidananda Murthy impressed us with his teaching of Indian and European philosophy. No other teacher matched him. Lakshmana Rao lectured on psychology until the bell rang. Murthy, another lecturer, was slow and uninteresting.

Long after marriage in 1964, I learnt that my spouse stayed in the ladies hostel as a student of English literature even as I studied M. A. (Philosophy).

Sakhamuri Raghava Rao and I studied Intermediate together in A. C. College, Guntur. We continued as classmates in Vizag as we did philosophy. He now lives in Guntur. Raghava Rao, hailing from Paladugu in Sattenapalli taluk, and I have remained friends since then. We met even in the U. S.

Raghava Rao and I studied together at home. He lent me books since I did not have any. He used to buy whatever book I wanted. We got some books, including those by M. N. Roy and B. R. Ambedkar, from the new and second hand bookshop in Kalbadevi Road, Bombay. From Visakhapatnam, I contributed articles to the Telugu fortnightly, '*Radical Humanist*'. Koganti Subrahmanyam was its editor. I noticed many print mistakes in the published articles because of poor proof reading.

I wrote many articles to help Radhabai to do her research in philosophy. Aktar, a gentle Telugu Muslim girl, became a friend of mine. Komala disclosed after marriage that Aktar had been a dear friend of hers. We lost track of Aktar subsequently.

Radharani, a university beauty, stayed in the girls' hostel along with Komala. Radharani did not appear to have bothered about students who ran after her.

I used to attend the mock Parliament and other programs conducted by Registrar K. V. Gopalaswamy. I maintained my association with him as long as he lived.

I introduced myself to Duvvuri Venkataramana Sastry, an erudite scholar, having heard about him from my guru Yelavarti Rosaiah in Guntur. He excelled in expounding grammar and impressed listeners with his talks over 'All India Radio'. His book on grammar Ramaneyyam has become a classic. I enjoyed visiting his home and listening to him talk.

Law Professor Venkatraman cast such a spell on students with his lectures that even outsiders came to listen to him. I too attended his classes sometimes.

Although a great writer and a critic Srinivasa Iyengar was a boring teacher. He was a disciple of Aurobindo. His daughter Prema Nandakumar studied English literature in the university. She used to review books in English. I learnt later that Prema, and Lakshmidēvi, the daughter-in-law of K. V. Gopalaswami, were seniors to Komala in the English Department.

Chatting away on the beach and visiting the many good bookshops in Vizag were memorable experiences.

The cost of living in Vizag was high even then. I visited tribal areas like Paderu and Lambasing along with my sister and enjoyed its natural beauty. At shandies, tribals exchanged their forest produce for commodities like beedis (hand rolled cigarettes).

I met Bandi Gopala Reddy, who was doing research on poet Vemana, in Vizag. I also met R. Ch. Manoharam from Mustabada. I had known her since 1954 when she was a leader in the student wing of Ranga's Krishikar Lok Party in Tenali. Ranga dissuaded her from becoming president of the student wing saying the post was too onerous for girls.

Manoharam was a fine woman. I met her subsequently in Vijayawada, when she was active in municipal politics. She married *Vahini* editor G. Viswanatham. I learnt subsequently she was a close friend of Komala.

The typewriting, though not shorthand, I learnt at Vizag came in handy much later.

I could not complete my M. A. Philosophy at Vizag because of my father's death due to diabetes related complications. In his last stages, he took homeopathic medicines from Patrudu, a smoking

homeopathic practitioner. He developed gangrene in one leg and went into a coma. We decided to take him to our native place. In response to my sister's persistent pleas, officials at Visakhapatnam railway station allotted a berth to my father. My mother, sister, and I accompanied him. He breathed his last after the train crossed Eluru. With my brother arriving at Vijayawada station, we took the body to our village in a taxi and conducted the funeral rites on October 2. Vasireddi Chandrasekhara Rao, Chebrole panchayat president, attended the funeral.

I liked the daily '*Statesman*', which I looked up regularly at Vizag.

I returned to Tenali from Visakhapatnam and my sister left for Sangareddy in Medak district on transfer. Staying with my brother at Tenali, I used to meet Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy every day. It was an enlightening experience for me.

I used to hear of M. N. Roy from P. H. Gupta in Maharani-pet of Vizag. M. N. Roy stayed with him during his Vizag visits. Yelavarti Rosaiah published a critique of the *Ramayana* written by Gupta. I ran into Gupta's son later in Hyderabad.



## 5. Taste of Politics

I was living with my sister Kamala in Sanga Reddy (Head quarters of Medak district) in 1959 when I received a postcard from N. G. Ranga (All India leader of Swatantra Party) inviting me to join him as his personal assistant. Kamala was then working as the District Women Welfare Officer.

I rushed to Tenali and sought the advice of Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy, my mentor, on joining Ranga. He asked me to accept the assignment, as it would offer me valuable experience. Ranga was delighted when I met him in person and accepted the offer. He wanted me to stay at his residence at Nidubrolu. Ranga's wife Bharati Devi, his elder brother Venkatappaiah's daughter-in-law (Nageswara Rao's wife) and Pushpa, who grew up at Ranga's house and later a lecturer, lived in the house. All of them looked after me well.

My main job was handling Ranga's correspondence and typing out his press statements. The typewriting I learned at Visakhapatnam came in handy. Ranga, instead of dictating statements; would write them. I deciphered his handwriting with ease and typed out the statements on the Italian Olivetti portable typewriter I carried with me.

I traveled with Ranga by train. As an MP (Member of Parliament), he traveled by first class while I accompanied him in third class. Ranga did not mind eating food sold on platforms. I, however, could not relish it. I always carried my bedding. Ranga too traveled light.

A large number of people came to stations to welcome him or just have a glimpse of him. That way, I met a number of people.

*Vahini* magazine was published from a palatial building in Vijayawada. Ranga, who had founded the Swatantra Party and became its President, used the

building as his party office. The Swatantra Party conducted its meetings in Vijayawada frequently. Gorrepati Venkata Subbaiah, G. Viswanatham (Editor) and I stayed in three separate rooms in the office building. The office was a beehive of activity with people streaming in and out all the time. R. Ch. Manoharam turned up every day. She subsequently married Viswanatham.

Dr. Marri Channa Reddy (Minister in Hyderabad state) and Bommakanti Satyanarayana (Leader from Khammam) from Telangana attended Swatantra Party meetings in the initial stages. The party conducted preparatory meetings all along the coast from Bapatla to Bobbili. I accompanied Ranga as his personal assistant, and not as a party member. Those who took part in the meetings included C. Rajagopalachari (Madras), Bezwada Ramachandra Reddy (former speaker of Madras Legislature), Gouthu Latchanna (Leader Krishikar lok party), my brother Vijayaraja Kumar, Pasupuleti Koteswara Rao (Bapatla), Dammalapati Venkateswara Rao (lecturer), Sunkara Satyanarayana, Veerachary, Daruvuri Veeraiah, Kotharu Venkateswarlu, Gorrepati Venkata Subbaiah, and Tella Krishnaiah (retired district judge) - all followers of N.G. Ranga.

I took part in the campaign at the instance of Bezwada Ramachandra Reddy. Traveling in his car, I heard him narrate his varied experiences in his long political career. I helped myself to the sweets he brought. He, however, would not consume them.

Rajagopalachari was the star campaigner. When all others (Ushasri, Sunkara Satyanarayana, Veerachari, Vijayaraja Kumar and Pasupuleti Koteswara Rao - all followers of N.G.Ranga) failed in translating Rajaji's speeches in English into Telugu, Latchanna excelled. Rajaji, therefore, asked him to be his translator. I, as Ranga's P.A. (Personal Assistant) had the opportunity of

interacting with Rajaji at the travelers' bungalow where he stayed.

The Swatantra Party attracted people, as it was new and sought to provide an alternative to the well-entrenched Congress. Even Dr. Channa Reddy joined it initially, maintaining that a fatal plunge into River Krishna was preferable to joining the Congress. That he joined the Congress subsequently was a different matter. I met Dr. Channa Reddy for the first time then (1959).

While in Vijayawada, I went to the *Vahini* office along with G. Viswanatham. *Vahini* was printed at Ramakrishna Press by Rattaiah. Jasti Jagannatham, K. V. Subbaiah, and Gogineni Umamaheswara Rao (Editor) were among its contributors. I wrote articles occasionally. The magazine served more as the mouthpiece of Ranga than of the party, although many served as its editors since its inception in 1938. It shut its office in 1967 when Chandrapal was the editor.

At that time, I was contributing articles to '*Prajavani*'. I wrote articles condemning the Hindu fundamentalism of Rajagopalachari and K. M. Munshi.

The State Swatantra Party miserably failed to emerge as an alternative to the Congress. Gorrepati Venkata Subbaiah as President and Tella Krishnamma as Secretary could not make the party popular for want of experience. Gorrepati Venkata Subbaiah, belonging to Ghantasala village, used to share his experiences with me.

My two years with Ranga helped me meet national leaders and gain rich experience.

Even after my return to Sangareddy after two years of serving Ranga, I maintained my relations with him. Ranga did not take offence at my articles critical of him. I had the opportunity of interviewing him for television.

All through, I deliberately kept myself away from his politics.

M. R. Masani used to send money every month to the Andhra Pradesh unit of the Swatantra Party for office maintenance. The President and the Secretary wrangled over that money.

Gorrepati Venkata Subbaiah maintained that there was no need for him to visit districts, if leaders at all levels did their duty. Although the party could not make any headway, it remained as an Opposition party thanks to Latchanna. He believed that Ranga committed a blunder by elevating his disciple as party President.

Vijayawada remained a hub of political activity. Bondalapati Sivaramakrishna published many works of Saratchandra Chatterjee in Telugu under his Desakavita banner. Reading those books, people wondered whether Sarat was a Telugu person by birth. I used to meet Sivaramakrishna occasionally. My brother authored a book on Subhashchandra Bose and got it printed under the title '*Revolutionary President*' at Tenali. He handed over the books to Desikavita Publications for sale. When I went to Desikavita to collect the sale proceeds, Sivaramakrishna would put me off by saying and he did not have the accounts readily available.

I met Bondalapati Sakuntala and Gorrepati Venkata Subbaiah at the office of Desikavita. The latter was called '*panditha*' (scholar) or '*yerra*' (fair-complexioned) Venkata Subbaiah.

Gorrepati Venkata Subbaiah brought out biographies of leaders like N. G. Ranga, Gottipati Brahmaiah, Tripuraneni Ramaswamy, and Kattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy. Venkata Subbaiah's writings were boring as they touched upon the leaders' contribution only cursorily.

Desikavita Publications published many books, including *Philosophers* by Gopichand. It brought out translations of Rabindranath Tagore's works.

'*Vahini's* working editor G. Viswanatham and I used to go to Ramakrishna Printers daily and proofread the magazine. Jasti Jagannatham had translated M. N. Roys' Philosophy into Telugu. '*Vahini*' carried it as a serial. The piece titled '*Marxism before Marx*' drew the attention of many. It was the main topic in the book, '*Reason, Romanticism, and Revolution*'.

Jagannatham had won as Secretary along with Rosaiah as President in the Hindu College Students' Union elections. I had known him since then, but he died at an early age.

It is difficult to recall the number of people who served as editors of '*Vahini*', as in the case of *Anandavani*. Although Gogineni Umamaheswara Rao's name appeared as editor in the print line, he wrote just one piece under the title *Ragam, Tanam, Pallavi* occasionally. He was always on the move as a member of the Railway Board. Viswanatham was in charge of the publication. I used to assist him. With the passing away of Viswanatham and his spouse Manoharam, '*Vahini*', went without a good helmsman.

Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy's weekly column, *The World around Me* was a great attraction. We persuaded him to write the column regularly.

Ranga contributed pen portraits of people. '*Vahini*' also carried his speeches. Journalists like B. S. R. Krishna, K. V. Subbaiah, Panditaradhyula Nageswara Rao, Nannapanei Venkata Subbaiah, Narayana Murty and P. Thimma Reddy ran the magazine during different periods. Yet, it continued to be a magazine of Ranga.

I used to meet Kalluri Basaveswara Rao, lecturer in Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada. The history textbooks he authored along with Bhattiprolu Hanumantha Rao for college students were popular. We attended Radical Humanist classes together. I contributed articles to '*Vahini*', *Prajavani* and *Radical Humanist* during my Vijayawada stay. I translated the

writings of M. N. Roy and Swadesi Ranjandas into Telugu. I visited Tenali frequently to meet fellow radical humanists. I spent time with Suryadevara Hanumanatha Rao, who ran *Vihari* magazine, at his press. I got acquainted with Nannapaneni Venkata Rao through him. I assisted Venkata Rao in conducting a seminar on backward classes. Sanjeevaiah came from Delhi to take part in the seminar.

Among the Radical Humanist friends I met at Tenali were G. V. Krishna Rao, Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy, Kolli Sivarama Reddy, M. V. Ramanaiah, Meka Chakrapani, Achyuta Ramaiah, and Jampala Syamasundar Rao. I relished my interactions with them.

## 6. Untrained teacher

After quitting as personal assistant to N. G. Ranga, I left for Sangareddy in Medak district and joined as a social studies and English teacher in the Zilla Parishad Multipurpose Higher Secondary School. My sister was working as the District Women Welfare Officer there. During my stay at Sangareddy I made many friends as it is a small town. I visited Hyderabad occasionally. Several students were attracted towards my rational approach in education. Some of them continued their association with me for a long time. Pandaiah, Bhumaiah and few others visited me at Hyderabad.

Since I happened to be at Sangareddy, my brother Vijaya Rajakumar too landed there and took to cultivation by buying a piece of land. Later on, he opened a printing press. He built a house there and evinced interest in local politics.

During my four-year-long stay there, I ran *Anveshana*, a magazine, on behalf of the Teachers' Association. M. Nageswara Rao, brother of philosophy lecturer Rajagopala Rao of Guntur, brought out a magazine on behalf of the Teachers' Union.

Even as a teacher, I contributed articles to *Andhra Bhoomi*, *Andhra Janata* and *Golkonda Patrika* published from Hyderabad. Gora Sastry was the editor of *Andhra Bhoomi*. The daily carried many of my articles, written under the pseudonym Sulapani, on the editorial page. I met Gora Sastry at his office in 1966 after I moved over to Hyderabad. He was pleasantly surprised to learn that Sulapani was none other than me. From then onwards, I wrote under my own name. *Golakonda Patrika* carried my translation of G. V. Krishna Rao's Ph. D. thesis on *Kalapurnodayam* as a serial.

I became close to P. Ramachandra Reddy, then Sangareddy panchayat samithi president. Later on he

became an M.L.A., Minister, and the Assembly Speaker. When the American Telugu Association honored me in the U. S. in 1992, it chose Ramachandra Reddy to present me the certificate.

As a teacher at Sangareddy, I conducted many activities including excursions. My rationalist thinking impressed some students. They maintained relations with me long after I quit the school. Among teachers, C. V. R. Sarma, Rama Murthy and Narahari came from the Basic Training School. Among colleagues in the school were Thiru Venkatachari, Anandachari, Lakshman, Veeramalla Goud, Vasudeva Rao, Murahari, Venkateswara Rao, and Srimannarayana. Once, the students struck work demanding immediate posting of science and mathematics teachers. When they sought my advice, I encouraged them to go ahead with the strike. As a result, the school recruited teachers from the Andhra region. Both the teachers and students were happy over the appointment of teachers. Officials, however, transferred me to Patancheru. Within a few days of transfer, I resigned from my position in 1964.

Sometime in 1960 when I was at Sangareddy, I was distressed to learn of Ellen Roy's murder at her home in Dehradun. She was known not merely as M. N. Roy's wife but also as a humanist writer in her own right. I met her once in 1956 at the residence of Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy (AGK) at Tenali. My acquaintance did not go beyond that. She was running the *Radical Humanist* magazine. Her death was a great loss to the humanist movement. Shib Narayan published her writings in as book form subsequently. AGK narrated his encounters with Ellen Roy.

My childhood friend and high school classmate Goli Nageswara Rao came to Sangareddy because of my presence and worked as a teacher for some time.



During the Indian border conflict with China, I offered a daily commentary in the school assembly. Students heard me with rapt attention.

During holidays, I visited places like Chirala, Tenali and Guntur and addressed humanist training classes. Besides being a prolific letter writer, I contributed articles, both originals and translations, to publications like *Andhra Janata*, *Andhra Bhoomi*, *Vahini* and *Prajavani*.

### **Marriage**

Avula Sambasiva Rao, who had known me since 1955 as a Radical Humanist, invited me from Sangareddy to his home in Hyderabad. He simultaneously invited Venigalla Venkata Subbaiah from Mulpur, from which Avula too hailed.

Sambasiva Rao, serving as a Public Prosecutor, then lived in Himayathnagar. He proposed that I marry Venkata Subbaiah's youngest daughter Komala as she was the right fit for me. He knew the background of the two families. Komala was then serving as an English teacher in Madapati Hanumantha Rao School in Narayanaguda, and stayed in the Brakatpura Yuvathi Mandali hostel, Hyderabad.

Sambasiva Rao took Venkata Subbaiah and me to Komala. All of us agreed to his proposal.

Sambasiva Rao readily conceded my request that Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy should conduct the marriage. Both of them belonged to the same village and were relatives and humanists.

AGK then in the U.S., agreed to perform the marriage in response to my request. Once he returned from the US three months later, I met him at Tenali and narrated the background to the marriage. He knew both the families. We scheduled the marriage for May 27, 1964 at Tenali Taluk High School. I mailed the wedding cards accordingly.

Meanwhile, Venkata Subbaiah approached AGK and pleaded that he would perform the marriage of his third daughter also if he deferred the date to May 31. AGK readily conceded his plea and sent for me. I got the wedding cards printed afresh and mailed them. Some did not receive the cards I had mailed earlier. It caused us a little embarrassment.

I utilized the Rs.400 in my post office savings bank account at Sangareddy towards wedding expenses. Some of my humanist friends at Chirala helped me monetarily. Ch. Raja Reddy and others acted as elders. We stayed at the house of Meka Chakrapani in Tenali. My brother, sister, and mother arrived from Sangareddy. My father-in-law was upset as he could not hire a photographer, as the day happened to be a Sunday. Sambasiva Rao presided over the function. AGK, as the master of the ceremony, delivered a beautiful lecture. Komala and I were united in wedlock along with us Syamala and Nagayya were united in wedlock. Many friends including Radical Humanists turned up. There were some relatives from Path Reddipalem and Chebrole. The marriages went off well.

During my four year stay at Sangareddy (1960-1964), I had an exposure to the customs and traditions, fairs and festivals including the Batukamma, and food habits of Telangana. Superstitions in Telangana and Andhra were different in nature. The scientific method of inquiry I advocated against superstitions attracted some students.

Once, the story of an eight-year-old boy of Rudraram village, located between Sangareddy and Hyderabad, curing people of diseases with his miraculous touch spread like wildfire. He drew large numbers of people. I took a group of students to the village and exposed the tricks the boy played on the gullible.

People shed their illusions shortly after I did a detailed expose of the boy with miraculous powers in *Andhra Bhoomi*.

The legislators with whom I got acquainted at Sangareddy were Lakshman, Krishnamachari, Jayaram Reddy and P. Ramachandra Reddy. I developed acquaintance with Aagamaiah, Vishnuvardhan Reddy, and Narasimha Reddy, all prominent people in the samithi.

Koteswara Rao of Guntur, who came to Sangareddy as postmaster, became a friend of mine. He introduced me to Potthuri Venkateswara Rao. A disciple of Jillellamudi Amma, Potturi lived in Chikkadapalle then. My differences of opinion with him over his beliefs did not come in the way of our friendship.

Jayapal Reddy and Vijaya, and Santa Reddy and P. Ramachandra Reddy became our family friends. I did not keep good health, while staying at Sangareddy.

My four-year stint as a teacher at Sangareddy ended with start of my marriage. I came to Hyderabad and settled down there.

## 7. Entered Married Life

After marriage in 1964, Komala and I started living in a rented house in Isamia Bazar of Hyderabad. It belonged to Jayapal Reddy and Vijaya who had been our friends at Sangareddy. While we lived in one portion, my sister lived in another portion of the same house. Bhaskar, son of Ch. Raja Reddy, stayed in an adjoining room. We lived in that house for one year.

It was during my stay in Isamia Bazar that I ran into Uppuluri Kalidas, editor and publisher of *Anandavani*. At his request, I translated some pieces in English into Telugu for publication in his magazine. Komala went to school by bus and attended to chores at home. Since I had neither a job nor any income, I decided to complete my M.A. in Philosophy by joining Osmania University.

At that time, Wahiduddin was the Head of the Department, Valiuddin, Professor of Islamic Studies, and Alam Khundmiri lecturer in modern philosophy. All of them were good teachers. Wahiduddin taught us European schools of philosophical thought, Valiuddin Sufism and Alam modern philosophy. Alam later on became a family friend. He and I, both rationalists, worked together in many movements. Subsequently, we became colleagues as teachers. K. Wilson, Malla Reddy (who later became Vice Chancellor), and Alluri Srirama Raju were among my classmates.

Even as a student of Osmania, I developed friendship with several teachers. We carried on humanist, rationalist, and secular movements. It was a great experience. Among them were Y. Raghavaiah (Public Administration), B. A. V. Sarma (Political Science), K. Seshadri, G. Ramreddy (Public Administration), and Rashiduddin Khan (Political Science).

During my stay in Isamia Bazar, I met A. L. Narasimha Rao, a Radical Humanist and follower of MN Roy since 1938. He was then working in *Andhra Janata*. With a view to help me, he asked me to join him in his newspaper. I attended his office in the evening. The office was located in a small house beside a drain in Secunderabad. K. S. Subrahmanyam and Editor Panduranga Rao were among employees. The paper faced financial problems. I stopped going there after working for some time.

Many served as *Andhra Janata* editors from its inception to its closure. They included G. C. Kondaiah, Pothuri Venkateswara Rao, V. B. Raju, and K. Kesava Rao. I wrote articles on and off. My friend A. L. Narasimha Rao too quit the paper and worked in many other papers.

Subsequently, I called on *Andhra Bhoomi* Editor Gora Sastry at his Secunderabad office, and introduced myself as the writer with the pseudonym Sulapani. I contributed some articles to *Andhra Bhoomi* during 1964-65 and then gave up. None paid for my writings. Gora Sastry introduced Varadachari, Pothuri, and his colleagues, to me. I had already met Pothuri.

*Andhra Bhoomi* limped as an associate of *Deccan Chronicle* for a long time. Panditaradhyula Nageswara Rao was its editor for some time. The management brought in Gora Sastry subsequently. He improved the daily. Gora Sastry's entry into *Andhra Bhoomi* followed the closure of *Telugu Swatantra*. He lived in Jeera area of Secunderabad. He wrote editorials even for *Deccan Chronicle*.

Gora Sastry, in course of time became our family friend. On many occasions, I had food at his residence and spent hours over discussions. I met a number of people who called on Gora Sastry. Among the prominent ones were Upadrashta Krishna Murthy, Dr. P. Tirumala Rao, Sasanka, C. Dharma Rao, and Gopala

Sastry. We celebrated Gora Sastry's 50th birthday in Kurnool and presented him a small purse. I did a detailed piece on Gora Sastry in a souvenir we brought out at the occasion. Mandava Srirama Murthy, working as an officer in the land mortgage bank in Kurnool, helped us a lot in organizing the function.

P. V. Narasimha Rao, then the Education Minister, and Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy, Zilla Parishad Chairman, addressed the meeting. Our purse provided some relief to Gora Sastry, who faced eternal financial hardships. Gora Sastry was in daily contact with Sitaram of UNI and Krishna. He used foul language liberally as he discussed editorials with them. He, however, did not allow his tongue to slip in interacting with me. We used to discuss the state of the world. He told me of his life in Madras. I met Ichchavarapu Jagannadham, K. Narayana, MP, and Bhattam Srirama Murthy at Gora Sastry's place.

'Gora Sastry' was short for Govindu Rama Sastry. He read Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy's writings presented by me. Impressed by them, he did a wonderful piece when AGK passed away. He differed violently with M. V. Rama Murthy.

During 1964-74, Gora Sastry and I visited each other's places regularly as family friends. We attended many programs together. Occasionally, he made me accompany him to P. V. Narasimha Rao on his mission to collect some money. P V never disappointed him. Our literary interactions with Ramadevi at Gora's house or at her house were interesting. Ramadevi had just then become a mother. Her sister, Lakshmi Devi, worked as an assistant to Justice Gopalrao Ekbote in Kachiguda crossroads. We used to meet Ramadevi at her Kachiguda office. We lost contact with her after she moved to Delhi for professional reasons.

I met Setty Eswara Rao at Gora Sastry's place. He had worked in the Russian Consulate in Madras.

Although Gora Sastry and I ideologically differed, we remained friends. We read Jerome K. Jerome and Dan Camillo novels together. We enjoyed our literary discussions. We used to call on Rachakonda Viswanatha Sastry at Neo Mysore Café where he stayed whenever he visited Hyderabad. We relished whisky and shared jokes to our heart's content.

Gora Sastry was a vegetarian. We sipped beer and liquor as we met for dinner in the evenings. After all, the drinks approved in the Vedas and the Puranas too are vegetarian. That was how Gora Sastry portrayed them, and I had no quarrel with him over it.

We did not meet after 1974, although there was no enmity between us.

Gora Sastry once introduced his elder brother working in Japan Airlines. He delighted us by narrating many of his strange experiences.

Komala and I spent the first year of our married life in the tiled house in Isamia Bazar. Komala's colleagues and students dropped in regularly. Her students Usharaju, Aruna Subhash and Radhika came with flowers and stayed on for hours. Among frequent visitors were her teacher colleagues Savitri, Sarojini, and Hema. Komala would not allow anyone to leave the house without enjoying her hospitality.

During the summer vacations, Komala set off for Mulpuru. In the traditional way, she wanted to have her delivery at her mother's place. We decided to move into a new house on her return. Accordingly, we rented a portion in her student Sailaja's house, near the school. I went round the city with a bus pass, even as Komala ran the home. That was in 1964.

Ramoji Rao, who wanted to launch *Eenadu* invited Gora Sastry for his advice. Gora Sastry took me along with him. We met Ramoji Rao at the Margadarsi Chit Fund office in Abids and had discussions with him over beer. I too tendered my advice. Ramoji jotted down everything we said. I met him a number of times subsequent to the launching of the daily and contributed some articles to the paper.

## 8. Encounter Different Personalities

My acquaintance with Uppuluri Kalidas, founder-editor of '*Anandavani*', began in 1969 at Hyderabad. Gora Sastry had introduced me to Kalidas, alluding to a Sri Sri's reported remark that everybody in Andhra region had edited the *Anandavani* magazine.

One day, Kalidas dropped in at my place, handed me over an English magazine, and asked me to do an article in Telugu based on the material in it. I complied with his request. Although my acquaintance with him did not blossom into friendship, we used to run into each other now and then.

*Anandavani* used to hit the newsstands on and off. Although beset with some problem or the other, Kalidas burned with a desire to publish the magazine regularly.

In course of time, Gora Sastry and D. Aanajaneyulu briefed me on *Anandavan's* background and the adventures of its editor.

Learning much later that Mr. Kalidas's wife happened to be in Hyderabad, I located and met her in the Vijayanagar colony. She patiently explained *Anandavani's* problems and gave me some photographs and old issues of the magazine. After copying them, I returned the material. She told me where I could get information about *Anandavani* in Madras and Visakhapatnam.

Anjaneyulu and Gora Sastry told me that Kalidas persuaded many, including well-known writers, to contribute to his magazine by promising remuneration. There was, however, no evidence of his fulfilling his commitments. Running a magazine in the 1940's was not a joke.

It is a matter of history that celebrities like Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Rajaji, Mamidipudi Venkata Rangaiah and Saraswati Giri maintained some sort of relationship or the other with Kalidas.



It was perhaps between 1970 and 1980 that *Anandavani* shut its shop after it moved from Madras to Hyderabad.

Kalidas used to bring out special issues occasionally. Some of them carried poems penned by Saraswati Giri. He traveled indefatigably. One day he was at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi and at Raj Bhavan in Madras on another. He flew by plane and moved about in cabs, undeterred by shortage of funds. It was because he mastered the art of borrowing. Fluent and articulate in both English and Telugu, he was creative enough to weave a story instantaneously and make someone pay for his cab. Many took his lies for truth at least for a while.

*Anandavani* has now become history and is useful only for reference. Its architect Kalidas filled it with politics, literature, arts etc.

I met Dr.Narasimha Sarma, Rachakonda Viswanatha Sastry's brother in Philadelphia along with Raja Karanam. I felt happy on learning that Narasimha Sarma was translating Ravi Sastry's writings into English. I lost contact with him after he reportedly left for Visakhapatnam. Again during 2011,I contacted him through my friend Mr. Myneni Gopala Krishna of Huntsville, Alabama.

With Velcheru Narayana Rao moving away from Madison to Atlanta, GA, Wisconsin University shut down its Telugu Department. I learnt that his wife Nidadavolu Malati separated from him and stayed in Dallas in Texas. A writer of novels and short stories, she runs a blog in Telugu. I contacted Velcheru Narayana Rao and Malathi separately and maintained my friendship with them.

Although Narayana Rao invited me to Madison once, I could not make it. He brought out *Kanyasulkam* in English. The translation was good.

## 9. Beyond Religion

Taslina Nasrin was born to Rajab Ali and Idul Ara in the town of Mymensingh on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 1962. Born into a muslim family she became an atheist over time. In course of her writing style she took a feminist approach. Following the publication of *Lajja*, Nasrin suffered a number of physical and other attacks. She had written against Islamic philosophy, angering many Muslims of Bangladesh, who called for a ban on her novel. In October 1993, an Islamic fundamentalist group called the Council of Islamic Soldiers, offered a bounty for her death.

I met Bangladesh's rationalist writer Taslima Nasrin for the first time in 1994 at the University of Maryland in U. S.

She attended a meeting organized by progressive students from Iran, read out her poetry, and answered questions. My wife Komala and daughter Dr. Naveena attended the meeting along with me. We posed for photographs with her.

Subsequently, I met her at a gathering organized by Warren Ellen Smith in a New York hotel. Noticing Taslima smoking, I advised her to kick the habit. She did give up smoking eventually, although I cannot claim credit for it. Warren Ellen continued to maintain her website.

I met Taslima for the third time at Gandhi Peace Foundation in New Delhi where she addressed a gathering of Radical Humanists. Dr. Gouri Malik introduced her to the audience. She did not like the accommodation at Gandhi Peace Foundation and the vegetarian food offered there. Therefore, I took her out to Connaught Circus one day and had a long talk over non-vegetarian lunch. Meanwhile, Rekha Saraswat called up to say that, guests were waiting to hear Taslima so we returned to attend the meeting.

Taslima permitted Komala to translate her writings into Telugu. Komala translated a few of her poems and articles and a short novel 'Shodh' and published them. At the suggestion of Sri Ramana, she titled the book as '*Chelluku Chellu*' (Measure for Measure).

Isanaka Muralidhar and I visited Taslima in Calcutta in 2007 when she invited us for dinner one evening. She was living under police protection on Rowden Street. She cooked dinner and even served us while she shared her acquaintances with poets, talked of Shib Narayan's support and showed her paintings.

Later we invited her to Hyderabad. She had to cancel her visit once because of protest demonstrations by Muslims in the wake of a *fatwah* issued against her.

Babu Gogineni reported, "Bangladeshi writer-in-exile, Taslima Nasreen was attacked at the Hyderabad Press Club on August 7, 2007," where she was launching the Telugu translation of her book '*Shodh*' ("Getting Even"). The attackers were members of the radical political group Majlis Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (MIM), led by three elected members of the Legislative Assembly. She responded, "Come what may, I will never be silenced."

A press photographer obviously with his association towards fanatic Muslims sent messages through cell phone and they responded by rushing to the venue in large number. Both missiles and obscene threats were launched against Taslima, but fortunately she was not injured as the attackers were unable to get very close to her. I was injured on the face by objects thrown by the protesters: they were throwing whatever they could lay their hands on, including flower bouquets, handbags and other items. They were even picking up chairs to threaten Taslima. Mr M Nageswara Rao of the Eenadu Journalism School and I were seen on television dissuading them.

Shockingly, the attackers themselves were elected representatives of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly and members of the fundamentalist Muslim party Majlis Ittehadul Muslimeen, accompanied by a few dozen followers. The leaders were arrested and appeared before a magistrate. Their rowdy followers held up traffic on a long stretch of road in Hyderabad, protesting her arrival in the city. They demanded that she be deported for having offended their religion and they wanted their leaders released. Many of them said that they will kill her if they have the opportunity.

The journalist's union has demanded that the three elected representatives be suspended from membership of the Legislature. There has been countrywide support from all quarters for Taslima, and in defence of free speech, including the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and the Union Ministry in Delhi. There was universal condemnation for what happened, including from the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Telugu Desam Party and many Non Government Organisations.

At the request of Taslima, I sent the video recording of the entire episode to Calcutta. I apologized to her for my failure to provide her enough security. Later on, caught up in a sea of troubles she had to leave the country itself.

## 10. A.B.Shah - Leader of Secular Movement

I corresponded with A.B.Shah from 1960s and came closer towards a secularist movement. Amritlal Bhikkhu Shah (originally from Gujarat digamber sect of Jains) of Poona was running the secular movement from Bombay. He was a great intellectual who incisively studied and followed M. N. Roy's humanist movement right from 1948. He sought my help in spreading the secular movement in Andhra Pradesh. I readily agreed since the assignment was dear to my heart. By 1964, A. B. Shah had founded Nachiketa Publications, brought out literature, started Secular Society and ran the magazine, *Secularist*.

Although I agreed to assist A. B. Shah, I did not have the resources to travel and undertake the task entrusted to me. Understanding my plight, A. B. Shah offered to pay me Rs.120 a month towards travel expenses, besides 50 percent of the sale proceeds of Nachiketa books as commission.

I requisitioned Nachiketa books and sold as many as I could in Hyderabad, Tenali, Guntur and Vijayawada. Gurajala Seetaramaiah in Tenali and Koneru Kutumbarao in Vijayawada helped me in my sales drive. In Hyderabad, I sold the books to my friends.

I conducted many seminars and discussions with A. B. Shah being the chief guest.

I organized discussions with religious groups like the Tamir-e -Millat, Jamaat-e- Islam, Muslim League, and the Jana Sangh. Osmania University's Institute of Asian Studies provided me the forum for conducting the debates at the YMCA Hall. Among the participants in the discussions were A. B. Shah, V. K. Sinha, Rasheeduddin Khan, Alam Khundmiri, Anwar Mozam, Moginitha Bassum, Mohit Sen and Lakshminarayana.

We organized discussions with people like K. Seshadri and B. A. V. Sarma and brought out the

contents in a book form. All such activities helped to spread the secular movement. We organized debates on Puri Sankaracharya's views and on cow slaughter ban.

We organized A. B. Shah meetings at Guntur, Vijayawada, Tenali, and Avanigadda. A. B. Shah's lecture at A. C. College in Guntur impressed many students. He also addressed the Bar Association.

A. B. Shah took part in the study classes we organized at Avanigadda for five days during 1965-66. Many prominent humanists, rationalists, and atheists took part in the classes. The participants included Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy, M. V. Rama Murthy, Ravipudi Venkatadri, N. V. Brahmam, G. V. Krishna Rao and Tripuraneni Venkateswara Rao.

Koneru Kutumba Rao, Mandava Srirama Murthy, and I organized the Avanigadda classes. The press coverage was good. A. B. Shah held discussions with a number of people during his stay at Avanigadda. I invited A. B. Shah later on also and made him take part in many programs. A. B. Shah and I called on the bedridden Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy at Tenali in 1967 and persuaded him to undergo treatment in Madras for his heart ailment. However, he passed away before leaving for Madras.

A. B. Shah succeeded in spreading the secular movement in Andhra Pradesh with assistance from people like Polu Satyanarayana and B. V. Sarma, besides me. The movement suffered a setback then with A. B. Shah's demise in 1982.

M. N. Roy spelt out clarifying scientifically what secularism means and A. B. Shah followed his interpretation meticulously. Secularism implies that State and religion are separate. Religious beliefs should remain personal and not be injected into governance. There should be one common civil law for all communities.

I translated A. B. Shah's articles into Telugu. Anupama Publications compiled my articles and brought out a book in 1968. Prof. Kotha Sachidananda Murthy wrote the foreword and addressed a meeting held to mark the book release.

Suryadevara Hanumantha Rao of Tenali published the book, *Secularism*, written by Polu Satyanarayana, on my request.

I invited Hamid Dalwai, who assisted A. B. Shah in Bombay, to Hyderabad. I translated his work *Muslim Politics* and carried it in *Prasaritha*, a quarterly magazine.

A.B. Shah cast his influence on Telugu-speaking people from 1964 to 1982. I introduced him to Chief Minister Bhavanam Venkatram, Alapati Ravindranath, and Narla Venkateswara Rao in Hyderabad. A. B. Shah impressed all of them.

At the instance of A. B. Shah, I inquired into the background of the family of Osmania University Vice Chancellor Nookala Narotham Reddy when A. B. Shah's daughter wanted to marry Narotham Reddy's son. The marriage took place but ended up in divorce later.

A. B. Shah helped me with my Ph.D. thesis by sending me the manuscript of *'Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science'*, which M. N. Roy authored in jail. I took down notes and returned the manuscript.

A. B. Shah relished his pipe. Both of us enjoyed drinking in moderation.

He suffered a heart attack during a visit to Hyderabad to take part in a seminar but revealed it to me only after his return to Poona. Shocked and surprised, I conveyed my indignation.

Occasionally, I took part in all-India seminars along with A. B. Shah in Bombay.

A. B. Shah's influence on me is deep. I translated his *Scientific Method* into Telugu and got it included in the curriculum for M. A. Philosophy in Osmania University. He was known for his clarity in thinking and perfection in articulation. His demise in 1982 at the age of 62 came as a setback to the secular movement in general and me in particular. He was next only to Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy among intellectuals who captivated me.

A. B. Shah suggested to the U. S. publishers of the '*Encyclopedia of Unbelief*' that they include an article on India and entrust the job of writing it to me. In response to an invitation from Editor Gordon Stein, I wrote the piece.

That A. B. Shah made the suggestion to the publishers without informing me beforehand testifies to the immense confidence he had in me.

It was only through A. B. Shah that I learnt of *Minerva*, the magazine of Edward Shills, and *Intellectuals*, the work by a Sociology Professor from Chicago University.

A. B. Shah brought out eight issues of *Humanist* quarterly systematically. He was the first to study the 22 doctrines propounded by M. N. Roy scientifically and publish them. Although he was born into a Digambar Jain family in Gujarat, he grew into a humanist, settled in Poona and taught in Bombay. He was a knowledgeable critic.



## 11. Joyful Life - Naveena, Raju

Naveena was born on May 21, 1965. It was hot summer.

My father-in-law admitted Komala in the Jhansivani Maternity home because of his acquaintance with the doctor. However, when it was time for delivery, Dr. Jhansi Vani overtaken by religious frenzy had gone to fulfill a vow at Tirupati. Normally, doctors make alternative arrangements for patient care during their absence but Dr. Jhansi did not make any. With the obstetrician missing, Komala had to undergo a lot of suffering. When my father-in-law voiced his righteous indignation, Dr. Jhansi murmured an apology. We returned to Hyderabad thereafter. By then, I had rented a house belonged to Sailaja, a student of Komala. It was within walking distance of Narayanaguda girls school. Both grandmothers from father's and mother's side were there to take care of Naveena.

Komala gave birth to Raju on June 26, 1966. Chastened by experience, we admitted her in Lakshmi Desai Clinic in Himayath Nagar, Hyderabad.

We did not name the baby girl even three months after her birth. My father-in-law said that such a delay would result in the baby being called Chinni or Chitti or by some other nickname and suggested that we christen her in a novel way. Latching on to the word 'novel' in his suggestion, we named her Naveena (which in Telugu stands for novelty).

We named the baby boy Raju after my father Rajaiah, in accordance with my mother's wish. Santaravuru teacher Velidi Venkateswarlu was fond of Raju during his childhood. Raju, in turn, addressed him as uncle.

Both Naveena and Raju turned out to be good children. Although Komala and I faced hardship, we spared the children from all the problems. Learning that we named the child Naveena, Avula Gopalakrishna

Murthy remarked, "So, you opted for the Sanskrit word Naveena for '*kotha*' in Telugu."

Naveena and Raju studied in a primary school called Blue Bells. Mrs. Najma Ahmed ran the school near Naubat Pahad in Adarsh Nagar. It provided a good foundation for both the children. Later, they studied at Grammar School in Abids, then known for its high standards. They did well in school.

Raju joined Chaitanya Junior College in Badi Chowdi of Sultan Bazar and Naveena, Stanley Junior College. Both of them later joined Nizam College. While Raju completed graduation, Naveena after her first year of graduation joined a medical college in Bangalore.

Raju, who did a course in rural management at Anand, worked in a dairy development corporation for some time. Later he did a course in journalism offered by *Times of India*, joined *Economic Times* and served for one year.

## 12. Can Reason Appeal

Only after I settled down in life after marriage in 1964, I could pursue education and take part in humanist, rationalist movements simultaneously.

The rationalist movement had been limping in the State and the country by then. Crippled by old age, Editor S. Ramanathan had halted publication of *Indian Rationalist*, the magazine in English. Even in Bombay and Maharashtra, the movement was on the wane.

Rationalists like me met at Avula Sambasiva Rao's residence and discussed ways and means of reviving the movement. The participants included N. K. Acharya, Narra Kotaiah, Y. Raghavaiah (Professor of Public Administration in Osmania University), A. L. Narasimha Rao (journalist), Jasti Jawaharlal (an employee in the Auditor General's office), and Polu Satyanarayana. Jayagopal Suryanarayana from Madras extended his support.

We revived the monthly magazine with Avula Sambasiva Rao as Editor, and N. K. Acharya's home as its office. A. L. Narasimha Rao took care of printing. I wrote every month on rationalism and related subjects. A. K. Acharya strove to bring out the magazine to the best of his ability, because of his inexperience in running a magazine. Sambasiva Rao soon became a judge.

At that point, Jayagopal Suryanarayana volunteered to run the magazine from Madras.

The rationalist movement had its origin in Bombay in the 1930s with stalwarts like Abraham Solomon, Lokhandawala, and R. P. Paranjape leading it. In Andhra, Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy and M. V. Rama Murthy shouldered the responsibility of spreading it.

Leaders like M. N. Roy and Annadurai took part in its all-India conferences.

Robert G. Ingersol's - famous critique of the Bible appealed to the public. The writings of Charles Bradlaw, and Haliac were inspiring.

Later on, rationalist societies sprang up in places like Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Guntur, Tenali, Chirala and Mangalagiri and spread the movement.

I took part in some study camps and conferences. *Charvaka* magazine, founded by Thotakura Babu, attracted the youth. The summer classes conducted by us had drawn Babu into the rationalist fold.

Abraham Kovoor gave a big boost to the rationalist movement with his tour of Andhra. Magic and hypnotism shows formed part of the Kovur tour. I joined Kovur in his public meetings. Komala, Naveena attended the program at Gandhi Bhavan. Sanal Edamaruku from Kerala with his magic shows exposed the so-called spiritual gurus who claimed miraculous powers.

Later on Ravipudi Venkatadri, Katti Padma Rao, Ramakrishna of Charvaka School, Jayagopal of Visakhapatnam and M. V. Rama Murthy played an active role in running the movement. I contributed by writing articles and bringing out books. Although rationalist societies existed, they were not strong. Their magazines had limited circulation, while some societies conducted summer classes.

### 13. Komala Unique Person

After marriage in 1964, Komala and I decided that she should retain her surname Venigalla and thereby her individuality. That was contrary to the Indian women's tradition of replacing their surname with their husbands'.

Since I had no income in 1965, I had to depend on Komala's salary as a school teacher to run the family. When we tried to get her a job in a college, we learnt that a pass in M. A. second class was the minimum prerequisite. She had B.A. honours with pass certificate. She, therefore, took the Andhra University M. A. exam and passed in second class.

When Komala finally wanted to move to a college, the school management stood in the way. The Secretary Narasimha Reddy, an Anand Marg disciple, would not accept her resignation and relieve her. Ignoring him, she joined the Anwarul Uloom College at Mallepalli in Hyderabad as an English lecturer. Its principal Khaleela Hussaini cooperated with us. He became a friend of mine, and later on attended A. B. Shah's meetings organized by me. He was also the leader of a Muslim organization called Tamir-e-Millat. The congenial atmosphere in the college in 1968 brought about a metamorphosis in Komala's life. During her decade-long service, she acquired good friends like A.M. Vatcha, Andrews Christina, Qamrunnisa, Raghu Manvi, and earned affection of the students.

Komala and I decided that she should do Ph.D. in English literature. After registering herself with professor Viswanadham, she did a thesis on Katherine Manfield (famous English writer). Once she completed it, the professor advised her to change the topic since someone else had done a thesis on that writer earlier. Komala selected Henry Fielding as her next choice for thesis. Professor Viswanadham asked her to change the

topic since somebody had already done on Henry Fielding. Komala did not pursue it.

In 1965, a couple, Polu Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, belonging to Santaravuru-Gollapalem village, moved into a portion of our rented house. Satyanarayana was a Kapu and Sesharatnam, a Kamma. When their families opposed their inter-caste marriage, Satyanarayana sought my help.

My friends and I performed a secular marriage for them in the presence of people like Prof. Ram Reddy and Dr. V. Madhusudhana Reddy, and held a marriage reception on the roof garden of Brindavan Hotel.

I helped Satyanarayana, who had resigned from the Intelligence Department to land a job as a lecturer. Satyanarayana shared my humanist ideology. Another acquaintance Sesharatnam was a chemistry lecturer in Anwarul Uloom College.

We shifted to Narayanaguda after taking a house on rent along with Madala Thimmaiah. In this manner I reduced my rental burden.

There was scarcity of baby milk powder during our daughter Naveena's infancy. Ch. Raja Reddy from Chirala and Mandava Srirama Murthy in Hyderabad came to our rescue.

Komala's mother Ramakotamma and my mother Anthonamma used to take care of baby Naveena. My mother and Velidi Venkateswarlu took care of Raju in his infancy. We quite often took Raju to Dr. Uma for treatment in his childhood. Later on, Dr. T. V. Krishna Rao performed a tonsillectomy on Raju.

From 1965 onwards, our house became a meeting point for humanists, rationalists, atheists, and secular movement activists. Komala would not allow anybody to leave without enjoying her hospitality. Those memories remain fresh among our visitors to this day.

Among the visitors to our Narayanaguda residence were Prof. Alapati Krishnakumar, B. A. V. Sarma, Gora, C. Narasimha Rao, Kolluri Koteswara Rao, and V. Manmohan Reddy.

Komala's friends too turned up quite often. Her school colleague Hemarani was very close to her. Hemarani, who remained unmarried, died suddenly under mysterious circumstances. Komala lost a good friend in her.

Komala's dear disciples Aruna and Usha invariably came with flowers and sat for hours on end. Both of them became doctors later on and became our life-long friends. Usha settled in Detroit (US). Aruna married Dr. Subhash. They became our family physicians. Sarojini, Komala's colleague, remained affectionate until her death. Komala's colleagues in college too remained close family friends.

## 14. Meandering into Research

After completing M. A. (Philosophy) in Osmania University in 1965-66, I registered for Ph.D. studies. My guide is V. Madhusadan Reddy head of philosophy Department. He had just returned to the university after a stint at Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. He was the younger brother of Vediri Ramachandra Reddy, who sparked a '*bhoodan*' movement in India by donating a piece of his land to Vinoba Bhave in Nalgonda district.

I chose 'Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science', a subject dealt with by M. N. Roy, for the Ph. D. thesis. Thanks to A. B. Shah, I had gone through M. N. Roy's manuscript. Although complex, the topic appealed to me as it was modern. I was fully aware that Madhusudana Reddy, being an Aurobindo disciple, would be of little help. Yet, he accepted to be my guide to fulfill a formality.

I consulted Ravada Satyanarayana of the Physics Department and also those in the Departments of Chemistry, Astronomy, and Genetics, A. B. Shah, and C. T. K. Chari of Madras Christian College and scoured libraries in Regional Research Laboratories and National Institute of Nutrition for relevant material.

Madhusudana Reddy approved the thesis I submitted in time and referred it to external observers chosen by him. They returned the thesis with divided opinion. He, therefore, formed another panel. The process went on for 10 long years and I was yet to get Ph. D. At my request, the Vice Chancellor appointed a one man judicial commission to go into the delay. The judge held Madhusudana Reddy guilty of doing injustice to me.

Then I approached the High Court, which took the matter seriously. The advocate for the university,



Babul Reddy, himself conceded that injustice had been done to me and the university was to be blamed.

The High Court in its verdict directed the university to dispose of the matter as per rules. The university formed a panel comprising Dr. Daya Krishna from Rajasthan and Madhusudana Reddy to interview me and take a decision. After the interview, they rejected my thesis.

The High Court found fault with the guide for initially accepting the thesis and rejecting it subsequently. In the wake of the High Court's observations, Madhusudana Reddy resigned and returned to the Aurobindo Ashram. I was awarded Ph.D. basing on the majority recommendation of the external observers. The print media splashed the Ph. D. episode prominently. Book Links brought out my thesis and the story behind it, written by M. V. Rama Murthy, in a book form.

During 1964-74, I took up many jobs in Osmania University. I joined as a lecturer after submitting the Ph. D. thesis, and taught psychology and philosophy to B. A. students in Nizam College. Revolutionary writer Jwalamukhi was one of the students. He always called me '*mastaru*' (teacher) always.

At the instance of Madhusudana Reddy I visited Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry and studied it closely. I noticed how visitors were taken to the Mother on the first floor for a *darshan*. I interviewed the inmates. Later on, I wrote articles critical of the goings on at the ashram.

At Osmania University, I conducted many humanist, rationalist and secularist programs by associating with all the well-informed professors in other departments. They included Rasheeduddin Khan, A. D. Bhogle, Yadagiri Reddy, P. V. Rajagopal, K. Seshadri, B. A. V. Sarma, C. Lakshmananna, Raghavendra Rao, Gautam Madhur, Alam Khundmiri, Anwar Mojam

and C. Narayana Reddy. I persuaded some to contribute good articles to magazines.

At Osmania, I handled philosophy classes for M. A. students. At my suggestion, the university prescribed A. B. Shah's *Scientific Method* as a textbook.

## 15. Facing New Phase

After settling down in Hyderabad in 1964, I had acquired many life-long friends. They include Chalasani Prasada Rao, Venigalla Venkata Ratnam, Mandava Srirama Murthy, Narra Kotaiah, N. K. Acharya, and A. L. Narasimha Rao, C. Bhaskara Rao, S.V. Pantulu.

Among the first few who visited my residence were atheist leader Gora, writer G. C. Kondaiah, B.V. Narasimha Rao and Maharajasri.

The death of Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy in 1967 when I was living in Narayanaguda left a deep void in my life.

Kolluri Koteswara Rao (1933-2014), editor of *Telugu Vidyarthi* published from Bandar (Machilipatnam), wanted me to write to the magazine. At his request, I interviewed many educationists and politicians including C. D. Deshmukh, Amrik Singh, P. V. Narasimha Rao, D. S. Reddy, Prof. Sridevi, and Kasu Brahmananda Reddy and contributed articles. I visited certain reputed schools in Krishna district and wrote about them. Thanks to Koteswara Rao, I developed close relations with Prof. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangaiah.

Koteswara Rao won an election to the Legislative Council from the Krishna district teachers' constituency. He invited me to stay in his house, No. 131 in New MLA Quarters, and assist him in Legislative Council activities. I moved there in the year 1968-1969.

I took part in a survey undertaken by the Department of Political Science of Osmania University in the Old City of Hyderabad. Polu Satyanarayana and I interviewed sanitary workers and downtrodden sections and studied the inhuman conditions in which they lived. They were apologetic as they could not provide us even a stool or a cot to sit and jot down their answers. We took down notes standing, asking them not to worry over formalities.

Prof. Valiuddin, who taught me Islam Sufism, lived in a bungalow in Khanabagh of Old City. Taking a liking for me, he used to invite me to his home and serve breakfast personally. His hospitality is still fresh in my memory. Thanks to the Oxford professor's teaching, I scored 80 percent in Sufism.

Alam Khundmiri, who initially stayed in Malakpet, moved to Salimnagar subsequently. Once my teacher, he became a colleague of mine. We became close by working together in several movements. I introduced A. B. Shah to him and they became friends.

Alam's wife Khadija Alam treated me affectionately. Alam entered into a matrimonial relationship with famous painter M. F. Hussain. I met Hussain at the wedding dinner of Alam's daughter with Hussain's son. Later on, his paintings incurred the wrath of Hindu fundamentalists. Alam was a talented person. We took part in many programs and watched movies together. Alam died of kidney failure. Komala, Naveena, and Raju too were acquainted with Alam and his family.

## 15. Friendship with Chief Justice

I had no acquaintance with Pingali Jaganmohan Reddy when he served as a Judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court and later the Supreme Court. I met him for the first time after the Chief Minister J. Vengala Rao appointed him the Vice Chancellor of Osmania University to rescue it from the rut it had fallen into.

Intrigued by the delay in the award of a Ph. D. to me, Pingali appointed Justice Parthasarathi as one-man commission to inquire into it. In his report, Justice Parthasarathi exposed the reprehensible conduct of my guide V. Madhusudana Reddy. When newspapers splashed the report, the Vice Chancellor, who lived opposite the Secretariat, sent for me. He was surprised to hear my version concerning the Ph.D. Thereafter, we became so close that he invited me to his house for breakfast or lunch, and sent me mangoes from his grove in summer.

Once, I had an occasion to discuss M. N. Roy with him. He was gracious enough to address Radical Humanist study classes at my invitation.

Heeding my suggestion that he record his experiences in life, he produced a voluminous autobiography. He gave the manuscript to my young son, Raju and asked him to go through it, and offer his opinion.

After going through the work, Raju minced no words in giving his feedback. He told Pingali, "Do you presume you are a Bertrand Russell? Who would be interested in all that muck? Excise all irrelevant things and make it brief and simple."

Eighteen year old Raju's irreverent remarks left me shell-shocked. Even as I wondered how Pingali would react, he did not take exception to Raju's candid remarks.

After deleting all the superfluous paragraphs Raju had marked in the margins, Pingali got the book printed under the title '*Down the Memory Lane*'. He told me he appreciated my son's advice and acknowledged his contribution in the foreword to the first edition.

Pingali appointed Mrs. Vanaja Iyengar to go into Ram Reddy's performance in Osmania University before he became Vice Chancellor. She conducted an inquiry and exposed Ram Reddy's corrupt practices and deficiencies. Mrs. Iyengar was the wife of prominent Communist Mohit Sen, who worked in the Department of Mathematics. Ram Reddy, who succeeded Pingali as Vice Chancellor, suppressed the inquiry report.

K. B. Satyanarayana of Book Links, a friend of Ram Reddy, published Pingali's book, *The University I Served*. I translated the book into Telugu at Pingali's request. Dr. Sivarama Murthy, Registrar of Telugu University, promised to publish the book on behalf of the university as desired by Pingali. Meanwhile, C. Narayana Reddy, Vice Chancellor put his foot down on its publication at the instigation of Ram Reddy.

An indignant Pingali insisted that the facts concerning the university should see the light of the day. Then *Udayam* daily, published by Dasari Narayana Rao and edited by Gajjela Malla Reddy carried a series of excerpts from the book. A. B. K. Prasad and K. Ramachandra Murthy were Malla Reddy's colleagues. Malla Reddy felt that the outpourings of a gentleman like Pingali deserved publication.

At the request of Pingali, I translated some of his monographs into Telugu. The Telugu Academy published the monographs on the minorities and the Constitution, the place of Governors in the constitutional set-up, and the highlights of the Constitution.

Pingali introduced me to Raji Reddy of Manchiryal of Karimnagar district. He had a good library.

Pingali's two sons – Jayaram (orthopedician) and Gautam (working in Administrative Staff College of India), daughter and wife became my friends.

I took Justice V. M. Tarkunde to Pingali's home when he visited Hyderabad. They had fruitful discussions.

Pingali shared his encounters with Veerendranath Chattopadhyaya and Sarojini Naidu and his experiences in Germany with me. He disclosed that he flew planes as a pilot for some time in Germany.

## 16. A Decade of Experience

During the end of 1968, I moved into the New MLA Quarters of Kolluri Koteswara Rao (Editor of *Telugu Vidyarthi*, Machilipatnam). Having just been elected as a member of the Legislative Council from a teachers' constituency, he wanted me to stay in his house and help him in his political career.

The separate Telangana movement was just then gaining momentum. Although the agitation rocked most parts of Hyderabad, the New MLA Quarters (housing) remained relatively trouble free. The rent was nominal and we had round the clock water supply. Our daughter Naveena and son Raju could play with children of their age group in the well laid lawn. With many to coddle them, our children enjoyed their stay.

I worked as the office secretary at the Institute of Asian Studies. Valluri Basava Raju was its Chairman and Vasanth Kumar Bawa (V. K. Bawa), IAS, was the General Secretary. V. B. Raju was a consummate politician, but V. K. Bawa as Director of State Archives was interested in research. I gained valuable experience because of my association with them. I invited Humanists like Dhan Raj, A. B. Shah and G. R. Dalwai for conferences I organized at the institute. Those conferences were highly productive.

I got acquainted with a Sikh writer, Surender Suri, at the institute. At his invitation, I attended a seminar at Sunder Nagar in Himachal Pradesh and enjoyed the privilege of meeting Balraj Puri for the first time.

Among those who attended meetings at the institute were Nutakki Venkateswara Rao, Indian Ambassador, and C. D. Deshmukh. Although the meetings were small, the deliberations were valuable.

I delivered talks and took part in debates over All India Radio, Hyderabad. Although, Veluri Sahajananda



had been a follower of Aurobindo since 1970, he did not hesitate to invite me to AIR debates and express my opinions as he respected freedom of expression. He sided with me in discussions, on many occasions. I met people like Dandamudi Mahidhar, Divi Venkata Ramaiah, Narravula Subba Rao, Bhandaru Srinivasa Rao, Madapati Satyavathi, Panyala Ranganatha Rao and violinist Domingo.

Venigalla Venkata Ratnam and I organized highly fruitful monthly meetings. Since we did not have a permanent venue, we conducted meetings wherever it was convenient. People like Sanjeev Dev and Narla Venkateswara Rao addressed the gatherings. After a few years, we called off the monthly meetings.

After moving into the New MLA quarters, I stepped up writing and publishing books, including translations, in Telugu and English.

My first book *Andhra Pradesh Rajakeeya Charitra* hit the stands during 1969-1970. Lokeswara Rao of Navajyothi Publishers, Vijayawada, brought out the booklet with less than hundred pages and presented me a hundred copies. A. B. Shah's *Collection of Essays* was my first translation. Anupama Publishers, Vijayawada, arranged a function where Professor Satchidananda Murthy, who penned the foreword, released the book.

A. B. Shah encouraged the publication of papers presented at seminars and meetings in a book form. I followed the tradition and brought out books after conducting a seminar on Modern Trends in Telugu and Urdu Literature under the banner of Cultural Freedom.

I wrote a book in English on Andhra Pradesh politics. Venigalla Venkata Ratnam got the book typed at Coromandel Fertilizers and made out 100 photocopies. Book Links' K. B. Satyanarayana distributed the copies enthusiastically. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that even the Library of Congress had

acquired a copy. Hyderabad Zilla Parishad President Bhoj Reddy collected copies of the book with alacrity.

Yet, I was not satisfied with that book. Every time I completed a book, I felt I could have done better.

K. B. Satyanarayana, Polu Satyanarayana and I started a State Book Club, with support from Dr. K. Seshadri. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangaiah inaugurated the club. We published books on the 'panchayat raj' system and the agitation for a separate State of Andhra (written by M. V. Rama Murthy). C. Bhaskara Rao, Sri Ramana, Venigalla Venkata Ratnam and I worked together to bring out some books of Sanjeev Dev in English and Telugu. We organized some meetings and got the books reviewed. The book club did not last long.

One day Raju went missing at the New MLA Quarters. We searched all the places he frequented. Failing to locate him, we lodged a police complaint. Police official Parvataneni Koteswara Rao alerted all police stations about the missing kid. As the sun went down, our anxiety went up. Late in the evening, the Nepali watchman of the quarters brought Raju along with him and confessed he had kidnapped the boy in the morning and took him to his home. When Raju fell asleep, the watchman's wife condemned him for the heinous crime and asked him to handover the boy back to his parents forthwith. We sighed in relief on Raju's return. The trauma petrified Raju so much that he did not utter a word, however much we prodded him. The watchman lost his job following our police complaint. But for that bitter episode, we had a good time at the New MLA Quarters.

## 17. Reporting Legislative discussions

After stepping into the New MLA Quarters of Kolluri Koteswara Rao at the end of 1968, I developed new contacts and gained new experiences. Kolluri had just been elected a member of the Legislative Council for the first time. Since he was not conversant with the working of the Council, I helped him by drafting questions, short notices, call attention motions and speeches. My association with Kolluri continued for almost a decade. During that period, I visited the Legislature regularly and made good use of its library.

I became the proud owner of a telephone for the first time in my life after I entered the New MLA Quarters. I could acquire a refrigerator and buy modern children's literature for our kids.

Becoming a member in the Fateh Maidan Club and the Secunderabad Club, I often took my family there for an outing. Gradually, I extended my cooperation to some other legislators who sought it. I tried to promote humanism, rationalism and scientific thinking through legislators and succeeded to some extent. Some legislators were persuaded to question frauds perpetrated by the so-called god men and women.

I assisted P. Bhujanga Rao, MLC from the Kadapa teachers' constituency, a lot. I also wrote for his monthly *Vidyodaya*.

Without seeking a credit line, I reviewed political developments of the week for *Zameen Rytu* published from Nellore, at the request of its editor Nellore Srirama Murthy. Although N. Janardhana Reddy, then MLC, pestered him to reveal the name of the writer, Srirama Murthy, however much as he was embarrassed, did not oblige.

I contributed articles to *Vijayabheri*, a magazine run by Dhanemkula Narasimham, MLA, at his request. I

helped Tulabandula Nageswara Rao, MLA from Mangalagiri, in his Assembly activities.

Kolluri (MLC) and Tulabandula Nageswara Rao (MLA) adhered scrupulously to the script I gave them for delivering speeches in the Legislature. They learnt the content by rote so thoroughly that they had no occasion to look into it as they were on their feet in the House. I wondered at their phenomenal memory.

K. Rosaiah, MLC, who stayed in the MLA Quarters, was affectionate to our children. I gave him questions that he might raise in the House.

To get information on some subjects in which I was interested, I passed on questions to select legislators like Paladugu Venkata Rao.

Among those with whom I developed close relations in the MLA Quarters were Y. V. Krishna Rao, Gottipati Brahmaiah, M. V. S. Subbaraju, Dantu Bhaskara Rao, Anagani Bhagavantha Rao and Masala Veeranna. Later on, M. V. S. Subbaraju, Bhavanam Venkatram and Kakani Venkataratnam became friends.

G. Rajaram and Chanumolu Venkata Rao lived in another part of the MLA Quarters. Legislators from Krishna district and those elected from teachers' constituencies like Raghavachari, Sivarama Raju and Manikrao became friends. For some time, poet Jashua served as an MLC. Munuswami, my neighbor, occasionally conversed with with me. Bhavanam, Jayaprada's younger daughter Durga Bhavani and M. V. S. Subba Raju's grand daughter Manohari were playmates to our daughter Naveena.

I chatted with G. Rajaram daily at some point of time or the other. D. Srinivas, then a boy, was a frequent visitor to Rajaram's house.

Gadde Rattaiah lived in the quarters for some time. He associated closely with J. Chokkarao.

There was hectic activity in the MLA Quarters when the movement for a separate Telangana State was at its peak.

As I assisted some members in legislative affairs, I developed close contacts with some Ministers, besides legislature staff. I used to chat with Nagnamuni (Kesava Rao), a reporter in the Assembly.

Shortly before I vacated the quarters, N. Chandrababu Naidu entered the quarters, living with Lakshminarayana. I drafted questions and occasionally gave him information on some issues.

I became close to prominent party leaders like Venkaiah Naidu, Jayapal Reddy, Chekuri Kasaiah, G. C. Kondaiah, and Mahipal Reddy.

The number of visitors to our home in the MLA Quarters gradually swelled. Komala extended all of them hospitality without a murmur.

Gouthu Latchanna gave me all of his diaries and asked me to do a biography. I accepted the assignment because of my long-standing relationship with him. It appeared as a serial in *Bahujana* magazine. He stopped its publication when someone told him the pieces were highly critical.

G. C. Kondaiah wanted me to correct his writings including translations. Although his writing was difficult to decipher, I obliged him because of my friendship.

At the request of Venkaiah Naidu, I gave some background material on some issues. He used it effectively in the House. Going through some of the questions posed by Venkaiah Naidu, then Education Minister Bhavanam Venkatram asked the former whether I had drafted them for him.

I assisted Bhavanam Venkatram a lot in legislative affairs.

Polu Satyanarayana and I started *Prasarita*, a quarterly social science magazine with assistance from

Prof. K. Seshadri. We decided to publish social sciences' literature in Telugu up to the post-graduate level. We succeeded to some extent as I handled political subjects and Satyanarayana dealt with panchayati raj.

We published interviews with people like Ravi Narayana Reddy and an article by the late Ashok, who was jailed for his role in the Naxalite movement. We did not reveal his name despite official pressures. He wrote under the pseudonym of Bhaskar.

We carried standard reviews of good books. Sanjeev Dev reviewed Narendra Dev's *Bouddha Darsan*. We brought out Hamid Dalwai's *Muslim Politics* and Lakshman Sastri Joshi's *Hinduism*. We carried M. V. Rama Murthy's article on the separate Andhra movement in the magazine.

I dissociated myself from the magazine after joining *Andhra Jyoti*. Satyanarayana carried it on for some time before folding it up. Alapati Ravindranath helped us in printing the magazine. Since it did not receive many advertisements, the magazine faced financial problems.

## 18. Helping Elected Representatives

After a stay of nearly 10 years at Koteswara Rao's quarters in the MLAs' Colony, I moved into nearby Adarsh Nagar in Hyderabad.

The *Telugu Vidyarthi* monthly, run by Koteswara Rao, carried a number of articles and interviews done by me. He brought out my writings in a book form under the banner of *Telugu Vidyarthi* Publications. Being a member of the Legislative Council representing teachers, he ensured that schools and libraries lapped up my work "*Raja Ram Mohan Roy nundi M.N.Roy varaku.*" He published many other works of mine. I had ever anticipated any remuneration from him. I was merely happy that he carried my highly controversial pieces on Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Marx, and Gandhi in *Telugu Vidyarthi* and widely circulated my works.

Between 1975 – 1980 Koteswara Rao and I myself selected some ideal schools in Krishna district, visited them, and carried reports in *Telugu Vidyarthi*. The schools at Gudlavaluru and Rudrapaka, Montessori School run by Koteswaramma and Bishop Ajaraiah School both in Vijayawada were among them. I did the pieces after in depth interviews with managements, students, and teachers. Koteswaramma was unhappy with me as I reported that her school students also approaching the teachers for private tuitions.

When Koteswara Rao sought reelection as MLC from Krishna district, I took part in his campaign and addressed meetings. The book I brought out compiling Koteswara Rao's speeches and questions in the Legislative Council came in handy during the campaign. I got closely acquainted with M. V. Raja Gopal, IAS, thanks to Koteswara Rao's introduction.

I lost touch with Koteswara Rao once I moved into Kalva Chandaiah's house in Adarsh Nagar.

Koteswara Rao's son Ramana took over the publication of *Telugu Vidyarthi*.

When A. S. Avadhani criticized an article of mine on antediluvian Hinduism in *Telugu Vidyarthi*, I responded with equal vehemence.

I visited Koteswara Rao at his home in Bandar many times and gave him my writings. I translated M. N. Roy's *India in Transition* into Telugu at the request of the Historical Society of India. Venkateswara Rao, Koteswara Rao's brother-in-law assisted me when I dictated and took notes. However, it has not seen the light of the day.



## 19. Joyful Humanism

I stepped up my activities like writing articles for '*Radical Humanist*' monthly magazine and translating Humanist literature into Telugu once I moved into the New MLA Quarters in 1968. I organized an all-India Humanist conference apart from seminars and workshops at the New MLA Quarters itself. Many Humanist leaders like Premanath Bazaz (Karshimiri Pandit critic of Bhagavageetha) V. B. Karnik (All India trade union leader) and V. M. Tarkunde (Judge of Maharashtra High Court) took part in the all-India conference.

With Humanist leaders from all over the country visiting our home, Komala got acquainted with all of them.

Once she took Maniben Kara (All India leader of women's movement, Indumati Parekh (president of Indian radical humanist association, and Gowri Malik (Indian renaissans institute general secretary) around Hyderabad. She accompanied Maniben Kara to Avula Sambasiva Rao's residence at Malakpet.

During his Hyderabad visit, Premanath Bazaz lost a purse containing Rs. 2000 in an auto-rickshaw. Even as we lodged a police complaint, the auto driver turned up at Dwaraka Hotel, where Bazaz stayed, to return the purse. A happy Bazaz aptly rewarded the honest driver.

We got Bazaz's sensational work on the *Bhagavadgita* reviewed in newspapers. I introduced Bazaz to Narla Venkateswara Rao, who was highly impressed with his work.

Whenever Humanist leaders like C.T. Daru (president radical humanist association) and A. B. Shah visited Hyderabad, I took them to Andhra. I once took V. B. Karnik to Guntur. V. B. Karnik often took part in seminars at the Administrative College of India in Hyderabad, where G. R. Dalvi worked. Komala

interviewed Nissim Ezekiel (famous poet) for a radio program when he attended a seminar in Hyderabad. I took part in the seminar along with him.

Lakshman Sastri Joshi (from Wai, writer of Hindu Dharm Kosh), J. B. H. Wadia (famous film producer) and Indumati Parekh were among those who visited Hyderabad and shared their experiences with us.

We organized Humanist meetings relentlessly for over a decade and helped spread the movement.

Later, I met Indumati Parekh in Washington in 1994.

I took part in various all-India Humanist conferences at Bombay, Delhi, Dehradun, Shantiniketan, Kolkata, and Nagpur.

## 20. Bureau chief of Telugu daily

As long as V.R.Narla was against M.N. Roy and humanist thought I kept myself away from him. Gradually V.R.Narla acquainted himself with humanist - rationalist thought and M.N.Roy's writings we moved closer. I developed affinity with *Andhra Jyothi* editor Narla Venkateswara Rao in the 1970s and in no time we became family friends. Narla visiting us at New M.L.A. Quarters and our visits at his Bajanara Hills' residence became a routine. He used to gift books and pens to our daughter Naveena and son Raju. He continued the practice until Naveena joined M.B.B.S. He took a liking for Raju. Later on, he wanted Raju to do the indexing for his book, *Man and his World*. He acknowledged the contribution of our children. Narla's exemplary wife Sulochana was known for her splendid hospitality.

Narla and I went round National Museum and other places in New Delhi together. We scoured Sunday pavement shops in Hyderabad for good, old books. If he had two copies of any book, he parted with one to me. Savoring Sulochana's steaming iddli, upma, and dosa and delicious tea became a regular habit. Although she was not highly educated, she could locate which book lay where in his 25,000-book library, and fetch it instantaneously at Narla's bidding. She took good care of Narla's books and art pieces.

Narla had been a famous journalist and writer by the time I came to know him. Even as a high school student, I read his editorials in *Andhra Prabha*, which he edited earlier. I had not bargained for developing close relations with Narla during his twilight years.

Narla invited me one day to join *Andhra Jyoti* either as bureau chief or a special reporter. I accepted his offer and joined as special reporter. The monthly salary was Rs.1500. *Andhra Jyoti* office was then located opposite the Secretariat, a short distance from

my residence. By then, Rama Rao had retired from Andhra Jyoti and Ramakrishna became the chief of bureau. I worked to the best of my ability to render justice to the assignment. *Andhra Jyoti's* head office was located in Vijayawada. Nanduri Ramamohana Rao was its working editor. I introduced myself to all colleagues.

Working as special reporter and later as bureau chief, I developed many political and social contacts. Narla sent editorials via tele-printer from Hyderabad to Vijayawada. Udayavarlu scripted the editorials dictated by Narla. If Narla himself had hand-written a piece, only Udayavarlu could decipher it.

Narla never interfered in my work.

Nanduri Ramamohana Rao followed Narla in both letter and spirit in writing editorials occasionally. He did not excel when he strayed from Narla's style.

*Andhra Jyoti* carried on its editorial page the special articles I wrote under the title, *Marx Concealed by Communists*, for five weeks. They created a flutter. Nanduri tried to stall its publication but Narla overruled him. The daily sent the articles to CPM leader Makineni Basavapunniah in Vijayawada and asked him to comment. He would not. Many years later, I ran into Makineni at a breakfast at D. Seshagiri Rao's house. Makineni asked me why I wrote the pieces, though he maintained that the Communists had been aware of all the issues I dwelt upon. Responding to him, Alapati Ravindranath asked him how was it that the all-knowing Communists had not taken the public into confidence until then. Makineni was adept at bluffing out of embarrassing situations.

My reports on the killing of Ramijabi's husband in a police station and the repercussions of the case in the High Court during Dr. Channa Reddy's rule caused quite a sensation.

I had the privilege of interviewing famous scientist Yelavarty Nayudamma at the Raj Bhavan Guest House and carrying a lengthy report. Later on, he died in the Kanishka air crash in the Alps.

I interviewed Mother Teresa when she was in Hyderabad to attend a program at Public Gardens. To every query, her two-word response was, 'god's grace.' Being not well educated, she had to fall back on her experiences in life to explain anything. She, however, gained wide currency in society because of support from the Catholic Church.

As the bureau chief, I met Chief Ministers ranging from Jalagam Vengala Rao and Channa Reddy to Anjaiah and Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy.

When I did a critical review of Gouthu Latchanna's politics, someone complained against it to the editor. Nanduri Ramamohana Rao, a coward, raised a hue and cry without bothering to ascertain facts. He calmed down only after I told him that I stood by every word I had written.

I suggested that he recruit Sri Ramana for *Andhra Jyoti*. I felt happy when he took him on board, whatever might have been his motive.

The then Vice Chancellor of Hyderabad Central University Gurbaksh Singh acquired many foreign books and magazines for the university library. In the U. S., old books and magazines are periodically culled from libraries and bookshops and sold cheaply. They do contain some valuable pieces too. Gurbaksh Singh imported them by ship for the library. Surprisingly, payments for books and magazines were made on the basis of their cover prices. Learning of the financial swindle through the librarian, I exposed it in *Andhra Jyoti*.

Anjaneya Reddy, then working in the Intelligence Bureau, asked me for the source of my information. But I refused.

I arranged to carry articles on the state of contemporary literature in various Indian languages. I got the articles written by university professors from around the country and translated them for publication.

The series of investigative articles we did on rulers who beat a retreat around the world drew a lot of attention.

In 1978, I reported a conversation over phone between Chief Minister Channa Reddy and Revenue Minister N. Janardhana Reddy on Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the State. Perplexed by the leak, they wanted the police Department, the Home Minister and Finance Minister G. Rajaram to find out how I came to know of it. Although they beseeched me for the source, I did not oblige them. Home Minister M. M. Hashim hosted a dinner to cajole me into parting with the source of my report. I did not spill the beans. After all, a journalist has to protect the source of his information. The *Andhra Jyoti* management did not intervene.

The *Andhra Jyoti* office was abuzz with people streaming in and out all the time. It was a source of news and information for some.

Eenadu Special reporter S. N. Shastry regularly visited our office to ascertain the news behind news. Kalyani Sankar of United News of India too dropped in for news and comments. Later on, she left for Delhi, got close to Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao and became prominent. She accompanied PV on his visit to the U.S. I had occasion to meet her in Washington DC.

Nadendla Bhaskara Rao, advocate, Youth Congress leader and disciple of Channa Reddy, was one of the many who frequented the office to meet me.

The Bhargava Commission was appointed to go into fake killings during the regime of Vengala Rao. Reputed Humanist advocate V. M. Tarkunde from Mumbai visited Hyderabad frequently to appear on behalf of victims' families. Reporting the inquiry was a unique experience. I had the pleasure of meeting advocate Kannabiran and some Communists. The commission did not last long.

Babu Rao was then the *Andhra Jyoti* vendor in Hyderabad. He paid salaries to the daily's staff from out of his monthly sales collection. As a result, there was no stipulated salary day.

I discussed legal matters with advocate N. K. Acharya in his office next to ours.

Those days, we transmitted Telugu news in Roman script via tele-printer to Vijayawada. Consequently, there were many mistakes warranting explanations from our end.

Damodara Swami, Udayavarlu, Ramanayudu and Bhagiratha were among reporters. When Ramakrishna was shifted to Delhi, Venkata Rao moved in from Vijayawada. Later on he became the editor. Radhakrishna was a reporter during my time before he became a manager and together, we covered the Assembly. Radhakrishna was an active reporter.

'Eenadu' daily ran a fortnightly, 'Eenadu Telugunadu', for the benefit of Telugu speaking people abroad. It was not made available in India. The Eenadu management asked me to review Opposition activities for their fortnightly. Chekuri Rama Rao was the real editor, although its print line carried the name of Ramoji Rao as editor. There was no conflict of interest in my accepting the assignment since the magazine did not circulate in India. I, however, wrote under the pseudonym Sakshi. It was the name I had used when I contributed articles to *Prajavani*, *Vahini* and *Andhra Bhoomi* long ago. The magazine ceased to appear after

about 15 issues. I passed on the magazine copies to the State archives.

Chief Minister Channa Reddy appointed CPM Opposition leader Putchalapalli Sundaraiah the Drainage Board Chairman. He soon resigned, realizing that he could not get things done despite going round the Secretariat carrying files personally. I shot many embarrassing questions when Sundaraiah held a press conference. I asked him how he accepted an assignment given by a leader whom his own party had dubbed as corrupt. He was nonplussed when I asked what a Communist hoped to achieve in the regime of one who accepted money equal to his weight in a *tulabharam*. B. T. L. N. Choudary said in the Assembly that Sundaraiah accepted the assignment out of caste loyalty, citing that the original name of Sundaraiah was Sundara Rami Reddy. I had the occasion to report all that.

Vande Mataram Ramachandra Rao was a giant killer, having vanquished Channa Reddy and Rangareddy in elections. When Channa Reddy offered him the position of Official Language Commission Chairman, he fell for it. I embarrassed him with inconvenient questions and put it in print. Although he was a friend of my brother Vijayaraja Kumar, I did not allow the relationship to come in the way of my reporting. The Official Language Commission post was an inconsequential one with neither powers nor resources, yet, he grabbed the chair with alacrity.

Kaloji Narayana Rao suffered a humiliating defeat by contesting from the Sattuapalle Assembly constituency. We toured the area and reported many interesting insights. Some leftist parties supported Kaloji.

By and large, my experiences at *Andhra Jyoti* were invaluable.



At that point of time, differences broke out between *Andhra Jyoti* management and editor Narla. Narla was uncompromising in his fight against the management. Being a Congress Member in the Rajya Sabha, publisher K. L. N. Prasad supported the country's ruling establishment. Such culture was totally alien to Narla. He vehemently criticized Indira Gandhi for clamping Emergency to stamp out freedom of expression. The daily's management, however, stood by her. Narla wanted an editorial in which he castigated Viswanatha Satyanarayana for his reactionary writings to be reprinted. Nanduri Ramamohana Rao, with management backing, refused to oblige. Puranam Subrahmanya Sarma termed editor Nanduri as a glorified clerk.

The feud between Narla and K. L. N. Prasad grew worse and led to Narla's exit. As I backed Narla, I was shifted to Vijayawada. I resigned in protest and ended my relationship with *Andhra Jyoti*.

## 21. V.R. Narla dedicates his last play

Narla Venkateswara Rao, editor of '*Andhra Jyothi*', resigned suddenly after serving the daily for 20 years in protest against the management's blatant attempts at muzzling him. Since I was a special reporter in the daily's Hyderabad news bureau, I continued to follow Narla in his footsteps. The management transferred me from Hyderabad to Vijayawada so that I would be away from V.R.Narla. Instead of yielding to their cheap tactics I simply resigned in a job

Thereafter, we became closer. I introduced every Humanist who visited Hyderabad to Narla. On many occasions, we attended functions together.

Among the famous people whom I met at Narla's residence were M. Chalapathi Rao, Gutala Krishna Murthy, Mahamaya Prasad, and Vidwan Vishwam of *Manikya Veena* fame.

M. Chalapathi Rao, editor of '*National Herald*', was a stammerer. At my request, he shared his experiences in life. Gutala Krishna Murthy, living all alone in London, published rare books. Mahamaya Prasad, who had served as Bihar Chief Minister, stayed at Narla's residence on his Hyderabad visits. He explained at length many incidents in his life. I introduced myself to Vidwan Viswam at Narla's residence.

I happened to witness a wailing Puranam Subrahmanya Sharma prostrating at Narla's feet one day. Narla was magnanimous enough to pardon and reinstate Puranam in *Andhra Jyothi*.

Narla took Avasarala Surya Rao to task for his innumerable blunders in articles on Gurajada, and lack of proficiency in English. Puranam, who supported Surya Rao and Communists in the controversy, abused Narla. Once he realized that Narla was right, he apologized.

Painter Sanjiv Dev spent a lot of time browsing books at Narla's home.

At Pothuri Venkateswara Rao's request, I introduced him to Narla. Many people fought shy of meeting Narla although they held him in high esteem. Pothuri was so delighted over the meeting that he shared the news with everyone around.

Narla was never in the pink of health. He had a defective foot and suffered from tinnitus. Pavuluri Krishnaiah Chowdary, a homeopath, started treating Narla. Once I got closer to Narla, I explained with documentary evidence that homeopathy was unscientific and that practitioners of that system would not own up responsibility for their failures. At long last, Narla heeded me and stopped using Pavuluri's pills.

On one of my routine visits to his home, Narla handed me '*Narakamlo Harischandra*', the last play written by him. Copies of the book had just arrived from Vijayawada. As I flipped the cover page, I was pleasantly surprised to notice that he had dedicated the book "to my dear friend Innaiah". He asked me if I was surprised. I said, "Of course," and thanked him.

I introduced Susheel Mukherjee, a Humanist and the owner of Minerva Associates in Calcutta, to Narla. He turned a Narla fan and published his book *God, Goblin and Men*. An elated Narla and Mukherjee became good friends.

We arranged Narla's lectures in the Sociology Department of Osmania University through Professor C. Lakshmana. He delivered three lectures in English on

the 'Caste System'. Book Links published the lectures in a book form.

Narla authored *'The Truth about the Gita'* but died before it saw the light of the day. I got the book printed in Hyderabad, with financial assistance from his daughter Meenakshi, a resident of Phoenix, Arizona, U.S. For the benefit of people in the Western world, Paul Kurz's Prometheus Books published it out in the U.S. at my request. Aaramalla Purnachandra and I wrote the foreword for the American edition. We created a Narla blog carrying his writings and photos.

## 22. Writer with human face

I met D. Anjaneyulu a number of times in Madras, where he lived most of the time. He was regular contributor to the Hindu daily under "Between you and me". He was prolific writer in English. He introduced several eminent Telugu journalist and literary figures to English reading public. We met Captain Baji, poet Dasaradhi (then working in All India Radio), Devulapalli Krishna Sastry, and Setty Eswara Rao (working in the Soviet Consulate). His daughter Shanya (Santhi Sri) became a friend of our daughter Naveena and son Raju.

Anjaneyulu was an excellent literary analyst and critic in English. He sought my suggestions and assistance in writing some articles. He acknowledged my assistance when he produced a monograph on Andhra University Vice Chancellor C. R. Reddy. V. R. Narla sent his writings in English to Anjaneyulu for correction.

Anjaneyulu worked for some time in Hyderabad and also in New Delhi. At both places, we attended seminars and literary gatherings together. When he lived in Lodi Colony in Delhi, we visited museums together. He edited a government magazine called *India and Foreign News*.

Anjaneyulu introduced Telugu poets and writers including C. Narayana Reddy to English readers. Narayana Reddy, who could not stand Anjaneyulu's incisive analysis and shared his bitter feelings with me.

I browsed old books and magazines, which were in abundance, at his home. We met Bezwada Gopala Reddy frequently.

Anjaneyulu introduced me to Chandur and we became good friends.

Anjaneyulu's first wife Adilakshmi, who worked for Radio Moscow, died in Moscow in 1962 after giving

birth to Santi Sri. Santi Sri grew up as Tanya in Russia for some years before joining her father in India.

Anjaneyulu married Hemalatha later. They parted company after living together for some years.

At Anjaneyulu's residence, I happened to see a Ph. D. certificate given to Anjaneyulu by International California University. Anjaneyulu, to my knowledge, had never prefixed his name with Dr. I, therefore, quizzed him about the doctorate. He evaded giving a straightforward reply. A little investigation revealed the secret behind the doctorate.

Thiruvengadam, a Tamil scholar, who ran a literary association in Mylapore, conducted literary meetings. Once a year, he conferred an annual award named after Indian Express editor Frank Moraes. After being introduced by Anjaneyulu, I began attending literary meetings addressed by people like Jaggaiah. B.S.R. Krishna too knew Thiruvengadam.

One day, I asked Thiruvengadam how one could obtain a doctorate. He told me that International California University conferred the doctorate based on one's writings and service to society. However, it cost some money, he added without elaborating further.

Among those who obtained doctorates through Thiruvengadam were Kotapati Murahari Rao, Alapati Ravindranath, and movie actor Mohan Babu.

Mohan Babu organized a large meeting in Madras to get felicitated on receiving the doctorate. Alapati Ravindranath was similarly feted at a meeting presided over by P. Rajagopala Naidu at the Press Club in Hyderabad. I did not attend the meeting. C. Narayana Reddy dubbed the doctorate as dubious.

When I visited the U. S. subsequently, I went to San Francisco to look up my nephew Cherukuri Rajasekhar who was living nearby. Learning that International California University was located there, I

called up its number. Oliver B. Roy, who had signed as Vice Chancellor of the university in the Ph. D. certificate, answered the call and agreed to see me.

With Rajasekhar's assistance, I met him at his home. He introduced his spouse as a writer. When asked where the university was located, he gave me a Washington address, and added that the university offered only correspondence courses and did not have a campus for conducting regular classes. Homeopathy was one of the courses the university offered. We posed for photographs with him.

He told me that he had rebutted criticism against his university that appeared in *The Hindu* of Madras, and showed me press clippings.

What emerged from my probe was that the university did not exist. He would not answer the query whether the university had Government recognition.

During my visit to Washington, I found out that a family lived at the place where he said the university was located. None of the persons he mentioned as people in charge of the university were to be found there. The university did not figure in any directory and did not have even a telephone number.

Apparently, people from countries like India, Ceylon, and Nepal who were enamored of doctorates bought one from the bogus university.

Ravindranath would not have accepted the doctorate had he been aware of the nature of the university. He, however, died before he could know the truth. So did Anjaneyulu. Apparently, Oliver B. Roy had taken many Indians for a ride before I exposed him after my return to India.

### 23. Chief Minister with difference

Our family doctor Tangirala Subhash Babu introduced me to Bhavanam Venkatram when I was living at Kolluri Koteswara Rao's place at New M.L.A. Quarters in 1978. Bhavanam had just become an M.L.C. Finding ourselves on the same wavelength, we gradually came closer. I assisted him in his Legislative Council activities.

Bhavanam, with socialist leanings, joined the Congress Party. As a student at Guntur, he was acquainted with N. T. Rama Rao. A Reddy by caste from Muppalla village in Guntur district, he married Jayaprada, a Kamma. The couple had three daughters and a son.

In course of time, Bhavanam became a Minister for Education and finally Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Traveling together often, we discussed many things. All the speeches I wrote for him when he was the Education Minister which turned out to be great hits.

As he had no group of his own within the party when he took over as Chief Minister in 1982, he became a pawn in the Congress chessboard. Dr.Y.S. Rajasekara Reddy (Dr. Y.S.R.), who had good rapport with Bhavanam, asked him to reward me with a position. When Bhavanam broached the subject, I told him I was not interested in any. Bhavanam was, of course, surprised.

Dr. Y.S.R. wanted Bhavanam to elevate N. Chandra Babu Naidu, a Minister of State in his Cabinet, to Cabinet rank. In fact, Dr. Y.S.R. wanted me too to put in a word on behalf of Chandrababu Naidu. Bhavanam could not oblige Dr. YSR as real power vested in the Congress High Command. I accompanied Bhavanam to Delhi many times at his request.



During my Delhi visits, I used to meet N. Bhaskara Rao, who then ran a media centre, and K. Seshadri of Jawaharlal Nehru University. I also attended the wedding of Manik, V. M. Tarkunde's daughter, at India International Centre in Lodi Colony in 1982. Tarkunde was very happy to see me — the only person from Andhra Pradesh to attend the wedding.

Bhavanam lasted as Chief Minister hardly for seven months. IAS officers Kasi Pandian and Robello assisted Bhavanam during his tenure. The credit for initiating establishment of an Open University goes to Bhavanam. It started functioning after he stepped down as Chief Minister.

Once, Bhavanam was invited to address a gathering of scientists. When he hesitated, I drafted a speech and suggested that he deliver it. Pleasantly surprised over the content of his speech, scientists congratulated Bhavanam profusely. He thanked me for going to his rescue.

Shortly before he stepped down as Chief Minister, Bhavanam allocated a medical admission to our daughter Naveena in the Bangalore Medical College. It was one of the 12 reciprocal seats Andhra Pradesh enjoyed in other States. Bhavanam, however, stepped down as Chief Minister soon after. Incoming Chief Minister Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy had to endorse Bhavanam's decision.

Bhavanam and I attended Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy's swearing in ceremony. Bhavanam wanted me to approach Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy, who was seated opposite me, then and there and request him to clear the file. When I made the request, Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy asked why I was interested in the file. When I told him the file related to my daughter's medical admission, he approved Bhavana's decision.

Some people filed a case in the High Court questioning the allocation of admission to Naveena. B.

N. Raman, then Chief Secretary, issued the G. O. allotting the seat promptly and enabled Naveena to report immediately at the Bangalore College. When our lawyer N. K. Acharya reported the development, the High Court dismissed the petition as time-barred.

Bhavanam was happy to learn about the outcome of the case. My friendship with Bhavanam continued till his death. My occasional incisive remarks against him did not come in the way of our friendship. I happened to be in the U. S. when he passed away.

Right from childhood, Naveena set her eyes on doing medicine and leaving for the U. S. as a doctor. She realized her dream, thanks to Bhavanam.

Naveena suffered an attack of appendicitis shortly before she was to appear for the State medical entrance examination. Unmindful of pain, she wanted to give the exam. We made her skip the exam and undergo appendectomy, much to her disappointment. She came out of gloom only when Bhavanam allocated her admission into medical college.

Bhavanam had to face trouble at home for allocating the admission to Naveena overruling his wife Jayaprada's recommendation in favor of some other candidate. By sticking to his decision, Bhavanam demonstrated that he placed friendship above family.

In that manner, Bhavanam played a key role in our family. Bhavanam admired Shah, as I had introduced him. Bhavanam introduced his younger son-in-law Dr. Gurava Reddy to me. Gurava Reddy wife Durga Bhavani and my daughter Naveena were childhood playmates at the MLA Quarters.

## 24. A friend in deed

I saw Alapati Ravindranath for the first time in 1955 at Jyoti Press in Tenali. I vividly read his magazines '*Jyoti*' and '*Rerani*', and he was a good friend of my brother Vijayaraj Kumar. Yet, I did not have the opportunity of getting acquainted with him.

Ravindranath had imposing attractive personality.

My acquaintance with Ravindranath began in 1968, long after he migrated to Hyderabad and opened Jyoti Press. He told me during the first meeting that he was aware of my being Vijayaraja Kumar's brother. Yet, he added, we had not met for unknown reasons.

Ravindranath resumed playing tennis at Fateh Maidan on his arrival in Hyderabad.

Few would believe if I assert that we met almost daily after getting to know each other. He used to pick me up in his car from the New MLA Quarters. Occasionally, Dontineni Seshagiri Rao joined us. The three of us visited Kosaraju Sambasiva Rao in his bungalow at Kalabagh in Old city. He lived alone and had a cook. As he dwelt on M. N. Roy in picturesque terms, we could visualize the founder of Radical Humanist movement.

Lok Satta founder, Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan's father-in-law, Paparao was another friend of ours. He was an M. N. Roy fan. He earned name and fame by evolving a high-yielding cotton variety at his large farm at Sindhanur near Bangalore. We stayed at the farm once in a while and shared our experiences.

We had the pleasure of talking to Governor Sukhadia, a friend of Paparao, on his visit to the Sindhanur farm. Belonging to Rajasthan, he came to Karnataka as Governor. We traveled by car to Sindhanur and stayed overnight at Bangalore. Paparao shared his experiences and relations with M. N. Roy's

followers. He contested for the Lok Sabha from Bangalore on the Janata Party ticket.

With Ravindranath's assistance, I became a member of the Fateh Maidan and Secunderabad Clubs. Membership in the Secunderabad Club was said to be prestigious. The *'Deccan Chronicle proprietor*, Chandrasekhara Reddy was then president of the club. The club had a good library and was a good meeting place for whiling away time. Komala, Naveena and I attended Chitti Babu's veena concert at the club. Since the Fateh Maidan Club was very near our residence, we went there almost every evening. Raju and Naveena browsed children's books from the library and watched movies.

Among those who joined me at the club were Ravindranath, Seshagiri Rao, S. V. Pantulu, and our landlord Kalva Chandaiah.

Ravindranath and I visited Madras frequently. Staying at Cosmopolitan Club on Mount Road, we called on people like D. Anjaneyulu and Palagummi Padmaraju.

I met Ravindranath at his residence in Gandhinagar in Hyderabad in the evenings. I introduced to him prominent Humanists Sibnarayan Ray (Calcutta), V. M. Tarkunde (Delhi) A. B. Shah (Poona), professor G. Ram Reddy, S. Yadagiri Reddy, and K. Seshadri, all from Osmania University.

C. Narayana Reddy spent some interesting time with us occasionally.

Famous artiste Suryadevara Sanjeev Dev was one of the guests at our home one evening. Although, he was not given to drinking, he sipped a couple of whiskies served by me.

Boodaraju Radhakrishna and Talluri Nageswara Rao dropped in once in a while.

Ravindranath had a large book collection, including *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. He was a subscriber to the *Time* magazine. They provided us good topics for discussion.

IAS official M. R. Pai joined us at the club.

Ravindranath and I called on Justice Gangadhara Rao and Justice Chinnapa Reddy at their residences. Always on the lookout for good books, we bought them from pavement vendors after haggling.

We watched non-English movies at Max Mueller Bhavan, Alliance France, and Saradhi Studios.

Since Ravindranath did not have the patience to sit through an entire movie, we came out midway. He acquired the 12 volumes of Will Durant's '*The Story of Civilization*' from the U. S. at a bargain price. Interested in Buddhism, he acquired a number of books. Literature, arts, and humanism were the staples of our discussions.

Ravindranath introduced Sarojini, a stage artiste and Kopparapu Subba Rao's wife, to me at his press. Ravindranath reprinted Kopparapu's '*Inapa Kachchadalu*'. The playwright clearly delineated in the margins how it should be staged. I interviewed Sarojini recording her experiences many times.

Tanguturi Suryakumari came from London to get a book of hers printed at Kala Jyoti Press with Ravindranath's assistance. She recognized me as the brother of Vijayaraja Kumar and inquired after his welfare. Settled in London, she gave stage performances all over the world.

My friendship with Ravindranath was thus full of rich experiences. We became good family friends.

Ravindranath's sons, Bapanna and Devendranath, gradually took over management of Kala Jyoti Press and relieved him from the day to day responsibilities.

Ravindranath hit upon the idea of starting a magazine as a means to import foreign paper on a large scale. He launched *Misimi*, a fortnightly. Right from the word get go, Ravindranath and I consulted each other and collected articles for the magazine. The maiden issue carried a lengthy article of mine under the title, 'What would have happened, had Subhash Chandra Bose won?'

Ravindranath wanted to stop its publication after some time. But his children dissuaded him by pointing out that it would keep him engaged. In addition printing, cost them nothing since the family owned the press. Eventually Ravindranath converted it into a serious monthly magazine and reflected his entire personality in it.

*Misimi* stands for pure, 24-carat gold. He named a granddaughter of his after *Misimi* and another after his press, Kala Jyoti.

Ravindranath and I were in constant touch with each other from the day he launched *Misimi* until he passed away. I wrote many articles dealing with science, philosophy etc. He bought books like *Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth and got them reviewed by Komala.

Ravindranath went through every article received for publication and asked the author to rewrite it, if necessary. He did not mind incurring the wrath of Vasireddi Sita Devi by rejecting an article of hers. He persuaded Sanjeev Dev to contribute articles. As a matter of policy, he decided against carrying short stories and poems. He focused on arts, science, culture, and modern subjects.

We chanced to look up Paul Johnson's *'Intellectuals'* one day. Impressed by its content, I suggested that Venkateswara Reddy of Tenali be requested to do a few articles summarizing the book.

Venkateswara Reddy had just embraced Buddhism after bidding good bye to Aurobindo's philosophy. When we sent him the book, he wrote a series of articles under the title '*Medhavula Metakalu*' (Intellectuals' Vulnerabilities).

Later on, Venkateswara Reddy published the articles in the form a book after Ravindranath's death. He did not acknowledge that it was a summary of Paul Johnson's book. He omitted some chapters in the English version from the Telugu translation. When I objected, he acknowledged the source in small print in an obscure corner of the book. Palagarism takes infinite forms, after all.

Ravindranath and I always discussed new features for *Misimi*. We approached Puranam Subrahmanya Sarma in Ashok Nagar and asked him to do a series in which Madhuravani interviews different poets and writers. Once he accepted the assignment, we told him that he should not land us in trouble by writing about living authors.

Yet, when some living writers figured in a few pieces, Ravindranath edited them out ruthlessly. He deleted brusque comments against KLN Prasad in a piece on Narla as also references to me at a couple of places. The feature, Madhuravani interviews, turned out to be a great hit. *Misimi* earned recognition and applause from media circles ranging from *The Hindu* to *Eenadu*.

Ravindranath's death left a deep void in me. To keep his memory alive, his sons asked Venkateswara Reddy to run '*Misimi*'. Steeping into shoes, too big for

him, he struggled to run it. Later, Ravindranath's sons constituted an editorial board under the leadership of Anjaneya Reddy and continued the magazine. In both content and style, *Misimi* could not regain the glory it enjoyed under Ravindranath's leadership. Poems and short stories, which Ravindranath avoided, surfaced in the magazine.

Ravindranath visited the US only once for a brief period, spending some time with his daughter Durga and son-in-law Nannapaneni Choudary and visiting a few places.



## 25. Facing hardships

I lived in Adarsh Nagar adjacent to new M.L.A. quarters. Our house owner Kalva Chandaiah was very friendly and affectionate person. Their children played with our children. We live there for almost a decade. It is a convenient place to reach secretariat, Legislative Assembly and Educational institutions. Mr.late P.V. Narasimha Rao (Prime Minister of India) Mr. M. Baga Reddy, Mrs. Neelakanteswaramma, Mr. Sasanka (Subba Rao). Ms. Seetha and Anasuaya lived there with whom we developed friendship. My daughter Naveena learnt pastoral songs from Seetha, Anasuya.

Once I moved there, I could acquire a black and white TV for the first time in my life. Children enjoyed watching cricket and other programs.

P. V. Rajagopal (Nizam College Principal), Gelli Narayana (father of Ramesh Gelli), and Devulapalli Krishna Sastry lived there with whom I developed good friendship.

Friends like Bobba Ranga Rao and I took delight in sitting on the terrace of our home and chatting. The astronomical observatory atop Naubat Pahad was a knowledge disseminating, center of attraction.

I attended meetings and press conferences and visited places like the Secretariat, the Assembly and All India Radio by foot. No wonder, people nicknamed me as a walking journalist.

After resigning from *Andhra Jyoti*, I worked for some time in Konda Lakshma Reddy's *National News Service*, Adiraju Venkateswara Rao's *Samachara Bharati* and V. Hanumantha Rao's *Data News Features*. None of them paid salaries to journalists.

Becoming a freelance journalist, I contributed articles to *Eenadu* and *Udayam* and a number of

monthlies, besides assisting members of the Legislature.

I regained health thanks to our family doctor Tangirala Subhash Babu, who practiced evidence-based medicine. I had been a victim of breathlessness earlier.

Simultaneously I continued writing books and undertaking translations. Osmania University prescribed my '*Andhra Pradesh Politics*' as a textbook for B. A. students. The book Mamidipudi Venkata Rangayya and I authored on the freedom struggle in Andhra was chosen as a reference book for Public Service Commission examinations. Although it sold well, I did not get any money as I had not copyrighted it.

The Telugu Academy published my Telugu translations of books by M. N. Roy, V. B. Karnik and A. B. Shah. It organized large meetings in Hyderabad and Vijayawada for their release.

At the Hyderabad function, C. Narayana Reddy spoke for an hour on the two sides of M. N. Roy's revolution. Journalist V. Satish remarked that the talk was intoxicating as though we had four pegs of Scotch whisky. Navaneetha Rao, Vice Chancellor of Osmania University presided over the function.

We converted the Telugu Academy meeting at Vijayawada into M. N. Roy's birth centenary celebration. Ravipudi Venkatadri, Daggupati Venkateswara Rao, Indra Reddy (both Ministers), and C. Lakshmananna (M. P.) spoke. Academy Director Venka Reddy was gracious enough to extend his cooperation.

Our home in Adarsh Nagar became a beehive of activity. C. Narasimha Rao, who was running a psychology magazine from Vijayawada, started a monthly called *Nutana Prapancham*. I contributed two articles for the monthly. But the magazine did not last long. I wrote a series of articles for *Prajatantra*, edited by Devipriya.

Among those who frequented my home were Chalasani Prasada Rao, Parvataneni Koteswara Rao, Koneru Janardhana Rao, Bandaru Ratnasabhupati, K. K. Satyanarayana, Govindu Choudary (Doordarshan), S. V. Pantulu, C. Narasimha Rao, Aswani Kumar, Narla Vinaya Kumar, Siva Nageswara Rao Guttikonda, Guduru Venkataratnam, D. Seshagiri Rao, Alapati Ravindranath, G. Ram Reddy, V. R. Narla, and M. V. Rama Murthy.

Venigalla Venkataratnam and I conducted monthly get-togethers at our home for some time. Although the attendance was small, they went off well. People like V. R. Narla and Sanjeev Dev addressed the meetings in which people like Prof. Alam Khundmiri and C. Lakshmanan took part.

Those days, some boys and girls from Iran studying at Anwarul-Uloom College came to attend classes in English offered by Komala. A girl called Farida lived in our home. They invited us for get-togethers and dinners. Thanks to them, we became acquainted with Iranian culture. They lost their freedoms with the advent of Ayatollah Khomeini in their country. Once they returned to Iran, they were forced to cover their bodies and faces with *burqas* and masks.

Friends of Naveena and Raju mingled with us as family members.

## 26. Encounter with academic cheats

By the time, I came into contact with Ram Reddy, he had been living with his second wife, who ran a school. As we grew closer, we became family friends and visited each other frequently. For some time he was shifted to Warangal. He, however, managed to return to Hyderabad soon. His keen interest in the panchayat raj system brought him close to Chief Minister J. Vengala Rao. Prof.K. Seshadri made panchayat raj literature available to Ram Reddy.

G. Ram Reddy had been a good friend of mine from Osmania University since 1964. He taught Public Administration initially and Political Science later on. He attended a number of meetings organized by me. Although he lacked depth in certain matters,

he had the gift of the gab. He often spoke disparagingly of V. Madhusudana Reddy, my Ph. D. guide, and his family.

Ram Reddy rose to occupy the posts of head of the Department of Political Science, Principal of Osmania Arts College and finally Vice Chancellor of Osmania University. He always had a group of his own. Left wing extremist G. Haragopal too drafted speeches and articles for Ram Reddy.

I introduced Alapati Ravindranath, A. B. Shah, Polu Satyanarayana, and K. Satyanarayana to Ram Reddy. Occasionally, we enjoyed drinks at Fateh Maidan Club.

Ram Reddy took part in almost all meetings I conducted. He was a secularist, although not a rationalist. He deserted B. A. V. Sarma after exploiting him for some time. Because of family reasons, he was not on talking terms with C. Narayana Reddy until the latter became the Vice Chancellor.

I too contributed my might in ensuring that Ram Reddy became Vice Chancellor of Open University. When at the last minute O. S. Reddy emerged as a competitor to Ram Reddy, I dissuaded him. As a close friend of Bhavanam Venkatram and Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, I ensured that they tilted the scales in favor of Ram Reddy. Ram Reddy was extremely grateful to me for my gesture. At my request, he gave a job to the daughter of Book Links, K. B. Satyanarayana. He surprised Satyanarayana by personally handing over the appointment order to him at my home. A grateful Satyanarayana published and sold many of Ram Reddy's books.

When I wrote the book, *Andhra Pradesh Political History*, for the Telugu Academy, Ram Reddy formally agreed to be its editor. He received some money for that.

Bhavanam Venkatram wanted to establish an open university at Nagarjunasagar to give a fillip to rural youth. Ram Reddy chose to set up the university in Hyderabad after Bhavanam lost power.

He recruited loyal staff. Later on, he moved to Delhi as Vice Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University. Prof. C. Lakshmananna, then a Rajya Sabha member, helped Ram Reddy land the job. I met him occasionally in Delhi. In an anonymous letter, someone warned him that he had better heed Innaiah and failure to do so would be disastrous for him. C. Narayana Reddy too received a similar letter. Despite my assertion that the letter was bogus, Ram Reddy took it to his heart and stopped talking to me.

Meanwhile, our son Raju had passed in the first class the Rural Management Course conducted at Anand in Gujarat. Ram Reddy had been invited to be the chief guest at the convocation ceremony for the distribution of certificates. Raju decided against accepting the

certificate from Ram Reddy, who had been unfair to me. He received it from another chief guest.

My wife Komala was then working in the English Department of Open University. Ram Reddy's acolytes discriminated against her as they could not vent their ire against me. Komala was unfazed. Vice Chancellor R. V. R. Chandrasekhara Rao confessed to Komala that he was helpless and incompetent in rendering her justice. Komala ignored him.

I was then President and Prof. Kothapalli Wilson Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh branch of the Social Sciences Academy. As part of our regular programs, we conducted a seminar on Andhra Pradesh Open University at the Indian Council of Social Sciences' Research hall at Osmania University. There was a good discussion on the papers presented by Dr. Pushpa Ramakrishna and T. V. Subbarao from Open University and me. In my paper, I pointed out that Open University strayed from the purpose for which it was established and that it was no different from traditional universities. Its examination system too did not differ from theirs. I underlined that the university lacked academic rigor since Ram Reddy packed the faculty with sycophants and yes men. Ram Reddy made students go around the university in Hyderabad instead of taking the university to rural areas. Ram Reddy was to be blamed solely for the way he laid the foundation for the university. Satyanarayana from the Political Science Department of Osmania University faulted me for my incisive observations.

Dr. Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad opined that my criticism was well founded. Although a number of people from Open University took part in the seminar, none objected to my comments or debated them.

They, however, carried the tale to Ram Reddy instantaneously. Deeply upset over the criticism, he kept his telephone line busy calling up all his

sycophants, job beneficiaries, and well wishers. They lost no time in doing a piece abusing me, getting it photocopied and distributing it widely. They dared not get their critical piece published in newspapers. None of them rebutted the points I made in the working paper.

Indra Reddy, a student of mine, was then in the cabinet. He visited Vijayawada to release my translation of M. N. Roy's work, published by the Telugu Academy. Ram Reddy called him up from Delhi and spoke for 40 minutes about me. Said Indra Reddy, "I do not know how you tortured Ram Reddy but he poured out his anguish to me."

Osmania University Vice Chancellor Navaneeth Rao took part in meetings organized by me. He presided over the M. N. Roy birth centenary lecture by Agehananda I organized at Osmania University. He delivered a talk at the Press Club on my books published by the Telugu Academy.

Open University staff then started publicizing their loyalty to Ram Reddy by going around in an Open University van and carrying tales against me. Among them were Registrar Nagaraju, Prof. Sivalinga Prasad, Kethu Viswanatha Reddy, Visweswara Reddy (Public Relations Officer), Sesha Ratnam (Chemistry lecturer) and her husband Polu Satyanarayana. There were also Ravindra Prasad and K. Madhusudhana Reddy from Osmania University. Left wing extremist Haragopal supported them. C. Narayana Reddy and Navaneeth Rao helped them meet some prominent people.

Meanwhile, Open University PRO Visweswara Reddy telephoned to me to say that he had to join the calumny campaign against me for reasons beyond his control, although I was responsible for his landing a job. He apologized to me.

Earlier, the gang called on my friend and colleague K. Wilson and asked him to affix his signature

on a statement criticizing me. He declined with a smile. They complained to S. P. Choubey, Secretary, Indian Academy of Social Sciences in Allahabad. He ignored them.

I was then working with V. Satish in Data News Features run by V. Hanumantha Rao. Hanumantha Rao turned down their request that he sack me.

Then the gang approached the Chief Minister N. T. Rama Rao with C. Narayana Reddy's assistance. After hearing what all the gang had to say, NTR reportedly remarked much to their consternation, "What have we got to do with all this? We don't bother."

Avula Sambasiva Rao and Pingali Jaganmohan Reddy turned a deaf ear to their pleas. They appealed to *Eenadu* and *Andhra Jyoti* not to publish my writings.

They halted the campaign of abuse after a month realizing its futility,

They say that a man who confines himself to home will come to naught. In this case, they came to naught by hitting the road.

About a month later, Prof. Kuppaswamy confessed to Komala that the detractors had realized how foolish they were and how wise I was.

Gradually, colleagues began talking to Komala. Personal friends Polu Satyanarayana and his wife Sesharatnam dropped in at my residence feigning ignorance of all that had happened. I did not continue my friendship with them after the incident.

They requested my dear friend K. B. Satyanarayana to stop selling my publications and remove them from his bookshop. He sent them back reproaching them.

That was how Open University head Ram Reddy orchestrated the whole thing.



After Ram Reddy passed away, C. Narayana Reddy and Navaneeth Rao mustered the courage to talk to me.

My wife Komala remained totally unfazed in the face of the Open University's narrow-minded behavior. In course of time, one after the other they felt ashamed of their bid to malign me. That was how some people were mired in academic slavery.

Finally, Dr. N. Yadagiri Reddy, a friend of mine, confessed that he felt embarrassed over the treatment meted out to me since Ram Reddy happened to be his relative, and I dear friend of his.

Much later, Malladi Rama Murthy disclosed that an Open University batch campaigning against me beat a hasty retreat from his house when he unleashed a fusillade of questions.

## 27. At last owned a house

A little earlier, I had spurned a lucrative and prestigious job offer from the American Consulate in Madras. K. V. Subbaiah, a friend of mine working at the consulate, brought the job offer letter. It was a media job with a decent salary. He wanted me to take up the job by a particular day. I, however, did not grab the offer, much to the amazement of consulate officials.

None had ever rejected a consulate job, according to them. I turned down the offer because as a consulate employee I was not supposed to write to any newspaper or publish any book. When I had to make a choice between a rare opportunity and personal freedom, I opted for the latter.

After moving into my own house in Journalist colony - A (1986) at the request of Konda Lakshma Reddy, a friend of mine, I agreed to be the President of the Journalist Colony Welfare Association. As President, I visited every house in the colony every morning, inquired about the residents' problems, and tried to solve them. We planted saplings and saw them grow into shade-giving trees.

My children never had the opportunity of living with us at the Journalist Colony. They were merely birds of passage. Our daughter Naveena studied at Bangalore Medical College, married Hemant, a friend of hers at Nizam College, Hyderabad, and left for the U. S. Our son Raju did a course in rural management at Anand in Gujarat and a Journalism course at the *Times of India*, worked for *Economic Times* in Delhi for a while, and left for the U. S.

I immersed myself in taking part or organizing secular, rationalist and Humanist programs. I formed a federation of different organizations in the State for conducting programs from a common platform. M. Basavapunna Rao of Tenali helped me a lot in the

mission. We conducted programs of Jana Vignana Vedika, Atheist, Radical Humanist and Rationalist Associations jointly. We took part in television programs.

We carried on a vigorous campaign against alternative medicines, Homeopathy, astrology, *vaastu*, and fake god men and women by conducting media conferences and public meetings. With support of Chandana Chakravarthy, I invited leaders like Premanand and Dr. P. M. Bhargava to address our meetings. We organized meetings and debates at Mandapeta, Rajahmundry, Kakinada, Tanuku, Eluru, Vijayawada, Tenali, Chirala, Inkollu and Guntur.

Yet, a growing number of the educated people turned antediluvian in their outlook and behavior. They seemed to revel in mental slavery, outside their spheres of activity.

Jubilee Hills underwent gradual transformation with improvement in transport facilities. People like Alapati Ravindranath, Editor of '*Misimi*', Puranam Subrahmanya Sarma, and Dr. K. Ravindranath, promoter of Global Hospitals, became our neighbors. Open University and Apollo Hospitals came up very near our home. Finally, *Andhra Jyothi* sprang up at the end of our street. Jubilee Hills thus became a center of activity.

I worked in various capacities in Radical Humanist, rationalist, secularist, and skeptic movements in Andhra Pradesh and India by maintaining good relations with the leaders and the workers. I wrote extensively for English and Telugu newspapers, undertook translations, and took part in radio and television debates. I participated in study classes, seminars and meetings in various States.

Driven by the desire to excel, I engaged myself in continuous research. I kept myself in touch with

national and international Humanist leaders through correspondence.

I was 55 when I planned my maiden trip to the U. S.

Among Humanist, rationalist and secular leaders with whom I worked closely were V. M. Tarkunde, Sibnarayan Ray, A. B. Shah, Justice Raghavendra Jahagirdar, Indumathi Parekh, C. R. M. Rao, Premnath Bajaj, Ram Singh, Sunil Bhattacharya, V. K. Sinha, Jayanthi Patel, Gowri Malik, Abraham Solomon, G. R. Dalvi, V. B. Karnik, J. B. H. Wadia, Lakshman Sastri Joshi, R.S.Yadav, Malladi Rama Murthy, Avula Gopala Krishna Murthy, Guthikonda Narahari, C. H. Raja Reddy, Kolli Sivarama Reddy, Malladi Subbamma, Premanand, Abraham Kovoor, H. Narasimhayya, Nanavathi Prabhakar, Maniben Kara, Avula Sambasiva Rao, Palagummi Padma Raju, Abburi Ramakrishna Rao, S. Ramanathan, Sanal K. Edamaruku, A. S. Avadhani, Koganti Subrahmanyam, Ravipudi Venkatadri, N. V. Brahman, Rekha Saraswath, B. D. Varma, Mohanlal Kiran, Nanavathi, Bipin Shraf, A. L. Narasimha Rao, N. K. Acharya, Gora, Lavanam, Vijayam, Vikas, Bhattiprolu Hanumantha Rao, Jasti Jagannadham, Siddhartha Baksh, Kalluri Basaveswara Rao, Koganti Radha Krishna Murthy, Alapati Ravindranath, Gumma Veeranna, Ancha Bapa Rao, Gorantla Raghavaiah, M. V. Sastry, Pemmaraju Venkata Rao, Jampala Shyam Sundara Rao, C. T. Daru, Manoj Dutt, Subhankar, Ajit Bhattacharya, Susheel Mukherjee, Samaren Roy, G.V.Krishna Rao, and Yelavarthi Rosaiah.

## 28. Unscientific alternatives

I had bitter experience with Homeopathy doctors and practitioners. My father and brother both suffered with the Homeopathy treatment. I met numerous homeo doctors and discussed with them about the system.

Poisonous weed planted by Samuel Hahnemann in Germany, flourished mysteriously in France and proliferated like parthenium in India and the US. Faith in the system borders on religious fundamentalism.

Homeopathy is a system of fake medicine that has failed to withstand scientific scrutiny all over the world. Yet, like astrology and *vaastu*, it has struck deep roots.

Blind believers in the system would not concede its failure whatever scientific evidence you deduce. They, of course, enjoy the support and patronage of homeopathic practitioners and drug sellers. For the last half a century, I have discussed homeopathy with a number of doctors in Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Guntur, Sangareddy, Delhi, Brussels, and in the U. S.

Backed by experts, I have challenged believers to prove that homeopathy is scientific.

James Randi of the U. S. deposited One Million Dollars in a bank and challenged believers in homeopathy to prove it is scientific before a committee and claim the amount. James Randi gave me the details when I met him in the U. S.

I had an occasion to address the Brussels' Open University on homeopathy in 2004. By then rationalists in that country had exposed it as dubious.

In Hyderabad, Dr. P. M. Bhargava fought against homeopathy and I stood by him. I wrote on homeopathy in Basava Premanand's *Skeptic* magazine. Premanand himself questioned the claims of

homeopathy. I wrote articles in *Radical Humanist* and a number of Telugu magazines. My book *Abadhala Veta – Nijala Bata* carries a detailed discussion on homeopathy.

Among Telugu dailies, *Eenadu* popularized homeopathy by carrying a series of articles by its practitioner Pavuluri Krishnayya Choudary. Far from carrying a rebuttal of mine, *Eenadu* returned it. I have preserved it since 1985.

When humanist friend Siddharth Baksh organized a public debate on homeopathy at Rajahmundry, I vehemently criticized the system while Pavuluri Krishnayya Choudary and N. V. Brahman stoutly defended it. Physics professor Yerneni Venkateswara Rao of Gudivada, who presided, emphasized that practitioners were yet to that prove homeopathy is scientific. I carried on the debate in small magazines like '*Hetuvadi*', '*Swetchalochana*' and '*Telugu Vidyarthi*' by contributing articles.

There are a few homeopathy practitioners even among humanists, atheists and rationalists. Even though having failed to prove that the system is scientific, they adamantly argue in its favor.

Humanist leader V. M. Tarkunde, who underwent homeopathic therapy for some ailment, argued with me over its efficacy. He too could not demonstrate it to be scientific. That homeopathy doctors and their families embrace allopathy when they fall ill is another matter.

Homeopathy spreads mostly by word of mouth with some patients/practitioners making tall claims about its efficacy by citing certain instances. They feign innocence about people who suffered or met with a fatal end after consuming homeopathic drugs. On top of it, they carry on a malicious campaign against the ills of the modern, allopathic system of medicine.

Allopathy has a self-correcting mechanism, in that research is continuous. But in homeopathy Hahnemann's tenets continue to be gospel truths. They

are immutable. Humanists in Europe and India have repeatedly demonstrated that homeopathic pills, however potent, are no medicine at all by gulping a fistful of them as people watched.

By influencing those in power clandestinely, homeopathic practitioners both in India and the U. S. have ensured that they are above medical laws. I have exposed their gimmicks in newspapers and TV talk shows.

Some people maintain that homeopathy is efficacious in certain diseases. They are evasive if you ask them to name the ailments. "Does it not imply that homeopathy does not work in some other diseases?"

They turn indignant if you shoot the question that flows from their very answer. Had not Hahnemann described homeopathy as a panacea?

Homeopathy is rooted in untruths that straddle from its basic principles to the way it is practiced. Yet, it reigns supreme like the spell cast by the so-called god men and god women. It is not for nothing that British physicians call it witchcraft.

If you ask me to cite one touchstone for our unscientific attitude, I affirm it is homeopathy.

## 29. Playing with blind believers

"Is Vivekananda whom we know different?" that was the title of my article published in *Udayam* daily. The Telugu daily managed by movie producer Dasari Narayana Rao in 1985 with A. B. K. Prasad as editor. In an accompanying note, the editor put a note to readers were welcoming response to the article.

The article triggered a hue and cry and protest demonstrations. When Hindu Bajarang Dal in RSS fundamentalists armed with batons landed at *Udayam*, Dasari Narayana Rao did not blink. He told them point blank he was ready to carry any rebuttal but if they chose to vandalize the office, he would not keep mum. None came forward to answer me. Meanwhile, A. B. K. Prasad succumbed to pressures and published a nonsensical editorial in which he likened Vivekananda to a sun, which nobody could eclipse by stretching one's palm. Protest demonstrations were staged in Kadapa, Gudivada, and Vijayawada.

What had the article to say?

"Vivekananda was a courageous Swami who confronted his critics. He was brave enough to condemn astrology. Humanists ranging from M. N. Roy to Niranjana Dhar studied Vivekananda in depth before publishing their findings. Humanists do not make baseless allegations. Niranjana Dhar in his book *Vedanta – Bengal Renaissance* exposed how Vivekananda stood by Raja Ramanad, Khetri zamindars and supported their cruel repression. Aghananda Bharati pointed out that Vivekananda wrote books on Yoga depicting it as a home remedy and made money by selling them. Niranjana Dhar disclosed Vivekananda's luxurious lifestyle in the U. S. by pointing out that zamindars had financed his visit. My article is only a summary of their findings."



Although the article did not carry any untruths, blind believers in Vivekananda could not stomach facts.

I wrote articles on Vivekananda in many magazines including *Telugu Vidyarthi*. Vivekananda's sycophants do not take cognizance of his condemnation of astrology or adhere to his maxim that serving the poor is preferable to singing hymns to god.

M. N. Roy had incisively studied both Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda in 1936 itself. I wrote about Vivekananda from a Humanist perspective without concealing unpalatable facts.

### **Article on Mother Teresa**

As bureau chief of *Andhra Jyothi* in Hyderabad, I had occasion to interview Mother Teresa in 1975. She had come to Hyderabad to take part in a program at the Public Gardens. To every question I posed, her monosyllabic reply was god's grace. I was deeply disappointed. She was just a school graduate.

Most people identify Mother Teresa with the poor by referring to the orphanages and shelter homes she had maintained.

In contrast, Humanists in America and Europe researched her activities impartially and exposed her with evidence.

As I went through their findings, I came across many startling facts. Based on my studies, I contributed articles in Telugu and English to newspapers. Large publications ignored my criticism. K. Ramachandra Murthy, then editor of *Andhra Jyothi*, dared not publish my article although, he conceded, it was evidence-based. I incorporated their findings in my books.

Christopher Hitchens carried out a detailed study of Mother Teresa's activities in various countries and brought to light many shocking facts. Even the Pope invited him to hear him. None could rebut Christopher

as he produced incontrovertible evidence. He revealed that Mother Teresa accepted money from tyrannical rulers and lottery operators.

The editor of '*Lancet*' magazine was shocked to see the conditions in the orphanages she opened in Calcutta. He recorded instances of sisters counseling the sick to pray to god for relief, instead of administering medicines. He reported that syringes were being recycled after a dip in cold water.

Mother Teresa, who collected crores of rupees in the name of poor children, diverted the money to the Pope instead of using it for their benefit. By the time she died, she had accumulated millions of rupees. Mother Teresa, who counseled the sick to pray for relief, but admitted herself into a top notch hospital when she was sick.

Aroop Chatterjee recorded with evidence all of Mother Teresa's questionable activities in Calcutta. Yet, the Marxists turned a blind eye to his book *Final Verdict – Mother Teresa* published from London. I entered into correspondence with Aroop Chatterjee.

German magazine Stern exposed how Mother Teresa diverted the funds she received for charity. An American named Keating, who became filthy rich by cheating people, made a huge donation in dollars to Mother Teresa. Finally when the law caught up with him, Mother Teresa had the temerity to ask the judge to release him. She visited Haiti at the invitation of the Catholic King and Queen, accepted felicitations and cash, and praised the royal family which was notorious for its misrule.

Christopher Hitchens exposed all such misdeeds of Mother Teresa. The Government of India conferred on her the highest honor of *Bharat Ratna*. She maintained no accounts for the funds she received and spent, let alone getting them audited. There was none to question her.

The Pope decided to canonize her as a saint after ensuring that stories of miracles performed by her surfaced after her death. Christopher Hitchens exposed the secret after talking to Mother Teresa's close aides.

I revealed all this in a TV interview to Mrs. Ellen Johnson, President of the American Atheist Association, at Staten Island, New York. Some TV channels telecast the interview in 2000. I wrote articles exposing Mother Teresa in Telugu and English newspapers, and included them in one of my books *Abhaddala Veta*. Yet, there are people who blindly believe in and deify her.

With the Pope anointing her a saint, Catholics will indulge in religious business centering round her for some time.

### **Islam**

An aphorism of Humanist Avula Gopala Krishna Murthy remains etched in my memory. He once said, "We treat all religions alike in that we reject all of them with equal vehemence."

I translated Ibn Waraq's '*Why I am not a Muslim*' into Telugu. Many hesitated to publish it. When I showed the manuscript to BJP leader M. Venkaiah Naidu during his US visit, he evinced no interest. Finally, the Rationalist Association of Chirala brought it out. Ibn Waraq was immensely pleased learning through a review that the book had been rendered into Telugu. He disclosed about the review when I met him in Buffalo. '*Misimi*' had carried my detailed review of the book. A person named Jagannadham translated the article into excellent English. A number of newspapers in India and the U. S. lapped up the review in English. I had no idea of the book review in English until I met Ibn Waraq.

Ibn Waraq portrayed in vivid detail the life of people in Muslim countries, their gender discrimination, and violation of human rights with evidence. Ibn Waraq

chose the U. S. as his home after changing his original Muslim name.

Some of my Muslim Humanist friends remained exemplary in their conduct. To name a few of the innumerable: Siddhartha Baksh (Mandapeta, East Godavari), Shiekh Babu (Inkollu), Sharif Gora, and Alam Khundmiri (Professor of Philosophy). I had occasion to interact with some Muslims frequently.

I studied Sufism under Prof. Valiuddin as part of my M. A. at Osmania University. Among those who helped me study Islam with a critical eye were Prof. Wahiduddin, Moghini Tabassum, and Anwar Mozam.

Hamid Dalwai, author of '*Muslim Politics*', tried his best to reform Muslims in Maharashtra. I translated his work and published it in *Prasarita*, a social quarterly. I organized many seminars and workshops where Hindus and Muslims discussed problems in a friendly way. But in course of time, *mullas* ignited fundamentalism among Muslims and spread hatred.

I stood by Taslima Nasreen's controversial writings. I had occasion to meet and discuss many issues with her both in India and the U. S. My wife Komala translated some of Taslima's writings including poems into Telugu. We took part in seminars together.

When we invited her for the release of a translation of her book, some Muslim rowdies behaved inhumanly. We could save her from physical assault.

Without my knowledge, Krantikar, a friend of mine in Khammam, gave my address for accessing a publication of his. The book had generated a lot of controversy and provoked some fundamentalist Muslims to lodge a police case. Since my name too figured in the complaint, the police arrested me.

The Government had not banned Krantikar's book, which merely carried what Tasleema Nasreen and others wrote on Muslims. The police acted arbitrarily,

without looking into the book's contents. Apparently, the unilateral action was politically motivated. Humanists around the world condemned Government action in one voice. Raju, my son, dedicated the award he received from *India Abroad* magazine to me, at a public function and cited my arrest to highlight the constraints on freedom of expression in India

### **God men and women**

There is no dearth of self-proclaimed saints — known as *babas* and *matas* — in India. The difference between one and the other is one of degree, since all of them have enriched themselves at the expense of the gullible public. They will continue to prosper as long as people, wanting in self-confidence, blindly believe that saints are there to bail them out of all earthly and heavenly problems.

We, on behalf of the Humanist, rationalist and secularist associations, exposed several saints and promoted the scientific method of inquiry. Shirdi Sai Baba occupies the No. 1 position among such saints.

The Telugu land, which once reverberated with Pandarinath hymns, turned its attention to a saint called Sai Baba from Maharashtra for veneration and deification. Sai used to beg for alms at a Shirdi *dargah* by preaching Sufi sermons. His antecedents are not known although there are many legends.

As Sai was illiterate, one Abdul scribbled on paper whatever Sai said. The sermons ran into 100 pages. Sai died around 1920. Abdul was joined by another beggar known as Razak. Razak lived up to the year 2000. I collected copies of the Sufi sermons reportedly preached by Sai and displayed them on TV 9 in Hyderabad.

Some Hindus cleverly spread through word of mouth that Sai was a Hindu saint blessed with miraculous powers. They formed a trust and built a Sai

temple. It soon became a money-making machine. The Sai cult spread like contagion among Telugus. Since the Endowments Department does not control Sai temples, there has been a scramble to construct Sai temples. After all, they have proved to be cash cows.

Some arrests were made following an inquiry into corruption scandals at the Shirdi Sai Trust. Yet, people could not come out of the chronic spell the Sai cult cast them.

We tried our best to dispel the myths surrounding Sai. Although some condemn Sathya Sai of Puttaparthi, they still deem Shirdi Sai as the real Sai.

### **Kalki Baba**

After conducting an incisive inquiry, I exposed Kalki Baba, who had grown enormously rich and powerful, in my TV 5 talk. Baba's disciples filed a case against me seeking Rs.50 crore as damages for defaming the Baba. They shut their mouth after N. Nagendra Babu, my advocate friend, rebutted the charge in reply to a court notice. Jana Vignana Vedika, Manava Vikasa Vedika, and Rationalist Association all carried articles critical of the Baba in various magazines including Pemanand's *Skeptic*.

Kalki Baba has the knack for attracting people in power. They naturally stand by him whenever he runs into trouble. He has gone through many vicissitudes in his baba incarnation.

### **Jillellamudi Amma**

Born as Anasuyamma, she morphed herself into an *Amma* (literally meaning mother) at a village near Bapatla in Guntur district. Some were drawn to her by her reported miracles. Among them were Potturi Venkateswara Rao and Dr. Sripada Gopalakrishna Murthy. They even published some books and articles on her in Telugu and English newspapers. I tried to

convince Potturi and Sripada that they were mistaken in their beliefs. Far from agreeing, they countered strangely that *Amma* was scientific in her approach.

I entrusted Humanist Malladi Rama Murthy, a friend of mine, with the task of probing the *Amma* phenomenon. We published his findings in *Jillellamudi Amma* on behalf of the State Book Club. The *Amma*, who carried on spiritual business, died at Osmania Hospital in 1975.

### **The *Amma* from Kerala**

Mata Amritanandamayi, hailing from Kerala, earned world-wide reputation by claiming to transmit energy with a hug.

Rolling in money collected from followers, she founded some trusts. I requested my rationalist friend Pattathanam to inquire into her activities. We carried his findings in some magazines. She has acquired a number of disciples even in the U. S. Her disciples opened a branch in Secunderabad, underlining that no spiritual business has a dearth of patrons.

Where people do not bother to doubt, inquire and ascertain, there *matas and babas* flourish. The height of absurdity lay in Abul Kalam as President of India visiting Mata Amritanandamayi.

### **Sai Baba of Puttaparti**

Omania University Sociology Professor Chintamani Lakshmana disclosed to me that Satyanarayana Raju, who later became Sai Baba, was senior to him in school at Uravakonda in Anantapur district. Even as a student, Satyanarayana Raju displayed his sleight of hand.

Going by the account of Guttikonda Nageswara Rao of Vijayawada, who studied in the Sai Ashram School, Sai Baba used to take students to Ooty and had sex with the chosen. Asked why he did not complain to

his parents, he said that he had but far from taking him seriously, they admonished him for pointing a finger at Sai Baba.

Another friend of mine, Kosaraju Seetharama Rao told me that a cancer-stricken woman went to the Sai Baba ashram seeking relief. Baba assured her that she would soon recover and asked her to return home. When she died in no time, her son took her body to the ashram seeking her revival. Ashram people sent him away by trotting out some excuse.

M. R. Pai, an IAS friend of mine was not a great believer in the baba. When his wife Tara was battling with end-stage cancer, he took her to the ashram rather reluctantly on friends' advice. She died and the baba could do nothing.

Many people, including Mary Naidu, a Member of Parliament, donated their properties to Sai Baba and suffered a lot.

A Science Professor Suri Bhagavantam, English Professor V. K. Gokak, and poet and writer K. Amarendra retreated from the ashram after a stint following deep disillusionment with the baba. They declined to record their experiences.

Sai Baba dared not set his foot on Hyderabad soil as long as N. T. Rama Rao was the Chief Minister. When some murders rocked the ashram, NTR ordered an inquiry and arrest of the culprits immediately.

With people in power prostrating before Sai Baba, even people like Premanand, Narasimhaiah, and Abraham Kovoor could do little to demolish the Baba myth. TV and in newspapers gave too much importance to Sai Baba. Sai Baba, a wrecker of scientific thinking, was a disgrace to the Indian nation. His rise as an extra constitutional authority was an affront to Indian secularism. He died in 2011.



### 30. Widening humanist horizon

I was 55 when I set foot on the American soil for the first time. Komala and I landed in Washington on a chilly day in February 1992.

We went round Washington by bus without depending on anybody for assistance. We walked to places like the White House, Capitol Hill (Congress), Library of Congress, monuments and museums. By becoming a member, I earned ready access to the Library of Congress, a treasure house of knowledge.

We had planned for a long, discovery of American tour. However, shortly before we were to begin our voyage, a stiff neck disabled Komala. As a result, I had to traverse the country all alone.

First, I went to Los Angeles where Dr. Annapurna, daughter of Janata Party leader and Kothapet MLA M. V. S. Subbaraju, and his granddaughter Vatsavai Manohari lived. Gogineni Krishna Rao from Mulpur was a relative of Komala. I stayed with them and visited beaches along the Pacific coast. Annapurna, a doctor in the Army, used to leave for her office, an hour's drive away, at 5-00 a.m. I accompanied her on her way, went round Los Angeles all through the day, and joined her in the evening to return home.

Raju's friend Rajneesh Puri and his family lived in Pasadena area of Los Angeles. He took me round Huntington Library, NASA Space Center, and Hollywood.

As Annapurna and I returning home one evening, we saw a huge, agitated crowd at one point. We somehow skirted the crowd and returned home. Tuning the TV, we learned that the crowd had gathered to protest police personnel thrashing Rodney King, an African American, for reportedly committing an offence.

Infuriated over police brutality, some African Americans staged the protest. Had we delayed a little, we would

have been caught up in the traffic snarl. The Rodney King episode, seen as an instance of racial discrimination, rocked the U. S. for many years.

G. V. Krishna Rao took me round old age homes and to Los Vegas one day. The aged, who enjoy benefits like free food and bus travel, visited Los Vegas to gamble during daytime and return home by evening.

One day Annapurna took me to the Army beach where Army personnel can hire a van with all amenities for the night. Entry into the beach, which is kept clean, is restricted to Army personnel and those known to them.

We enjoyed our visit to Disneyland and the science museum.

### **Phoenix**

After completing the West Coast visit, I left for Phoenix, the capital of Arizona State, by bus. As the bus wound its way through sand dunes and bushes in the desert, I saw hundreds of windmills set up to generate power. The climate was hot.

Dr. Meenakshi, the fourth daughter of Narla Venkateswara Rao, lives with her husband Dr. Sarad, a Maharashtrian, in Phoenix. They received me on arrival. A visit to the cactus museum there reminded me of the thorny plants on the tank bund in our village.

From Phoenix, I went to Grand Canyon by bus. The driver kept the visitors engaged by showing Native Americans' houses and explaining their way of living. We had to put on coats at Grand Canyon as the weather turned chilly.

The canyon is indeed grand and colorful. Some were adventurous enough to go down the canyon and start painting. We savored Native American food.

Meenakshi had helped me publish Narla's work, *The Truth about the Gita*, in Hyderabad. Her daughter

Mona (Monica) studied law and married a Jew. Theirs is an international family, a Narla's dream.

### **St. Louis**

From Phoenix I left for St. Louis, where my friend Dr. Kaza Rama Rao received me. There I addressed a meeting of the St. Louis Rationalist Society and replied to their numerous questions. Among the audience was 90-year-old Walter Hoops, a rationalist immigrant from Germany.

I met members of the Skeptical Association of Washington University in St. Louis and learnt of their activities. We posed for photographs.

Rama Rao took me round historical places abutting the Mississippi River. The then TANA president Narasaraju gave me good company. St. Louis is home to a few Telugu families.

### **Niagara, Buffalo, Amherst**

From St. Louis, I left for Niagara Falls. Narla's younger daughter Dr. Rama and her husband Dr. Bojedla Vijay, both medical practitioners, received me and showed me the Niagara Falls. We traveled in a boat to the point where the Niagara cascades down. We were drenched even though we thought we put on raincoats. Rama had been a close friend of our daughter Naveena.

From there I went to Amherst town on the outskirts of Buffalo and visited the U. S. Humanist Center. Its Executive Director Fred Edwards received me. He gifted me some books and magazines. We posed for photographs.

Not far from the Humanist Center was the Center for Inquiry founded by Paul Kurtz. Paul Kurtz received me and introduced his colleagues. We discussed future programs. Tim Madigan and Mat Cherry were working there. Ranjit Sandhu, an Indian descendant, was personal assistant to Paul Kurtz.

I returned to Hyderabad in July 1992.

## Washington

In the U. S. capital, Washington, I interviewed Philip J. Klass, the scientist who exposed the myth of flying saucers. Our son-in-law Hemant recorded the interview and took photographs. Philip collected evidence about the so-called flying saucers meticulously, wrote articles, and published books.

I told him that the flying saucer phenomenon had not caught Indians' fancy as yet.

A member of the Center for Inquiry, Phillip J. Klass lived alone with a dog as his companion. We discussed a number of things as we took a walk together. He died in 2005. Prometheus Books published his writings. Since he lived in the heart of Washington, I could see him with ease.

Edd Doerr, president of Religious Liberty, Former President of American Humanist Associations, was known for his sense of humor. Since he lived near my home on the outskirts of the capital, we frequently dined together. I introduced him to a Humanist Gouri Malik Bajaj from India. He took photographs. I met Ed Doerr frequently and maintained correspondence with him. He invited me to take part in a couple of meetings.

As soon as I landed in the U. S., I told Edd Doerr that I was keen on meeting Humanist science writer Isaac Asimov. He learnt from Asimov's wife that he was unwell and she would give me an appointment once he recovered. Even as I waited for a call, I heard over the radio one day in April 1992 that Asimov had died of cancer in New York.

American newspapers including *The New York Times* carried editorials on Asimov. He served as president of the U. S. Humanist Association, founded a science book club, and popularized science with extensive writing. He also wrote scientific fiction for children.

## Roy Torcaso

I met Roy Torcaso when he was the president of Maryland Humanist Association. He lived at Wheaton, not far from where I stayed. He conducted monthly meetings. He refused a job which involved the taking of oath in the name of god. He fought against oath-taking in the name of god in court and won. The U. S. lags behind many nations in questioning the existence of god. Torcaso, a veteran of World War II, remained a Humanist and atheist all through his life. He died in 2007.

The Washington Secular Humanist Association conducts regular meetings and brings out a monthly Newsletter. I addressed their meetings and wrote for their Newsletter. Kenneth Marsalek (Baltimore), one of the members, became close to our family. He organized dinner meetings to which he invited Don Evans among others. At my invitation, Kenneth addressed the Periyar Association.

Kenneth Marsalek and I attended meetings addressed by renowned astronomer and Humanist Carl Sagan. Naveena accompanied me to one meeting and took photographs.

I gifted Kenneth my autographed English books, *Forced into Faith*, *M. N. Roy*, and *Radical Humanism*.

## O' Hair on TV

Madalyn O'Hair (1919-1995) along with her son and daughter anchored the American Atheist Association's TV programs from Austin. They interviewed people like Paul Kurtz. I met Madalyn O'Hair briefly when she visited India. When I spoke to her over phone in the U. S., she invited me to visit Austin.

She spoke disapprovingly of Lavanam for reasons not known to me. She shifted from Baltimore to Austin in Texas. She fought against religious prayers in schools and ultimately won her case in the Supreme Court.

Setting their eyes on her wealth, her own colleagues took her on an excursion and brutally murdered her.

Jews who did not believe in religion conducted their meetings in Maryland in a secular manner, though they had their own arts and culture. Their headquarters is in Detroit.

Those who split away from TANA (Telugu Association of North America) formed ATA (American Telugu Association). ATA conducted its second conference at New York in 1992. I wrote a 60-page piece on Andhra Pradesh politics for their souvenir at their request. Dr. Ramakrishnaiah informed me that ATA had decided to honor me at the conference. Naveena, Hemanth, and Komala accompanied me to the conference.

Balasubrahmanyam introduced me to the gathering. I was conferred the *Siromani* title. P. Ramachandra Reddy, Industries Minister in the N. T. Rama Rao Cabinet, who was the chief guest, felicitated me on behalf of ATA. He had been a friend of mine since 1962 when I lived at Sangareddy. Aaramalla Purnachandra, a fellow Humanist and friend of mine, recorded the event. Nanduri Ramamohana Rao was among those felicitated on the occasion.

Since I had no conflict with either TANA or ATA, I took part in the conferences conducted by both of them. Again they split into two more associations.

The conferences provided a good opportunity to meet a number of Telugu friends. Among them were family members of Pamidimukkala Swarna. We had a good time.

### **Warren Ellen Smith**

Humanist Warren Ellen Smith ran a music studio and wrote humorous stories. At his invitation, we visited his home at Greenwich Village in the heart of New York.

Meeting on the terrace of his home, we shared a lot of experiences. He showed me the correspondence he had had with M. N. Roy's wife Ellen Roy. I visited him many times when he showed me round Greenwich. He talked about Isaac Asimov. Komala and Aramalla Purnachandra joined me in the meetings. Later he compiled a big volume under the title, '*Who is Who in Hell*'. I contributed an article on India for that book.

Warren offered shelter to Taslima Nasreen and created a website for her. He invited me to her meetings in New York. He showed me the apartment Monika Lewinsky bought near his home. Monica got publicity in the wake of her affair with Bill Clinton. Warren and I took part in an atheist demonstration meeting. He displayed our photographs on his website.

### **Indiana University**

Our son Raju did a course in journalism at Indiana University, Bloomington, reputed for its journalism courses since 1974. Komala and I visited the university and its township for two days. Raju burnt the midnight oil at the library. By the time I visited him and for my sake he had photocopied the writings of Thomas Szasz, a favorite author of mine. Raju stayed with a couple of friends. Indiana University recognised Raju as their special student and honoured him in 2014.

### 31. Friendship with Rationalists, Skeptics and Humanists

Komala and I visited the U. S. for the second time in 1994. It was a year of joy and happiness for us.

Our daughter Naveena gave birth to her first child Rohit on May 11, 1994. Four months later, our son Raju married Kim, an editorial colleague at the *Dayton Daily News*. Naveena orchestrated all the arrangements with great fanfare. Raju had completed a course in journalism at Indiana University and joined *Dayton Daily News*. Komala and I spent some time with Raju.

Dr. Jampala Choudary, a friend of mine, then lived in Dayton, later he moved to Chicago. He edited 'TANA Patrika' and later started 'Telugu Nadi' magazine.

We visited several places in Ohio travelling by bus, a convenient mode of transport for going round the city. Three rivers flow through the city, and one is called the Mad river.

Subsequently, we accompanied Raju to Pittsburgh where he joined as a reporter for '*Wall Street Journal*' and lived in a house near Pittsburgh University. We visited a Pittsburg a number of times.

I met eminent philosophy professor and rationalist Adolf Grunbaum at the university. He gifted me some of his writings. He was a regular contributor to '*Free Inquiry*'.

The university designed its classrooms to reflect the cultures of different countries. At that point of time, there was no room mirroring Indian culture. As per university norms, the concerned country had to bear the expenditure. Indian Association leaders said they were collecting money for an Indian classroom.

We visited the nearby Carnegie Mellon University. Pittsburgh boasts of good hospitals and local bus services.



I took part in meetings and continued to write articles for Washline.

I attended meetings of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, secular schools of the American Ethical Society, and Humanist room at the United Nations. I took part in New York Humanist Association meetings along with Aaramalla Purnachandra, and addressed them.

*Udayam* Editor K. Ramachandra Murthy authorized me to report for his daily as an international correspondent. I obtained a journalist pass from the Indian Embassy in Washington. *Udayam* carried my articles on various institutions. I joined the Press Club in Washington, where Raja Mohan, son of my friend Ch. Raja Reddy, was *The Hindu* correspondent. We met frequently. I visited the Senate and the House of Representatives. Later we returned to India.

With Komala retiring from Open University in 1995, we decided to bring up our grandson Rohit in the U. S. Taking part in a number of programs in the U. S. I sent news about the Humanist movement to India.

For the sake of my grandson Rohit, I learned to drive in my 58th year and obtained a driving license. I took our grandson to school, library and other places.

We stayed in the U. S. for five years. Komala and I received green cards and social security numbers on a petition filed by our son Raju.

For five years from 1996, I immersed myself in Humanist programs in the U. S. and reported them to various Indian magazines.

After getting acquainted with Ibn Warraq, I introduced him to Komala and Naveena. He addressed a meeting at George Washington University, Washington. We chatted a lot over dinners and met frequently at the Center for Inquiry. I translated his work, *Why I am not a Muslim*, into Telugu and published it on behalf of the Rationalist Association. A scholar of Islamic studies, he

wrote in depth about Quoran. After working for some time at the Center for Inquiry, he took up another job. I introduced Arasu Chellayya of Periyar Society to Ibn Warraq.

At their invitation, I addressed American Humanist Association meetings in Detroit. Lavanam, a friend of mine from the Atheist Center in Vijayawada, took part in the meeting. Humanist poet Philip Applemen, who received many Awards for his works, read out his poetry. I stayed with our family friend Dr. Usha Raju in Detroit. She worked for TANA for some time.

I was also the guest of Dr. Durga Das, a cardiologist. He is the second son of Narla Venkateswara Rao. My friends M. Satyanarayana Reddy, his daughter Sobha and son-in-law Mallikharjun extended me their hospitality. I visited the Humanist Judaic Center in Detroit and met its members.

Along with Aaramalla Purnachandra I visited the Thomas Paine Museum on the outskirts of New York. Thomas Paine's house, converted into a museum, was in a state of neglect.

The Nicholas Roerich Museum is located on 110 street of New York. The Russian painter was a friend of Sanjeev Dev. I prevailed upon Sanjeev Dev to part with his correspondence with Roerich, got it through Aswani Kumar and presented it to the museum. Museum officials were elated over my gesture. Chalasani Prasad had visited the museum earlier. Not too many people visit the museum located in a remote corner of New York.

Aaramalla Purnachandra and I attended the inauguration of the Ingersoll Museum at Rochester, New York State. Ingersoll's house had been converted into a museum. The museum remains closed only during winter.

Gordon Stein, Tom Flynn and Tim Madigan took part in the inauguration function. Gordon Stein wanted to gather all the published works of Ingersoll from around the world. But he passed away before he could realize his dream. We posed for photographs at the street corner where there were boards displaying State and Church on either side. The photograph captures the spirit of secularism which calls for separation of State from religion.

I met my journalist friend Nadimpalli Seetarama Raju and his daughter in Rochester and spent some time with them.

I met the wife of reputed Humanist writer Corliss Lamont and had food with her. We reviewed the Humanist movement.

Since our son stayed in Wall Street in New York, Komala and I enjoyed going round the city and visiting museums and libraries, and attending shows at Broadway. One can travel by bus and train round the clock in New York.

Dr. Doddapaneni Babu Rao felicitated me on behalf of the Telugu Association. Aaramalla Purnachandra and I took part in many meetings.

We could see top tennis players Serena Williams, Venus Williams and their father (coach and photographer) in action at the Queens' tennis grounds.

In Greenwich, we had the pleasure of savoring food of different countries. We took part in poets' gatherings and visited painting exhibitions. We went round Chelsea. Attending ballet theatre and watching proceedings at the U. N. were unique experiences.

With the American Humanist Association moving to Washington, I could meet Fred Edward, its executive director, and took part in its meetings. Later on, Fred Edward and Edd Doerr drifted away from the association and joined others.

When Paul Kurtz was chairman, I visited the Center for Inquiry at Amherst many times and addressed the staff. They gifted me with many books and magazines.

I wrote articles for *Free Inquiry*, edited by Tom Flynn, and for '*Encyclopedia of Unbelief*', a standard reference book brought out by him, on the Humanist movement, M. N. Roy, Abraham Solomon, and Indumathi Parekh.

I developed close relations with D. J. Grothe, who worked to dispel superstitions through magic. He later joined James Randi's institution. I also met Matt Cherry, Tim Madigan, Ranjit Sandhu, and Ibn Warraq at the Center for Inquiry and had good discussions with them.

Prometheus Publications, founded by Paul Kurtz and run by his son Jonathan, is located near the center. They published '*Forced into Faith*' and '*M. N. Roy's Humanism*', which I wrote at their request. They brought out the American edition of Narla's '*The Truth about the Gita*', at my request.

I took part in international conferences at the Center for Inquiry and had the opportunity to talk to scientist Richard Dawkins and critic Sam Harris.

Pendyala Subrahmanyam, a friend of mine, patronized the center. I organized a meeting when he visited Hyderabad. He retired from the University Buffalo and moved to Florida.

I held discussions with Prof. Thomas Saaz, a famous psychiatric critic, at the center. With his permission, I wrote a number of articles in Indian magazines based on his writings. I introduced my daughter Naveena to him. We heard his lectures at American University, Washington. Accompanied by Praveen Agarwal, a friend of Raju, I visited Syracuse to meet with Thomas Saaz. Mr. Praveen later joined the University in Duluth.

Thomas Saaz is a trenchant critic of Freud. '*Myth of Mental Illness*' is one of his famous works.

With Paul Kurtz's permission, I translated and published his books '*Affirmations*', and '*Living without Religion*', into Telugu. A happy Kurtz shared the news with a number of people.

The center has a good Humanist library. My writings find a place on its shelves.

With Paul Kurtz's help and support, we started a Center for Inquiry in India and conducted programs. Among those who attended its programs were Paul Kurtz, Austin Dacey, Prof. Trigg from New York University and Pasago from Italy.

I attended meetings at Columbia University in New York with Dr. Rao Kolluri, son of Dr. Venkatrayudu of Tenali. The Secretary of State gave good replies to questions posed by Fareed Zakaria in an interview. Subbarao lives in New Jersey. He wrote on technical subjects. We visited the Science Museum in Los Angeles together.

The Telugu Association of North America held its conference at Disneyland in Los Angeles in July 1997. Movie actor Akkineni Nageswara Rao felicitated me on behalf of TANA on the first day. I spoke briefly. Prof. Nirmal Mishra, my wife Komala and daughter Naveena attended the conference. Naveena's video camera failed at the critical moment.

The Greater Delaware Telugu Association honored me in 1998 at Philadelphia. Kaikala Satyanarayana, the chief guest, presented me a memento. Velivolu Syambabu, the younger son of Velivolu Sitaramaiah of Tenali, organized the function. He conducted a couple of meetings for me at Dover, the capital of Delaware, where he lives.

Vadlamudi Sri Krishna and others of the Washington Telugu Association honored me.

## 32. Feeling the Cosmos

Carl Sagan visited India in 1982 to take part in a world astronomers' conference in Delhi. I did not meet him at that time.

I maintained correspondence with famous astronomer Carl Sagan from 1994 onwards. He taught at Cornell University. He was prompt in his replies. I have preserved his letters as a treasure.

Carl Sagan's writings including '*The Demon-Haunted World*' and his Cosmos TV serial had had a great impact on me.

When there were prospects of meteorites striking Jupiter and rumors of the planet being destroyed as a result, Carl Sagan did research and announced that although Mars would receive a hit, it would not be destroyed. I attended a large conference held in Washington on the Jupiter episode. Accompanied by Humanist friend Kenneth Marsalek of Baltimore and my daughter Naveena, I attended the conference where Carl Sagan spoke briefly. I introduced myself to Carl Sagan and invited him to visit India. Naveena recorded my pleasant encounter with him on camera.

On another occasion, Carl Sagan explained the place of earth in the universe at the Air and Space Museum in Washington. Kenneth Marsalek and I enjoyed his brilliant presentation.

Carl Sagan died of blood cancer at a Seattle hospital in December 1996. He promoted humanist thoughts.

American Atheist Association President Ellen Johnson interviewed me at Staten Island in 1998 for an hour in the presence of Ron Barrier, the association's public relations in-charge. Mr. Aaramalla Purchandra took photographs of us during the interview. The interview, telecast by some TV channels, captures the

humanist movement and my experiences in India. I uploaded it on to YouTube.

I took part in programs organized by Ellen Johnson in Washington.

At the request of Zendler, editor of *Atheist*, I wrote articles for his monthly. I met him during the world atheist conference in Vijayawada.

I introduced Ibn Warraq to Ron Barrier of the Atheist Association. We met over dinner in New York and discussed many things.

I discussed Humanist Association activities with Mrs. Beth Carliss Lamont in New York. She continued the work of her Humanist husband, who wrote and published books on humanism.

Barring a couple of Humanists and Communists, most Indians do not know that Evelyn Trent was the first wife of M. N. Roy. M. N. Roy had not mentioned her name in any of his writings including his autobiography. I, therefore, got curious and started collecting information about her from the Library of Congress and The National Archives. Later, I entered into correspondence with her sister at Sacramento near San Francisco. I met her sister's son Devon Meredith at Palm Gardens on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Gogineni Krishna Rao and his son-in-law Cherukuri Mohan, who accompanied me, recorded my interview and took photographs. Devon had turned 80 by then. He gave me some personal details of Evelyn Trent, a photograph of her, and the diary written by her father, a marine engineer, on a visit to Japan in 1889.

Later, I interviewed Robert C. North, a retired Stanford professor, with whom Evelyn Trent maintained correspondence even as she lived anonymously. Prof. North had interviewed M. N. Roy at Dehradun and did research on his role in China. Prof. North, who hosted me a dinner at the university faculty club, revealed

many things concerning M. N. Roy. We posed for photographs. Cherukuri Rajasekhar, my nephew, accompanied me.

The Social Sciences Research Institute at Amsterdam gave me copies of Evelyn's letters to and from Prof. North. I handed them over to Stanford University's Hoover Library. The persons in charge of the library thanked me for passing on material concerning a graduate of their university.

Later on, I wrote a 100-page booklet on Evelyn Trent. Atluri Ashok, a friend of my son Raju, composed it on computer and made out a printout. Later we brought out print edition.

My book has become the sole reference work for all. Evelyn figures in some of Muzzafer Ahmed's writings and Adhikari's *Communist Party History*.

Evelyn then called herself Santi Devi. M. N. Roy had recorded events in his life up to 1925, when he and Evelyn parted company. They divorced two years later. M. N. Roy did not refer to her at all in any of his writings. Yet, I felt, she could not be ignored as she played a historical role in the early part of M. N. Roy's life.

### **James Randi**

I exchanged letters with Humanist magician James Randi and met him for the first time at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington. Sometime in 1996, he agreed to visit India if programs were organized and his travel expenses met. He had a liking for Premanand. I met James Randi along with my daughter Naveena, grandson Rohit in Centre for Enquiry Conference Maryland 2010



He set up a Randi Center at Plantation in Florida to train people in magic. He deposited One million dollars in a bank and challenged anyone from around the world to claim the amount by proving before a scientific committee that homeopathy, astrology etc are all scientific. None have come forward to claim the prize money.

We shifted his headquarters to Los Angeles. Mr. D.J. Grothe became the director of James Randy foundation.

### 33. India once again

Our five-year stay in the U. S. was productive. We had the satisfaction of raising our grandson Rohit even as we took part in programs of interest to us.

During our U. S. stay, many friends from India dropped in. They included Justice Amancharla Gangadhara Rao, Prof. K. Seshadri, Dr. Yelamanchili Sivaji, Dr. Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad, M. Venkaiah Naidu, Paladugu Venkata Rao and his wife, Aswani Kumar, Kosaraju Seetarama Rao, Narla Vinay Kumar, and Chalasani Prasad.

Among journalist visitors were K.Ramachandra Murthy, A. B. K. Prasad, K. Srinivasa Reddy, Nadimpalli Seetharama Raju, and Potturi Venkateswara Rao. Among Humanist friends, I met Mrs. Indumathi Parekh in Washington and Dr. Gowri Malik in Maryland. Dr. Gowri, suffering from Alzheimer's disease, had lost her memory.

In association with Jana Vignana Vedika, Manava Vikasa Vedika, rationalist, Humanist and, casteless society and the Skeptic Society, I organized a series of programs in India during 2000-10.

M. Basava Punnarao of Tenali and I formed a Federation of Atheist, Rationalist and Humanist Associations (FARAH) to conduct programs from a common platform.

We took part in TV programs and contributed articles to newspapers regularly. We focused on exposing astrology, *vaastu*, self-proclaimed god men and women, dispelling superstitions, and promoting scientific inquiry. We, naturally, faced stiff resistance from those whose stock-in-trade was people's blind faith. Media came to our rescue only to a limited extent as sections of them were not above blind belief.

To the extent possible, we involved scientists in our mission. People like Dr. P. M. Bhargava, Chandana Chakravarty, Raghuram and Jayaprakash Narayan helped us.

Those who could not withstand our exposure of homeopathy resorted to violent acts.

Those who abhorred scientific thinking got away by bluffing. Demanding that science be taught from primary classes, we even drafted a syllabus.

We asked Telugu University to juxtapose astrology and astronomy and questioned its courses in *vaastu*.

Although, Avula Sambasiva Rao's daughter Dasari Manjulatha happened to be Vice Chancellor she could not do anything. We questioned the rationale behind teaching *vaastu* in the university. We faced resistance from self-proclaimed saints as we exposed their frauds through writings and demonstrations with assistance from Premanand, Vikram, Bhimanna Pasala and others. Yet, our success was modest.

### **Radical Humanist Movement**

When I requested Justice Raghavendra Jahgirdar (son-in-law of Chief Justice Gajendra Gadkar) to be President of the Indian Radical Humanist Association, he said he would, provided I agreed to be his Secretary. Willy-nilly, I accepted the assignment. I had all through concerned myself with working as a soldier in all the movements without aspiring for any position.

We organized meetings and seminars in Bombay and Hyderabad. Dr. P. M. Bhargava spoke extensively on M. N. Roy's ideology at a Bombay meeting. He had gone through the English version of my book *M. N. Roy's Philosophy*, published by Prometheus Books in the U. S. An organization that recorded his speech misplaced it rendering all our pains-taking effort futile.

We published Jahgirdar's writings on secularism. Our association was active for two years.

I worked with people like Ravipudi Venkatadri and Sanal Edamraku at the State level in the Rationalist Association.

I brought out many books and monographs including Paul Kurz's writings in Telugu with assistance from Venigalla Venkataratnam and Chimakurty Bhaskara Rao. Aaramalla Purnachandra and I wrote the foreword for Narla's book on the Gita and got it published in the U. S.

### **Center for Inquiry, India**

We set up an Indian Center for Inquiry with Hyderabad as its headquarters and opened chapters in Poona and Delhi. Its international headquarters is located at Amherst in New York State. Paul Kurtz, its founder, had spread humanist and secular ideology beyond anybody's expectations.

The Indian center, not being an affiliate of the international center, organized its own programs. The international center extended cooperation by supplying literature and sending its domain experts for our meetings at its expense.

Among those who enriched our conferences with their presentations on different occasions were Prof. Triggall (New York University), Amaradev Sarma (Germany) Hugo (Italy) Austin Dacey, and Paul Kurtz.

Dr. Jugal Kishore ran the Delhi center and Santhi Sri, the Poona center. Humanists, rationalists, skeptics, and atheists took part in its activities.

Those who cooperated with us included Satyanveshana Mandali (Putta Surendra Babu), Jana Vignana Vedika, Manava Vikasa Vedika, Atheist Center, Periyar Sangham, and caste eradication, Humanist, rationalist, and secular associations.

Among those who took part in Center for Scientific Inquiry activities and spread human values were V. K. Sinha, Sangeeta Mall, Justice Raghavendra Jahgirdar, scientist P. M. Bhargava, Dr. Raghuram, Chandana Chakravarty, Premanand, K. Veeramani (Madras), Pattathanam, Subhankar, Manoj Dutt, Ajit Bhattacharya, S. V. Raju, Lavanam, Vijayam, Vikas, Jayaprakash Narayan, Dr. K. Krishnayya, Malladi Subbamma, M. Subbarao, K. Wilson, Prasangi, Lakshmana, and Chintamani.

Daily newspapers and TV channels encouraged us in our fight against superstitions. Vikram, Bheemanna, Narendra Naik, and Premanand presented magic shows in support of our campaign.

Isanaka Muralidhar, C. Bhaskara Rao, Venigalla Venkataratnam, T. V. Rao, B. Sambasiva Rao, and Makkena Ramakrishna put in tremendous effort in keeping our movement alive. Venigalla Komala undertook translations and original writing.

Isanaka Muralidhar stood as a pillar of support for me in running the Center for Scientific Inquiry for a decade. He withstood many vicissitudes in his relentless efforts. P. Bhaskara Rao built the website without anticipating anything in return.

Komala focused on translations. She rendered into Telugu Taslima Nasreen's '*Shodh*' under the title '*Chelluku Chellu*'. Muslims, who reveled in religious bigotry, mistook her book as a critique of Islam without ever reading it.

The response to Komala's translation in Telugu of Jung Chang's '*Wild Swans*' under the title '*Adavi Kachina Vennela*', mirroring life in China, was good. Atluri Ashok, who had encouraged Komala to translate the work, invited Jung Chang to Hyderabad to release the book at a function Akshara Publications organized at Kakatiya Hotel. It is the most important publication of the Center for Scientific Inquiry. Jung Chang was elated

over Komala's introduction of her to the audience. Ranganayakamma presented a detailed and incisive analysis of the book.

C. Narasimha Rao, an expert in personality development and prolific writer, supported the Center for Scientific Inquiry with his suggestions, advice, and guidance.

C. L. N. Gandhi, a family friend of ours, helped me in bringing out publications and organizing programs and remained a source of inspiration and support. All the members of his family are Humanists. His father-in-law Gurijala Seetharamaiah and his daughter Radharani too associated themselves with our activities.

Tummala Gopala Rao, a long-time friend of mine, extended me his support directly and indirectly in running the center. He started his career as a college lecturer and later became the manager of educational institutions founded by movie producer and actor Mohan Babu near Tirupati.

There were debates later in newspapers and on TV over Taslima. Muslims succeeded in hounding her out of the country. There had already been a religious injunction against her in Bangladesh. The crusade against Taslima was a blot on democracy.

The Center for Inquiry published many books including '*The Political History of Andhra Pradesh*', '*The Chief Ministers and Humanists I met*', all written by me in English and Telugu.

Publications like '*Matam Leni Madhura Jeevitam*', a translation of Paul Kurtz's work, impressed readers.

Alakananda Publications of Vijayawada brought out my Telugu translation of famous evolutionary scientist Richard Dawkins' '*The God Delusion*' under the title '*Devuni Bhramalo*'.

I published Sam Harris' *Letter to a Christian Nation* under the title '*Christavam Inta Amanushama*' and Christopher Hitchen's *God is not Great* under the title '*Devudante Idanna Mata*'.

Komala's translations of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's writings including '*Sanchari*' and '*Mata Panjaramlo Kanya*', which exposes the suppression of women in the name of Islam, impressed readers. We presented copies of those books to the Humanist Center of Inkollu in Prakasam district.

Komala's translation of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel* in Telugu '*Mata Grahnam Veedindi*', got good reviews.

C. Bhaskara Rao incorporated the Center for Inquiry publications as e-books in its website and blog.

I had the privilege of presenting the translations to the authors at public gatherings in the U. S.

*Navya* weekly carried my translation of Agehananda Bharathi's '*Ochre Robe*' as a serial under the title '*Sanyasi Satyam Palikite*'. We included it in our website.

### **Research**

On behalf of Secular Society, Prof. Kosmin Barry and I undertook a survey on the secular and religious attitude of 1000 scientists. The Trinity College center of Hartford, capital of Connecticut State in the U. S., sponsored the project. We sent a questionnaire to scientists and elicited their replies. We published the findings which revealed that many scientists were unscientific in their outlook in that they believed in religion, astrology, god men, *vaastu* etc.

I gave an hour-long radio interview '*Equal Time for Free Thought*' in New Jersey. The interview, dealing with secularism and religions in India, finds a place on their website.

Phil Zukerman included an article of mine on India in his book '*Secularity and Atheism*', published in the U. S.

*New Encyclopedia of Unbelief*, a magnum opus compiled by Tom Flynn, carried an article of mine on humanism and Humanists in India.

Contrasting astrology with astronomy, we demonstrated how astrology is rooted in belief. Our grandson Rohit evinced interest in the science of evolution and astronomy in his 13th year itself. When he visited Hyderabad, Vasireddy Amaranath and T. V. Rao gave him an assignment at Slate School. He demonstrated to science teachers that the daily and weekly astrological forecasts in newspapers were baseless. He later juxtaposed the nine planets and constellations that figure in astrology with astronomical facts and exposed how astrology is built on falsehood. The teachers were flabbergasted even as the media recorded the event.

T. V. Rao, Vikram and I tried similar experiments in the Jubilee Hills Public School and a Khairatabad school to educate teachers.

Alex Orbito of the Philippines landed in Hyderabad claiming to cure ailments by surgery without wielding the scalpel. With some of the rich and the famous in society supporting him, he earned a lot of money and fame. We immediately organized a program at the Hyderabad Press Club and exposed Alex Orbito as a fake practitioner. Vikram demonstrated how surgery can be performed through magic by asking one Subbarao to lie on a table as a patient. With media publicizing the event, Orbito ran away to the Philippines via Bangalore. Among those who fell victims to his sleight of hand were former Member of Parliament B. N. Reddy and *Eenadu* proprietor Ramoji Rao's daughter-in-law.



## **Fish medicine**

Hyderabad is notorious for its fish medicine for asthma. The practitioners make patients gulp a small fish along with herbal medicine on June 7 every year after the onset of the rainy season. We got a scientific study done and established that the practice is no remedy for asthma. We carried on a campaign against fish medicine for years. Although we could not eradicate the practice, we stemmed the influx of patients from all over the country into Hyderabad. Many organizations and media sections cooperated with us. The Government, however, continues to defend the practice, succumbing to pressures from vested interests.

## **Alternative therapies**

All India Institute of Medical Sciences' experts established after pains-taking research that ten alternative therapies including use of urine, music, precious stones etc, are all unscientific and asked the Central and State Governments to ban them. But the Governments dared not lest they should incur people's wrath.

We publicized the findings and appealed to the State and Central Governments to ban the unscientific alternative therapies. We wanted the Government to appoint a committee of scientists to go into homeopathy credentials. But bowing to powerful lobbies, the Government keeps quiet, betraying their unscientific attitude.

## **Return to the U. S.**

After promoting science in various fields from 2000 to 2010 in India, Komala and I returned to the U. S.

I took part in the activities of Science and Human Values, a new institution promoted by Paul Kurtz, in 2010. Toni Pelt is active supporter to this institute.

I addressed meetings of Telugu associations on subjects like Tripuraneni Ramaswamy's thoughts and Prof. Ranga's services to farmers.

To spread the views of Narla Venkateswara Rao and Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy, we started blogs. We cooperated with Ramaraju who started a blog in the name of his father and my college guru Yelavarti Rosaiah.

With assistance from C. Bhaskara Rao, we opened a Ravipudi Venkatadri blog.

I wrote a brief history of the Radical Humanist movement in Andhra Pradesh from 1940. We published a book of Narla in the U. S. and publicized it.

Aaramalla Purnachandra bought 100 copies of a compendium of M. N. Roy's writings on humanism, which we published in the U. S., and presented them to his friends in the U. S.

I translated and published a book in Telugu on Guntur district written by Robert Frickenburg, a former Professor of Wisconsin University, and published by Oxford University Press.

### 34. Regional Associations in America

People belonging to different Indian States or speaking different Indian languages have their own associations. And almost all of them have associations and separate membership. There are Telugu, Malayali, Tamil, Kannada, Hindi, Gujarati, Kashmiri, Bengali, Punjabi, Marathi and Oriyan associations. They organize mega conferences once in two years and small meetings in between.

Telugu-speaking people started the Telugu Association of North America (TANA). By 1990, a group of people formed the American Telugu Association (ATA). Later on two more associations were formed namely North America Telugu Society (NATS), North America Telugu Association (NATA).

In addition, there are local associations in various areas, each bringing out its own magazine or newsletter. I had the privilege of being invited and honored by TANA and ATA, and Telugu associations in Delaware, New York and Washington. I had the privilege of contributing special articles to their souvenirs. I took part even in Tamil association meetings.

Instead of confining their religious beliefs to personal level, they bring them to streets and public places. Lot of superstitions, blind beliefs, astrology, numerology, palmistry, geomancy (vaastu) and cult worships were imported which are polluting the society. The children born in America are developing differently due to the environment, which is a good sign.

Members believe that constructing Temples and performing religious rituals constitute culture. They have built temples for Siva, Vishnu, Murugan, Lakshminarayana, Venkateswara, and Shirdi Sai Baba etc. Tax exemptions for religious institutions, temples, properties are taken advantage of.

No wonder, God men and God women have infiltrated the associations to exert influence and make money. Indians vie with each other in inviting their favorite stars and saints, and felicitate them.

Leaders of various ethnic associations including those of Telugu-speaking people visit India and call on people in power. They flaunt the trusts and projects sponsored by them and try to boost their influence in India.

They are besmirching their associations' image by bowing to political parties in India. Instead of imbibing the best of U. S. customs and traditions, they fall apart and revel in slinging mud at each other.

Fed up with their politicking, some members have chosen to keep away from them.

### **Humanist movement**

I have been associated with the Humanist movement since 1956 under the influence of Yelavarti Rosaiah and Avula Gopala Krishna Murthy. I have also worked in rationalist, secular, skeptic and atheist movements.

I did not meet either M. N. Roy or his wife Evelyn. M. N. Roy died in 1955 and his wife was murdered in 1960. I translated the writings of all prominent Humanists including M. N. Roy, founder of the movement into Telugu. I wrote articles in newspapers and addressed study classes which were attended by rationalists, secularists, skeptics and atheists.

I worked with top Humanist leaders at both the state and national level in India. They included Justice V. M. Tarkunde, Justice Avula Sambasiva Rao, Justice Raghavendra Jahgirdar, Prof. Sibnarayan Ray, A. B. Shah, Malladi Rama Murthy, Ravipudi Venkatadri, Kolli Sivarama Reddy and Ch. Raja Reddy. Working with

stalwarts has been a rare and rewarding experience for me.

Rationalist and secularist movements are akin to the Humanist movement. As a result, I could work with people like S. Ramanathan, Lokhandavala, Solomon Abraham, V. K. Sinha, Sanal Edamaruku, Premanand, Narendra Nayak, and Jayagopal.

The Atheist Center founded by Gora in Vijayawada earned international attention. I worked with Gora and subsequently with Lavanam, Saraswati Gora, Hemalata, Vijayam, Vikas, and Samaram. We conducted atheist programs in Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Calcutta, and Hyderabad and in Kerala.

A federation of organizations working in various movements came up under the leadership of Premanand. It functioned only for some time since all did not choose to work together.

As of 2011, none of the Humanist and related organizations is strong. All of them suffer from financial and human resource constraints. Their message has not reached the new generation even as religious extremism and fundamentalism have witnessed resurgence. Even the educated have bid goodbye to scientific outlook except in their professions. All political parties have succumbed to religious influences. Media's cooperation is not much to write home about.

### 35. Thinkers groups

I carried out my experiences with humanists, rationalists, skeptics and Center for enquiry in India to USA. When I was working in India with these associations I invited humanist leaders like Paul Kurtz, Austin Dacey, ..... I also met and participated in various humanist discussions, seminars, workshops, and gained rich experiences. I could meet eminent personalities like Barbara Smoker, Madalya O Hair, Sonja Aggrix, Levy Fragil, Roy Brown, Editor of American Atheist Magazine ..... Then I corresponded with editors, writers, humanist organisations who requested me to contribute articles which I did. Tom Flynn, Gorden Stein (Encyclopedia unbelief), who is who in hell editor Warren Elen Smith, When I reached USA I continued my association with all these organisations, I attended several meetings and conferences, spoke in some of them and continued my membership with them.

The International Humanist and Ethical Association came into existence in 1952 with talented and reputed scientists joining it and M. N. Roy serving as its Vice Chairman. Yet, it could not emerge as a federation of Humanist associations in various countries. It confined its activities to holding conferences once in two years and extending its cooperation to some organizations. It could not take up even publication of good books. Its existence gradually became notional. I was associated with its children's wing.

As in India, there are humanist, secularist, rationalist, skeptic, and atheist associations in the U. S. and Europe. There are small foundations at the local level. All of them have limited members.

Paul Kurtz earned a good name for Humanists by founding the Center for Inquiry and publishing many books and magazines. I worked with it for ten years.

We started an independent center in India and carried on activities. Paul Kurtz's Prometheus Books published Narla's book on the *Bhagavadgita*. I addressed American Humanist Association meetings. The American Atheist Association interviewed me and telecast it.

The Humanist associations in the U. S are few in number and have limited influence. Humanists have been fighting for separation of State from religion. Once in a while, rulers heed what Humanists say as some of them happen to be scientists like Carl Sagan, Richard Dawkins and Isaac Asimov.

By 2011, Paul Kurtz in his 85th year founded an organization called Science and Human Values and launched the magazine *Human Perspective*. He died and then there was vacuum in the organisation. That is also a personal loss to me.

The American associations are working with vigor and gradually their membership is growing. I maintained good relations with all of them and took part in their meetings. I translated the writings of prominent Humanists into Telugu. Komala too translated Ayan Hirsi Ali's books. I had the pleasure of meeting Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens, all of whom earned international recognition for their books.

Humanist associations in European countries like Norway, Sweden, Holland, and England are strong with large membership. My address to the Open University in Belgium in 2004 was well received. Humanists in Belgium were fighting against unscientific systems of medicine like homeopathy.

Humanist associations in New Zealand, Australia, and Africa too are strong with large membership. Small associations have just sprung up in China and Russia but not in Arab countries.

## **2014 is memorable year in our life**

Our children, grandchildren and friends celebrated our 50th wedding Golden Jubilee in USA. It is heartening that well wishers participated in the event. It was systematically organised by my daughter Dr. Naveena, son-in-law Hemanth, son Raju amidst joyful well wishers. To synchronize with this event memoirs of mine and Komala were distributed to the participants. Several speakers like Dr. Y. Lakshmi Prasad, Totakura Prasad, Mr. Kenneth Marselek, Chandana Chakravarthy, Atluri Ashok, and Margaret Downey conveyed their messages. Mr. Lenin Vemula, Ganti Bhaskar, Hemanth Bhaskar entertained with songs. All the participants dance and enjoyed the function. Dr.Nirmala , Dr. Usha (students of Komala), Jyothirmayi delivered special messages. Cherukuri Rajasekhar, Cherukuri Raghava Rao, Dr. Sudhakar Babu, Dr. Chennareddy Gandhi (all relatives) came from far away places to participate in this. Mr. Anantha Mallavarapu, Devineni Madhusudana Rao, Rajani Karuturi, Raja Karanam, Velivolu Shyambabu, Anne venkateswarlu, Meer Abdullah, Pidathala Sridevi came to wish.

I maintained blogs in Telugu and English.

### **AGK**

<http://agk-rationalist.blogspot.in/>

### **V.R.Narla**

<http://narlavr.blogspot.in/>

### **N. Innaiah**

<http://innaiahn.blogspot.in/>

<http://manavavadi.blogspot.in/>

[http://secularhumanist.blogspot.in](http://secularhumanist.blogspot.in/)

<http://zolaleila.blogspot.in/>

<http://innaiahn.tripod.com/>



## **A story of Thesis**

The Ph.D thesis of Innaiah Narisetti submitted in Osmania University created history due to the role the guide and devotee of Cult Hindu guru Aurobindo. Mr M V Ramamurthy (1918-1999) studied the case and presented it;

### **Philosophical consequences of Modern science-Thesis –Antithesis**

The facts relating to this Thesis constitute interesting reading. The zigzag turns, the twists all give a touch of drama to the course of the Thesis. Its chequered career is influenced and shaped by acts of well meaning and honest persons as well as by the sly and subtle ways of some others.

Mr. N. Innaiah enrolled himself as a research scholar for Ph.D. degree course of Osmania University in the Department of Philosophy in October, 1965. The topic of research was "The Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science with special reference to the problem of Determinism." (Appendix-1) He had passed the preliminary Ph.D. test held in September, 1966 (Appendix - 2). Mr. Innaiah was then one of the Lecturers in the Philosophy Department of Osmania University. As such, he submitted some research papers. They were commended by his supervisor for publication as articles (Appendix-3). He submitted his Thesis on 3rd October, 1969. He was not informed about the fate of his Thesis even by 22nd June, 1973. Then the scholar wrote a letter to the Vice Chancellor of Osmania University requesting him, for the information (Appendix-4). On 17th December, 1974 he was asked by the Controller of Examinations to revise his Thesis (Appendix-5). He was furnished with extracts from the reports of the Examiners. (Appendix - 6). He submitted his revised Thesis on 30th March, 1976 (Appendix. 7).

It is not out of place to refer to something that 'happened prior to March 1976. There was a move to get an Aurobindo University established, by Prof. Madhusudhana Reddy. He is an Aurobindite. It was felt in many circles that he was making strenuous efforts to get an Aurobindo University established. This gave rise to a tirade against the said move by the rationalists and radical humanists in the form of a press statement (Appendix-8). They wrote a 'Letter to the Editor' in a local English Daily (Appendix-9). This seems to have irked the Aurobindites of Hyderabad. In the meanwhile, a one-man commission headed by a retired Judge of Andhra Pradesh High Court, Mr. V. Parthasarathi, was appointed to go into the affairs of the University. Naturally, the way the Thesis of Mr N. Innaiah was dealt with, figured as one of the matters enquired into by the commission. The report of the commission in respect of the manner in which the Thesis was handled is revealing. It spoke of the entire episode as one of 'wrecked hope' and 'a blasted career'. It stated that one could not part with the case "without being shaken to the core of one's being." Elsewhere in the report it is observed that "it is frustration that grows out of weary years of waiting that enhances or deepens the pathos of the tragedy." The Commission commented that the matter was "muddled through for several months with the inept handling repeating itself in an incredible manner." This evidently referred to the University's delay in taking the necessary action just prior to its directing the candidate on December 17, 1974 to revise his Thesis. The commission did not leave the matter without indicating to the examination branch of the University by saying "that no one associated with the matter is free from blame." It seems that the report of the commission was sent to Dr. V Madhusudhana Reddy for comment. Events followed fast thereafter. Mr. Innaiah Supervisor and guide Dr. Madhusudhana Reddy tendered his resignation to the post of Professor and

Head of Department of Philosophy. The news of this event was reported in the press with the date line of April 25, 1976. Even this incident created problems for Mr. Innaiah for he was asked to submit the revised Thesis with the certificate from his supervisor. Under the circumstances then prevailing, it was impossible.

Several factors till then unknown to the candidate became known, thanks to the enquiry by the one-man commission. It seems that at first three examiners were appointed to evaluate the Thesis. They were:

1. Prof. Leo Gabriel of Austria.
2. Dr. Daya Krishna, Jaipur.
3. Dr. V. Madhusudhana Reddy, Supervisor.

While Prof. Leo Gabriel and Dr. V Madhusudhana Reddy had recommended the award of Ph.D degree, Dr. Daya Krishna had recommended its rejection. The University Syndicate at its 143rd meeting, held on 17th April, 1971, had resolved that the Thesis of Mr.innaiah be referred to the fourth examiner. The offer was made to three foreign examiners in succession and ultimately it was sent to Prof. Richard Hecking of USA, on 6th July, 1972. Since the report of Prof. Hecking was not received for a long time, Dr. Milick Gapek of Boston University was appointed as examiner. He sent the report in February 1974, stating that the Thesis should be thoroughly revised and resubmitted. The case was submitted to the University Syndicate on 10th June, 1974. It seems that the syndicate has resolved to call upon the candidate to revise the Thesis. The communication of the Syndicate's direction was made on December 17, 1974. Thus it can be seen that it took nearly two years from April 17, 1971 onwards, for selecting an examiner who could be expected to agree to do the evaluation. Thereafter it took nearly four months for submitting the matter to the Syndicate i.e., from February, 1974 to June, 1974. Yet another six months were allowed to lapse from June 10, 1974 to

December 17, 1974 to communicate the syndicate's resolution to the candidate. It is this delay that was the subject of adverse comment by the one-man commission headed by Mr. Parthasarathy.

The English daily press reported the news of the report by the commission and the consequent resignation of the guide. As per Rule 26(b) of Ph.D. rules of Osmania University, the revised Thesis shall, as far as possible, be referred to the same examiners for their opinion. But this rule was not brought to the notice of the Vice-Chancellor who appointed on May 18, 1976, the following three teachers as examiners:

1. Prof. K Satchidananda Murthy, Tirupathi
2. Prof. N K Devaraj, Varanasi
3. Dr, Barlingay, Poona

The Thesis was sent to the said examiners who submitted the reports. While Dr. K. Satchitananda Murthy recommended the award of Ph.D. degree, Prof. N. K. Devraj and Dr. Barlingay, have suggested the revision of the Thesis. On 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1977 the syndicate passed a resolution to call upon the candidate to revise and resubmit his Thesis in the light of the remarks made by examiners (2) and (3). All these facts are adverted to in the note before the syndicate at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1977 (Appendix-10). The Dean, Faculty of Arts was requested on March 1, 1977 to communicate to the candidate that he should revise the Thesis. He was suggested that the reports of the three examiner's be communicated to the candidate. Accordingly, on March 10, 1977, the University sent a note to the candidate calling upon him to revise the thesis (Appendix-11). The extracts from the reports of the examiners were supplied to him (Appendix-12). On May 21, 1977 he wrote a letter to the University protesting against the procedure and requesting that he be awarded with the degree of Ph.D (Appendix-13). The University seemed to have been perplexed by the

various irregularities it had been committing I reference to this issue, so it was considered by the syndicate at its meeting on June 4, 1977. It decided to cancel the communication dated March 10, 1977, directing revision. It further directed the Controller of Examinations to send the revised Thesis of March 30, 1976 to Dr. Mitlic Gaspek of USA, Dr V. Madhusudhana Reddy and Prof. Leo Gabriel. In June 1977, two copies of the Thesis were sent to Prof. Leo Gabriel and Prof. Gaspek. Prof. Gaspek sent it to his colleague Prof. N. Bhattacharya and the University later acquiesced on it. Prof. Bhattacharya sent his report on March 30, 1978, to Prof. K J Shah, who was appointed in the place of Prof. Madhusudhana Reddy. He did not reply to the University's communication, being out of service then, Prof. Shah sent his report on September 18, 1978. Both the examiners rejected the thesis. All these facts became known when the University filed a counter to the W.P. 476 of 1979, on the file of the Andhra Pradesh High Court (Appendix-14).

On June 15, 1977, Mr. Innaiah was informed that his representation was under consideration (Appendix-15). Evidently the University did not choose to inform the candidate about the revised Thesis being sent to the original examiners. As time was running fast, as nearly 10 years have elapsed after the candidate's submission of the Thesis on October 3, 1969, he became courageous enough to file a Writ Petition No. 476 of 1979 in the High Court of Andhra Pradesh on January 19, 1979, praying for the issue of a writ of mandamus directing the University to constitute a Board of Examiners to conduct the Viva-voce for him in relation to his Thesis (Appendix-16). The University filed the counter earlier referred to as Appendix No-14. The position stood thus — the original Thesis was read by four examiners out of which two have recommended award of the degree; one recommended rejection and one opted for directing revision. The revised Thesis was

perused by five examiners out of which one has recommended acceptance, two for rejection and two opined that it needed revision. Thus out of nine Scholars who had the privilege of examining the Thesis either in the original form or in the revised form, opinions were expressed as follows. Three examiners recommended acceptance, while another three examiners rejected its worthiness and the remaining three chose to direct revision. Thus it is evident that the matter was not free from doubt. Moreover, one fact became evident that there was a wide difference of opinion between the Austrian school and the American School in respect of the subject itself. This can be inferred from the communication of Dr. Gaspak to the University as referred to the counter to WP. 476 of 1979 (Appendix-14). Prejudices seemed to have played a vital part in the decision of the examiners who ought to be above these considerations. Apart from that, the University cannot be expected to direct the candidate to revise the Thesis twice, as rules do not permit the same. What all happened after the reports of the original examiners i.e., what happened after 1971 is null and void as being contrary to law and the rules. At any rate, as two out of the three examiners of the First Board recommended acceptance of the candidate's Thesis, it should have been accepted for award of the degree.

Then Mr. Justice Alladi Kuppuswami, directed the University on February 6, 1980, to consider the position as it obtained in 1971 after the receipt of the reports of the examiners viz. Prof. V. Madhusudhana Reddy, Prof. Leo Gabriel Of Austria and Prof. Daya Krishna. The Vice-Chancellor was directed to decide within one month whether he should direct the viva-voce examination to be conducted, or the Thesis should be revised or rejected (Appendix-17). The Court was also pleased to direct that viva-voce should be conducted within two months if the Vice-Chancellor chose to do so.

One would expect smooth sailing thereafter, but alas, it was not so. Mr. Innaiah as called upon by the University by its communication dated April 16, 1980 to appear for the viva-voce examination on April 27, 1980 (Appendix-18). He complied with the direction. There, to his dismay and consternation, he found only two examiners, one who rejected his Thesis viz. Prof. Daya Krishna and the other his erstwhile supervisor Prof. V. Madhusudhan Reddy who by that time rejoined service in the University. Whathappened at the interview was far from being happy. The viva-voce examination was riot utilised for the purpose for which it was intended i.e. to determine whether after all the scholar has written the Thesis or somebody else did it for him with the connivance of the supervisor. The two examiners did not have the advantage of reading the Thesis again for they did not have copies of the same with them. The last time they read it was in 1970 or so i.e., nearly a decade ago. The copy of the scholar was borrowed by them and questions poured forth. What transpired at the interview was referred by the candidate in his letters to the Vice-Chancellor dated 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1980 (Appendix-19) i.e., the very day of the examination and dated May 6, 1980 (Appendix-20). On June 16, 1980 the Vice-Chancellor of the University chose to reject the Thesis submitted by Mr. Innaiah (Appendix-21). This was unexpected for the supervisor and guide commended the Thesis as early as 1970. Presumably he must have changed his stand. Consistent with his earlier stand, Prof. Daya Krishna might have rejected the Thesis as unworthy for acceptance. Eyebrows were raised as it is probably the first time in the University that a Thesis was rejected in viva-voce and probably first occasion in the academic history of India when a guide and supervisor went back on his earlier recommendation. Mr. Innaiah filed the Writ Petition No. 3452 of 1980, praying that the Andhra Pradesh High Court might be pleased to direct the University to award the

degree of Ph.D.to him (Appendix-21). The University filed a counter (Appendix-22). Ms. Justice Amareswari by her judgement dated April 14, 1981, accepted the contention of the scholar that viva-voce conducted on April 27, 1980, was against the rules framed by the University as only two examiners were present then. The Hon'ble judge set aside the viva-voce. She opined that there was neither logic nor justification in appointing Dr. Daya Krishna as an examiner for the viva-voce as he had earlier rejected the thesis outright and denounced it in the harshest terms. Prof. Madhusudhana Reddy was found to have written on April 27, 1980 to the Vice-Chancellor. His letter reads as follows, "In the context of the disturbing controversy into which my name got involved, I request you kindly to keep me out of any panel of adjudicators that you may contemplate for the purpose," This attitude of Prof. Madhusudhana Reddy was quite appropriate and befitting the membership of the academic community had the matter stood there. Moreover Mr. Parthasarathy as the one-man commission opined that one of the contributory factors for the delay in respect of the Thesis was "remissness" on the part of the internal examiner, thereby meaning Dr. Madhusudhana Reddy. It was unfortunate that he should have decided to sit as an examiner for viva-voce. The Court thought that Dr. Madhusudhana Reddy's presence at the viva-voce examination, should be dispensed with, in the circumstances of the case, It opined that the University has power under Rule 32 to dispense with the viva-voce in certain cases. It directed the University to adjudicate upon the Thesis in the light of its observations without any further delay (Appendex-23). To a call attention of an M.L.A., the Hon'ble Minister for Education stated in the A.P. Legislative Assembly that the University has decided to award the degree of Ph.D to Mr. Innaiah in the Convocation to be held on May 14, 1981.



Ultimately, he was awarded with the degree. Thus, Mr.Innaiah became Dr. Innaiah.

The price paid by Mr. Innaiah was heavy. For want of Ph.D. degree he had to lose the opportunities of continuing in the University. He became a freelance journalist and ultimately ended up by now as a working journalist. It took him nearly 12 years after the submission of his Thesis to get the degree. It involved two legal battles in the High Court.The University took nearly eleven years to reject the Thesis at the first instance. Such an inordinate delay engendering horrible mental agony to the scholar is unheard of in the annals of the academic life.

Mr. N K Acharya the present president of the Hyderabad Rationalist Association and editor of the 'Indian Rationalist' during 1967-1971 stood the ground and argued Mr. Innaiah's case with ability and steadfastness of purpose.

The success of Mr. Innaiah is the tale of victory of the cause of 'Justice to the Scholars.' It may appear to be the lone fight of a single person; yet it partakes of the character of a fight for the vindication of rights of scholars to have their dissertations treated with consideration and sympathy in keeping with the highest principles of the academic life. It is neither a craving for charity nor is a praying for mercy. It is a reminder to the Academies to keep flying the banner of intellectualism in the country. It is a beacon of light beckoning the academic community to develop the spirit of enquiry, respect for knowledge and attitude of detachment. All kudos goes to Dr. Innaiah, who braved the hardship and suffering to raise the standard of revolt for a just and noble cause.

- M. V. RAMA MURTHY

*Pictures  
to remember*



**Parents**  
Rajaiah, Anthonamma

## *Wedding Invitation of N. Innaiah*

### INVITATION

*For the marriage of N. INNAIAH with  
KOMALA daughter of Mr. Venigalla Venkata  
Subbaiah on 31-5-1964 at 5-30 p.m. in the  
Municipal Girls High School, Tenali; your  
presence is cordially solicited.*

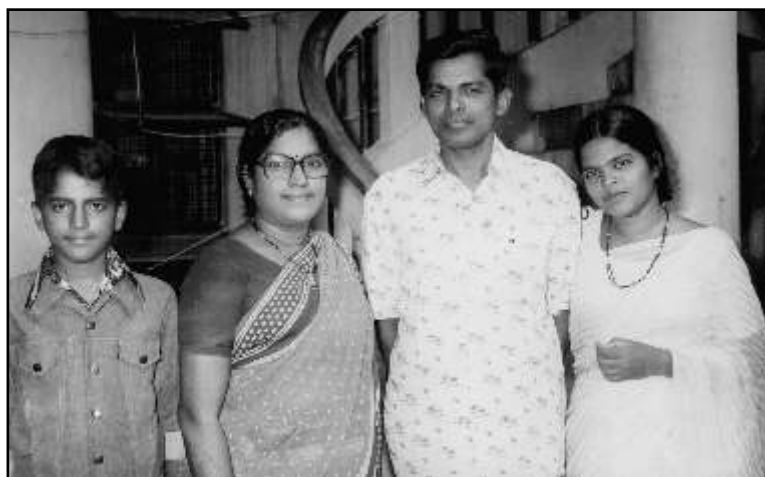
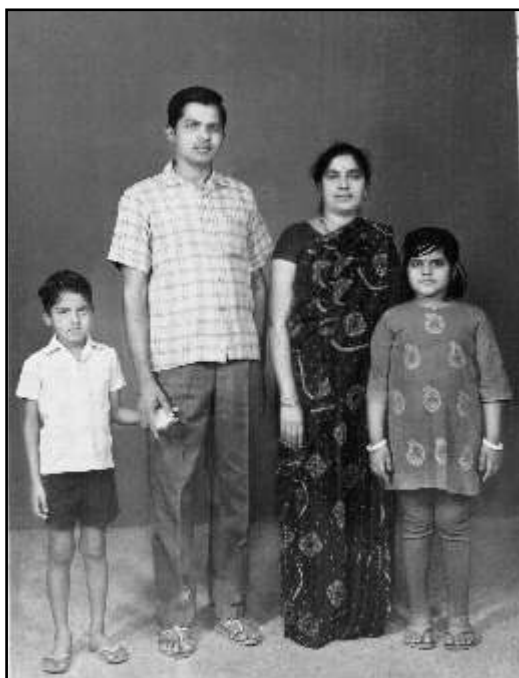
*The Radical Communist Movement  
will play the host.*

TENALI

16 5 - 1964

YOURS

AVULA GOPALAKRISHNA MURTHY



### **Family Photo**

Komala (wife), Naveena (daughter), Raju (son)



In Karnool with Gora Sastry on the occasion of 50th birthday  
 sitting left 3rd Gora Sastry, Left first Sasanka  
 standing first C. Dharma Rao, second Innaiah,  
 3rd Sivaswamy, 4th Mandava Sriramamurthy (1968)



Tarkunde visit to Hyderabad -  
 speech in Nizam's college

**Left to right 1st row :**  
 V.M. Tarkunde, Gopalrao Ekbote,  
 Avula sambasiva Rao

**2nd row :**  
 A.H.V.Subba Rao, P.V.Raja Gopal,

**3rd row**  
 2nd Alam Kundmiri, 3rd G.R. Dalvi

**4th row :**  
 1st N.K. Acharya,  
 2nd A.S.Wadvalkar  
 4th N. Innaiah

**5th row :**  
 Jasti Sulapani, Kosaraju Sambasiva  
 Rao, P.S. Narayana



standing C. Dharma Rao, sitting 1st Gora Sastry,  
2nd P.V. Narasimha Rao



Dr. N. Gopi's (Telugug University V.C.) wedding officiating by Innaiah  
at Srikrishna Devaraya Bhasha Nilayam, Hyderabad,  
sitting 1st Dr Sivalinga Prasad (Ambedkar Open University V.C.),  
2nd Sitting J. Veeraswamy (President Casteless Society.)



Innaiah officiating the wedding of Manjulatha (V.C. of T.U.),  
Subrahmanyeswararao  
in Exhibition Club, Hyderabad

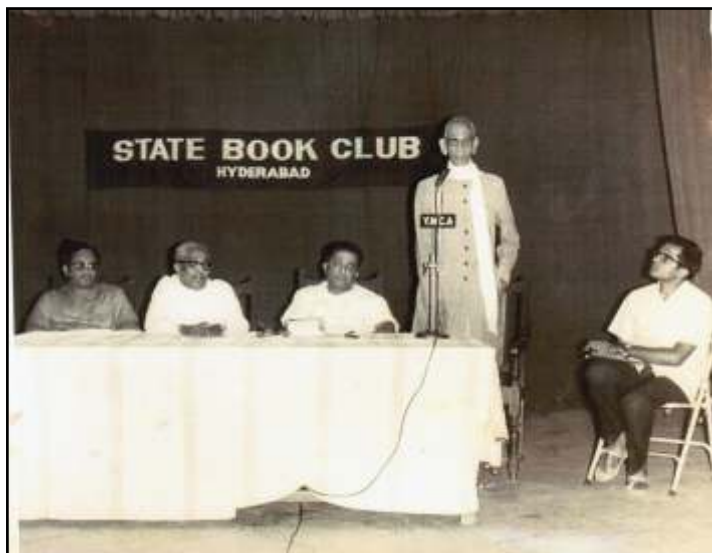


Addressing Avula Gopalakrishna Murty, Advocate, Writer, Humanist,  
officiated marriages, toured USA, 1964;  
sitting Gora, Atheist Leader; Malladi Ramamurthy, Humanist Leader,  
Editor, behind N. Innaiah





Narla VR in Taj roof gardens Hyderabad  
along with Dandamudi Mahidhar, AIR Hindi producer; N. Innaiah



C. Narayana Reddy, Poet Devulapalli Ramanuja Rao,  
Literary Person M.V.Rajagopal, I.A.S.,  
Writer Mamidipudi Venkata Rangaiah (inaugurating State Book Club)  
Historian; N. Innaiah



Avula Sambasiva Rao (addressing)  
sitting N. Innaiah, M. Venkatarangaiah, Hyderabad, India.



C. Narasimharao, (Editor, Repu) , Innaiah,  
Tummala Gopala Rao, Aswini Kumar (editer Misimi)



Innaiah addressing; sitting C.Narayana Reddy, Sanjeevadev,  
Ravindra Bharathi Mini Theatre, Hyderabad (1973)



Innaiah interviewing  
Pingali Jaganmohan Reddy, Supreme Court Judge



at Sangareddi ,Medak district  
 with my brother Vijayaraja Kumar, Dr Narayana Dutt,  
 Koteswararao (post master) standing my friend since school days  
 Goli Nageswararao, Mohanrao, Madhusudanarao, Venkateswararao (1963)



left Innaiah, N.K. Archarya;  
 last K. Somaiah, A.S. Wadwalkar, K. Wilsom



addressing N. Innaiah, sitting middle Justice A. Gangadhara Rao



Bhavanam Venktram (Chief Minister)  
Komala, N. Innaiah, Naveena



standing M. Sriramamurthy, Koneru Kutumba Rao,  
A.B. Shah (Secular movement leader), N. Innaiah



N. Innaiah  
(bureau chief of  
Andhra Jyothi daily)  
receiving Neelam  
Sanjeeva Reddy  
(speaker Loksabha)  
in Begumpet Airport,  
Hyderabad



Malladi Ramamurthy, Innaiah  
in Mussorie, India,  
after Radical Humanist Study Camp in 1970





Rationalist study camp - on stage Dr. P.M. Bhargava (scientist),  
Premanand (Indian Skeptic), N. Innaiah



M.N. Roy Centenary Celebrations - release of Telugu translations of  
M.N.Roy's Books, published by Telugu Akademi,  
Prof. C. Lakshmanna (member Rajyasabha),  
Daggupati venkateswararao (Minister in NTR's cabinet);  
Indra Reddy (Educational Minister), N.Innaiah (1987 VJA, A.P.)





N. Innaiah with Dr Gauri Malik, (Humanist leader) from Delhi



Justice Raghavendra Jahagirdar, President  
N. Innaiah, General Secretary,  
Radical Humanist Association in Bombay



Abraham Solomon, Secularist leader from Bombay  
N. Innaiah



N. Innaiah with Vijay K Sinha,  
Editor Secularist; New Quest, Bombay



N. Innaiah with Justice Vimadlal Mahadev Tarkunde,  
humanist leader



N. Innaiah with Indumati Parekh,  
President, Indian Radical Humanist Association



N. Innaiah with Premanand, Lakshmanna



Ravipudi Venkatadri, N. Innaiah (middle), S. Raghava Rao  
at Chirala



N. Innaiah with Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad,  
Member Rajya Sabha, Professor



N. Innaiah with his teacher Devabhaktuni Narayanarao,  
(Chebrolu, S N High school, Guntur Dist.) in New Jersey



Dr Chekuri Ramarao, Vadlamudi Srikrishna, Innaiah,  
Vadlamudi Jamuna (Mrs Srikrishna) in Maryland



M. Basava Punna Rao, Vikram, Innaiah  
performing Psychic Surgery in Tenali, (A.P.)





Innaiah with V. Hanumantha Rao,  
in Data News Features Office, August 1989



Insearch of Freedom written by Sibnarayan Ray,  
Telugu version by N.Innaiah. Released at Telugu University  
sitting left Indumathi Parekh, Sivaramamurthy (Registrar),  
Justice Avulasambasiva Rao



N. Innaiah with Chittiratnam, Aramalla Purnachandra in USA



Addressing humanists  
on 24th Feb 2006 Kolkata, RH Office  
sitting Sibnarayan Ray, Innaiah





N. Innaiah with Siddarth Bakshi, Putta Surendra  
26-2-2004  
Mandapeta



N. Innaiah with Malladi Subbamma,  
(Humanist Leader)



N. Innaiah with Sibnarayan Ray,  
I Muralidhar, 25th Feb 2006, Kolkatha



N. Innaiah with (right) Kolluri Subbarao,  
(left) C. Bhaskara Rao



Book release of A.P. Politics, written by N. Innaiah standing K. Ramachandramurthy, editor Hans India; Innaiah, K. Srinivasa Reddy, Editor Vishalandra; Rajendra Prasad, Beuro Chief, Hindu; Bandaru Srinivasa Rao, Journalist, AIR (4th Feb 2002, Press Club)



S. Jayarama Reddy presenting his book to N. Innaiah  
11.8.02 FARA Convention, Hyderabad



sitting N. Inniah, K. Vilson



Rationalist study camp  
from right Innaiah, Malladi Subbamma, Ravipudi Venkatadri



Dr. P.M. Bhargava, Jayaprakash Narayan, Innaiah,  
Center for Inquiry meet,  
19th Feb 2006, Hyderabad



Innaiah with Manoj Dutt (sitting 4th middle) and others,  
25th Feb 2006, RH Office, Kolkata





Mrs. Jyothi Narasimharao, Innaiah, Komala



N. Innaiah, Avula Manjulatha  
Mahila Vocational Junior College, First Annual Day 11.8.01,  
at Malladi Subbamma Center



In Vidyaniketan Tirupati, N. Innaiah,  
Mohan Babu (Cene producer)  
Tummala Gopalarao, C Narasimharao



N. Innaiah with Phulagenda Sinha, in Washington DC  
who published missing verses of Bhagavadgeetha



with Colleagues of Komala Ms Qamrunnisa,  
Ms Christina, Mr Vacha,  
Innaiah



submitting demands to Mr K.Rosaiah, Minister.  
sitting 1st Sambasiva Rao, 2nd Innaiah,  
standing T.V.Rao, C.L.N.Gandhi





Komala, Innaiah with family friend Mr S.V.Pantulu



in Jana Vijnana Vedica Meeting  
P.M. Bhargava, N. Innaiah



Dr. Yelavarthi Ramaraju (Chicago), Innaiah, Komala



Jayaprakash Narayan Inaugurating Alaska Centre,  
behind Innaiah, Bhaskara Rao



Innaiah with Wilson, Jayadev, Ankamma, Ongole



Innaiah, Komala, Prof T.V Subbarao (Open University),  
Mrs. Subba Rao



Left Ramesh, Muralidhar, Innaiah, Raghavulu (CPM),  
M. Subba Rao, Raju (JVV)



Mr S V Raju, editor Freedom First;  
Mr V K Sinha (editor New Quest), Innaiah in Bombay



Innaiah, Kiran, Tori Nimmagadda, Komala



Komala, Innaiah, Dr. Vijaya, Gogineni Krishnarao,





Surendrababu, Innaiah, Jayaprakashnarayan, T.V. Rao, Premanand



Innaiah presenting books to Venkatadri Ravipudi



Innaiah with lifelong friend Venigalla Venkataratnam



Dr Subhas Babu (family Doctor), Innaiah



Innaiah discussing with Tasleema at her residence, Kolkata, 24th Feb 2006



Majlis Muslims attacked Taslima in Press Club, Hyderabad, 2008, Innaiah tried to shield her





Savitri, Innaiah, Medapati Satyanarayana Reddy, family friends



Innaiah with Ravi Prakash (TV9 channel CEO)  
T V Rao (Janavignana Vedica leader)



Innaiah, D.V.Narasaraju (humanist, Cene writer)



Innaiah, Dr. Narla Mohan Das & Kamala in Silican Vally, USA



Innaiah, Ms. & Mr. Diven Merideth, Mr. Mohan Cherukuri  
for discussing about Evelyn Trent in Palm gardens, Los Angeles



Innaiah discussing with Philip Klass, about UFO in DC  
(1992)



meeting with rationalists in St Louis (1992)



Meeting Abid Hussain (Indian Ambassador in USA,  
Washington DC. in his office Innaiah, Komala



left sitting 2nd Lavanam (atheist), Mr Patri (from Orissa), Innaiah  
in humanist conference, Detroit, USA (1994)



In Ghent, Belgium, Rohit, Innaiah,  
Sonia Eggrix president of IHEU & Frederic, youth leader





Fred Edwords,  
Editor, Humanist Magazine  
(monthly)  
Innaiah in Amherest,  
US 1992



Innaiah, Avula Vijayarao  
in Syracuse, USA



Thomas Szasz (writer of Myth of Mental Illness)  
Psychiatrist in Syracuse, USA, Innaiah



Innaiah, Ed Doerr,  
President American Humanist Association, DC



receiving distinguished  
award in TANA function 1997, Los Angeles, USA  
from Akkineni Nageswara Rao



Innaiah, Komala, Ashok (broadcaster),  
Voice of America Center, D.C.





Innaiah, Tariq, Mr. Warren, Aramallu Purnachandra  
in NewYork



Christophr Hitchens, Innaiah, Naveena



Mr. Ron, Mrs. Ellen Johnson  
(president American Atheist Association) Interviewed Innaiah  
in T V Studio, Staton Island , New York



Robert C. North (Author of M.N. Roy Mission in China), Innaiah  
in Stanford University, 1998



Innaiah with Texas Telugu association persons in Dallas  
 left second Mr Thotakura Prasad, Tana elected president.  
 Innaiah with Jodhpur coat,  
 next is Mr Anant Mallavarapu, organiser of TEX



Innaiah, Mr and Ms Diven Merideth, Gogineni Krishnarao  
 in Los Angeles



John Holiday (Husband of Jung Chang), Jung Chang, Innaiah



Dr Stuart Jordan, (retired from NASA as astronomer) and  
Dr N.Innaiah in Washington DC, on Dec 3, 2010



Seerna Sokalomer, Innaiah, Leonard (WASH leader)  
on 26th Feb in Maryland



with Aramalla Purnachandra, Tirupathi Reddy, Innaiah  
Long Island, Newyork



Dr. Nirmala, Rajakaranam, Innaiah



Levi Fragil (IHEU leader), P.M.Bhargava (scientist), Innaiah





Innaiah, Sibnarayan Ray (writer, Biography of M.N.Roy  
on 25th Feb 2006 in Kolkata



Innaiah, Samaren Roy (writer of Restless Brahmin)  
25th Feb 2006, Kolkata



Chinese delegates, Paul Kurtz, Innaiah  
in CFI conference, Amherst, USA

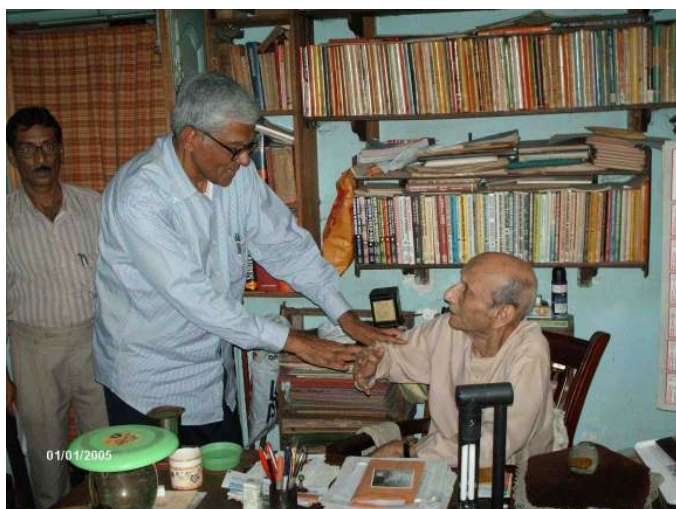


(right) Innaiah with (center) Richard Dawkins (scientist in  
Amherst), New York during Center for Inquiry Conference





Innaiah, Sam Harris (author of End of Faith)  
in Amherst, USA



Innaiah greetings  
Susheel Mukherji (publisher of Minerva Associates)



Innaiah, Fred Edwards editor Humanist



Sonia Eggrix, Frederik (humanist leaders)  
Innaiah in guest lunch meet in Belgium, 9th July,



Tom Flynn (editor Free Inquiry )  
Aramalla Purnachandra, Innaiah in Rochester, Newyork



Robert Frykenberg (author of Guntur District), Innaiah in Madison,  
Wisconsin, USA.



Innaiah, Paul Kurtz



Innaiah talking to Carl Sagan during the conference of the Effect of  
Planet Mars Approaching Near Earth,  
Washington DC (1995)



Warren Allen Smith  
(compiler of Who is Who in Hell),  
Innaiah  
in New York



Oliver B. Roy  
(who claimed Chancellor of  
International California  
University which is non  
existent in Fremont Avenue,  
San Francisco  
at his residence)  
Innaiah





**During 75th Birthday with my family members**

Innaiah, Hemanth (son-in-law), Raju (son), Naveena (daughter), Komala (wife), Rohit (grand son), Rahul (grand son), Leila (grand daughter), Zola (grand daughter)



**75th Birthday gift presented by Shalini Boddu**

# *50th Wedding Anniversary of Innaiah and Komala*



## **with family members**

Raju (son), Kim (daughter - in-law), Rahul (grandson), Zola (grand daughter), Komala, Innaiah, Leila (grand daughter), Naveena (daughter), Hemanth (son-in-law), Rohit (grandson)