

aa no bhadrah kratavo yantu visvatah
Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.

—Rig Veda 1-89-i

My Tryst with Destiny

Autobiography of Dr. V. Parameshvara

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Foreword

Dr. V. Parameshvara is a great life in our times. This beautiful and touching tale of the journey of this man of medicine through the wilderness of life's experience tells us that it is not the aggrandizement of the personal life and achievements of an individual, howsoever otherwise great, but really, and in a non-trivial sense, the story of transformation of our society through those significant decades after India's independence. The story is presented in the background of the life and work of a man who practiced the art and science of healing with a sense of an impersonal love for mankind. Dr. Parameshvara himself says "This book is not so much about the author as it is about the time and values of his life.... There has been a see-saw change in the social and of social behavior in Indian Society over a period of time."

Indeed, no profession has changed more during the past decades as has the profession of Medicine. The impact of technological innovations in diagnosis and treatment have increasingly distanced the doctor from the patient. The increasing impersonalisation of the practice of medicine has enhanced the commercial element in medical practice leading to the dismal situation of a doctor always keeping in mind the possibility of his own patient turning against him. The result is that there is enormous amount of negative practice of subjecting the patient to unnecessary and expensive tests, not so much in the interest of the patient but more in the interests of doctor's own protection against a potential litigation. Negative practice and the amount of money paid to buy malpractice insurance have assumed scandalous proportions.

The first decades of 21st century will see the most stunning developments in human genetics. All our ideas of health and disease will be turned on their heads.

American *Time* in one of the issues published a lead article titled “2045 : the year in which Man attained immortality” says that the spurt in human life-span will enable men to live for 400 years and more. Raymond Kruzweil and Dr. Terry Grossman posited that even with our present knowledge of Human physiology we can “add one year to our life span every year”. The prediction is that in the 21st century the Technological Research will be 20000 times that we saw in the 20th century. Convergences in the field of knowledge will be spectacular. Indeed, in the last decade alone two Nobel prizes in Medicine went to two physicists.

The message of Dr. Parameshvara’s professional life, which is in itself a celebrated ideal, is that ethics in and efficiency of medical practice are not antagonistic to each other but are inevitable concomitants. Dr. Parameshvara makes this statement of faith “The philosophy of medical practice was not entirely commercial, but should be available to one and all discharged with compassion and concern. It is also possible that medical practice, being knowledge driven, does not cost the doctor materially to give free medical advice and consultation. Medicine after all is not equated with other professions; society has placed it on a higher pedestal.”

Dr. Parameshvara’s life and career have been shining examples of a total dedication to the larger vision of the medical profession as a means of service to humanity. The “Dr. Parameshvara Charitable Trust” and the “The Sharada Dhanvanthri Charitable Trust” and the humanitarian services they have undertaken are legendary.

A research study in Ayurveda was sponsored by Dr. Parameshvara in collaboration with Prof. S.K. Ramachandra Rao for a systematic and comprehensive study of Ayurvedic literature. The full set of “Encyclopedia of Indian Medicine” was released in April 2005. On this occasion, Dr. Parameshvara expressed his joy and said “My life’s ambition to offer something solid and enriching for posterity had been fulfilled.”

India's health care scenario is grim. Scientific research in medicine is not impressive or adequate. Owing to cost constraints, we cannot afford to buy high technology either. In some areas of health care therefore, prevention is the only cure. Health care today has virtually been converted into medical-care. Preventive health care has not been given due recognition and importance. Indeed, in the area of high incidence of diabetes alone, unless there is a genetic break-through in the treatment, by 2020, India which has the largest and fastest growing diabetic population, may need 450 million Haemo-dialyses each year. There are equally deep and disturbing concerns in other areas of health care.

Dr. Parameshvara started his life's journey from pastoral background on the banks of River Tunga in the Malnad area of the old state of Mysore. His journey took him to Mysore for medical education and to Guntur for the Master's. He achieved success and fame by sheer dint of commitment to the welfare of the people. He combined highest ethics and the highest professional standards and commanded a large practice with highest standards of professional expertise and ethics. He became the National President of IMA. Many honours and recognitions came his way, including the celebrated "Dr. BC Roy Award". But all this success and honours sit lightly on his shoulders. He continues to be the same gracious and kind gentleman he has always known to be. Such lives are rare and shining pole stars for the inspiration of others. They also serve to expiate by their grim, and often cruel, self discipline and self denial, the short-comings and sins of lesser men in their calling.

I deem it an honour to be invited to subscribe this 'Foreword' to the beautiful tale of the life of a great man and a great doctor whose inspiring life will surely touch the hearts of the readers.

Bangalore
29th June 2013.

MN Venkatachaliah



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Sotto Voce

Several fellow professionals and friends have for long been pressing me to pen my memoirs. Some of them have been proactive in urging me to put down in writing my experiences, thoughts and events in life. Notable among them are the *late* Prof. S.K. Ramachandra Rao, my brother, Prof. V. Narahari, my younger son Dr. Ashvin Vishwanath and eminent colleagues especially across the north and west of the country.

Ashvin's interest is to know about my childhood and early days, the scenario of pre-Independent India as we saw and the cascading events leading to India's independence.

My conviction of not to tell the whole truth would be self deceptive. This I attribute to my reading of the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi and writings of Dr. D.V. Gundappa. I posed this moral issue as the stumbling block to Prof. S.K. Ramachandra Rao. Rao replied that this is a dilemma that every writer faces and somehow gets over it either by minimizing or putting across the not too great qualities of persons and incidents in a lighter vein. This was a vital exit point from an erudite and experienced scholar.

After going through the autobiography of some notable Kannada writers, some of whom I knew personally, I was emboldened to write these pages. Unpleasant moments and incidents that might cause embarrassment have been scrupulously shortshrifed. At the same time, attempts to suppress the truth are minimal.

Great details about difficulties one faces in life, particularly in the early days, would appear like asking for sympathy and may not go down well with

readers. Moreover, they are part of circumstances and social environment of bygone days—neither good or bad.

The writing itself is not so much about the author, as it is about the time and values of his life spanning over a period of seven decades. There has been a sea change in society and of social behaviour in the Indian ethos over a period of time. This book is an explicit descriptive catalogue of events and pertains to the periods and social background of those times and is not intended to be judgmental.

I have attempted to narrate facts without bias. Yet, if the reader feels otherwise, I may be forgiven if I don't plead guilty. Man after all is neither totally good nor totally bad; he is a bit of both and no two men are alike .

Basic human instincts are permanently coded but attitudes and reactions keep changing with changing values and circumstances in the environment. Survival is a basic instinct. The quest to be secure is natural; to fulfill one's ambition is individualistic and everyone has the right to improve one's prospects in life. In the process, to curb jealousy is difficult. Heartburn hurts the one who is jealous more than the one he is envious of. Man being a social animal owes a responsibility to fellow beings. This is an area which is less and less appreciated with changing times. Social debt is a responsibility everyone should shoulder. Many events do not find mention and details of those mentioned are kept at a minimum, except for events which mandate it.

Age and lapse of time have taken their toll. Many incidents are forgotten or vaguely remembered. Experiences with several persons have faded, even a few whom I knew well cannot be recalled. The work probably suffers from lack of accurate date of events on many an occasion. Had it not been so, it would have lent more credence to the narration. This despite maintaining records, files and documents covering over half a century.

A serious lapse on my part is in not having maintained a diary. This is a regrettable lapse. A diary speaks more eloquently than man and events. The

habit of maintaining a diary and preserving it should start early in life and continue throughout one's life.

Writing this autobiography took me about two years (from 6th November 2006 to 10th November 2008). A few later events have been added subsequently. The undue time is primarily due to my not being able to spare adequate time in view of commitments, professional demands, preparing scientific presentations, attending conferences, public meetings and social programmes. It was handwritten as I could jot down piecemeal during free time.

My wife, Nalini was of immense help in taking down dictation, write down from my notes, fine turning the language and reducing to the right format, and correcting the typed script over and over again. Stupendous effort, which Nalini did diligently with interest, patience and perseverance. The credit for the compilation is largely due to her application.

We are grateful to Journalist Sri. S.N. Chandrasekhar, who took immense pains, effort and time in going through the manuscript and suggesting the desired corrections with finesse.

My secretary Smt. B.R. Jayashree has worked hard, tirelessly and with diligence in neatly typing this script with patience and dedication.

Justice M.N.Venkatachalaiah, the 25th Chief Justice of India, former Chairman of Human Rights Commission and on the Advisory Board of Foundation for Restoration of National Values, is a jewel in the crown of India. A doyen of the Judiciary, a man of supreme intellect, eminence, exemplary persona with erudite mastery over the English language, has written the 'FOREWORD' is indeed my good fortune ! I am singularly honoured and deeply beholden to Justice M.N.Venkatachaliah.

Professor L.S. Seshagiri Rao, former Professor of Postgraduate Department of English, Bangalore University, recipient of several prestigious awards is regarded as an authority on the epic, the novel and literary criticism and has

authored several books in English and Kannada. I deem it a great privilege to have him pen the Epilogue. The concise text is an exercise in excellence of language and content. I am deeply grateful to Professor Seshagiri Rao.

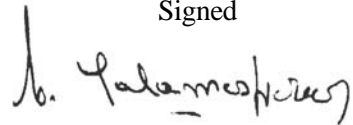
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan has over the years become the centre of my social endeavours. I am grateful to Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for evincing interest in my autobiography. Sri. H.N. Suresh, its dynamic Director, has given his guidance and whole-hearted assistance at every step in the process of its preparation. I am deeply indebted to Sri. H.N. Suresh, Deputy Director Sri. C.N. Ashok Kumar, the Bhavan and its dedicated staff.

Sri. H.R. Ananth, the youthful Managing Director of THE BANGALORE PRESS is a powerhouse of talent, zest and dedication, has offered to print and undertake the Publication of the book through the prestigious *BAPPCO*. Sri. Ananth has put his heart and soul in giving the finishing touch to it.

The finished product is a testimony to his craft of elegance and excellence! I am deeply touched and feel indebted to him.

And, last but not by any means the least of this labour of love finds favour with the reader, the purpose is served.

Signed



Of Memories and Milestones

Life presents you a blank sheet of paper, luring the moving finger of time to write on it. What is written is determined from the time one becomes aware of oneself as a person, his dreams, aspirations, DNA, environment, family, skill inherent and acquired and destiny which impacts in ways beyond one's control.

Born into an economically sound and enlightened family where girls got treated better than boys, I seized all avenues that were offered, and achieved the unthinkable by graduating from Madras Medical College, later specializing from the same Alma Mater. Destiny played its winsome role, getting me married to the dashing and articulate Dr.V. Parameshvara. That was nearly 51 years ago ! The credit for this enduring partnership rests entirely with my husband, I myself being pretty naïve, and lending only core values and common sense into the marriage. My husband has been caring, understanding, kind with loads of patience and understated sense of humor. It was much later that I learnt the ropes and became a devoted wife and his ideal public relations officer.

As a parent, Dr. Parameshvara is awesome. Our daughter, Aparna considers him her Icon and confirms that imitation is the best form of admiration with an abiding faith in the divine and pursuit of broad academic horizons. Our younger son, Ashvin has inherited his brilliance and ploughed it into his chosen field and risen to become the Professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of California. What amazes Ashvin is the huge number of people whose lives his distinguished father has impacted.

Our family has been no different from others with its share of good and bad times. The good times have been treated as precious gifts, shared happily with others. Dr. Parameshvara has adroitly tided over the bad patches with his resources and enormous goodwill from society which he has served with

his medical acumen, compassion and without discrimination between the 'haves and have-nots'. His constant refrain has been that medicine has no religion and every person is entitled to quality medical care. Another favorite quote of his is that he admires only those who are productive to society and have commitment to fellow beings.

My husband's sojourn in Great Britain, obtaining the coveted Membership of the Royal College of Physicians of London, was a game changer. It transformed him into a classy physician, distinctively superior with British bedside manners. In fact, the polishing of the diamond had been complete.

Indeed, he is unique in that he gives more than he receives—definition of a gentleman. Winner on all fronts, as a life partner, a parent, a physician and a friend, he is generous to a fault as his children will testify, children who always approached him, especially when it came to books which he encouraged them to buy, considering as he did as an investment—another quote of my husband—knowledge is power.

Yes, it is his wit and knowledge beyond the realms of medicine that has made him a treasured person to be with. Dr. Parameshvara's prowess as a consultant physician and cardiologist is legendary as he is now in his 60th year of practice. Holding high posts in his specialty organizations, his foray in academics, his philanthropic institutions are touched upon in his autobiography. Even to this day, he keeps himself updated by reading and writing on medical topics.

My husband is a complex person with an enduring edifice of character. Excellence has been his password. A doctor for all seasons, practicing medicine without boundaries. Blessed by his patients, admired by his peers and friends, loved and held in high esteem by his family—Dr. V. Parameshvara in my opinion is a 'Colossus'.

by—**Dr. (Mrs.) Nalini Parameshvara**

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