

# Celebrities All

**A. PRASANNA KUMAR**

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To  
My Uncle  
Dr. A.N. Rao



## Preface

This is a small collection of 22 articles, some of them published to mark an occasion. They relate to different fields and since they were written over a period of fifteen years there may not be a logical connection among the subjects covered.

I cannot adequately thank Sri P. S. Rangaswamy retired assistant editor of Indian Express not only for publishing some of these articles but also for the way he guided me in my journalistic endeavours. His worthy successor Mr. R. Sampath, the present News Editor of the Express at Vijayawada has given me as much encouragement as Mr. Rangaswamy had done and to Mr. Sampath I am deeply beholden for publishing many of these articles.

Mr. Bapu in whom one finds a rare blend of genius and generosity has graciously sent me the cover design within twenty four hours of my request for it. My grateful thanks to him and to my friends Professors N. Krishna Rao and T. Ramesh Dutta for their interest in my work and for offering valuable suggestions.

I am thankful to the editors of Indian Express, Deccan Chronicle and Swarajya for permitting me to publish the articles in book form. Mr. K. Ananda Mohan has permitted me to use his article in this collection and I am thankful to him also.

Kunduri Enterprises have carried out the publication of this work for which I am indebted. I will be failing in my duty if I do not thank Mr. Appa Rao for typing the articles before they were sent to press.

I am deeply beholden to Shri M. Hidayatullah, His Excellency the Vice-President of India, for his gracious foreword.

Waltair,  
May 1983

**A. PRASANNA KUMAR**

## Foreword

“Celebrities All” is a collection of 22 articles on eminent persons written by Professor A. Prasanna Kumar, Professor and Head of the Department of Politics and Public Administration, Andhra University, Waltair. Some of these articles have already been published in newspapers and weeklies.

The nation is today enjoying the fruits of the hard work of a noble band of our countrymen in various spheres of human activity. This volume contains articles on some of them. These great men and women have played a leading role in our national renaissance. Their labour and sacrifices have brought benefits not only to their own but also to succeeding generations. It is our good fortune that some of them are still with us and rendering valuable service to the motherland.

This volume, I have no doubt, shall help to bring the lives and work of these eminent personalities before our people and inspire them to emulate their great qualities.

**M. HIDAYATULLAH**  
His Excellency  
the Vice-President of India

## **A word about the second edition**

*Celebrities All*, a compilation of published articles, was brought out in the summer of 1983. Sri Babu responded to my request with characteristic promptness and kindness by sending the cover-design. Shri M.Hidayatullah, His Excellency the Vice-President of India, graciously sent a foreword to it. The small publication was gratefully dedicated to my uncle Dr A.N.Rao who was literally a Lakshmana in serving his brother and my father, Ramamurti and taking protective care of us after my father's premature death.

The Mahaswami of Kanchi, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swamikal, was pleased to accept and leaf through a copy of the book when it was submitted to him on September 14, 1983 at Kurnool where he was then camping. Several printing errors that had crept into the first edition have now been corrected thanks to Sri V.Seetaramaiah, Sri M.Varahalu Chetty and Prof M.S.Rama Murthy. The advice of some well wishers and friends and the enthusiasm of the ever-cheerful Sri M.K.Kumar of Sathyam Offset Imprints and his able assistant Smt. Kiranmayi to bring out a second edition of it prompted me to undertake this small venture, in the hope, of course, that readers will find time, at least, to glance through it.

**A.Prasanna Kumar**

Visakhapatnam

May 2010

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## **The Saints of Thiruvaiyaru**

### **SRI THYAGARAJA**

The two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Sri Thyagaraja has been celebrated all over the country. Thyagaraja brought divine music down to earth to sing in praise of his Ishta Deivam, Sri Rama whose lotus feet he reached in his 88<sup>th</sup> year. It is said that the Ramayana will be there as long as the great rivers flow and the mountains exist. Like the Ramayana, this great devotee of Rama will also live for ever. It is believed that Thyagaraja was a reincarnation of Sage Valmiki. Valmiki wrote 24,000 slokas in praise of Rama. Legend says that Thyagaraja composed 24,000 kritis!

Thyagaraja was named after the presiding deity of Thiruvaiyaru, Lord Thyagarajaswami. From his devoutly religious parents he as a boy learnt the kirtanas of Jayadeva, Purandaradasa and Bhakta Ramadas. Later he also learnt at the feet of Vidwan Sonti Venkataramanayya. With the presentation of Swaraarnavam by Sage Narada, Thyagaraja's genius began to blossom. But the bhakta in him gained the upper hand over the musical genius. For the humble Thyagaraja, music was a means to salvation. If music could enrapture and ennoble the mind, it could also be a golden link between man and God.

The flow of his music, like the flow of the eternal Ganga, is majestic, serene and perennial. There is no word in his kritis that fails to express his devotion to the Lord, just as there was

no moment in his life without Rama's name. His love for Sri Rama was spontaneous and intense. At times he was the child of Rama and Sita, craving for their affection and tenderness. The child complains to Mother Sita that Father has been unnecessarily angry with him. The child even chides Rama for his indifference and tells him that he was lucky to have married Sita, who brought him glory. Sometimes he was King Dasaratha or Queen Kausalya doting on the child and lavishing on him all the affection of a parent. At other times he was like Hanuman, the Lord's most trusted servant, or like Lakshmana, always at the service of Divine Couple. But in many moments of introspection the saint-composer realized how small and helpless man was, and completely surrendered himself to God.

Honours came to his feet, but he rejected them. Wealth would have poured into his house if only he had nodded his head. A born philosopher, he overcame all the temptations of life so that he could more truly serve his Lord. At the same time, he showed the way to attain salvation through *samsaara*.

Numerous miracles are attributed to the grace of Thyagaraja. It is said that he brought back to life a pilgrim at Puttur. When Thyagaraja went to Tirumala to worship Balaji he could not have the Lord's *darshan* as it was not the appointed time. A curtain was hung in front of Lord. Thyagaraja thought within himself that what prevented him from seeing the Lord was not the curtain in front of him; the real curtain was within himself. It was the curtain of ego, of jealousy of greed and of lust. He

sang a beautiful kriti praying to Lord Venkatesa to remove this curtain from his mind. The priests soon realized that a great bhakta had come, and at once removed the curtain in front of the Lord. Dazzled by the effulgence of Balaji, Thyagaraja sang in ecstasy that “to worship Lord Venkatesa one needs ten thousand eyes”.

The saint of Thiruvaiyaru bequeathed to posterity an imperishable wealth of compositions which has been a source of solace and strength to generations of men and women.

There is also a moral from his life. He was an Andhra by birth but was born and brought up in Tamilnadu, But for the Tamilians’ care and devotion the name of Thyagaraja would not have become so well-known. Thyagaraja belongs not to any particular region but to the whole of humanity. The great saint with a kriti on his lips begged for alms in the streets of Thiruvaiyaru for his livelihood. Indeed, he begged people to know the meaning of life and worship God. Almost every home in South India, like the hallowed streets of Thiruvaiyaru, echoes the music of Thyagaraja.

( *Courtesy : Swarajya, July, 1967* )

## A SAGE AT PANDHARPUR

The journey of Pandharpur, where the great Jagadguru Chandrasekharendra Saraswati of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham is camping revealed to me the hidden beauty of our countryside unaffected by the artifacts of modern civilization. The train from Kurudwadi to Pandharpur is pretty old and the seats in the tiny compartments are very small. People, mostly pilgrims and villagers, squat on the floor in the compartments and the two hours and a half journey early in the morning was a pleasant ride through green land. This train, a curious relic of a bygone age, arrived at the sleepy Pandharpur station on the dot. Even passenger trains run on time on Central Railway!

Despite my broken Hindi, I could get the information I needed. On the train a passenger, a villager, told me that “Sri Shankaracharya Maharaj” (that is how he is called there) was staying a few miles away from the Vithala temple. Every one here spoke in Marathi making courteous enquiries about the purpose of my visit. At the station the only available transport was the tonga. The tonga driver looked as self-assured as the moustache-twirling aurto-rickshaw driver of Delhi. He dumped people and luggage in his ramshackle cart and drove away lecturing to the crowded passengers on a variety of subjects ranging from the dangers of traveling in buses to the glory of Lord Vitthala. Offloading me at a hotel, he drove off with a nonchalance that conveyed his dominance in the realm of transportation in Pandharpur.

An hour later I allowed myself to be taken care of by another tongawalla who offered to take me to ‘Sri Shankaracharya Maharaj’ and bringing me back to the lodge for Rs.15. He told me of the long distance he had to drive including the last lap across the bridge on the river Chandrabagh. Later, I realised that it was after all not such a long journey. As the road bridge was closed for vehicular traffic, I had to get off the tonga near the bridge and walk up nearly a mile to reach the abode of the Sage of Kanchi.

The river Chandrabagh-so named because of its crescent-shape formation at Pandharpur according to my guide, the tongawalla looked serene. Pilgrims from the Vithoba Temple on one side of the river were being ferried across to the other side for Sri Sankaracharya’s darshan. As the morning sun was briskly rising in the sky, I walked up to the abode of the Swami. It was a shed-like house. All was quiet as I entered the portion. There was an assortment of people from the south north and west. In the hall inside some devotees had been waiting since early morning for ‘His Holiness’s’ darshan. One of the inmates of the ashram was carrying messages from someone in the hall to the Swami inside. “When will the sage come out? What is the darshan time?” quietly ask a few. A little later as the number began to swell to over a hundred we were all asked to move into the front verandah where the Swami would come shortly. A line was formed and two wooden tables were arranged to regulate the queue. Two constables came in asking people to form into a

line. There came a hefty chowkidar-like person issuing instructions to the devotees.

A young girl led a chorus of devotional hymns- “Hara Hara Shankara Kaladi Shankar”. The air was filled with an atmosphere of bhakti. A young man raised his voice singing the bhajans louder than the others. There were three doors to that place and the Swami would come out through the front door at which some women and men were all ready to offer flowers, fruits and arati when he came out. Behind them was a middle-aged man who being happy to be ahead of others in the line asked his wife and daughter standing a few yards away to get behind him. He and his family had now acquired a vantage position. Minutes passed. All eyes were riveted to the front door.

Suddenly there was a mild flutter. The Swami accompanied by an assistant came out through a different door! People turned around shouting “Jai Jai Sankara”. He waved his hand gently asking every one to at once sit on the floor. His orders were instantly obeyed. The chowkidar then prostrated before the Swami. His Holiness recognizing the chowkidar smilingly greeted him by his name and the huge man rose, his face radiating happiness at the honour done to him.

The Swami then retreated to the corner of the door and sat there enabling everyone in the line to go near him to receive his blessings. One by one men, women and children went near him, prostrated and left as he gently raised his hand and blessed each

of them, making kind enquiries about their welfare. Some talked in emotion, some totally surrendered at his feet and some spoke in unconcealed innocence.

I am reminded of the incident narrated to me by an ex-official of the Indian Express. He once went to Kalavai, near Kanchi, where the Swami was staying after relinquishing the Peethadhipathyam. (I too saw him once there and it was most touching to see poor villagers explaining to “Periyaval” their worries and problems such as the loss of a dear one, daughter eloping with a married man, or son taking to liquor. The Swami would then offer them advice or guidance and they would leave, having passed on their ‘burdens’ to him). Continuing the narration, when the Express official went to the Swami, he found him totally silent. He was in a trance, the people there thought and so they sat there quietly waiting for him to look at them. A little later a poor villager came there literally sobbing and supplicating the Swami’s help for his daughter’s marriage. The Swami opened his eyes and asked him about the problem. “My daughter’s marriage is fixed. The groom’s party wants ten gold sovereigns. You must help me”.

“Where do I have the gold? What can I give you”? the Swami asked.

“You have been guiding me all through my life, how can you say no to me now? You only can help me”, he persisted.

Finding the poor fellow unrelenting, the Swami said: “You

know we are all the children of Mother Kamakshi. You go to her temple and pray. She only can help you”.

“I have no God except you I pray to you only”, he continued.

“I am telling you, go to Mother Kamakshi and pray to Her with all your heart”.

The fellow left reluctantly, tears streaming down his cheeks. The Swami was moved by the situation.

Another long spell of silence. Quite a few were there waiting anxiously to speak to him. After nearly an hour he began to hear the others. Another hour passed. The Express official got his chance to speak to him. In the meantime came a Gujarati couple. Prostrating before the Swami they offered fruits and some gold sovereigns in a plate. Looking at the plate and the gift, the Swami said that he would not accept any gifts and asked them to take the plate away.

“We took a vow that we would offer you eleven gold sovereigns for your blessings. We have been saved by your grace and we must fulfil the vow. You may do anything with them, Swami, kindly accept them,” they insisted.

Asking them to wait, the Swami enquired whether anybody there had a car. The Express man instantly said that his car was ready to go anywhere.

“You saw the poor fellow? Go to Kamakshi temple and fetch him here without telling him anything”.

In less than half an hour the car returned with the fellow still sobbing. He fell at the Swami's feet.

"Have you prayed to the mother with all your heart? The Swami asked.

"I know no prayer; I just cried before the mother", he replied.

"The Divine Mother is pleased with your prayers and take Her gift here". His Holiness pointed to the plate.

The poor fellow's face turned pink with ecstasy. He looked at the sovereigns. "I want only ten Swami, not eleven" he pleaded still sobbing, this time in joy.

"The Mother is so pleased with your prayer that She gave you one more. Take all the eleven and perform your daughter's marriage well".

There was not one there without moist eyes. To the poor fellow and the people there it was nothing but the grace of His Holiness that solved the problem. To others it might seem a miracle or just a coincidence.

I was filled with such thoughts that I stood motionless at Chandrabagh for a while after the darshan. What did I ask for? Nothing, what could I seek; what greater boon could one ask for than to be in his presence even if it was for a minute or two! As I left the place with a heavy heart I was greeted by the river, the temple on the other side of the river bank and my tongawalla friend.

In the town the Vithala temple is surrounded by a pantheon of Gods and Goddesses, which no pilgrim misses. I went to the Vithala temple. But then did not visit the cluster of other temples around. I had the darshan and blessings of a living God. As I journeyed back, my mind was filled with the memory of those few minutes when His Holiness spoke to me gently. I did not remember much of the journey part on my way back nor did I feel the fatigue of the long journey from Pandharpur to Secunderabad via Sholapur.

The great sage's small figure, his benign smile, his raised hand, blessing the devotees, his radiant face all are vivid in my memory. It seems as if I was in his great presence only a little while ago. Perhaps another such moment will be granted to me and countless people like me.

Indian Express  
December 1981

## **JAWAHARLAL NEHRU**

### **Statesman - Humanist**

It has been said of Abraham Lincoln that the longer he is dead the more he is remembered. These words can equally well be applied to Jawaharlal Nehru, who died fourteen years ago after being the undisputed leader of the world's largest democracy for about seventeen years. We miss him more now because the need for such a leader is greater now than before.

It was his and India's good fortune that he won Gandhiji's confidence. That there was something extraordinary about Nehru was evident from the fact that great men admired his qualities. Poets and men of letters like Tagore and Bernard Shaw saw in Nehru not only a great leader of people but also a great humanist. In a memorable speech Tagore stated that Nehru was a person "greater than his deeds and truer than his surroundings." Nehru, according to Tagore, kept unusually high the standards of purity in the midst of political turmoils. Gurudev observed: "He has never fought shy of truth when it was dangerous; nor made an alliance with falsehood when it would be convenient". Tagore opined that Nehru's greatest contribution in his fight for freedom was "this lofty ideal of truth".

Nehru's writings reveal quite a few interesting facets of his personality. In "A Bunch of Old Letters," a letter written by Amrita Sher Gill, the famous artist who died prematurely, is remarkable for its style and content. She received a copy of Nehru's autobiography and in her letter she wrote: "As a rule I dislike biographies and autobiographies. They ring false.

Pomposity or exhibitionism. But I think I will like yours. You are able to discard your halo occasionally. You are capable of saying ‘when I saw the sea for the first time’ when others would say ‘when the sea saw me for the first time’.”

While this refers to one quality of Nehru, an observation by Michael Brecher that Nehru imbibed Victorian disdain for ‘boorish’ and ‘immature’ America, alludes to his prejudice in certain matters. Nehru’s visits to the United States hardly “strengthened bonds of friendship between the two countries.” Nor did he hit it off well with the American Press. Nehru seldom concealed his mistrust of the Western powers. Perhaps that was due to the role played by them as colonial powers who after World War II came under America’s leadership. Added to that was the pride of Nehru-pride of India’s cultural heritage. The sweep of history overwhelmed him and he had a legitimate reason to feel that India was not inferior to any nation in the world. Brecher refers to this saying that “pride finds its most acute expression in the personality of Jawaharlal Nehru.” This was partly responsible for Nehru’s tilt toward the Soviet Union. He and Nasser, the pillars of non-alignment in South and West Asia, in a way helped the Soviet Union acquire a firm diplomatic foothold in this part of the world. Of course the main reason for Russia’s success was the so-called Dulles diplomacy.

Yet it would be totally wrong to infer that Nehru’s foreign policy was aimed against any country, Nehru was an idealist and he would never allow considerations of petty gains and meanness to enter the realm of policy-making. A classic exposition of India’s foreign policy was made by him at the

Columbia University in October 1949 where he said: “The pursuit of peace, not through alignment with any major power or group of powers, but through an independent approach to each controversial or disputed issue, the maintenance of freedom, both national and individual; the elimination of want, disease and ignorance which afflict the greater part of the world’s population.” Such a foreign policy declaration is rather uncommon. Nehru set in this declaration goals not only for India but for every nation that believed in peace and human happiness.

His spirit often soared in the skies. His idealism, unique though it was, resulted in a sort of drift in internal matters. India’s progress, economic and social, was not commensurate with the growth of prestige abroad. And in the evening of his life, a series of misfortunes occurred which broke his spirit and the back of India’s economy. None was more aware of his failures than himself. Way back in the thirties he had written anonymously an article on himself pointing out his own drawbacks and failings. It would be ridiculous to imagine that Nehru was overpowered by his ego.

Jawaharlal Nehru loved India more than its parts and the world more than India. He had unshakable faith in the spirit of man. His deep humanity and passion for peace have secured for him immortality. He belongs to mankind as much as he belongs to India, which cherishes his memory. Nehru is dead. The red rose is gone. But its fragrance never fades.

Indian Express

May 27, 1978

## **SARDAR PATEL**

### **The Great Unifier**

“The coming generations have a claim on us, who are their trustees. If we leave them only a heritage of insults and dishonour, of what use would all the wealth and all the comforts that we may leave to them be?” asked Vallabhbhai Patel in 1918. Little did he perhaps imagine then that about thirty years later he would be called upon to translate this ideal into a reality. When India became free in 1947 Patel, despite poor health, set about the task of integrating the nearly six hundred princely States with the Indian Union and, after the process of integration was completed he passed away as if the role that Destiny had accorded him was over. It was integration without bloodshed, unparalleled in modern history and for that Patel was hailed as the Bismarck of India. In fact it was equally rightly observed that if Patel had come on the historical scene earlier than Bismarck the latter might have been called the Sardar of Germany.

Karl Jaspers, the great German philosopher, described the national statesman as one who facilitates the growth of future generations and does not allow ideologies to limit his horizon. This description aptly suits the Sardar who with Jawaharlal Nehru was confronted with the gigantic task of consolidating India’s hard earned freedom and laying the foundations of a stable and healthy democracy. That too at a time when the country was entangled in a series of crises and calamities

including the assassination of the Father of the Nation. It was India's good fortune that there were two great leaders-Nehru and Patel-to lead the nation from chaos to stability.

No tribute could be too high to the outstanding role played by the Sardar during those crucial forty months after freedom was won. Patel displayed statesmanship of a high order when he called upon the British officials, whose services were needed by India, not to prepare to retire but to get ready to serve the new nation with a new commitment. His support for the civil services was largely responsible for the inclusion of Article 311 in the Constitution and this article provides certain safeguards for the civil servants.

The secret of Patel's success as an administrator lay in the fact that he picked up right men for the right jobs and never interfered with their functioning after giving them the necessary guidelines. He seldom looked for scapegoats when his policy failed but was ready to own up responsibility for any lapses that might have occurred in the implementation of his policy. Lord Mountbatten praised this quality of Patel thus: "What I admired was his ability to acknowledge gracefully when he was in the wrong, for this is the sure sign of a big man."

Of great significance and of more lasting value to the nation was the way he achieved the merger of the princely States with the Union. For this act of statesmanship he was rightly hailed as the 'great unifier'. Patel used both pressure and persuasion as

the main instruments in achieving his goal. Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir posed serious threat to national integrity and security. The manner in which Sardar Patel tackled these complex issues has been elaborately described by men close to him like V.P.Menon and V.Shankar in books as well as articles.

A very interesting incident that took place during that fateful week when Indian troops were ordered to repel Pakistani invasion was narrated by P.B.Gajendragadkar in his Patel memorial lectures in 1967. The Kashmir Prime Minister, Mahajan, air-dashed to Delhi to impress on Nehru and Patel gravity of the situation and the need for immediate action by India. He wanted to convey to Nehru and Patel the anxiety of the Maharaja to accede to India, Explaining the problem to Nehru and Patel, Mahajan told Nehru that he had orders to go to Pakistan if the Indian Government's help was not immediately forthcoming. This infuriated Nehru who at once said, "Go away, Mahajan". As Mahajan was about to leave the room, Patel stopped him and gently said, "Of course, Mahajan, you are not going to Pakistan". That typical Patel remark put the issue beyond doubt and several momentous decisions followed soon after and thanks to Sheikh Abdullah, Nehru and Patel, Pakistan was prevented from grabbing the whole of Kashmir.

With Gandhiji Patel had a long and close association that lasted over thirty years. The Mahatma was so attached to Patel that he once said that Patel's affection for him reminded him of his dear mother's affection. Patel declared a week before

Gandhiji's death that whatever qualities he had were derived from Gandhiji. Nehru expressed the view that in the "whole of India Gandhiji has had no more loyal colleague than Vallabhbhai." Yet Patel never hesitated to oppose the Mahatma's views or policies when he felt that his master was in error. In fact, Patel in his last years regretted that many were trying to exploit the Mahatma's goodness for their own advantage. Gandhiji himself questioned at times the wisdom of Patel's actions but never did he question his honesty. The Mahatma, who knew that Patel could be ruthless in the pursuit of his goal, once warned: "Heaven help those who cross the Sardar's path." Gandhiji and observed with characteristic shrewdness that Nehru was a thinker, Patel a doer!

Karl Jaspers says that the statesman stands at the frontier of humanity, at a place where someone must stand, so that all may live. Such a statesman was Sardar Patel, who was born on October, 30.

Indian Express  
February 30, 1976

## **SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN**

It was in the summer of 1952 that I met Dr.Radhakrishnan for the first time. My uncle, the late K.Iswara Dutt, a friend and admirer of Radhakrishnan since 1917 when Radhakrishnan was teaching philosophy at the Government Arts College, Rajahmundry, took me to the just then elected Vice-President of India. Radhakrishnan's reputation was particularly high then for his famous meeting with Stalin. When he patted Stalin on his back and exhorted him to take care of his health, Stalin, it seems, shed tears. The world was surprised that even Stalin could be sentimental.

At his residence that summer evening when we called on Radhakrishnan, he was talking to Danish visitors. Whenever there was a lull in the conversation, Radhakrishnan would either hum or sing gently to himself Thyagaraja kritis. I heard him hum Thyagaraja's "Chakkaniraajamaargamu". In January 1953 he came to Machilipatnam to unveil the statue of my father at the Andhra Scientific Company. He was with us for a whole day. I again heard him hum Thyagaraja kritis. Thyagaraja seemed to fascinate him. I thought that he liked "Nidhi chaala sukhamaa" most.

He made a number of inquiries of that great journalist K.Ramakotiswara Rao. When Ramakotiswara Rao called on him in the evening, Radhakrishnan patted him on the back and they spent some time discussing journalism. The District Collector came in to ask whether the Vice-President would like to travel

by the night passenger train or the morning mail to Waltair. “I shall go by the passenger. That would give me some time to prepare my convocation address”. At Waltair the following day he delivered one of the most brilliant convocation addresses at Andhra University. Incidentally Radhakrishnan gave his first convocation address at Andhra University in 1927.

As he was stepping into the car before leaving Machilipatnam a young man held out an autograph book with a request that Radhakrishnan should give his autograph in Telugu. Wearing a smile on his lips Radhakrishnan obliged him with the remark, “You think I cannot do it. Here it is”. He had a phenomenal memory. He would call everyone he knew or met by name and would make personal enquiries about his health and welfare.

As the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha he was reputed to have conducted the business as though the House was a class-room. He once told us that he had no difficulty in his relations with the members of the ruling party or opposition. He spoke highly of Andhra MPs, particularly of Narla Venkateswara Rao and P.Sundarayya. During his visit to India the British Prime Minister, Mr. Anthony Eden, was invited to address a joint session of Parliament. Referring to Dr.Radhakrishnan’s speech on that occasion, Eden said, “Few Englishmen could match his eloquence. I certainly could not and felt rather like a little boy stumbling across a ploughed field after a leveret has shown its swift light paces.”

Radhakrishnan's global reputation cannot be adequately described in an article like this. An American author called him "a Minister to and for Humanity". Charles Moore described him as 'the Thomas Aquinas of the modern age'. The words of Arnold Toynbee are memorable. Said the historian of the philosopher-statesman: "He has opened up a way - a characteristically Indian way - for the present generation, all over the world, to follow."

When Radhakrishnan visited the United States twelve years ago, elaborate arrangements to welcome the Indian President were made under the personal supervision of President Kennedy. But an unseasonal shower upset the arrangements at the airport. When Kennedy referred to this Radhakrishnan replied. "We cannot control the course of events, but we can control our attitude to them."

A great era has come to an end with the passing of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. In the evening of his life Radhakrishnan must have recalled the words of Bertrand Russell:

Now, if I sleep

I shall sleep fulfilled.

Sunday Standard

April 20, 1975

## **HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAY**

From Kakinada where he spoke in honour of the great Sri Sri, Harindranath Chattopadhyay came to Waltair to catch the plane. During his stopover he spoke at Andhra University. It was a 40 minute spell of evocatively brilliant verse, an ensemble of poetry, humour, action and emotion, only a Harindranath can offer. Probably the university relived for a while, brief though, the spirit of those halcyon days when Rabindranath Tagore sang verses and Ramanand Chatterjee discoursed on philosophy under the chairmanship of the then Vice-Chancellor, Dr.Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, in the thirties. Or probably the spirit of those times when Dr.C.R.Reddy's matchless powers of oratory held the audience spellbound in the halls of the university. Or one was reminded of the not so distant past when Prof.K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar enriched the young minds with his mellifluous voice and massive scholarship. Why all this nostalgia, one may ask. Necessary because, as Harindranath said during his speech, we tend to forget the past, the great past, too soon.

I first heard Harindranath Chattopadhyay in Delhi in 1952, after he was elected to the first Lok Sabha from the Vijayawada constituency at a function got up in honour of Vice-President Radhakrishnan by the Andhra Association of Delhi. It was a gathering of eminent personages. Harindranath and his nephew Dr.Jaisoorya. It was poetry vs prose, the lively verse of the poet and the gorgeous diction of the doctor. It is hard to say which carried the day ultimately for Dr.Radhakrishnan's silver-tongued

oratory came at the end as the fitting finale, after Tenneti Visvanadham embellished the proceedings with a beautiful speech in Telugu. Leading journalists like K.Rama Rao, K.Iswara Dutt and Narla Venkateswara Rao were present. Andhra glory in the Capital of India! Harindranath, however, sent the big gathering into peals of laughter. He recited from his *Curd Seller*:

“My wife has a baby,  
The baby is divine,  
People congratulate me,  
I hope the child is mine.”

And when we chased him for an autograph he wrote:

“It makes me weep,  
it makes me laugh  
To know  
You want my autograph”.

That was nearly 30 years ago when I was young and Harindranath was not old.

Today Harindranath is 82 years young, almost twice my age. And not many people half my age would have the enthusiasm and zeal of the grand old man of letters. He stood erect, except when feeling overpowered him, when he rested his hand on the nearby lectern. He spoke like a revolutionary and cried like a child. “See through your eye not with the eye,” he recalled Blake’s words. “I am young in spirit though my body may have grown old,” he added. Emphasizing the need for

discipline he said discipline does not mean giving up pleasures of life. “Enjoy the pleasures of life but let pleasures not enjoy your life,” he quipped. Talking on love he said that before 50 it is all “falling” and real love starts after one is 50 “Love love...hate hate...” he exhorted. He recalled how his verse embarrassed members of Parliament. He once joked that the blacker the blackmarketers, the whiter were their white caps.

Harin ‘strayed’ into politics. Public service is, after all, in his blood. Moreover, have poets not been the unacknowledged legislators of mankind? One felt infinitely younger, at least in spirit, in the presence of this irrepressible veteran. A whiff of fresh air of good old times from a young man of 82.

Indian Express  
March 16, 1980

## **M. CHALAPATHI RAU**

True to his promise that he ‘would hop on to Visakhapatnam from Hyderabad’ after a meeting there, Mr.M.Chalapathi Rau came here on a three-day stay to see the loveliness of the sea which he loves dearly. MC’s brother, Mr.Rukhmangada Rao of Andhra University, provided for him accommodation in a hotel by the seaside where MC spent hours in communion with the sea. “No meetings please, I have, come to see the sea which I love,” he turned down our requests. “The sea is vast, you are great and we are too small to interrupt your silent dialogue with it, please reconsider,” I said. But much to the disappointment of his admirers and friends he did not agree, though he talked to people, of all ages and hues, with his characteristic patience and affection. “I was born here and I know and like this place well,” he replied when someone suggested that he might see important places.

It was a rewarding experience to listen to this doyen among our journalists whom Mrs. Indira Gandhi described as “not only a great editor but a lovable human being”. It is his innate goodness that is lovable in MC who at the age of 70 promptly replies to letters in his own hand, quietly listens to others’ views and is charmingly courteous to those who visit him. Few people know that he was born here and that he practised at the local bar for about a year before taking to journalism. Iswara Dutt whom MC affectionately remembers as ‘one of my mentors’ wrote that MC took to journalism “without the intention of being a journalist”.

Iswara Dutt, known as ID, wrote long ago that MC was a voracious reader, his range of reading was vast from ancient classics to Marxism..... “He is many things rolled into one (writer of prose and verse, satirist, columnist, leader-writer).....particularly two things: he is both a craftsman and crusader.” I referred to MC being present for nearly an hour as the mortal remains of Iswara Dutt were consigned to flames at Delhi on June 9, 1968. “ID’s son Gopala Ratnam noticed tears rolling down my cheeks,” observed MC alluding to their long and distinguished association. I, like many admirers, was surprised that MC’s affections were so deep.

Nehru, noticing that MC prepared to remain in the background at a function at the National Herald Office, remarked that MC always chose to be away from the glare of publicity and prominence. Even his feelings and sentiments are not known to many.

When I referred to the brilliance of his pen, particularly the devastating manner in which he cut people down to size, MC smilingly said that demolishing people is always easy. Here again how right Nehru was when he said that “there is no malice in him”! How can one forget MC’s brilliant sketches on leaders with Shankar’s cartoons in that famous Shankar’s Weekly and his pieces under pen-name the Magnus? Recalling that MC said that even now he is writing occasionally for a paper under the nom de plume Magnus as some friends requested him to continue that famous pen name. “Nobody was a greater defender of press freedom than I and no one a greater critic of its abuse. I suggested

to the Press Council and people who matter that self-regulation should be the ideal for journalists and newspapers not censorship and government control. I always believe that self-regulation is necessary for the press,” he remarked when his attention was drawn to the new trends in the newspapers and journals.

In the book on MC compiled by Jagmohan when MC completed 30 years as the Editor of National Herald, P.D.Tandon wrote that MC could write with ‘bluntness’. Fearlessness is one of the virtues of great journalists. What made MC’s writings superior to those of others was perhaps a rare sharpness of expression spiced with delectable humour and deadly wit. His background is extraordinary. A master in English from the Madras Presidency College of those days plus a law degree, a stint at the bar ‘flirting with the ICS’ and then taking to journalism, inspired by two Andhra worthies Kolavennu Ramakotiswara Rau and Iswara Dutt, gravitating to the north and succeeding Kotamraju Rama Rao, another famous Andhra as the Editor of the National. Herald! On top of it earning the admiration and affection of Jawaharlal Nehru! Then of course standing by Mrs. Gandhi in her early days as Prime Minister when she had more tribulations than ‘triumphs’ and the ‘inevitable’ disagreement with her ways leading to MC’s exit from the Herald. Can there be a more courageous journalist than he who while returning the sanad and the medal (Padma Bhushan) in 1969 could write, “It seems to me better to remain undistinguished than to conform to some categorized distinction. I feel too that journalists, especially active journalists, should not seek or accept recognition of a kind which might be even a

remote encroachment on their freedom in a sphere of many dimensions in which distinction cannot be defined”.

He had his moments of glory. He does not gloat over them. Referring to his latest book, a biography of Pant, MC wrote to me that Natwar Singh listed it among the three best books of the year 1981. “So far it has had a good press. Criticism will, of course, follow”. MC is of the view that English cannot remain as the official language. “It is not ours. Even after so many years of writing and speaking in English I am at times not certain about my English” he remarked with child-like simplicity. “If he says that where are we?” I said to a friend as MC looked on with a gentle smile. He likes reading Pothana’s Bhagavatham which he considers a classic of supreme value.

Currently he is writing a book on his experiences as a journalist. Probably it will be titled ‘Politics and Journalism’. When Prof. K.Satchidananda Murty suggested that MC may come here and give lectures at the university on modern Indian politics and history, he replied: “I can talk for days of the freedom struggle, on modern India, on Nehru and such subjects. Right now I am busy with my work. I love to come back here and spend time by the seaside”. Perhaps he will persuade himself to come here again sooner than later. And what greater honour can the city have than to play host to one of the greatest Indian journalists and an Andhra celebrity!

Sunday  
Feb.28, 1982

## **K. ISWARA DUTT**

### **A Rare Journalist**

The last battle was not a long one. Nor was it the usual battle familiar to him for forty years. Though a terminal disease was slowly corroding his physical frame, Iswara Dutt refused to be cowed down by it. He did not go to any hospital till friends like Dr.K.L.Rao, literally forced him into the Safdarjung Hospital where after a few days of suffering K.Iswara Dutt breathed his last on June 9, 1968. It had always been his desire to drop out from this world like a ripe fruit from a tree. Iswara Dutt's soul must have felt soothed when M.Chalapathi Rau, whom he had been longing to see for quite sometime, came to the burial ground and tearfully paid his last respects to his 'mentor'. Journalists and national leaders paid handsome tributes to this stalwart who had served Fleet Street with great distinction for over four decades.

Iswara Dutt began his journalistic career in 1928 when he joined Prakasam's Swarajya. Krupanidhi and Khasa Subba Rau were his colleagues, K.Rama Rao a close friend and M.Chalapathi Rau his 'discovery'. Dutt served on the staff of The Hindu and A.Rangaswami Iyengar its editor had this to say when Dutt left the paper. "You have maintained your reputation for high literary capacity, loyal devotion to work and excellent character and integrity". Iswara Dutt was a friend of many worthies and was close to both Prakasam and Pattabhi, arch rivals in Madras provincial politics for a long time. Rajaji treated

Dutt with affection and Radhakrishnan remarked of Dutt's work: "His writings often cease to be journalism and become literature". When Dutt attained sixty years Rajaji wrote "it is not easy to live sixty years with no blemish on one's good name and with none to bear ill will. And this Iswara Dutt has done".

The high point in Iswara Dutt's journalistic career was his stewardship of "that remarkable monthly-Twentieth Century" (to use K.M.Panikkar's words) for which some of the outstanding men of those times were regular contributors. C.P.Ramaswami Iyer considered it to be 'one of the best conducted magazines of its type.' V.S.Srinivasa Sastri assigned it a place among the organs of true education in public affairs'. The T.C. was quoted by Sir Samuel Hoare in a speech at Oxford, and also in the debates of the House of Commons and by The Times.

As K.Rama Rao once said Dutt 'wriggled himself into the bosoms' of many eminent men. Sir Mirza Ismail was among those who liked Iswara Dutt immensely. Dutt was with Sir Mirza as a Public Relations Officer. When Sir Mirza who beautified Mysore and Bangalore said of Mysore "Here lies the finest city in India" I.D. wrote in his diary: "And then I saw too the finest Muslim I have known".

Iswara Dutt rose to become the Chief Editor of The Leader and that was a moment he cherished most. For, he stepped into the shoes of his former chief Sir C.Y.Chintamani. Like Khasa, K.Rama Rao and others Dutt too was a crusader in the working journalists' movement. He resigned the post, as he had left similar

high positions, refusing to compromise his ideals. K.Rama Rao's words that as a journalist he positively refused to think of the next day were dear to Dutt's heart. Iswara Dutt defined a journalist as a person who fought battles other than his own. He served as the President of the Delhi Union of Journalists. When someone advised Iswara Dutt not to allow the union to fall into the hands of the Communists, he retorted that he would not let it fall into the hands of the Congress either. The rebellious spirit that made him famous with the publication of his *Sparks and Fumes* in 1930 glowed throughout his life. Iswara Dutt spent all his earnings on books (he possessed an excellent personal library) and on entertaining friends and guests. He had no house of his own; nor a piece of land any where. His books were his wealth and to his son Gopala Ratnam, who, alas, died prematurely, Dutt bequeathed this wealth and a legacy of high values. Many admired I.D's elegant style of writing. I.D's style of living was no less elegant. He loved cigars, betel nut powder, coffee and tea and above all friends who greatly enjoyed his hospitality. He was fond of quoting M.Chalapati Rau's letter to him: "I thought of you inevitably in blessed Fleet Street. If Satan took Hell about with him, you have dragged Fleet Street with you—to saunter about, smoke and smoulder with post-prandial wit" Iswara Dutt belonged to that class of journalists who made journalism a truly noble profession.

## **Prof. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR**

### **An Eminent Professor**

Prof.K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar will be 71 on April 17. It is difficult to believe that he has completed the Biblical span of three score and ten. Only ten years ago he was the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University and about a year ago he laid down the office of the Vice-President of the Sahitya Academy. He wears his years like the many honours that came to him, lightly. Despite recurring trouble in one eye, Prof. Iyengar continues to work as hard as he did before, reading and writing most of the time. His gifted daughter, Mrs. Prema Nandakumar, it seems, asked him recently why he should, in spite of the nagging eye trouble, strain himself. "The other eye is all right", seems to be his reply.

Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar is a true university man, a torchbearer of our culture standing "second to none in the comprehension of its moral values no less than of the amplitude of his philosophic outlook". The pursuit of truth and the enrichment of the world of learning through fifty years of dedicated work are indeed great achievements. As a teacher of English, Prof. Iyengar has very few equals and the admiration his multitudinous students have for him is his wealth. As Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University he was a worthy successor to Dr. C. R. Reddy and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and like these two great men, he wrote prolifically. Dr. Reddy and Dr. Radhakrishnan were outstanding orators who swept the audience off their feet with their gorgeous diction and command of language.

As a speaker, Prof. Iyengar was equally eminent. His gentle voice, superb sense of humour and analytical skill thrilled the audience no less. When he speaks, English appears so simple that one would be tempted to imagine that any one could speak in that language as fluently as he does! Such is his mastery. Like Dr. V. S. Krishna, another great Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Iyengar strove ceaselessly to enrich the university through seminars and meetings.

Born in April, 1908 in Ramanathapuram district, Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar had his early education in Kodaganallur, Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai. He took his M. A. from Madras University in 1932 and D. Litt in 1939. He taught at many places including Sri Lanka before becoming Professor of English in the Lingraj College, Belgaum. He was teaching in Bombay University when Dr. C. R. Reddy invited him to head the Department of English at Andhra University in 1947. During his 20-year stewardship, the University's English Department grew into one of the best of its kind in the country. In 1966 he reluctantly accepted the office of Vice-Chancellor which he gladly relinquished in November, 1968. His departure from Waltair that year brought to an end a glorious era in the history of the university, though his occasional visits and inimitable lectures redolent of those halcyon days, are rewarding experiences to the University.

Prof. Iyengar started writing for journals and newspapers around 1928. Chatto and Windus published his Lytton Strachey: A Critical Study in 1939. Gerald Manly Hopkins, Sri Aurobindo, (he is working on a massive book now) Indian Writing in English,

*The Adventure of Criticism, Shakespeare: His World and His Art and Mainly Academic, On the Mother, and Francois Mauriac: Novelist and Moralist* are among the notable books written by him since then. Thousand of his articles have, of course, come out in journals, magazines and newspapers. A number of researchers under his guidance were awarded Ph. Ds. Andhra University honoured him fittingly with an honorary D. Litt. at its golden jubilee convocation last year.

Prof. Iyengar was the President of the All-India English Teachers Conference in 1963. As an executive member of the PEN and as a Visiting Professor he toured several countries. He represented India at Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary Celebrations at Stratford-on-Avon in 1964. As Vice-Chancellor he attended the common wealth Vice-Chancellors' Conference. He lectured abroad at several universities and centres of learning.

His daughter Mrs. Prema Nandakumar, is among the outstanding woman writers of India. His son Prof. Ambirajan who taught Economics at Sydney University, Australia, is now a Professor at Madras. An eminent interpreter of Sri Aurobindo, Prof. Iyengar has devoted himself in recent times mostly to writing on the great seer of modern India. A humanist who practices what he preaches, Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar is an academic missionary, never tired of learning.

Indian Express  
April 17, 1979

## **RACHAKONDA VISWANATHA SASTRY**

### **Completes 50**

No Telugu writer since Sri Sri and Chalam has made such an impact on the people, particularly the youth, as Rachakonda Viswanatha Sastry has done. R. V. Sastry has a following far beyond his awareness of it. The pen is his sword (to borrow the late K. Rama Rao's words). It may not have become the instrument of the revolution he has so passionately been waiting for. But it has aroused the conscience of his fellowmen against exploitation and oppression. Sastry is a confirmed radical among Telugu writers and a writer of great originality among the radicals. Some of his stories were splendidly translated into English by Achanta Janaki Ram.

Viswanatha Sastry is no enigma. He speaks little but when he speaks he does so with conviction. A very courteous man, he does not claim to be what he is not. Nor is he ashamed of owning responsibility for what he has and what he does. He is as simple as, say, Proust was.

Dressed in white he is seen in the evening walking briskly along the road, puffing away at his cigarette. He has a muscular physique. His graying hair is immaculately groomed. Even the spectacles can not hide the glint of his deep-set eyes. He often throws a look that reminds one of the biting pen he wields. Beneath the strong physical frame lies a stronger spirit.

Viswanatha Sastry does not look fifty. He does not certainly look the fifty-year-old father of six children, including a boy

employed in the Port and a girl going to the medical college. His profession is law: his philosophy is to root out the same law that ‘perpetuates oppression etc.’

His office is located in a small room near Yellammathota junction on the road leading to the district court. It is in a row of houses and hutments in which none but the poor dwell. An arrack shop, a vulcanizer, a smithy and a pan shop are his immediate neighbours. The people there admire him; perhaps they don’t know why they do so. Outwardly there is little in Sastry to inspire loyalty or admiration. In his small office his clerk does his job squatting on the floor. Quite a few visit Sastry in the evening and deprive him of the time he badly needs. Sastry is an extraordinarily patient listener. Perhaps he gets material for his stories by listening to and watching people. He works hard. “You see I have to do a lot of slogging... It is sheer necessity”, he explains.

As a radical what does he think of life today? The present society is not beneficial to us. Conditions are becoming increasingly miserable for the poor. He lashes out at caste, tradition, the social system and the rich. All these things along with ‘our intelligent bourgeoisie’ are making revolution inevitable. Sastry’s concern for the poor is only matched by his contempt for the rich. Even artists and writers are a burden on society. “We live off their wages (poor people’s) he complains.

“Do you believe in God?” I ask.

It is immaterial whether one believes in God or not. It is a

personal thing. But my belief in God or lack of it cannot stand in the way of my goal,” he replies.

“How did you take to writing?”

“I began writing at the age of eight. The writings of Lamb and Dickens influenced me much. In fact I stopped writing in 1941 I thought I could not write any more. But I began writing again in 1949... inspired by the writings of Sri Sri and Paul de Kruif. They kindled in me the desire to write.”

“Who are your favourite Telugu writers?”

“Gurazada, Panuganti, Sri Sri are among my favourite writers. Sri Sri is indeed great. I also like the writings of the young revolutionary writers of today.”

“Do you think that the industrial setting of Visakhapatnam affects your mood to write?”

“No, it does not affect me. I live in my own world. I badly need time to write. I do most of my writing at night.”

It is said that writers become less sensitive owing to over-use of their sensibilities. The edge of Sastry’s sharp mind has not been blunted. His eight books, plays and numerous stories show how sensitively conscious he has been of the social and economic ills of our world. The people are doubtless proud of Viswanatha Sastry. It is a different matter even if Sastry is not proud of them.

Indian Express  
April 27, 1974

## **ARTHUR COTTON**

### **He Converted Water into Wealth**

According to Hindu mythology, the Godavari like the Ganges descended from Siva's head. Sage Gowthama prayed to Lord Siva to release the holy waters so that he could wipe off the sin of killing a cow. The boon was granted and since it came down at Gowthama's request, it is called Gowthami. It is also regarded as the Dakshina Ganga.

Mythology apart, the Godavari begins as a trickle near Triambak-Jyothir Linga, sixteen miles off Nasik. Joined by other tributaries enroute it becomes a mighty and 'fearful stream' traversing a near 1500 kilometer long course before merging into the Bay of Bengal. The fury of the Godavari in full flood has always excited the wonder and fear of those who have seen it. The scenic beauty of the Eastern Ghats amidst luxuriant foliage through which the magnificent river enters the plains made Sir Charles Trevelyan compare it to that of the Rhine between Coblenz and Binger. Walch described its strength and fury thus: "Its maximum discharge is calculated to be one and a half million cubic feet per second, more than two hundred times that of the Thames at Staines and about three times that of the Nile at Cairo." Yet most of the water flowed into the sea and as a memorandum submitted to M. E. Grant Duff, Governor of Madras, said, "people perished for want of the water that flowed in abundance at their feet".

Edmund Burke once referred to the water resources of South India as “the national bank of the country”. To Arthur Cotton of the Madras Engineers they were ‘liquid gold’. An engineer by profession and a devout Christian, Arthur Cotton loved India but pitied her plight. As his daughter Lady Hope wrote, “India had taken hold of him. Not the India of Romance, but the India in Need”.

Born on May 15, 1803, the tenth son of Henry Cotton who was himself the tenth son of Sir Lynch Cotton, Arthur Cotton came to India as an engineer and returned to England as one of mankind’s great benefactors. Early in his career he discovered the rotary engine but injured his legs severely when the boiler burst. Cotton was, however, delighted that despite the injury he ‘succeeded in getting one hundred fifty revolutions a minute’.

An engineer in the service of the Madras Government, Cotton thought that the Carnatic region could become one of the most fertile areas in the world if only the water there was not allowed to go waste and the energies of its government were exerted, as they must be, to bring out the capabilities of the country. He felt that it was morally indefensible on the part of the Europeans not to put their knowledge to use in helping the natives overcome the scourge of famine. Such indifference, he believed, was neither civilized, nor did it reflect true Christian spirit. How bold and noble was he when he declared “so magnificent a country in such a state of ruin was the greatest disgrace to a civilized government”.

His first major success was the construction of two anicuts across the Coleroon in 1835. They brought prosperity to the districts of Tanjore and Trichinopoly. Of that Colonel Baird Smith said, "The permanent prosperity of Tanjore is without doubt to be attributed in a large measure to that first bold step taken by Colonel Cotton in the construction of the upper Coleroon dam under circumstances of great difficulty, with restricted means, against much opposition and with heavy personal responsibilities." Colonel Duncan Sim praised Cotton's "courage in the carrying out of his convictions attended by a degree of responsibility and risk which few would voluntarily have undertaken."

Nine years later a bigger challenge came his way. He was asked 'to report professionally on the possibility of building on anicut' on the Godavari. The idea of anicut across the Godavari was first mooted by Michael Topping, an astronomer, in 1789. The idea was revived in 1844 when Sir Henry Montgomery, special commissioner, was asked to report on 'what could be done to raise it from its lamentable state of depression'.

Cotton's acquaintance with the Godavari began years prior to that when he was in Vizagapatnam where he built a Church and some channel works at the harbour. He then prophesied a great future for the Vizag harbour and even suggested the construction of the outer harbour 'with blocks of granite of any size, from the Dolphin's nose costing nothing but powder, loading etc.' Now in 1844 he felt that forty years of attention in

Tanjore should not mean forty years of neglect here (Godavari). In his report Cotton wrote that, “as respects soil, climate and capabilities of irrigation it can scarcely be surpassed by any part of the world.” He was deeply grieved that despite so much of potential there people were allowed to starve and die. He observed that the money spent on irrigation works could be recovered as water could be converted into money. To quote his words, “The unfailing river, an immense expense of the richest soil, a safe and accessible port, a complete internal water communication with teak forests, and abundance of labour at 1-1/3<sup>rd</sup> a day, form such a combination of advantages as, I suppose, cannot be found in the world and certainly not under such a Government as ours”.

Having submitted his report in unequivocal terms Cotton put his faith in God. “The matter is God’s—not mine: and if He has a purpose of blessing the district, He will find instruments for His purpose.” The Marquis of Tweedale, the Governor of Madras, lent strong support to Cotton’s report and in the dispatch dated December 23, 1846, the Court of Directors sanctioned the project.

The gigantic project was initially estimated to cost a little over four lakhs of rupees. Work on it began in April, 1847. It took five long and hard years to finish the anicut. Ten thousand labourers, five hundred carpenters and as many smiths were employed. It was a hard job for Cotton who used to say. “The more I worked, the stronger I became.” But in 1848 he was so

“exhausted by the unremitting work and anxiety” that he had to leave for home for rest and recovery leaving the project construction work to his able lieutenant C.A. Orr and Sub-Collector H. Forbes. Despite floods and breaches, work went on steadily and a year later Arthur Cotton returned to the job. On March 31, 1852, the anicut across the Godavari at Dowleiswaram was completed at a total cost of over fifteen lakhs of rupees. The same year Cotton and G.T. Haig also built the Gunnaram aqueduct of 49 arches across an arm of the river.

Although Cotton originally wanted to build the anicut at Rajahmundry, he chose Doweleiswaram because the latter had the advantage of being close to a hill of coarse, strong sand stone, “of a degree of hardness exactly suited to the case; neither too hard to be expensive in working nor yet soft enough to be unfit for the purpose.” The availability of hydraulic lime stone of excellent quality and the low cost of labour were added advantages here. The anicut consisted of four divisions (1) Dowleiswaram division—from the left bank of the river to Pichika islands—1650 yards long and 12 feet high, (2) Rali branch—from Pichika islands to Bobbaralanka—940 yards long and 10 ½, feet high, (3) Madduru division—from Bobbaralanka to Madduru islands—520 yards long and 1 ½ feet high and (4) Vijeswaram division—from Madduru islands to Chiguru islands adjoining the right bank of the river—900 yards long and 9 feet high. It was a great ‘victory for peace’ and an enduring monument to Cotton.

The Godavari, known all along for its fury, now began to smile benignly on the people. Revenue went up four-fold. Trade leaped from 3,00,000 pounds in 1862 to 7,40,000 pounds in 1872 and 15,00,000 pounds in 1888. The Godavari district, which ranked 13<sup>th</sup> among the 22 districts of the Madras Presidency, jumped to the second place from the revenue point of view, second only to Tanjore, Cotton's first success. His irrigation works increased the Presidency's revenue by twenty five per cent. He was hailed as the "Founder of the cheapest school of engineering in the world." The Court of Directors commending his work said, "The Godavari anicut is a new and splendid illustration of his powers of mind and self-devotion, from the exercise of which the country has already so largely benefited." Morris called it "the noblest feat of engineering skill which has yet been accomplished in British India." A letter from the Board of Revenue said that "he who makes two blades of grass grow where one grew before is a benefactor of his species."

His advocacy of water carriage to boost revenue was misconstrued as opposition to the railway system. Cotton felt that steam navigation from the sea to Berar would be "the cheapest line of communication in the world." On more than one occasion he made it clear that he was not opposed to the railway system but favoured canal navigation in view of the low cost of the latter and its large scale feasibility in India.

Back in England Sir Arthur Cotton continued to show keen interest in the affairs of India. He had, however, to face criticism in some quarters for his "hopelessly enthusiastic" schemes and

‘reckless’ spending. Sir George Champbell said in Parliament that Cotton had “water on the brain”. This charge was strongly rejected by many. There were interesting debates and comments in Parliament and the press about Cotton’s irrigation works.

Full of years and honours, Cotton in the evening of his life continued to plead for India’s economic development through irrigation works, by constantly writing to such leading papers as *The Times*. Between February 26 and April 20, 1898 he wrote a series of letters condemning British neglect of India resulting in loss of life and money. Only Sir Arthur who had brought over a lakh of acres under cultivation and saved millions of lives could have written so. A speech in defence of Cotton went on these lines: “Had he killed in battle a hundredth of those he saved from suffering and premature death, he would have received the thanks of both Houses of Parliament, been made a peer and have received a large grant from the public funds.....His name will be venerated by millions, yet unborn....”

On July 14, 1899, at the ripe age of 96 Arthur Cotton breathed his last. Cotton who had visited his own grave earlier, took no precaution to arrest a new type of flood—the flood of tributes. The grandest testimony was perhaps given by Sir Richard Sankey who wrote, “His works have already saved thousands of lives and will continue to do so as long as the world lasts.”

Sunday Standard

June 11, 1978

## **DURGABAI DESHMUKH**

### **Beacon Light to Women**

Great rivers, it is well-known, begin as small streams. The Andhra Mahila Sabha, which is completing sixty, had its origins in the Balika Hindi Pathasala, launched by a twelve-year old girl in 1922. That “master magician” Gandhiji toured Andhra in 1921. Inspired by his call to non-cooperate with the British, Durgabai, hardly eleven then, destroyed her foreign clothes and began to learn Hindi and ply the charka. In 1923 little Durgabai was a Congress volunteer at the Hindi Sammelan and the Congress exhibition. She attracted the attention of all when she refused to admit Jawaharlal Nehru into the exhibition as Nehru did not have the ticket.

Fearlessness and sacrifice were part of the movement launched by Gandhiji. Countless number of people gave up their wealth or profession to join the freedom struggle. When Durgabai, an embodiment of courage, led a batch of Congress volunteers defying the prohibitory orders in Madras, she was put in jail. She suffered incarceration a number of times between 1932-'33. Her father Rama Rao and mother Krishnaveniamma instilled in her universal love and spirit of service. The Mahatma provided to such selfless youngsters and idealists the leadership they were yearning for.

Durgabai had her education at Benares and later at Andhra and Madras Universities. At Madras she founded a novel type of institution—The Little Ladies of Brindavan, No.14 Dwaraka

in Brindavan, Mylapore was the venue of the club, where girls between four and ten were taught to sing and dance and told patriotic stories. This little organization became part of the Chennapuri (Madras) Andhra Maha Sabha, as its women's wing, which later broke away to become the Andhra Mahila Sabha in 1937. According to Durgabai, the Andhra Mahila Sabha, though technically 42 now, was actually 'started' in 1922 when she founded the Balika Hindi Pathasala. The Sabha has 75 buildings and several branches covering over 12 districts of Andhra Pradesh. In 1958, the Hyderabad branch was opened. Schools, hospitals, workshops, training centres and children's homes are among the many branches of the mighty tree that has grown up since its birth in the thirties.

The growth and phenomenal achievements of the Andhra Mahila Sabha are due to the dynamism of Durgabai and the dedicated work of her lieutenants. Prabhudas Patwari, the Governor of Tamil Nadu, remarked that 'Saraswati and Lakshmi who do not normally go together joined hands 'to help the dreams, hopes and aspirations of this adventurer.' Durgabai explains the secret of her success: "While one honest, sincere and efficient worker could create millions or billions of rupees, no million or billion of rupees can create an honest, sincere and devoted worker", The Andhra Mahila Sabha, dedicated "to the service of education and welfare of women and children in the tasks of nation-building", the off-shoot of the Balika Hindi Pathasala, is now a mighty tree giving shelter and succour to countless number of women and children. Prabhudas Patwari in his moving introduction to Durgabai's book, "The Stone That

Speaketh” put it aptly: “The achievements of this selfless patriot and dynamic social worker will be written in letters of gold in the history of our country’s social progress”.

Durgabai was the Chairman of the Social Welfare Board and National Committee on Girls. She helped in the starting of 10,000 voluntary organizations in the country (says the citation when she was awarded the Honorary Doctorate in 1963 by Andhra University). She edited the Encyclopaedia of Social Work. In 1953 she married Dr. Chintaman Deshmukh. When the Deshmukhs visited Andhra University, Dr. V.S. Krishna, its Vice-Chancellor, recalled that Dr. C.R. Reddy had once introduced Sarojini Naidu as Andhra’s greatest daughter-in-law, cheers rent the air even before Dr. Krishna said that Mr. Deshmukh was Andhra’s greatest son-in-law.

The Deshmukhs now live in Hyderabad. Despite indifferent health they continue to evince keen interest in social work. And the selfless Durgabai, whose life is a saga of selfless service in the annals of modern Indian womanhood, hopes to witness the Golden and Diamond jubilees of the Andhra Mahila Sabha she had founded and built up. Three years ago she wrote “The Stone That Speaketh.” It is the story of the growth of her institutions—how the stones laid by eminent people grew up into noble institutions. Durgabai has demonstrated that stones can speak! More encouraging it is to remember that people are always there to respond generously to noble causes and great ideals.

Indian Express

July 26, 1979

**A. RAMAMURTI**  
**A Pioneer in Instrument Industry**

by  
**K.Ananda Mohan**

It was 33 years ago on July 26, 1949, that Ayyagari Ramamurti founder of the Andhra Scientific Company, Machilipatnam passed away. Ramamurti was born on October 20, 1896.

Cancer cut short a highly promising career of Ramamurti at 53 at a time when he was about to put Andhra in the forefront of the industrial map of India. The efflorescence of a teacher of science in a government school into a builder of a leading precision scientific instruments manufacturing company in the country is a saga worth recalling.

The instruments industry in India is essentially a post-independence development. Before independence there was hardly any manufacturing activity but for a very few and small units scattered in a few places in the country. In those days, imports were free and plenty. Banking and financial credit facilities were few. Government encouragement, unlike at the present, was non-existent. Training facilities for skilled and semi-skilled labour were meager. Andhra Pradesh was then a backward area industrially. And Machilipatnam was not developed and isolated, in spite of having, by then two premier institutions—the Andhra Bank and Andhra Insurance Company.

For everything, from a precision lathe to a standard screw or bolt and nut, one had to depend for supplies on Madras.

It is against this background one has to assess the achievements of Ramamurti in founding the Andhra Scientific Company and making it into one of the foremost of its kind in the country within a span of two decades. Possessed with a keen business acumen, foresight and creative urge Ramamurti felt restless even in a secure Government job. As a teacher of science, he foresaw a great future for the manufacture of scientific instruments in India. He spurned promotion as headmaster and resigned from a lucrative government job to the shock of his family and dismay of his friends and plunged into his new venture.

With no resources but a few hundreds of borrowed money from friends and no assets but his abilities and faith in his capacity, he started the Andhra Scientific Company in 1926 as a trading-cum-manufacturing unit. The first ten were challenging years for young Ramamurti. He had to undergo many trials and tribulations and contend with professional rivalries and personal jealousies. With courage and devotion, he built up the business step by step and brought it up from almost a one-man-show into a considerable size and importance. In 1937, he converted it into a public limited company with a capital Rs. 5 lakhs. Development of the company was as fast as it was varied. Being obliged to be self-dependent for everything, he had to start its own carpentry, smithy, foundry, moulding, painting sections

besides a full-fledged workshop. To keep all these divisions busy the production had to be diversified and increased.

Thus we find the Andhra Scientific Company manufacturing such large variety of instruments. But the real greatness of Ramamurti was finding suitable personnel for all these jobs and he did it successfully, almost all being from local talent. He made some of the most illiterate men into first rate skilled and semi-skilled workers.

The next ten years saw very great advance in the Andhra Scientific Company as well as in Ramamurti. The second world war gave a boost to indigenous production and the Andhra Scientific Company, which was already well equipped for it, seized the chance. Ramamurti, who never lost an opportunity, spotted and recruited right talent and started a research and development department, which enabled him to go into designing and production of advanced and sophisticated optical instruments.

By the end of the second decade the Andhra Scientific Company became the leading and the biggest manufacturer of precision scientific instruments in the country with turnover of about Rs. 25 lakh a year and 600 people working and with spacious workshop and building of its own and share capital increased to about Rs. 10 lakhs.

Ramamurti was as zealous about the quality of the instruments as of the welfare of his employees. While he never

compromised on the former, he never neglected the latter. Innumerable were the ways, Ramamurti used to look after his employees, extending his sympathy and financial assistance in their hour of need. He used to pray daily thanking the Almighty for choosing him as an instrument in creating livelihood to so many.

In 1947, he set up a unit at Chittigudur, a village seven miles from Machilipatnam for processing the raw materials into semi-finished goods, thus saving a lot of time and energy of his workers. He wished to set up a chain of such units all along the Machilipatnam-Vijayawada Road as ancillary units and thus created local employment. Even when he was severely down with cancer attack, he was planning for the further expansion of the Andhra Scientific Company. In 1948, he appointed an England-trained electronic engineer to start electronic instruments manufacture. Before the work could be started in earnest, he passed away. With him his plans also perished.

Ramamurthy was a many-sided personality. His interest was not confined to instruments manufacture alone. In the early 40's he and his brother, Dr. A.N. Rao, started a pharmaceutical factory at Machilipatnam called Eastern Drug Company. Around 1944, he founded National Chemicals Ltd., at Machilipatnam with a capital of Rs. 10 lakhs for manufacture of industrial chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides and laboratory chemicals.

He started the Scientific Glass Products Ltd., for manufacture of optical components. But his biggest achievement

would have been the starting of a Soda Ash factory in Andhra for which he had secured Central Government's permission to locate it at Machilipatnam with a capital of Rs. 1.5 crore.

While the protracted negotiations were taking place with the Madras Government, Ramamurti had a severe set-back in his health. While undergoing rest at Bangalore after a major operation, a huge fire accident in the Andhra Scientific Company in 1948 forced him to rush back and start reconstruction work right from ashes. This strain caused a major upset and gradually sapped his energy and finally he passed away in July 1949, throwing all his plans and his dreams into disarray.

Dr. C.R. Reddy called Murti a noble genius. The Madras Governor, Sir Archibald Nye hailed Ramamurti's vision and genius.

No greater tribute could be paid to Ramamurti than that three and half years later, all the company employees voluntarily contributed from their meagre salaries erected a statue in his memory in the company's compound. It was unveiled by none other than Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the then Vice-President of India and a great admirer of Ramamurti, on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the Andhra Scientific Company in January 1953.

Indian Express  
October 21, 1982

## V. NAGAYYA

To have produced a movie that was instrumental in the conversion of a shepherded boy into a saint is indeed a rare distinction. A boy in East Godavari, the story goes, had come under a spell on seeing Nagayya's Pothana and soon became the Balayogi of Mummidivaram. Whether this is true or not, Nagayya's movies, Pothana, Thyagayya, Vemana and Ramadas, had such an impact on the minds of the Telugu-speaking people that it used to be said that if angels were to come to earth they would converse in Nagayya's language. Through the film medium Nagayya made an outstanding contribution to the modern Telugh renaissance.

Nagayya's life, like the lives of some saints he adored, was full of contradictions: of soaring hopes and shattered dreams; of unexpected wealth and chill penury. He received high praise and also low insults. Yet destiny's pranks could never subdue his spirit.

Three years ago I spent more than an hour with Nagayya at his house, perhaps rented, in Madras. He spoke like an angel and wept like a child. He wept not because he was poor or uncared for but because his dreams had not come true. He had plans to produce films "Molla" "Adi Sankara" and "Ramakrishnaparamahamsa". But he didn't have the money.

Referring to the titanic struggle he had gone through to complete "Bhakta Ramadas", he smilingly said, "In suffering I

myself became a Ramadas but Lord Ramachandra took pity on me.”

His munificence cost him dearly. But he never regretted it. ‘One hand should not know what the other gives’, he remarked. Music halls in Madras and elsewhere and the Thyagaraja Samadhi at Thiruvaiyuru were among the many institutions that received handsome donations from him.

As we were talking the telephone rang. I heard Nagayya telling the person at the other end that he would agree to work for any amount. After the call was over he told me that he was going to act in a film for just five hundred rupees. What a pity! That was the fate of an actor whom Baburao Patel once hailed as one of India’s greatest stars.

Asked what he would do in the evening of his life, Nagayya said he would try to produce the films he had in his mind, clear his dues including the unmerciful income-tax and settle on the banks of the Godavari at Bhadrachalam to lead the life of an ascetic.

“I shall do it during my last days”, he reaffirmed. He has reached his Lord’s feet though he could not live on the banks of the Godavari.

Indian Express  
January 5, 1974

## **M.S. SUBBULAKSHMI**

### **The Angel of Charity**

“I have a feeling that the three goddesses-Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati-presided over her birth and one has bestowed divine melody (music), another wealth and the third charitable disposition. To put it in a lighter vein, she is Saraswati by birth, Lakshmi by name and Parvathi by marriage...” wrote Mr. K. Ananda Mohan in a letter to Mr. T. Sadasivam, M.S. Subbulakshmi’s husband, when she was given the Magsaysay Award years ago. Mr. Mohan, I am sure, learnt the art of writing such fine letters from his illustrious brother, the late Mr. K. Iswara Dutt.

One might add that there is no surprise if a person so blessed has been the angel of charity, giving generously to any worthy cause, local or national. Yet it is distressing to hear that the angel of charity has in the recent past given away most of her wealth to help her noble husband overcome his financial stringency. One hopes and prays that their worries may end soon.

All the same one cannot but wonder at the ways of God. Why does He trouble people who are dear to Him? Who in the world ever imagined that the celebrated “Queen of Music”—as described by Nehru—would have to struggle for money? Is not one reminded here of Thyagaraja’s famous kriti “Nidhi chaala sukham...”? Did not the saint of Thiruvaiyaru spurn offers of wealth so that he would not be away from the service of his

Lord? After all, Thyagaraja “begged” (unchavriti) in the hallowed steets of Thiruvaiyaru, not just for alms, but for the sake of people’s well-being, asking them to be God-minded. Saints like Thyagaraja and Ramadas suffered poverty and hardship before they reached His lotus feet. And none knows better the mysterious ways of God than the great Subbulakshmi.

Born in Madurai in 1916, Subbulakshmi learnt from her mother Shanmugha Vadivu vocal and instrumental music. Her mother was a famous veena player. Subbulakshmi gave her first solo recital when she was just seven. Her singing in the Hindi film “Meera” and Tamil film “Shakuntala” brought her name in North and South. She came to be hailed as the “Kokila” of music. Since then she has sung in innumerable places at home and abroad.

At the Edinburgh international music festival in 1963 her voice thrilled the English audience. Accolades came to her from the foreign press when she sang in 1966 at the United Nations. The U.N. General Assembly, known as the ‘harmoniser of conflicting interests’ found in her music real harmony of human spirit.

M.S.’s famous LP—the Bhaja Govindam the hymn of Adi Sankara has a beautiful introduction by Rajaji who says: “To believe that jnana and bhakti—knowledge and devotion—are different from each other is ignorance”. Equally popular are her Kamakshi Suprabhatam, Venkatesa Suprabhatam and Vishnu Sahasranamam L.Ps.

There is hardly a house in South India where her music is not heard and there are few in India who do not know about her magnificent contribution for suffering humanity. Her tranquil greatness remains undisturbed by all these setbacks and worries.

She continues to sing with that passion and devotion which make her music divine, “an outward sign of inward grace”. That is why not only music lovers but all God-minded people adore her. Honours and titles such as the Padma Bhushan have come to her. The latest is by All India Radio which made her an emeritus producer. After all, such gestures are a token of the affection and gratefulness of the public.

It is the earnest hope of one and all that she will enjoy good health and long life. May human suffering continue to be alleviated by her charity and human spirit elevated by the beauty and grace of her divine voice.

Indian Express  
September 22, 1979

## **S. RAJESWARA RAO**

### **Moody Genius of Film Music**

Music Director Saluri Rajeswara Rao, on whom the Andhra University has recently conferred the degree of Kalaprapoorna at its 52<sup>nd</sup> Convocation at Waltair, has to his credit 150 films—120 in Telugu, 20 in Tamil, 6 in Kannada and 4 in Hindi.

Rajeswara Rao is affectionately remembered by Telugu-speaking audience not only for the superb music he has provided for such classics as “Malleswari”, directed by the late B.N. Reddy, but also for the “revolution” he brought about in light music in Andhra Pradesh nearly forty years ago. His songs like “Challagalilo”, “Patapaduma Krishna” Kalaganti” and “Oho vibhavare” are as popular today as they were when he tuned and sang them in the early forties. He, along with Balantrapu Rajnikanta Rao and R. Balasaraswati lifted Telugu light music to great heights.

Rajeswara Rao, like most gifted persons, is an enigma. To have survived the stresses and strains of the whimsical world of films for over forty years and to be still at the top is, indeed, an achievement; it may not be a feat in the case of some but it certainly is in his case. For Rajeswara Rao is no less unpredictable than the world in which he functions. He is moody and sometimes the producer’s problem and the director’s dilemma since it is hard to “manage” him.

Born in October 1921 at Sivaramapuram in Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh, Rajeswara Rao was initiated into

music by his father, Sanyasi Raju, who was himself a well-known musician. Sanyasi Raju used to give mridangam accompaniment to the famous violin vidwan the late Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu. Raju put his five-year-old son under the eminent violinist and the renowned Harikatha exponent Adibhatla Narayanadas. And, at the age of seven, Rajeswara Rao began to recite Harikathas. He won medals and laurels, though, in the process, his studies came to an end.

In 1934, the Hutchins Gramophone Company took him to Bangalore for recording a number of songs. Gudavalli Ramabrahmam, then in search of a singing actor, fixed up Rajeswara Rao to play Krishna in his “Krishnaleelalu”. The following year he played Abhimanyu in “Mayabazar”. 1938 was for Rajeswara Rao a memorable year. He spent that year in Calcutta during the production of the Telugu film, “Keechakavadha” acting as Uttara Kumara. While in Calcutta, he was introduced to K.L. Saigal, who, in turn, took him to New Theatres, where Pankaj Mullick and R.C. Boral evinced interest in him. Under their guidance he learned to play a number of instruments and also studied Hindustani and Western music. Pankaj and Boral were the first musicians to blend Western and Indian music.

When he returned to Madras, eighteen-year-old Rajeswara Rao was offered a role in “Balanagamma”. He also composed music for it. But the film could not be completed for want of money. When he provided music for “Jayaprada” in 1939, he formally made his debut as a music director. Within a short time he established himself as a top composer.

S.S. Vasam took him as Gemini's music director on a monthly pay of Rs. 400 which steadily went up to Rs. 1,500 per month. "Chandralekha" made Rajeswara Rao famous all over the country and "Nishan" confirmed his place as one of the top music directors in the country. Vasam's portrait along with that of Saint Thyagaraja finds a prominent place in his room.

But it was in B.N. Reddy that Rajeswara Rao found the ideal boss. Under Reddy's patient and skilful guidance, Rajeswara Rao's genius flowered into full bloom and the composer tuned Devulapalli Krishna Sastry's moving lyrics and made them songs of matchless beauty. And Ghantasala and Bhanumathi, whose voices were at their best then, put their heart and soul into the songs. The result was "Malleswari". The movie became a masterpiece which enriched Telugu culture. It is regarded even now as part of the Telugu ethos.

Rajeswara Rao has seldom deviated from the path he had chosen in the thirties of adapting classical tunes for light songs. He has a particular liking for Mohana raga. Hundreds of his songs have become hit films, which include *Dr. Chakravarti*, *Aatmeeyulu*, *Bhakta Prahlada* and *Bharya Bharathalu*. Now in his fifty-ninth year, Rajeswara Rao remains unsophisticated despite a long and unbeaten innings in the world of grease paint and glamour. He talks like a child and his simplicity and innate goodness make him a lovable person.

Screen  
July 20, 1979

## **AN EVENING WITH ABU ABRAHAM**

It was during the 63<sup>rd</sup> Science Congress at Waltair that I had the pleasure of meeting Abu Abraham. When I called on him at his hotel he was dressed in a white choodidar pyjama, a khurta and a Nehru waist-coat. Having read his piece, ‘Oh, Guntakal’ I knew how deep was Abu’s love of India and things Indian. Not that there is anything unique in a person loving his own country and people. What compelled my admiration for Abu is that in spite of being in the United Kingdom for over thirteen years, his love for his motherland has not dimmed a little. Abu was a cartoonist for, ‘The Guardian’ and ‘The Observer’ for over twelve years. The only ‘un-Indian’ thing I found was the pipe at which he puffs away ceaselessly. A.M. Abraham is his real name and Abu is the pseudonym he took while in the U.K. for certain personal reasons.

Abu took me to the restaurant where barring the hotel staff there was hardly an Indian. After a while the waiter who did not evince much interest in us stopped at our table and disappeared in a jiffy making a quick note of Abu’s requirements. We waited and waited-Abu told me how enchanted he was with the view of the sea. “I swam for more than an hour in the morning. Why not we swim in the evening”, he said, I told him that I could not swim.

“Are Andhras also like Tamils?” One out of ten Tamils goes to the sea to swim. It is the reverse in Kerala. I once told the

British High Commissioner during his visit to Kerala that we in Kerala are water-oriented. We love to swim. You really love the sea when you see it,” he said. The usually reticent Abu told me about the happiness a person gets while swimming, particularly in the sea. “You just float on water.....sea-bathing cures many ailments,” he went on.

There was no sign of the waiter. But in the meantime Dr. M.S. Swaminathan came there. Seeing Abu he came to our table and talked about the Science Congress programme. I went to the proprietor or some-one who looked important there and told him that a member of Parliament and senior journalist had been waiting for over half-an-hour to get his lunch. Then there was immediate attention on our table. After lunch I invited Abu to a game of tennis. “I have not brought my kit which I normally carry wherever I go...” he replied. I persuaded him to come to play telling him that we were not very formal in our dress etc.

On the tennis court Abu played in a highly relaxed competent manner. He served and went to the net to volley. I could see the easy artistry of an experienced player. I later asked him whether he started playing tennis in the U.K. “Oh, no I started playing in my youth. My father was a leading player of Kerala and he won a number of tennis titles and cups”. I came to know that Abu played for his University and claimed many cups as a student.

As we drove down the beach road Abu’s observant eye fell on many things, animate and inanimate. Later in the evening I

was surprised to know that he liked pickles and chillies. He liked the prince of Andhra pickles ‘avakaya’ so much that he ate quite a bit of it with very little rice. While the hot pickle was being consumed we discussed many ‘harmless’ things. A journalist or a paper that cannot keep pace with the changing times cannot survive, he remarked.

He is opposed to conservation and is a committed crusader for the upliftment of the downtrodden and the underdog. Frank Moraes in his introduction to ‘Abu on Bangladesh’ a collection of cartoons, wrote “I think Abu’s strongest quality as a cartoonist is his sense of subtle quixotic satire which gives his cartoons an individual ambience, character and quality.”

Abu as a cartoonist has carved a niche for himself in the hearts of millions of newspaper readers. His pictorial satire is genial without being innocuous, at times devastatingly brilliant but never diabolic. He and others like Shankar Pillay and R.K. Laxman have made political cartooning a powerful and popular weapon of the Fourth Estate. The value of it cannot be overstated. As Desmond Mc Carthy once said, “When the horse-laugh dies out of English caricature something vital and important dies with it. Caricature and cartooning add spice to political satire.”

The time came for me to bid good-bye to Abu. I requested a self-portrait from him. Abu seemed to ponder for a minute. I asked him whether he needed his glasses to draw it, thinking that he might have left them in his room. “No, no, you know I am fifty now but till now I have’nt used glasses for writing or

reading”. In less than a minute he drew a self-portrait and gave it to me. I was amazed at the versatility of the man, his wide range of interests, his tastes and his gentle disposition. A very rewarding evening came to an end. Although I was sad I had to say good-bye to Abu Abraham I was soon buoyed up by the thought that he would greet us the next morning with another of his cartoons.

The Deccan Chronicle  
August 22, 1976

## **BAPU**

### **Portrait of An Artist**

SATTIRAJU Lakshmi Narayana is a name not known to many. That is the real name of Bapu, the artist-turned film director whose popularity among the Telugu speaking people is phenomenal.

“What made you take to film-direction” “I always loved seeing films. I still see a lot of them”, he replies.

Since 1967 when he turned film director at the age of 34 he has directed nine films and was a co-producer of six of them. The film medium is, of course, a wide canvas for the display of his artistic creativity.

As an artist Bapu made a name at the age of twelve. “Our father, though happy at Bapu’s talents as an artist, never wanted Bapu to grow into a professional artist. It was his desire that Bapu should become a lawyer, our father’s successor”, says Sankaranarayana, Bapu’s brother. Bapu did become a lawyer after taking his law degree from the Madras University. But fortunately for the Telugu people Bapu’s artistic talent blossomed quicker than his friends and relatives had anticipated. The urge to communicate his humour and ideas became irresistible for Bapu and his cartoons and caricatures set in motion a new wave in the Telugu literary world. His style of writing has become the ideal for his countless Ekalavyas.

“Have you given up drawing cartoons and caricatures?” “Oh, no never..... I love to draw them and I am doing it regularly,” he replies.

“Who are your favourites in that field?” “Many.....like Thurber.....R.K. Laxman and Abu Abraham.....” he answers puffing away, like Abu, at his pipe. Like Abu, Bapu is bald.

After a stint in the Press Information Bureau, Bapu worked as art consultant for the Southern Languages Book Trust (sponsored by the Ford Foundation) for J. Walter Thompson and many well-known Indian and foreign concerns. He gave demonstration in book illustrations and book/cover art in the programme sponsored by the UNESCO in 1964. Twenty-five exhibitions of his art have been held so far in different parts of the country.

When discussion reverts to films, Bapu says that whatever success he has achieved in that field is due to Mullapudi Venkata Ramana, his childhood friend. The usually reticent Bapu becomes warm, in his elucidation of that point. “We are twin souls...” he speaks with a perceptible glow in his eyes.

Mullapudi is a perfect foil to Bapu and a match to him in not only the art they seek to promote but even in simplicity and in shunning publicity. They have chosen to project their love of God through their films. “We don’t worship any deity.....we are not religious-minded in the real sense of the term”. Bapu seeks to explain. But they cannot conceal their love of God.

After all, as Shaw said “Art is the magic mirror you make to reflect your invisible dreams in visible pictures.....” Steeped in the Hindu or to be precise in the Telugu lore, their faith in God is unshakeable.

“What is your mission as an artist?” My last question. “We have no mission except to carry on our work.....” The words of Gaugin are never more true:

Art for art’s sake, why not?

Art for pleasure’s sake, why not?

Art for life’s sake, why not?

For the true artist there is no ultimate. The quest for perfection knows no bounds. And for a man who is not even forty-three such a question is meaningless.

Indian Express  
October 22, 1975

## **RAMANATHAN KRISHNAN**

### **The Gentle Giant**

“Playing tennis has been a great education to me. The good things that go with tennis are not so important as the game itself”, R. Krishnan told me in an interview. Krishnan who recently celebrated the Silver Jubilee year of his tennis career by winning the national hard court title at Ahmedabad still plays in tournaments to help the younger players improve their standard.

Krishnan is not just a great tennis player. He embodies all that is rich in our culture. Humility, dedication and discipline are allied to a genius that has no parallel in Indian tennis. When he walks on to the court he looks more like a devotee entering a temple with humility than an ace player marching into the court. His court manners and sangfroid have earned for him fame all over the world. In tournament Krishnan comes always on time, sometimes walking along the road to the court, in striking contrast to the many others who come late either because the car did not go to the hotel in time or because they were not woken up.

Referring to his weak service, Krishnan said, “If anyone takes too much advantage of my weak serve, I get into trouble, I always try to serve to my advantage.” Krishnan became the youngest player to win the national championship when he beat Jack Arkinstall 6-2; 6-3, 7-5, in the final at Calcutta in 1954. That year he won the junior title at Wimbledon. In 1955 he lost

to Ayala of Chile in a ‘tremendous tussle’ at Wimbledon and the next year Krishnan hit the headlines with a sensational win over Jaroslav Drobny at Wimbledon. Krishnan became the gentle giant-killer knocking out several top players in tournaments. In 1956 he beat Herb Flam giving India the only win in the Davis Cup tie against the United States. That year he took the scalp of Italy’s Pietrangeli. In the Davis Cup tie against Australia Krishnan beat Rod Laver and humbled Laver again 8-6; 6-3; 6-0; in the Pacific South West tournament at Los Angeles. About those wins Krishnan remarked with characteristic humility:” Oh, no, Laver was nowhere near his best. He was just then coming up.” Krishnan has high praise for Rod Laver and Lew Hoad.

1959 was for Krishnan a year to remember. He won the American National Singles Hard court title, the Bristol and Queen’s Club titles in England. He had wins (twice) over the top American player Alex Olmedo and Australia’s Neale Fraser. That year Krishnan was ranked world’s no.3 player.

In the 1960 Wimbledon Krishnan was drawn to play Andre Gimeno of Spain. Jack Kramer predicted that Gimeno would beat Krishnan and then go on to win the title. Krishnan proved Kramer wrong. In a thrilling five setter the Indian maestro conquered Gimeno 2-6; 6-3; 6-0; 2-6; 6-1. Krishnan beat Germany’s no. one player Stuck and South Africa’s Vermark. In the quarter final the Indian made short work of Ayala 7-5; 10-8;6-2. But in the semi final Krishnan fell to the eventual winner Neale Fraser. D.F. Byrne wrote thus on Krishnan’s wins: “The

Indian champion had delighted the Wimbledon crowds with exquisitely carved victories over Gimeno and Ayala, in two of the finest matches in the whole tournament....Krishnan's encounters with Gimeno and Ayala were two polished gems among a collection of rough cut diamonds in Wimbledon's dazzling necklace.....skill rather than force and guile rather than speed being the outstanding features. Krishnan played magnificent tennis in both teasing his opponents into errors with sharply angled returns and stop volleys executed with artistic delicacy."

Krishnan reached the Wimbledon semi-final again in 1961 after beating Roy Emerson in straight sets in the quarter final. Praising Krishnan's uncanny anticipation and artistry a critic remarked that Emerson "could never have been made to look so inferior a player." Krishnan won that year titles at Amsterdam and Dusseldorf. Krishnan continued to be ranked among the world's best ten. Though he was slowly getting away from top tournaments due to business commitments, his touch was not blunted. In 1966 he, Mukherjee and Lal took India for the first time into the Challenge Round of the Davis Cup. Krishnan's glorious win over Brazil's Thomas Koch after being down 2-5 and love thirty in the fourth set constitutes a golden page in the history of Indian tennis. In 1967 Krishnan beat the top American player Clark Graebner in the Davis Cup tie. The New York Times observed that Krishnan was among the five better players in the world." No Indian player was among the world's best ten for so

many years as Krishnan and no Indian performed so consistently and creditably at Wimbledon and in other tournaments as he had done.

“I have learnt a lot from defeats.....in fact one learns more from defeats,” wrote Krishnan once in an article. He never got ruffled on or off the court. Honours such as the Helms award and Padma Bhushan came to him. What endeared Krishnan most to his fans and to those thousands who saw him in action was that he took success and defeat with supreme detachment.

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## **SUNNY'S DAY AT CHEPAUK**

The mark of good batsmanship lies not only in choosing the right ball to hit but also in the ability to leave judiciously the ball moving away from the line of the stumps. That is where the great batsman scores over the ordinary ones. Sunil Gavaskar's masterly knock at Chepauk in the fifth Test match against Pakistan was unique in many ways. As the top batsman in the side and as the skipper of the Indian team he played to a strategy, after Kapil Dev with the ball and Kirmani behind the stumps did not allow the Pakistani batsman to dominate on the first day.

Gavaskar dropped the anchor first. He neither flashed at the ball outside the off stump nor lost his cool when Imran Khan and Sikander Bakht released a barrage of bouncers, like air pilots carrying out sorties. The ease with which he moved away from the line of the ball was indeed an object lesson to all youngsters. As long as he was at the crease—he stayed there for almost ten long hours—the pace and fury of the two reputed Pakistan bowlers looked ordinary. It was Gavaskar who inspired confidence in the non-striker and though four wickets fell for 160 Yashpal Sharma defended dourly by emulating his hero at the other end. The nagging accuracy of Iqbal Qasim made as little impression as the pace of Imran and Sikander. Often did Gavaskar go down the wicket to smother the spin of Qasim. Not once did the ball rise an inch from the ground. Such was his footwork.

An interesting aspect of Gavaskar's batting is the manner in which he corrects himself, whenever he makes a mistake or loses concentration. When he edges the ball, he is seen the next moment practising the shot teaching himself how to avoid the mistake. At Chepauk only once did a bouncer from Imran graze his hat and the next moment Gavaskar was seen demonstrating how he should have moved away from it. When he mistimed a hook, the shot was seen being rehearsed. And the shaking of the first was another gesture which indicated his warning to himself. As he came back to the pavilion after that great knock which took the wind out of the sails of the Pakistani bowling. Gavaskar was cursing himself perhaps for not finishing the task he had set before himself, on Wednesday, January 16.

There were many in the packed stadium who thought that Gavaskar was too dour and should have scored faster. But the skipper in him seemed to have got the better of the master batsman he is. The advantage that Kapil Dev and others brought for India, to the surprise of many, had to be driven home. And if Kapil Dev, as the BBC said, tore the heart out of the Pakistan batting, Gavaskar's batting completed Pakistan's demoralization. Every run he made and every moment of his stay at the wicket took India away from danger and difficulty and towards safety first and victory later, leading to India's brilliant triumph in the series.

The innings that Gavaskar played at Chepauk may not have been his best knock, nor perhaps the best seen on the ground.

Gavaskar will, of course, make equally historic, if not more memorable, innings in the future. But what one should remember is that the innings he played at Madras marked the resurgence of Indian cricket. When Sunil Gavaskar had arrived on the scene ten years ago it heralded a new age in Indian cricket. The new ball had till then been the thorn in the flesh of Indian cricket. We could neither face it confidently nor use it effectively. Since Gavaskar's advent facing the new ball ceased to be a problem to Indian batsman. Now after ten years we have in Kapil Dev one who has magnificently solved a chronic deficiency of Indian cricket. Under Gavaskar's leadership, with an all-rounder like Kapil Dev being there, the resurgence of Indian cricket took place in the series. That was what one felt at Chepauk.

Meanwhile his twenty-third century takes Gavaskar closer to beating first the record of that Grand Knight of Cricket, Sir Garfield Sobers and later to that of the Knight of Knights, Sir Donald Bradman. Surely it was Sunny's day at Chepauk and one of the sunniest moments in the annals of Indian cricket. And this has been Sunil Gavaskar's decade in Indian cricket.

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## **Viswanath's Debut in Ranji Tourney**

The cricket fans of Vijayawada were understandably disappointed on the eve of the Ranji trophy tie between Andhra and Mysore in the second week of November, 1967. Test stars Prasanna, Chandrasekhar and Subrahmanyam dropped out of the Mysore team that came to Vijayawada. As many as eight youngsters made their debut under the leadership of emergency captain Y.B. Patel. On that cloudy morning of November 11, Patel won the toss and elected to bat.

Andhra's new ball bowlers, the well-built R.P. Gupta and Venkatarao, bowled with fire against the Mysore opening batsmen, Vijayakumar and Nagabhushan. At 10, Venkatarao bowled a beautiful inswinger that uprooted Nagabhushan's middle stump. After five runs were added by the new batsman Kirmani and Vijayakumar, Venkatarao trapped Vijayakumar leg before and Mysore were in real trouble. Eighteen-year-old Viswanath joined Kirmani. Viswanath's good performances in junior cricket that year got for him a place in the State side. He had made 75 against Hyderabad, 50 against Kerala and 44 and 30 not out against Madras in junior cricket.

Gupta and Venkatarao, spurred on by their early successes and cheered by the home crowd, bowled a number of bouncers in an aggressive manner that reminded one of Hall and Griffith who had a few months earlier demonstrated on Indian grounds their bowling prowess. There was in the minds of the spectators

at Vijayawada pity and concern for the two tiny Mysore batsmen, Viswanath and Kirmani. Although the Mysore batsmen farmed the speed of the Andhra bowlers with maturity far beyond their years, Kirmani fell at 42 to slow bowler Raju.

Viswanath, after defending for a while, began to unleash a number of gorgeous cuts and pulls. To the short ball, he lay back and cut it with elegance. To the flighted ones he came down the pitch to execute neat drives and deflections off his toes to the on-side. Mr. P.S. Rangaswamy, who has been watching cricket in India since the thirties, remarked to me in the press box then that this youngster was going to be another Hazare.

With Nataraj, he added 139 runs for the fourth wicket and later, with C.R. Lakshminarayan, he was concerned in another century partnership for the sixth wicket. His century was completed with the help of twelve boundaries. He went on to score freely and at 198, some youngsters watching the game, thinking that Viswanath had reached his double century, ran onto the ground and garlanded him. The double century did come after he drove Mahendrakumar to the on side.

At stumps, Viswanath was unbeaten with 209. The next morning, he broke Abell's record of 210 on his debut in 1934. Viswanath was eventually out for 230. More than half of his score came in boundaries. It was a chanceless innings.

The shy Viswanath, eluding the few photographers there

sneaked into the Mysore players' tent after making that historic knock. He would not come out to pose for the cameramen. Then Patel, his skipper, and a few other Mysore players literally pulled Viswanath out of the tent and made him oblige the photographers. The little hero gently raised his head and smiled coyly as a shy bride. That was seven years ago.....

Sunday Standard

February 9, 1975

## **PRAKASH PADUKONE**

### **The Golden Boy of Indian Badminton**

Two occasions come to my mind whenever I think of Prakash Padukone, the golden boy of Indian badminton. The first was when he was humbled by Syed Modi in the 45<sup>th</sup> national championship final at Vijayawada in January, 1981. Modi shocked Prakash to win the title. It was touching to see the new champion respectfully bend and touch the feet of Prakash as the latter hugged his conqueror. No victor could have looked so humble in the hour of triumph and no loser so happy in defeat. The second occasion was when Prakash beat China's Han Jian in a thrilling final in the first Indian Masters Badminton tournament at Pune on November 14, 1981. Overwhelmed by joy Prakash raised his hands acknowledging the cheers of the packed stadium. The champion who later came to the All India Radio's commentator's box where we were doing a running commentary said that it was one of the happiest moments of his life. "I have never won a major title at home and I am therefore most thrilled today," he replied when we asked for his reaction.

Prakash Padukone 'epitomizes the ease and grace of badminton.' On and off the court Prakash is a gentleman to his fingertips. He never gets ruffled even if the situation is not under his control. His dedication to the game is total. He is eager to learn all the time. Probably he does not possess a powerful smash. True also it is that Prakash does not have inexhaustible reserves

of stamina like Han Jian of China. But Prakash has a repertoire of strokes and superb control over the game that have made him a world class player. He is an exponent of the touch game and the way he displaces his adversary with angled shots and skilful touch is something different from the usual type of game one comes across. That is why, perhaps, those who lose to him do not feel the bitterness of defeat.

By winning the All England title and many prestigious finals abroad Prakash Padukone has secured for India a high place in the game of badminton. His game has class and character and India salutes this great sportsman.

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