

Seeker of Scientific Truth

Volume - III



INNAIAH NARISSETTI

Biographies

- South India to North America Journey of Journalist
- Evelyn Trent Alias Shantidevi

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Innaiah Narisetti

**SEEKER OF
SCIENTIFIC TRUTH
Volume - III**

Biographies

Innaiah Narisetti

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South India
to
North America
Journey of Journalist

Narisetti Innaiah

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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 Ven

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 25th of January and in Mutlur village on the 3rd 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

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. Gn

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

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 (1st year –

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.

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

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

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 Durgaiiah 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.

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 Narasaraju'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.

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.

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

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,

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 Venkateswar

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.

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.

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 Sundaraiah 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

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 y

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 G

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

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.

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 Govindarajaulu 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

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.

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

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

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 Visakahaptnam 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 Maharanipet 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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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 Chir

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

BEYOND RELIGION

Taslima Nasrin was born to Rajab Ali and Idul Ara in the town of Mymensingh on the 25th 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

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*

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

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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 rev

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.

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.

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.

