



KRB *His Life & Times*
(March 27, 1923–February 3, 2015)



Celebrating our Appa's Life on his Centenary
(27th March, 2023)



CONTENTS

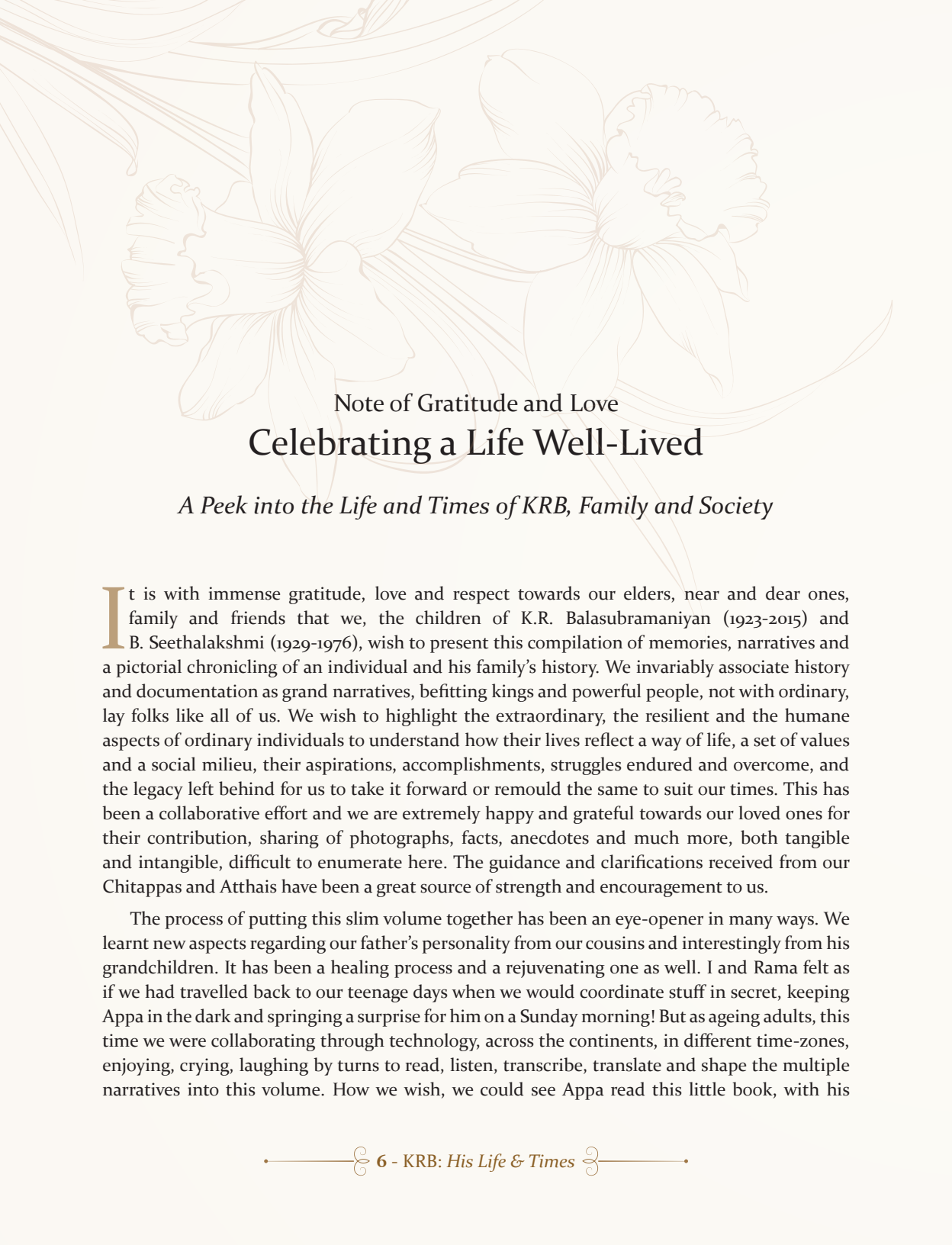
1. Note of Gratitude and Love	06
2. Sharing Our Memories	11
Rukmani Chitti & Appa's Siblings	
3. Family Tree	16
4. Appa's Cousins	18
5. Nephews & Nieces	20
6. Daughters-in-law	30
7. Sons-in-law	33
8. Children	41
9. Grand Children	54
10. A Poetic Tribute	76
11. Favourite Food Items of Appa	77
12. Photo Gallery	28, 29, 48, 49 50, 51, 52, 53 68, 69, 70 , 71 72, 73, 74, 75, 78

AT HIS WEDDING & PARENTS' SADABISHEKAM



ON DEPUTATION TO THE USA, NETHERLANDS





Note of Gratitude and Love Celebrating a Life Well-Lived

A Peek into the Life and Times of KRB, Family and Society

It is with immense gratitude, love and respect towards our elders, near and dear ones, family and friends that we, the children of K.R. Balasubramaniyan (1923-2015) and B. Seethalakshmi (1929-1976), wish to present this compilation of memories, narratives and a pictorial chronicling of an individual and his family's history. We invariably associate history and documentation as grand narratives, befitting kings and powerful people, not with ordinary, lay folks like all of us. We wish to highlight the extraordinary, the resilient and the humane aspects of ordinary individuals to understand how their lives reflect a way of life, a set of values and a social milieu, their aspirations, accomplishments, struggles endured and overcome, and the legacy left behind for us to take it forward or remould the same to suit our times. This has been a collaborative effort and we are extremely happy and grateful towards our loved ones for their contribution, sharing of photographs, facts, anecdotes and much more, both tangible and intangible, difficult to enumerate here. The guidance and clarifications received from our Chitappas and Atthais have been a great source of strength and encouragement to us.

The process of putting this slim volume together has been an eye-opener in many ways. We learnt new aspects regarding our father's personality from our cousins and interestingly from his grandchildren. It has been a healing process and a rejuvenating one as well. I and Rama felt as if we had travelled back to our teenage days when we would coordinate stuff in secret, keeping Appa in the dark and springing a surprise for him on a Sunday morning! But as ageing adults, this time we were collaborating through technology, across the continents, in different time-zones, enjoying, crying, laughing by turns to read, listen, transcribe, translate and shape the multiple narratives into this volume. How we wish, we could see Appa read this little book, with his

magnifying glass in hand, sitting cross-legged on his couch and hiding his emotions as always!

Appa had donned different hats in his lifetime just as he was referred to through numerous names. To his parents, siblings and his extended family, he was Mani, to his friends in Delhi he was Balu, his colleagues called him Bala Saab and he was simply KRB to his neighbours and family circles in Delhi. He often talked about how he was named differently at birth and how he got the name Balasubramaniyan. The family legend goes this way: He was sleeping in his crib (thooli, an improvised cloth crib hung from a ceiling) as a baby, when our Paati spotted a cobra firmly clinging to the bottom of the thooli and froze in fear. His parents {V.S. Ramasamy Iyer 1893-1980; Janaki Ammal 1904-1977} bowed to the snake in reverence, invoked our family deity Lord Swaminatha and promised to name the baby after the Lord's name and requested the snake to go its way without harming the child. The snake crawled away quietly and their son was named Balasubramaniyan. He was not their first-born but the first child to survive and became the eldest of their nine children, five sons and four daughters. Murugan arul protected him, believed our grandparents and it is of no mean significance that Appa breathed his last on Thaipusam day, an auspicious day for the Lord.

The year of his birth coincided with interesting historical events. In Chennai, Malayapuram Singaravelu Chettiar raised the Red Flag and May Day was celebrated in India for the first time in 1923. It was also the year when movies like *The Ten Commandments* and *Hunchback of Notre Dame* were released. Appa was active in student politics and in theatre during his college days. Though he quit student politics on Thatha's injunction, he was involved with Tamil drama troupes in Delhi in the initial years of his shifting to Delhi. He is the only one in our family to have pursued a B.Sc. degree in Agriculture. His expertise was a boon to his career during the Green Revolution phase of our country.

He witnessed the uncertainties precipitated by the Second World War in his youth, India-China war in 1962, Indo-Pak wars in 1965, 1971 and the Kargil crisis in 1999. His personal life criss-crossed with these national events as he got married in 1944, expanded his family further in the sixties in Delhi, was on a professional deputation to the U.S.A. in 1965, struggled to feed his rice-eating family during its harsh rationing in 1971-72 and led fiery debates on the politics of the Sub-continent in the late 1990s from his, by then, fixed position on his single diwan in the living room. His deputation to the U.S. for six months in 1966-67 was also a period of challenge for Amma to take care of us single-handedly. Appa stayed with American families, delivered talks and did extension work with the farmers there. In 1975, he went to the Netherlands and Denmark for three months, and was interviewed by the Netherlands Broadcasting Service about his work. His work at AFPRO, following voluntary retirement from the Ministry was much appreciated as he worked with NGOs and independent researchers. The personal and the political were intertwined in his life and hence recording his personal history helps us to understand how people of his generation thought, believed and nurtured a life-style that tried to accommodate one's family/community traditions and the social/national changing ethos.

The Bangladesh war exposed us to frequent black-outs, loud sirens, aeroplanes whizzing past at odd hours, windows plastered with brown papers and a severe shortage of rice. Amma used

to cook wheat dhalia in a Vengala Panai over an angeethi to be eaten with sambar and rasam and we simply could not stomach it. Appa had to walk back from his office to Rajinder Nagar to save on the bus fare. Yet, we have never seen him bitter over financial constraints. He and Amma were deeply distressed about this aspect only on one occasion, when they could not attend Raju Chitappa-Sarada Chitti's wedding in 1965. When the Emergency was declared, as a government servant, he maintained a studied silence, though during the Janata Party rule he was much more frank and bold with his analysis and observations on politics.

He could never forget that he lost out on increments and a higher pension as he had to quit his state government job, forgo his benefits and join the Central government service as a fresher. The anti-caste movement led by Periyar and the Dravida Kazhagam turned into a volatile anti-Brahmin movement and he chose to shift to Delhi to escape targeted attacks and resentment in office circles. Shifting to a strange, Northern city with a harsh climate and unfamiliar language must have been huge risks that he chose to face rather than accept unfair curtailing of his career in the political climate of Tamil Nadu in the late 1950s. The first among his family to migrate to North India, he and Amma faced stark reality in multiple dimensions. But his resilient spirit, quiet fortitude and the immense support from Amma helped the family march ahead, slow but steady.

Although he was critical of caste politics of the DK movement, and had paid a heavy price for its excesses, we never found our parents practising any kind of discrimination, against anyone, against any community. Amma would offer fresh food to Ramu, our manual scavenger at Rajinder Nagar colony and would drill it into our heads that *avalum namma madiri manusha daan* (She/They too are human beings like us). Appa kept an open house for his friends, colleagues, neighbours, our friends from different cultural locations and never made anyone uncomfortable.

A great votary of cricket, he would get into passionate, vociferous debates and arguments over how the game should be played, which bowler or fielder should have done what but he remained a sport at heart and taught us true sportsmanship. The complete absence of personalised, offensive speech or hate speech at home, helped us emerge as socially tolerant, liberal and accommodating individuals. He never "taught" us "values", he simply led by example, by walking the talk as it were.

While Amma was quick to fix our faults and was a disciplinarian, Appa's parenting was more in terms of omission than commission! He never remembered which child studied in which class, would look over our Report card silently, make a couple of stern remarks and made us promise to do better next time and closed the interaction. His way of warning us that he would come to school to meet the teacher did the trick and our marks automatically improved. He never attended any PTM or annual day functions at school, even when his children performed at the cultural programme or won awards and prizes. He believed in understatements and this helped us to never take our achievements too earnestly. He was giving us space and autonomy, the buzz words of the millennials. Pro-active parenting was *passee* for him and he delegated the parental whip to Amma who would restrain us by a simple dictum, "Don't do this. Your Appa will not like it." And we obeyed, never questioning either of them! When we became parents,

we unleashed parental activism with a vengeance until our kids ticked us off, “Stop telling us what to do. We are adults. Give us space,” and the familiar, contemporary blah blah!! Reading our children’s account of their grandfather has made us understand how liberal and ahead of his time our father was.

Appa also taught us, both in word and practice, the importance of a joint family. His residency in Delhi never took him away, emotionally, from his family or his cultural roots. He never invested in a house in Delhi as he dreamed of building row houses in Kattankulathur in Tamil Nadu where he and his siblings had bought plots and he wished that they shall live together in close proximity after retirement. His bonding with his siblings and their spouses was amazing. His respectful posture and speech in the presence of our Thatha had to be seen to be believed. And yet he allowed us to answer back, disagree and assert ourselves in his presence. He was also very close to his maternal uncles, and cousins. Suppuni Mamathatha & Pankajam Manni, Venkuttu Mamathatha & Sachchu Manni, Somu Mamathatha had showered affection on our parents and us both during their visits to Delhi or when we called upon them at Chennai.

As we worked on this book, we recalled all the laughter, family-jokes, anecdotes, weddings and our happy coming together during Thatha-Patti’s Sadabhishekam at 15, Pillaiyar Kovil Street, Kumbakonam. Now too, all of us have come together, albeit without the thinnai or the koodam or the kinathadi. We miss the presence of Jaya Atthai, M.R.S. Attimber who were our parents’ support system as the two families negotiated tradition and modernity. We miss Seenu Chitappa and Dharmu Chitti for the warmth, love and regard our parents had for them and lovingly reciprocated by them. Our parents happily shared their only son with them, exhorting Arun Anna to be a son to them and a brother to their daughters. Cheena Attimber was Appa’s only brother-in-law who could pull his leg, banter with him and get away with an indulgent laugh as a reply. Nana Chitappa was special to our parents as they worried about his fragile health and talked about Rukku Chitti’s amazing dressmaking skills. Radha Chitti was like a younger sister to Amma and was very dear to our parents as they found her very modest and friendly despite being a Miranda House graduate. There was a special bond between Sarada Chitti and Amma as the two exchanged letters and stayed close for years without meeting each other in person. Saroja Atthai used to joke that the two daughters-in-law are likely to meet up in a train and discover each other as in lost and found potboilers!

Our parents would exhort us to be like “your Bama Atthai” in studies, music. Raman Attimber won their hearts for his simplicity and gentle ways. Sarasu Atthai was the kid sister whose marital family was very affectionate towards us and our parents, right from Aagum to her grandchildren. Appa and Balu Attimber would talk for hours during his posting or short official visits in Northern cities when he could visit us during the weekends. Amma was all praise for “namma Gopu Raju”, always and Appa enjoyed excellent solidarity with his two younger brothers. We are blessed to have our Chitappas, Chittis, Atthais, Attimbers in our lives for always giving us so much love and guidance. We cannot express our love and gratitude enough ever.

As we gather together to celebrate Appa’s 100th birthday, we miss Ranjini Akka’s presence the most. None of us could ever match her energy levels, her zest for life, her boisterous and

infectious laughter and her effortless way of leading from the front. Appa always called her, “my second son” and this book and the celebration would have taken a shape with her distinct stamp but we are left only with our memories of her. Nonetheless, We are Seven even today as she cannot be far away from us in spirit ever.

We miss Balu Anna who was no less than a son to our parents and a brother to all of us.

Our love and thanks to our cousins, our brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, all our elders, our children and our grandchildren for their contribution to this book and enriching our lives. Mythili/ Mythili Manni has been equally part of this journey since 1976 and has been yet another daughter to our Appa.

We recall Ramji Attimber’s favourite motto, “Finish consuming what you don’t like first.” We do hope that the reader of this book will find it hard to leave anything unconsumed!

Love and Namaskaram,

Children of KRB & Seethalakshmi ■





Sharing Our Memories Rukmani Chitti & Appa's Siblings

Rukmini Narayanaswamy

Periya Anna could not attend our Sadabhishekam. We felt very bad and missed him but understood that he could not travel due to his advanced age. Nonetheless, he sent his asirvatham in his own way. He gave money to Mythili to get a saree for me. Mythili got me a six-yard saree on his behalf. But once Periya Anna got to know, he asked Mythili to return the six-yard saree and asked her to get a nine-yard for me, insisting Rukmini will wear a nine-yard saree and that is what she should get from me. Even now, I have treasured that nine-yard saree and I remember Anna everytime I see the saree. His gesture reflected his urimai over me and affection for me. After the Sadabhishekam, both of us went to visit Periya Anna to offer our namaskaram to him. Spent a week with him laughing and sharing jokes with him. I cannot forget those jolly days.

When we were in Tambaram near Chennai, Anna came to live with us for a few days. We had a very good time with him. Like in the movie Pasa Malar, he treated me with affection and was an elder brother to me. He always considered me as his sister and always behaved like a brother to me. He will ask me to make vadam and comment that I make pudalangai urundai just like Amma. He was very affectionate and also exercised his right over me as a brother. I was very happy to prepare delicacies that he wished to eat during his stay. He liked eating rava urundai a lot. He also would comment whether it was well-made or required any improvement. I took delight in making these delicacies for him and he enjoyed having them.

We were in Virugambakkam in Chennai, when Girija was about to give birth to Srilekha, Periya Anna asked me to take care of her. He said you are like a sister to me and take care of Girija

at this hour. He said you have to take care of her as Manni would have taken care of her and gave the responsibility to me. I took care of her for five days at the Isabel hospital. On the seventh day, Girija's mother-in-law wanted her to be dropped back at their home. I wished to take her to our home but Periya Anna pointed out that her mother-in-law is experienced and an elder and asked me to do whatever was the desire of Girija's mother-in-law. Her in-laws were also very happy that in the absence of a mother, Chitti took good care of her. Periya Anna also expressed his happiness that I was able to take care of Girija in the absence of Periya Manni. Although these are small things in a family, when someone is satisfied and openly appreciates, it makes me feel very happy and fulfilled.

We had many such happy occasions and exchanges of affection. Our relationship was like that of a brother and sister and not the traditional brother-in-law-sister-in-law one. Hence, there were no barriers or gaps in interaction. In his passing, we miss his presence but with time and distance, we console ourselves and remember the good times. ■

K.R. Gopalakrishnan

Anna, my eldest brother, was fondly called by his siblings as Mani Anna.

Due to the huge age difference between me and Anna I don't have childhood memories of him as he was studying or at work away from home most of the time. My earliest memories of him go back to my school days at Kumbakonam. Whenever he visited Kumbakonam he used to take me along to buy vegetables in the morning. Either on the way or returning from the market he used to take me to the then Venkata Lodge and buy me sumptuous tiffin. Those days it was a great luxury for me. When we returned home after purchase, I had to keep quiet if my mother asked what price we paid for the vegetable!

Anna used to simply tell half the price that he had paid. My mother used to tell us that only Mani knows where and how to purchase vegetables cheaply. I very eagerly used to look forward to his visits to Kumbakonam and hence to Venkata Lodge.

My interaction with him became more when he shifted to Delhi. Before my marriage I used to visit Delhi for official work. If I remember correctly the first place, I visited him was at Ramnagar near New Delhi Railway Station. He was living in the barsati with his friend as my Manni was yet to move to Delhi. It will not be out of place if I make any reference to the Angel of a person my Manni was. I remain ever grateful to Anna and my parents for bringing this wonderful lady into my life. I experienced unadulterated love and affection from her. She was a mother to me.

Anna and Manni were mainly responsible for my marriage with Mangalam (Radha).

My Manni told me that I would be very happy in my life if I married Mangalam.

True to her words we had a wonderful life.

Thanks Anna and Manni for making my life what it is.

Anna's love towards his siblings knew no bounds. My visits to Delhi increased after my marriage. I cannot forget the wonderful days we spent at Karol Bagh, Rajinder Nagar and Saket.

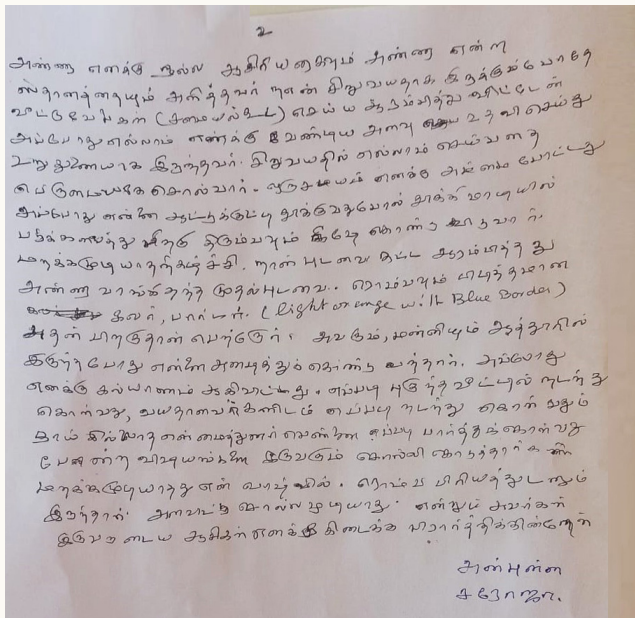
Anna was a fatherly figure and it is impossible for me to forget the love and affection he showered on me. I am the luckiest sibling who could spend more time with Anna, Manni and children. I cherish their Blessings. ■

Saroja Srinivasan

My Anna was a good mentor and a brother to me. I began doing many of the domestic chores, including cooking at a very young age. At that age, he was a great pillar of strength to me and assisted me whenever I needed help. He was very proud of me for doing those tasks at such a young age. Once I was down with chicken-pox. He carried me gently in his arms as if he was carrying a baby goat, took me to the terrace to lie down for a while and brought me down in his arms to the room. I cannot ever forget this incident.

The first saree I wore was bought by Anna. I began wearing sarees only after that. The saree was in a light orange color with a blue border, my favorite color. Later, my parents got me more. When Anna and Manni were residing at Aththur, he took me home to stay with them for a while. I had been married by then. Both of them mentored me regarding how to conduct myself at my in-laws' home, how to take care of the elders in the family, and how to look after the motherless daughter of my brother-in-law. That stay is deeply embedded in my memory. Memorable times of my life.

He was very affectionate towards me. It cannot be quantified. I earnestly pray that both of them may continue to bless me always. ■



K.R. Natarajan

As a kid brother I was told that I was always with my dear Anna. I was told he used to feed me and pamper me during my childhood.

In 1944 he got married. As a four-year-old boy, I was told I missed him a lot and hovered around him whenever he was home. As a school going boy, I still remember he used to take me and Gopu Anna to nearby Venkata Lodge at Kumbakonam and feed us like anything. He used to come to my rescue whenever my father used to scold me. Anna and my dearest Manni are my other parents. On 8th July, 1965, I was missing them both. That day, I couldn't control my emotions as my anna-manni could not attend my marriage.

His love for his brothers and sisters cannot be explained in words. We couldn't beat him while playing cards with him. He could teach us how to play.

He was very affectionate and he was always a fatherly figure to me. I was told that as a child he used to make me sleep and I was always found with him only. ■

Bama Raman

I am proud to express my thoughts about my Manni and Anna. I have always considered him as equal to my father. He loved me very much, especially as he knew I was the most innocent amongst the siblings.

I remember a few incidents which I would like to share with you all. When I was a small girl – can't remember my exact age – I was playing with my brother Raju and others. We had a sibling quarrel. Following this I fell into a drain (gutter) and was scared to come out and was crying. My anna came running and took me out of the drain. I hugged him and cried out in fear. He pacified me, gave me a bath and changed my clothes.

Another incident I recall is very funny. Anna, Manni, myself along with Sarasu were traveling to Salem/ Aththur by train. I always talked continuously which disturbed Anna and he asked me to keep quiet till we reached home and he would give me Rs 10. I immediately kept quiet till we reached home. On my failing to answer his questions, he laughed and asked me to break my silence and gave me the promised amount. He hugged me and patted me with love.

My Manni was very, very dear to me. She always considered me as her daughter. She had great confidence in me, so she would allow me to take care of her children in academic and other activities. Her children were and continue to be not only obedient but also very, very affectionate to this day. I used to narrate stories for them before they went to sleep. I am happy to have such a lovely brother's family.

Whenever he came to Kumbakonam, he would enquire about my studies and give motivating advice for improvement. When I was studying in the first year of my graduation, there was a

severe earthquake in Delhi, where Anna and family were staying. I was so worried and upset that Appa sent a telegram (no telephone facility then) to enquire about their safety. I was relieved only after hearing from him.

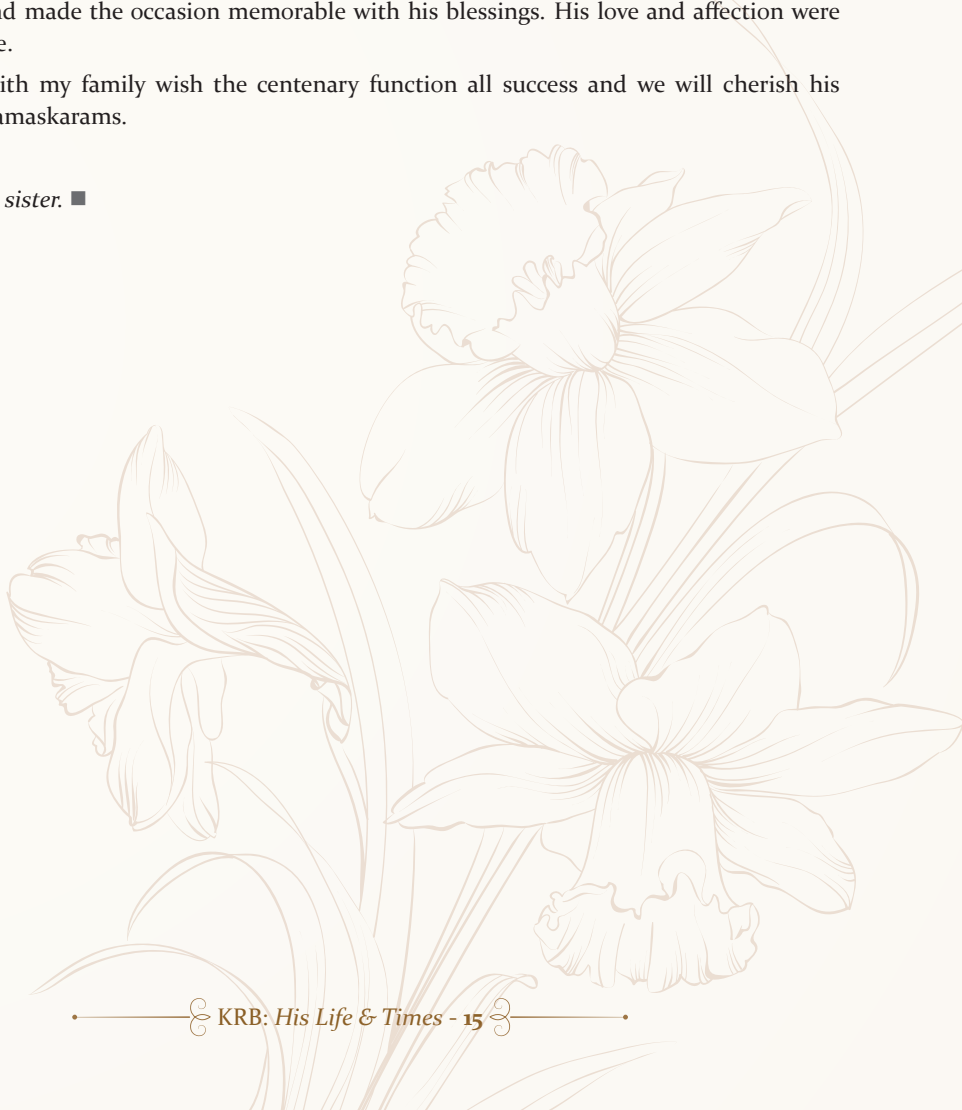
One more incident I recall on a sad note. Manni passed away in 1976. The news was shocking and shook me. My husband understood my feelings and took me to Delhi, leaving our two girls behind with my brother-in-law. I was in an inconsolable position on seeing her young children and being with them for a few days helped me recover. Manni was a special person who knew everyone's taste and catered to them. A loving Manni who was like a mother to us.

I recall my husband Raman's 60th birthday. We were not celebrating it in the traditional way. A small pooja in the temple was what we had in mind, so no one was invited. Anna suddenly informed us a day earlier that he would be at our place for a day. He was the only person to be with us and made the occasion memorable with his blessings. His love and affection were immeasurable.

I along with my family wish the centenary function all success and we will cherish his memories. Namaskarams.

Bama.

His loving sister. ■



FAMILY TREE

Seshadri-Parvathi

Krishna-Seshammal

Subramanian-Chellammal(d)/ Subramanian & Dharmambal

**Sheshammal-T.R.Sundaram; Venkatakrishnan-Mangalam; Ramasami-Janaki; Rajagopalan-Meenakshi;
Krishnasami-Senga; Parvathi-Tyagarajan; Lakshmi-Krishna Iyer.**

V.S. Ramasamy & Janaki

Balasubramaniyan - Seethalakshmi	Jayalakshmi-M. R. Srinivasan	Srinivasan-Dharmambal	Naryanaswami-Rukmani
Arunachalam-Mythili	Chandra-Krishnan	Sasikala-Janakiraman	Ramakrishnan (Ramesh)- Saradha
Bhaskar-Neha	Suresh-Jaishree	Kamesh-Ishwarya	Vignesh- Swathi
Roshni, Sanya	Shreya, Siddharth	Sampragnya	Aparna
Girija -Venkatachalam	Lalitha- Vaidyanathan	Ramana- Sandhya	Sumathi-Balasubramanian
Srilekha-Arun	Sriram-Sneha	Anjana, Devasena	Raghavi-Vijayshankar
Pranati, Pradyut	Nandhini, Roshni	Savithri-Subramaniam	Vihan
Vivek-Manisha	Kumar-Akhila	Manavati	Ramasheshan (Suresh)-Anuradha
Agastya	Ayush, Sujay		Ranjana
Vijaya Ranjini-Krishnan	Sushila-Jayaraman	Shanthi-Balasubramanian	Bhavana
Kartik-Neeraja	Aruna-Hari	Manji-Sriram	
Ramana-Swati	Abhishek, Varun	Malavika- Sabarish	
Bhuvaneshwari-Raja Ramaswamy	Padma- Jagadeesan	Vaidehi-Ganesh	
Srikanth-Harini	Gokul- Rajeswari	Sahana	
Stuti, Akshaj	Diya	Parvata Vardhini-Sriram	
Jaikant-Pooja	Jayender- Shilpa	Srinidhi	
Adira	Akshara	Srinithya	
Sundari-Ramasubramanian	Raja Ramaswamy-Bhuvaneshwari		
Sowmya-Vikram	Srikanth-Harini		
	Stuti, Akshaj		
Ananya/Kris, Ria	Jaikant-Pooja		
	Adira		
Aishwarya	Chitra-Krishnan		
Mangalam-Sharat	Sundar-Neha		
Shashank-Arshdeep	Vasu-Aishwarya		
Mehar	Vaishnavi		
Parikshith	Shankar-Vidya		
Ramalakshmi-Dilipkumar	Aravind-Ramya		
Aditya	Smaran		
	Abhinav		
	Ravi-Mary(d)		
	Ravi-Rene		
	Shanti		
	Meera		
	Nidhi		

Children in **Bold**

Grand children in **Blue**

Great Grand children in **Red**

V.S.Ramasamy Iyer: 1893-1980

Janaki Ammal: 1904-1977

K. R. Balasubramaniyan: 1923-2015

B.Seethalakshmi:1929-1976

FAMILY TREE

Seshadri-Parvathi

Krishna-Seshammal

Subramanian-Chellammal(d)/ Subramanian & Dharmambal

**Sheshammal-T.R.Sundaram; Venkatakrishnan-Mangalam; Ramasami-Janaki; Rajagopalan-Meenakshi;
Krishnasami-Senga; Parvathi-Tyagarajan; Lakshmi-Krishna Iyer.**

V.S. Ramasamy & Janaki

Saroja-K.S. Srinivasan	Gopalakrishnan- Mangalam	Natarajan- Saradha	Bama- Kodandaraman	Saraswathi- T.R. Balasubramanian
Vijayalakshmi- Sridhar	Janakiraman (Ramani)-Radha	Mohanram- Nandini	Gayathri- Balasubramanian	Ramji- Indra
Pavitra-Vivek	Ankita	Shiva-Swetha	Madhusudhan	
Arhan, Pratyush, Pramika	Akshay	Sreyas	Sriram	
Subramanian (Ramani) -Nitya Kalyani	Kasiraman (Satish)-Lalitha	Ramasubramaian (Guha)- Pankajalakshmi	Kala-Raghu	Guru-Brindha
Gayatri-Shyam	Aditya	Neeraja	Gautam	Skanda
Vidhur, Vihan		Anagha		Sadhana
Kaushik-Divya	Sangeeta- Nagaraj	Janakey (Janu)- Sivasubramanian		Murali-Priya
	Swaraj	Aravind		Ananya
Rajeswari-Ravi	Praharshita	Raghavan		Akshara
Gautham				
Anusha-Guru				
Rayirth, Smara				
Bhuvaneswari- Raghunat				
Saranya-Aniket				
Niam				
Shreyan				

Children in **Bold**

Grand children in **Blue**

Great Grand children in **Red**

V.S.Ramasamy Iyer: 1893-1980

Janaki Ammal: 1904-1977

K. R. Balasubramanian: 1923-2015

B.Seethalakshmi:1929-1976



Appa's Cousins

Sarasa Rajagopal

Mani atthaan was a very affectionate person. He is one of the few persons from this family, with whom I interacted very closely. In fact, with both Mani anna and Manni. We came to Delhi in 1967, I think. On Sundays, we used to visit them at Rajinder Nagar, enjoy Manni's cooking. We would have lunch with the family and enjoy ourselves. We really cherish those memories. Even later, when we came back to Delhi, I used to visit him in Saket. Such a fine person and he showed so much affection towards us. I always cherish those memories. ■

Sekar

I affectionately called him Mani Atthaan. He was 25 years older than me and was my Atthai's son. The great quality of Mani Atthaan was that he was easily able to mix with all age groups and people. Usually, elders will not mix with younger cousins but he was very good in that respect. He was very jovial and spoke well with everyone. I lived with him and his family for 5 to 6 months in 1974. I loved Mani Atthaan and his family very much. Everyone was very nice and jovial. I never found any of them morose or not chatty ever. I had the opportunity to spend time with Seethalakshmi Manni and she was very affectionate. My parents often praised Seethalakshmi Manni and Dharmu Manni and their enormous contributions to my Atthai's family. I had never seen Mani Atthaan or spoken to him before 1974 because of the age difference. The first time I came to Delhi in 1974, I did not know Hindi. Arun met me at the Railway Station and within a

week took me to a hotel in Delhi and I got introduced to North Indian food and I very much relished the taste. I loved all the members of the family. Mani Atthaan used to talk to me very affectionately and freely. When I shifted out of 11A/40, Mani Atthaan saw to it that I stayed somewhere very close so he could take care of me. When I was in Delhi, he took care of me as my parents would take care of me and was very affectionate. ■

Bhawani Sharma

When I met Appa for the first time, he reminded me of the playback singer, Hemant Kumar. A well-built, tall man but so gentle and soft-spoken in his interaction which let everyone relax and be at ease in his company. His knowledge and interest in national and international politics as well as in the game of cricket was amazing. However, he never bore any grudge or resentment against those who held a different opinion from his own convictions. He was religious but not a fundamentalist in his beliefs. He was a man of independent, liberal perspective. His thoughts were progressive and modern in spirit. Today, we find each person holding on to one's own position, as the only truth/ brahmasatya. Appa, on the other hand, believed in listening to one and all. He stayed rooted to his family and friends.

I hope that we adopt Appa's traits and add meaning to our lives. ■



Nephews & Nieces

Sasikala Janakiraman

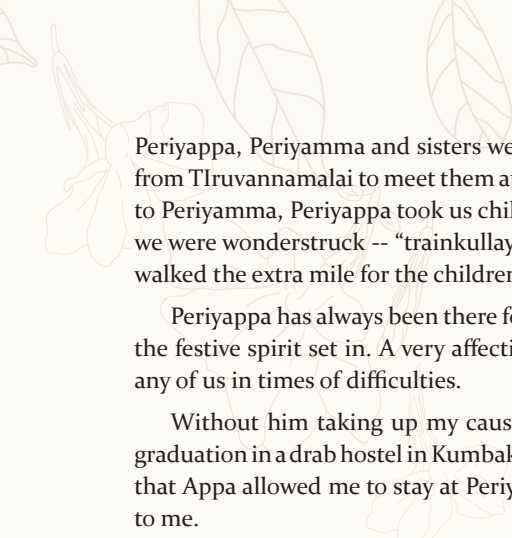
To me, Periyappa was just like my father. He always had a special affection for me. Whenever he visited Chennai or Thiruvannamalai he always visited me and spent time with me. When I got married and was living in Nungambakkam, he visited me and later shared that he was very proud of me to note how I conducted myself at my in-laws' place. He shared that my in-laws appreciated me and he was very happy. When we bought a new home and moved to Velacheri, he visited me with gifts that were very dear to me. For my first marriage anniversary, he made a surprise visit and got a saree for me, a shirt-piece for my husband. He always got something unique that suited my needs.

Periyappa and Periyamma always showed affection just like a parent. I still cherish the memories and have preserved their gift of a chapati kal to roll chapathis and a vengala panai for making pongal till now. I can never forget my Periyappa and Periyamma's love towards me. ■

Savithri Subramaniam

Delhi Periyappa. That is what he was to all of us. A towering and handsome person who dressed up immaculately and carried himself with confidence and style.

One of my very early memories of Periyappa is of the time he took us to the pantry car in one of the trains, probably Boat Mail. I was too young to remember the details. All I remember is that



Periyappa, Periyamma and sisters were traveling to Kumbakonam from Delhi and we had gone from Tiruvannamalai to meet them at some interim station. While Appa and Amma were talking to Periyamma, Periyappa took us children to the pantry car and got us ice creams. At that time, we were wonderstruck -- “trainkullaye hotelaaa!” He has always been that kind of a person who walked the extra mile for the children.

Periyappa has always been there for all the functions. Only after Periyappa came home would the festive spirit set in. A very affectionate and caring person who was always there to support any of us in times of difficulties.

Without him taking up my cause with Appa, I would have had to spend my final year of graduation in a drab hostel in Kumbakonam after Patti’s demise. It was because of his intervention that Appa allowed me to stay at Periya Thatha’s house to complete my degree. That meant a lot to me.

I Will always cherish the fond memories of him talking about the olden days, telling us stories, the times they all spent with Patti and Thatha.

Love you Periyappa and will always cherish fond memories of our times with you. ■

Shanthi Balasubramanian

When I came to Delhi after marriage the thought that I have my Periyappa and cousins in the same city was very reassuring, not making me too homesick. He was always full of life, effervescent and whenever I think of him, his impeccable dressing sense comes to my mind. I have always admired that.

He was a great source of strength to Amma and Appa during all the marriages at Tiruvannamalai. He will make himself available well in advance and assist them in all the arrangements. That eased a lot of burden off Appa’s shoulders. I used to enjoy accompanying him shopping for the wedding. It was a great learning experience -- the way he picked the items to be bought after thorough quality check and how he bargained for a good price.

We are proud to be his nieces. He will always be fondly remembered and I am sure he will bless us all in everything that we do. ■

Vaidehi Ganesh

Periyappa was a very hard working and a very affectionate person. Very handsome and always well dressed. This is how I remember him.

Periyappa was familiar to me as Delhi Periyappa and that’s all I knew of him as long as I lived in Tiruvannamalai till I was 22. He would always come at least a week earlier for my sisters’ wedding

and would help Amma and Appa with planning and complete the last minute purchases.

After my studies when I went to Delhi to live with Periyappa, Anna and Manni, that's when I really got to know him. He was very happy to have me there and showered immense love and affection throughout my stay. He was fun loving and I can never forget the movie watching sessions with him and Bhashi. I didn't know a word of Hindi when I first went to Delhi. Rama and Periyappa used to translate the serials and Mahabharata serial for me. Not a single birthday passed without him getting me a dress when I lived there. He never missed my birthday and always continued calling me after my marriage too.

For all the family functions he always used to get five similar kurtas and all the five brothers used to wear them proudly!

Periyappa, you would always be remembered fondly by all of us. ■

M.S. Shankar & M.S. Ravi

Mani Mama, as we called him, always had a special place in our hearts while we were growing up in Karnal. After all, it was only when he visited us that we set up ball badminton courts in the backyard of our Bhoot Bungalow. He could even convince our father to play!

An abiding memory is the effect he had on our parents and our grandmother. They just seemed much younger and more relaxed when he was around! We didn't know anyone else who could convince my father to play a game that involved physical activity! Mani Mama's effect on our mother was remarkable. Thinking back on it, we can almost see her reverting to her younger carefree self before all the burdens of adulthood weighed in on her. We could always sense a lightening of spirit in our mother when Mani Mama visited. Just for the gift of enabling us to see our parents in such a different light, our memories of him are priceless. But then he was also incredibly generous to us. He is one of the few adults from our childhood who we remember visiting us, when we felt that an adult was interested in having a conversation with us! He must have had infinite patience to deal with us gits!!

We miss him terribly and we are eternally grateful to the richness he brought to our lives. ■

Viji Sridhar

Mani Mama had a knack of encouraging people. Even now it is he who is encouraging me to write. As a person, I feel more comfortable speaking than writing!

Whenever I think of Mani Mama my mind goes into a flashback mode. Remember him with newspapers and vethallai petti.

The fun

The laughter

The affection

His caring for everyone in the family

His unique ability to move with all age groups...

All of us at home would wait for the freshly made wheat flour biscuits Manni used to bring from Delhi. We enjoyed that very much. And waited for Mama because he transformed the atmosphere with his energy, enthusiasm and genuine affection for people.

Qualities that have been imbibed by all his children. Qualities that have rubbed on many of us too. ■

Sridhar

I saw Sri Mani Mama first in July 1974 during our wedding. He is the eldest brother of my mother-in-law.

My enduring image of him is this:

- a friend
- a caring elder
- a rasika
- great sense of humour
- always willing to give you time

I fondly recall the interesting conversations I have had with him. ■

Ramani Srinivasan

My eldest Mama, Shri Mani Mama can be termed as my first guardian other than my parents. When my mother wrote to him saying that she is sending her son to Delhi to take up his first job, Mama readily agreed and told my mother that he will take care of me. Not only did he care for me but made sure that his family also did the same.

When I landed in Delhi, Hindi was like any other foreign language to me. I stayed with Mama and he treated me as his child at 11A/40, Karol Bagh. He made sure that his children too made me feel at home and taught me how to navigate my day-to-day activities outside the home. Since Mama worked in the Ministry of Agriculture, he also made me watch the “Krishi Darshan” program on TV! I think he also appeared in some of the episodes.

When I told him that I am going to join IIT Delhi, he encouraged me and made sure that I

took the right accommodation to be independent and pursue my studies. He had been very close to me and used to share his experiences of his post-retirement work.

But without him and his children I could not have progressed in my professional life, I am indebted to him for that.

Glad to recall memories of those days on the happy occasion of Mama's centenary. ■

Rajeshwari Ravi

My memories of Mani Mama...One thing I distinctly remember was that he had his own pet names for me. In my childhood, he would always call me by a pet name -- 'Tomboy' and 'Rajappa' are two that spring to my mind.

Two memories that come to my mind occurred when I visited New Delhi to attend Raja-Bhuvana's wedding. During our stay there, Mani Mama was very particular about taking me to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. However, that could not happen. I asked him why he was so particular about my seeing the Taj Mahal. He asked me, "Who built the Taj Mahal?". I answered, 'It was built by Shah Jahan for his wife'. Immediately Mani Mama pounced on me: "See, it was built by a man whose wife troubled him just as you troubled me."

It was also during that visit that Mani Mama took me to the bazaar and got me a sari. That green sari held a special significance for me -- first, it was given to me by Mani Mama, and second, it was the very first sari that I wore in my life.

I would like to conclude by narrating an incident that involves my husband Ravi. We were living in Mumbai at that time, and Mani Mama came to visit us. He took Ravi to one side and said, "I must congratulate you on bringing Rajeshwari to a very appropriate place". When Ravi looked perplexed, Mani Mama asked Ravi, "What is the name of the road you live on?" Ravi replied, "Mahakali Caves Road". Pat responded Mani Mama, "Rajeshwari and Mahakali, what could be more appropriate!" All three of us had a hearty laugh! ■

Sumathi Balasubramanian

Celebrating Periyappa's centenary year is quite a milestone. It is time to look back at a century of memories made along the way.

Delhi Periyappa was my pet Periyappa, we all liked him very much because he was close to every one of us, age no barrier. I remember, when I was in college, he stayed with us for a few days. Those days were unforgettable. Appa and Periyappa would hold ore arratai, kummalam and galatta. He always supported us. Periyappa shared all his experiences with us about Kumbakonam House, Thatha-Patti stories, about all our Atthais, Chithappas funny anecdotes, etc. We enjoyed his stay with us very much. Those were beautiful times!

He gave a lot of advice and guidance to me and Balu. After my marriage he came to my place. That time we shifted our house from Ambattur to Vadapalani. We kept our old house without caring, due to our office routine. Periyappa only insisted Balu do the repair work and give the house for rent immediately, I will never forget that.

Whenever Periyappa met us, he used to be more concerned with Balu as “he had no father and was an innocent man”, Periyappa would say. ■

My first trip after our marriage was to Delhi. We straightaway went to Periyappa’s house to stay. Arun Anna came to the station to pick us up, as we were coming to Delhi for the first time. Periyappa took such good care of us. We had an opportunity to be there for Perimma’s ceremony and had lunch there. Periyappa asked us to visit all my sisters’ places, Ranjani Akka, Bhuvana Akka, Manga and we met Sundari Akka at her office. That was an unforgettable trip for me.

This is an important occasion for all of us. I am happy that I am also a part of that. ■

Ramani Gopalakrishnan

As it was customary for me and the KRG family to name our relatives we fondly called him Delhi Periyappa. He was synonymous, for me, with Delhi. Our frequent trips to Delhi to meet Periyappa, Periyamma and the cousins left many memories about Periyappa and the Delhi cousins. The balcony of the 11A/40 Karol Bagh house is a cherished memory.

He connected with me at levels that not many of our family’s older generation did. Could be because of our frequent trips to Delhi or more because he was very approachable to the younger ones as he was very young at heart. I could discuss many topics with him which I would not be able to with others of his generation. Whether it was to discuss my hostel life or tips of advice when I ventured to the USA. He was there, available to connect at my wave length.

I have great memories of watching sports with Periyappa, especially the 1982 Asiad with Periyappa and Nana Periyappa in Deonar. Commenting how “generous” our politicians were in giving away gold and silver ornaments :) – medals – to foreign athletes.

Humbled to have been touched by Periyappa and Periyamma. My namaskarams to both of them. ■

Mohanram

Mani Periyappa was a truly multi-dimensional person. He was traditional yet contemporary. Commanded a stature amongst elders, yet would easily mingle with youngsters/kids. He was deeply rooted to Arunachaleshwara poojai and family traditions, yet had a pragmatic outlook to life’s varying nuances. I suppose this trait of his to merge almost innately with Life and its People makes him one of our most beloved kin in our family.

Personally, I have many fond memories of Periyappa. I’d like to share two such instances that

left an indelible mark in my life. Periyappa had come to Pune in 1995. We both visited Sai Baba temple at Shirdi. Right until we finished having Darshan, Periyappa hardly spoke to anyone. I suppose he was “in his zone” and was contemplating on Baba and his Darshan. Soon after we had Darshan, he was chatty and generally at ease. This seemed to indicate his ability to focus on his priorities ahead and once done, he knew how to unwind and to be at ease. I can't forget to mention how lovingly he got me a CD that had Sai Baba's Aarathi collection.

Back in 1992, Periyappa and I made a trip to Ravanasmudram to visit PVK Mama, Mami (Girija Akka's in-laws). On our way back, we visited a few places at Tirunelveli. I could see how nostalgic Periyappa felt, as he reminisced about his childhood days. Our Bus (Tiruvalluvar) from Tirunelveli to Chennai broke-down soon after we left Madurai. It was close to midnight. All passengers got down from the bus and the conductor was trying to accommodate passengers in other buses that were headed for Chennai. While I was thinking what to do next, given Periyappa's age (mid-70s), there came a bus and Periyappa instantaneously got in. The bus was already full and Periyappa traveled standing, right until we reached Chengalpattu (almost 5 hrs. later). Not once did he complain or show any signs of fatigue. This episode is still vivid in my mind along with the many lessons it taught me. I can go on and on...

Periyappa was one of his kind and I'm grateful for the affection he showered on us.

As we celebrate your birth centenary, our Namaskarams to you, Periyappa. ■

Kala Raghu

My memories of Mama are mostly what Amma has told me about him and Mami. I remember Mama as a tall, fair genial gentleman with a great sense of humour. We have always heard so much about Mama and Mami from Amma. She would tell us about the fact that Mama was a father figure to her. Mami and her selfless nature, her endless love for all her in-laws have always been an inspiration. It's so thoughtful to remember the eldest child of the VSR family and come together to celebrate. Mama must be looking down on all of us with a gentle smile from his heavenly abode and blessing us all. ■

Ramji Raamaswamy

My memories of Mani Mama go to Tiruvannamalai in 1978 where, if I remember right, the marriage of Ranjini Akka and Krishnan Athimber took place. Appa, Amma and three of us (Ramji, Guru and Murali) visited Delhi in 1978 to attend Raja Anna-Bhuvana Manni marriage. We had taken a photo with Raja Anna, Manga Akka at Taj Mahal which was our Kodak moment. At that time Arun Anna, Mythili Manni, Sundari Akka, Manga Akka and Rama were living along with Mani Mama at 11A Block WEA, Karol Bagh,

Later I was in Delhi in 1988 where I stayed for four months in Prasad Nagar where Mani Mama, Arun Anna, Mythili Manni, Bhaskar and Rama were there. At that time Vaidehi was also in Delhi. During that period Mama discussed a lot about the political situation, including the Emergency, the 1984 riots, etc. He also talked about his work with the agriculture ministry and how he shifted to Delhi and the role played by the then Agriculture Minister, C. Subramanian.

Mama in those days after retirement still used to go to work in DK Publishers in Uttam Nagar after changing three buses. At the age of nearly 70 it was unbelievable. I still remember how the entire household in Prasad Nagar was totally involved in conducting Satyanarayana Puja on Pournami and Mama after coming from office used to take bath before the start of the puja which used to take place around 5/6 p.m.

Mama used to take strong paan (120/500 brand, etc.) which I used to get for him from the pan shop in Prasad Nagar. I remember Arun Anna and Mythili Manni used to tease me that I was unnecessarily spoiling Mama by buying paan for him. Mani Mama was keen on cricket and was always watching the matches irrespective of any situation at home.

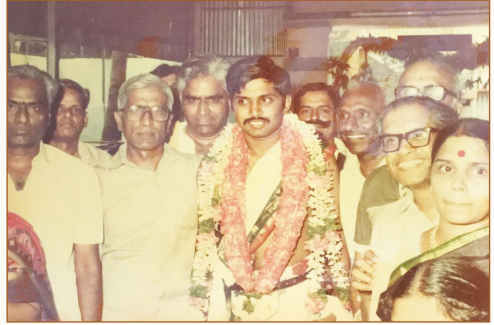
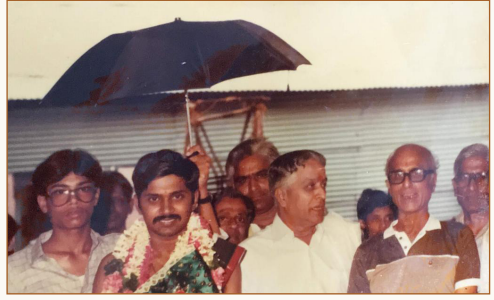
While I attended a few marriages and other functions during my stay in Delhi for a few years, I remember Bhaskar's Upanayanam held in Birla Mandir, Gole Market in 1991. Mama was in close consultation with Vadhiyars along with Arun Anna. After I got the Government job in 1991, the private company where I worked requested me to work part-time for them. Mama advised me to avoid such activities and advised me several times to avoid arguments. When I read the book "Argumentative Indian" by Amartya Sen, I remembered Mani Mama.

Mama was a very strong personality both mentally and physically. He could be brutally frank in some situations and in other cases he could be extremely diplomatic. While there cannot be any doubt that the entire family of sisters and their husbands and Arun Anna and Mythili Manni and all the grandsons/grand-daughters later were source of support for Mama, the fact that he led a healthy life for more than 80 years, having lived without Mami for close to 40 years, was no small achievement.

Mani Mama had special affection for Amma. And it was Amma and Appa who visited Mama at Saket and were the first among the relatives in October 2013 when Mama's health started deteriorating. At that time, I returned from abroad and Amma and Appa stayed for a few days in Ranjani Akka's house in Dilshad Garden. Other relatives followed suit to visit Mama after their visit. Amma used to remind Mama and recalled several times that she was the first to visit Mama when his health became bad. In this place it would not be out of place to mention that I had seen how Mama was taken care of by Ranjini Akka and Athimber when he was in Dilshad Garden for some time. Mama was literally blessed to have such a son-in-law.

Even though I had written a few lines about Mama, I feel the absence of Appa and Amma for they would have contributed some more relevant points. More so, I miss Ranjini Akka very much and my tribute to Mama would have been better had she been alive. Ultimately, I am sure that all the pitrus of the family, especially Seetalakshmi Mami, would bless this collective effort to recall Mama's life. ■

APPA & SIBLINGS



APPA & SIBLINGS





Daughters-in-law

Prema Balasubramanian

“For anyone who didn’t grow up with a father in their life, finding a father figure in another man can be the greatest gift of all. The relationship you share with this person is proof that fathers don’t have to share your DNA.”

I came across these lines somewhere, sometime. GB was lucky enough to find one such father in Appa. He always used to tell me how his friend Arun and his family, right from Appa to Rama made him feel he was part of that family. I feel close to all of you when all of you call me Manni and make me a member of the family. We have had Appa stay with us on a few occasions while in Virugambakkam and have had many memorable experiences.

May He BLESS US ALL from wherever he is.■

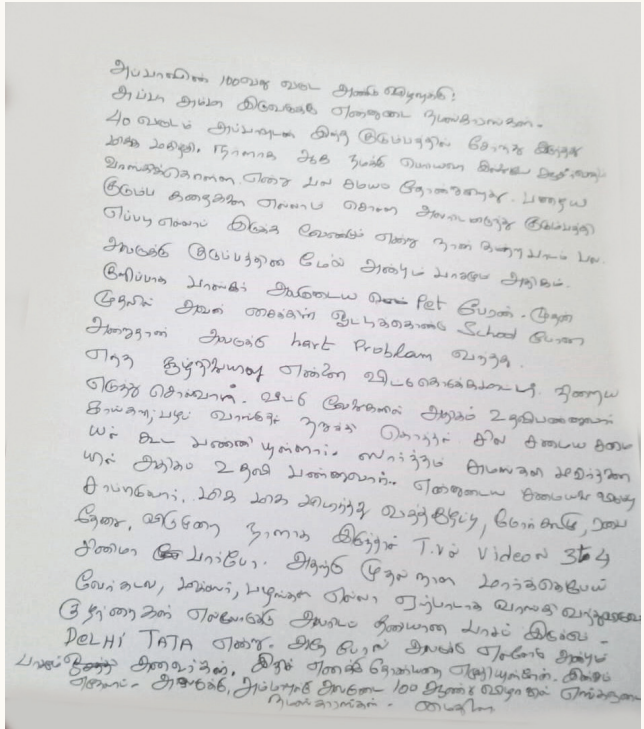
Mythili Arunachalam

Appa’s 100th Centennial Celebration.

My namaskarams to Appa and Amma. I am very happy to have spent 40 years with Appa in the family. As the days go by, many times, I feel we don’t have elders in the family to seek asirvadham. Appa used to narrate old family stories and share how to conduct oneself. I learnt many valuable lessons listening to him. Appa had a lot of love and affection for all in the family.

Bhaskar was Appa's pet peran. Appa developed heart problems on the day Bhaskar rode a bicycle to reach school for the first time.

Under any circumstances, Appa never let me down. He advised me a lot. He used to help me a lot with household chores. He used to buy vegetables, milk, etc., and help me with chopping vegetables. Sometimes he also cooked. He used to help a lot at the times of Sradham and Sumangali Prarthanai. He used to relish my cooking. His favourites were Vetha Kuzhambhu, Mor Kuzhambhu, Rava Dosai. On a holiday, we will watch three to four movies. A day before, he would go to the market to get peanuts, namkeen, fruits, etc.



All the children had special affection for their Delhi Thatha. Similarly, he also loved all the children. I have written what flashed through my mind. There is so much more to write...

My namaskarams to Appa and Amma on Appa's 100th birth anniversary celebration. ■

Saradha Krishnan

Head of a big family.

I was fortunate to have Periyappa stay with us and got to know about our big banyan family.

Between the marriages of our two Kumb cousins, there was a gap of about a month in 2003. Ramesh was working at Pondicherry and used to come on Saturday night and leave for Pondy on Monday morning. So, myself and Vignesh were enjoying the wholesome company of Periyappa for about 15 to 20 days.

During that time Vignesh used to enjoy the company and comfort of a grandfather after coming from school. Periyappa used to play with him, ask about his daily studies, used to have

food, snacks with him and by the time he left Virugambakkam, Vignesh and Periyappa enjoyed each other's company. In fact, after he left, Vignesh missed him a lot.

I also had a good time with him during his stay with us. He used to tell us about our big family, grand-parents' way of running such a big family, about each of his brothers and sisters and how they grew.

When it came to Periyamma, I could notice his tears in his eyes, which he tried to control and his passion and love for her. He narrated how Periyamma stood with him and the love she had for him. He narrated small, small incidents and their love for each other. I was overwhelmed and saddened that Periyamma could not live long with such a caring husband. It also gave me an opportunity to know about our grand-parents, our family practices and customs. He also enjoyed his stay with us, my food and our company.

As for Ramesh, he used to perform Lord Arunachaleswarar pooja on Sundays and holidays when he came over to Chennai. In fact, he was overjoyed that he could perform the daily pooja of what his grandfather was performing. Of course, this laid the foundation for Vignesh and me to have a similar pooja at Virugambakkam on seeing Periyappa performing Lord Arunachala pooja at Virugambakkam during that period. Our short and sweet stay with Periyappa could not be forgotten and even today Vignesh is cherishing those lovely moments. ■



Sons-in-law

K. Venkatachalam

He was a towering personality. He was humble towards all and caring towards all kith and kin. My association with my father-in-law began in 1975. He was more a friend, philosopher and guide. Always eager to assist all in case of need. He used to share important issues without any hesitation or reservations. He had a liking for politics and cricket. He could discuss at length with relevant details and statistics. If required, he could recollect the incident with authority to justify his views on specific issues. He used to get emotional at times during discussion with upfront arguments to establish his views, be it cricket or politics.

To put it in a nutshell, he was a reliable friend, more than a Father-in-law. I could see his attachment and affection more to the family ever since 1976 as a single parent (after the unfortunate and untimely demise of Amma). As a matter of routine, he made it a point to start his day with his wishes and blessings on all family occasions/functions/festivals. Invariably, early in the morning, his call would be the first call to wish, greet and give us his blessings. He was fond of South Indian dishes like Dosai/ Rava Dosai/ Idli, etc., and would prefer to order these when visiting restaurants. He liked to joke with grandchildren and enjoy life to its fullest.

Above all, he had respect for elders, including my parents. I cannot express the depth of his regard for them, adequately in words. I pray for the departed soul to rest in peace and continue to bless the family. ■

S.V. Krishnan

My association with Sh. K.R.B goes back to 1977. First he met me in a government organization at Nirman Bhawan in New Delhi. He bowled me over with his gift of gab. He came to meet me with a proposal for marriage with his second daughter Miss Vijaya Ranjani. Her name itself sounded peculiar to me. To this, Ranjani replied later that when she was born Sh. K.R.B got promotion and hence Vijaya was also added in her name. My cousin, Dr. TKG at Coimbatore, also exhorted me to get married to the girl as the family background at Thiruvannamalai, known to him, was very super and solid. My marriage was celebrated on a grand scale on 14.12.1977 at Thiruvannamalai.

Myself and Shri. K.R.B used to travel in bus no. 84 from Arya Samaj Road to the Secretariat. When a co-passenger mocked me for reading the previous day's newspaper, Sh. K.R.B. shot back that one write-up had appealed to me in that news item and I was re-reading it.

I learnt from him the following:

How to talk with others: seniors, juniors, elders depending upon their age and qualities and how to get our work done from them.

Organising ability in engaging such as Vadhyar and friends suiting our conveniences.

Performing poojas: Sathya Narayana pooja and Sai pooja were also performed by me and Smt Ranjani at my flat after my marriage for several years regularly, only as per his guidance, to lead a successful life.

Doing all things in an organised, systematic manner, punctually and regularly to have a happy life.

Once we were returning from the office to my flat in Regarpura, Karol Bagh. He came there and after tea he invited me for a function at 11A/40. I was greatly moved by his gesture. I have on countless occasions enjoyed hospitality from Sh. K.R.B. Sh. Arun and Smt. Mythili Manni in all the marriages of Smt. Bhuvana with Sh. Raja, Smt. Sundari with Shri Ramji, Smt. Manga with Shri Sharat and Smt Rama with Shri Dilip. With my joining the family tree of Sh. K.R.B., if I say that I was able to perform marriages of my two sisters, Smt Raji and Smt Rani and my younger brothers, Shri Seenu and Shri Suresh, and above all, the Poonal and the marriages of my sons Shri Karthik and Sh. Ramana, it is not an exaggeration and they richly deserve the praise.

I did not have the golden opportunity of seeing my mother-in-law, Smt. Seethalakshmi Ammal in person but proud to say that Shri. K.R.B. and Smt. Seethalakshmi Ammal did their duties in an exceptionally good manner in bringing up their seven children as noble citizens of India. ■

M.S. Raja Ramaswamy

Mama or Mamanaar

I was asked to pen down my views on Mani Mama's life. I thought there are many others who know much more about him than me and I stayed silent. But then my inner voice said that I am the only one to have had a dual relationship with him as nephew and son-in-law, and it should not go unnoticed or unrecorded how well he managed this relationship on a formal and at a personal level. Therefore, I decided to write about Mani Mama in my life and as I knew him.

My earliest recollection of Mani Mama is through a picture of him holding me by his side taken in a studio in Madras when I was probably three years old, but I have no memory of that. We had moved to Karnal in 1957. He visited us along with my youngest Chittappa who too carried Mama's name. Mani Mama was the first person among my mother's natal family whom I remember to have met. He was very lovely and jovial, to say in simple words.

He shared a very good relationship with my paternal grandmother. Both together used to laugh, cut jokes and make us all laugh. During summer vacation we visited the south to meet our uncles, aunt and their children. Mani Mama and Peria Manni used to receive us at Delhi station with fresh coffee decoction, milk and food for three-day travel. We were 10 people in all with one of my brothers in my mother's arms. Mama and Manni made sure they got things to eat for us children; coffee for my father, mother, aunt and grandmother; and regular food carried in a huge tiffin carrier and gooja. This they did, without fail during our to and fro trip to the south. My father's brother's family were also treated similarly whenever they passed through Delhi to Karnal. Those days when every item was rationed, to extend such wonderful hospitality with great smiles and joy was something that only they could do. They never once grumbled or even expressed any kind of stress or strain. They were always more than happy to feed others.

My father got transferred to Bangalore and we lost touch with Mani Mama. The contacts were revived again when we returned to Karnal after five years. I was 15 years old then. From then on, I was meeting him more often, either when he visited Karnal or during our trips to Delhi, or via Delhi to the south.

Mani Mama to me was always a bald, well-dressed gentleman who liked scented powder. He used to share his friendly relationship with my father, they had both studied at the same time in Annamalai University, staying in the hostel. They both knew each other even before my father got married to his sister. I am sure, both of them, with their habits of the good old days, must have shared many tantrums and secrets. He had great regards and was emotionally attached to my parents and their entire family.

All my father's brothers and their children knew Mani Mama so well. He was as much Mani Mama to all of them as he was to us and treated all equally. Everyone loved his jokes and laughter. My father's parent office was in Krishi Bhawan in which Mama worked. They used to meet each other, exchange special eatables carried from home for each other, but always maintained official

decorum. Only very few people knew they were related. Mama always maintained his dignity while respecting others.

Mani Mama was called by Oxform, an international organization, to join them as Consultant in their India office in Delhi. He had a few years to retire, then. Since there was no age limit in Oxform he took voluntary retirement from GOI to join Oxform. But his joining was delayed due to some formalities not completed by Oxform. He had been relieved from GOI and had nothing to do. During this time, I was working in Delhi at Mother Dairy and worked in night shifts. I could see the frustration and dejection in him for not having work in hand. He was very much disturbed, especially during the day he hated to sit at home alone. To divert his attention, I invited him to watch a movie. Those days English movies were screened as morning shows from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Chanakya and Alankar theater in M Block Greater Kailash. I recall watching *Omen*, *Exorcist*, *One Flew Over Cuckoo's Nest*, *Patton*, etc. He talked very less; I could see the worry on his face. I believe it must have been one of the bad periods he went through in his life.

He gave me the gift of my life, when I married his daughter. I believe it was Peria Manni's wish but I am sure without Mama's 'yes' it would not have materialized. I wonder what they saw in me – a thin, lean, gawky, weighing below 50kg, dark, tall boy to get their well-built, very fair, beautiful daughter married to me. I learnt later that one of his close relatives also commented on this alliance in our marriage saying 'thick coffee decoction is blending with milk and it will be nice to see the resulting coffee'. Rightly so. Mama did not propose the alliance to my father though he had maintained a very good relation with him. He asked his father, my maternal grandfather, to write to my father proposing the alliance. Mama always did his best to maintain decorum and he also expected others to maintain decorum.

I got married and suddenly from his nephew I became his son-in-law. A huge change in the relationship for both of us. It took some time to sink in. He couldn't immediately behave with me as my father-in-law the way he did with his other sons-in-law. It showed in his actions. But he changed his stance quickly. He respected our relationship of son-in-law and father-in-law and at the same time emotionally remained attached as Mama towards his Maruman.

In all we were six sons-in-law, he treated all of us equally and to me he never showed any leaning. Till my mother was alive he visited her, shared his love and affection, availed his right to ask her to prepare special food and talked of the days gone by among themselves. He never embarrassed my mother with added relationships and neither did my mother. Having lost his wife at a very young age of 55 years he dedicated his life for the good of his children. Now that I am old enough and understand the need of a life partner, I am more pained to think how he scuttled his emotions and needs to lead a lonely life for more than 30 years.

I found him very possessive of his family, having gone through lots of emotional and financial turmoil in his life to build and bring up the family. As he grew old this possessiveness did show up and instead of accepting it as his love and affection it led to many misunderstandings. He could never open up his heart to anyone after losing his wife. Being the eldest, he assumed it was his responsibility not to share his emotional pain with anyone. This attitude of his was

misunderstood by many. I say this as both his Maruman and Mapillai.

He definitely had a special affection for me in some corner of his heart. That I knew well. It was expressed subtly now and then. It got expressed profusely in his last days. When I visited him, he was in a state of dereliction. He wanted Arun's car driver, who had died long ago, to take him to the barber shop. His hair had grown wild, his nails had outgrown endangering him. Arun had pleaded with him for days, but he refused. The day I reached and saw Mama I was really taken aback. He looked like an unkempt sage. Arun told him that he should get his haircut by me. Next morning without any tantrums he allowed me to cut his hair and nails. After his bath we were very happy to see Mani Mama of the 1990s. He stood tall with a big smile. In the evening he expressed to me in a low voice his desire to eat rasgulla. Arun had asked him not to eat any sweets. I was caught in a fix. Yet I searched in a nearby market but could not find rasgulla. I thought he would forget it. But he remembered and asked for it again. Next day I made sure and got it for him.

I left him with a heavy heart, knowing well that this will be my last visit to him. But I was happy to have a Mama and father-in-law like him. I am also happy my sons have taken after him for his colour, personality and dress etiquette.

Everyone knows we had a unique relationship. There will always be many guesses how such a relationship could be handled. I must admit Mani Mama always remained more of Mama and less of a father-in-law for me. And I know, for him I was first his Maruman and no less a son-in-law.

I am proud of him and count my blessings. ■

Sharat Sharma

KRB — A Man with Solid Roots

KR Balasubramanian, Appa for us, was referred to as KRB by his contemporaries. Behind his back during stag talk sessions, we also referred to him as "KRB". This sums up his personality. You respected him. You also treated him as your friend. You definitely did not fear him.

Intelligent, smart, well-informed and aware he could scale up and down and hold his forte while interacting with kids, youngsters as well as oldies alike.

This handsome hunk of a man had no visible fragile ego. No frail emotions. Or even if he had any, he decided not to express them publicly. No bossing around or demanding respect and idolatry from youngsters. Even when we crossed the 'limit' he will smilingly accept the aberration and later on, recall the incident with a smile.

You could discuss and debate with him to the point of total disagreement. He will listen to you smilingly. Make fun of you, teasingly with twinkling eyes and a puckish smile of his. In hindsight, maybe, he did all this to provoke you. He could be mischievous at times.

Rarely one came across his bossiness. When he did try to boss over someone, he came out poorly since it was not his nature.

However, many times he kept quiet to avoid conflict. I found this strange as in his place, my reaction would have been exactly the opposite. But now in hindsight, when I look back, I know he did it for a reason: To keep the family together. That is the kind of man KRB was.

I remember once I called him and his clan rootless. I bluntly told him, or one can say I passed my judgment: “Your father had Vedaranyam as a prefix. You have Kumbakonam as a prefix. Your grandson puts New Delhi before his name. You guys keep moving from one village to another, one city to another leaving no trace behind. You know nothing about roots since you do not have them. This is rootlessness. You guys are nomads.”

He had listened to me and smiled. Later on, he had recounted this statement of mine to Mangalam: “Sharat called us rootless nomads.” My wife flared up on her father’s behalf and shot back, “It’s because we are not parochial. We are cosmopolitans and can thrive at any place.” It was my turn to listen to her and smile!

I come from a clan where ancestral home and village are valued the most. I found it quite strange to see a generational shift taking place at such speed in my in-law’s clan. Father from Vedaranyam. Son from Kumbakonam. And his grandson from New Delhi. All moving on with breakneck speed, leaving no footprints behind. I would have loved to see this clan owning a home in Vedaranyam or at least in Kumbakonam.

But KRB did not feel insulted. He did not sulk or cut off his ties with me just because I called him and his clan nomads. Neither did he stop talking to me. That is the kind of man KRB was.

Lover of armchair cricket, he could make you laugh. Crack you up. He was super intelligent. Not only a cerebral person but also highly emotional, he would make an effort to know you better as well as make you feel at home.

He came from the famous Vedaranyam-Kumbakonam lineage and was proud about it. But he seemed to have left his Brahmanical Aghraharam baggage and mindset behind when he moved out of Kumbakonam in search of greener pastures. He never bragged about his “Brahmanical supremacy by birth”. He was not a ritualist. Puja was a routine affair for him. Not an event to showcase his Brahmanical upbringing and supremacy to the outside world. Once he moved out of the puja room he was a material man of the world who loved living life king size. He was far ahead of his times.

I did not ever see him living in the past. He never made fun of the present times by invoking “hamare jamaane mein...” tales.

He was always moving with the times.

Any other Kumbakonam Iyer would have raised hell in the mid-1980s on being approached by a North Indian family for an alliance with his daughter. He did not. He accepted me, a non-vegetarian, as his son-in-law and did not mind sharing his dinner table with me, each of us enjoying our respective food habits.

Once, after nearly 15 years of our marriage, with twinkling eyes and mischief writ large on his smiling face he asked me with all seriousness: “Sharat, your pitaji’s condition was that yours and Manga’s horoscopes must match for the marriage to happen. What would you have done had these not matched?” Right then I realized this question must have been bothering him all these years and he wanted an answer to that big “If”. As a girl’s father it is the most obvious question in a tricky alliance like this when the likely groom’s father’s diktat leaves no room for escape or Plan B in case of a condition not being fulfilled. I burst out laughing and said: “I firmly believe in the idiom, Cross the bridge when you come to it, Appa.” He burst out laughing. As a concerned father this question must be weighing on his mind all those years. And he did seek an answer. That is what KRB was.

In the era of limited opportunities, he was an achiever. You had to sit with him to dig up his past or his work profile. He never volunteered on his own to tell you what all he did during his service period. Whether in the ministry or at DK Agencies, where he gave his best. He was a man of integrity. Financial honesty was his forte. He was a man who trusted humanity. Since he could do no wrong he also perceived the world to be like him.

Yes, he had the opportunity to migrate to the USA. Being an expert in the field of agriculture he could easily have moved on to the USA in the 60s and struck gold there. He did not. Because he was a married man when the offer came his way. He decided to stay on in India and be a family man.

I cherish my evenings with him over a couple of glasses of Beer or Scotch. I will always remember those evenings with fondness when he was at his relaxed best and made you feel like his friend and contemporary. Three cheers to him and his life and times with the best of the scotch ■

Dilipkumar Vaidyanathan

I am grateful to the family for this opportunity to share my fond memories of my father-in-law. We used to affectionately call him Delhi Appa. I met him for the first time at Mangalam’s marriage in 1986. I was introduced as Arun’s Ludhiana office colleague. He was very courteous and insisted that I eat before leaving. Fast forward, and he became my father-in-law after my marriage to his wonderful daughter Rama in 1989. Right from day one he was more like a friend than a father-in-law. I did maintain my boundaries, of course, but found him as affectionate as my own father. He used to stop by our home on his way from work on some weekends.

I remember going with him to the sabzi mandi to buy vegetables and fruits. He used to buy the best quality and ensured that we also got Paneer as that was my favorite. We also shared a beer at home. He loved the beer ice cold with potato chips. Those were the times he shared his experiences about his life in the United States.

He was a very affectionate grandfather to my son Aditya. We had the good fortune of my

father and he spending time together at our house. Although both of them had a different temperament they always got along well. I remember his love for puri and aloo sabzi. He liked it hot and would sweat from the head while enjoying the meal! Whenever we visited him on festivals, he always gave us crisp currency notes to buy whatever we wanted. I sincerely miss his smile. His siblings respected him a lot. I remember visiting Bama Atthai in Baroda. There was hardly a sentence she spoke without referring to 'enga Manni, enga Anna'.

I am sure wherever he is, we all have his blessings. ■





Children

Arun

Appa was very lucky to have Amma in his life. That's the first and foremost thing I could say about appa. Amma was one of the richest girls before marriage but they lived as one of the poorest couples in Delhi. In spite of that, she gave the best support to Appa during her lifetime. At the same time, living without Amma was a big challenge for him; not everyone could have managed that. Maybe it was his karma from the previous lifetime that he had to face and we could not do anything about it. He also realized it as he traveled along with us.

In Thatha's family, our appa was the only agricultural graduate. I think that itself was a very proud achievement for him. Not sure if it helped our family with respect to lands. In those days, to do a unique degree and get into a state government was a big achievement. He was a very emotive and non-communicative person. I recall that for three or four months, Thatha would not have received a letter and would send a reply postcard to appa. Appa responded by scribbling a few lines to convey his welfare. That was appa's weakness, otherwise when he met someone, he was very emotional. He would shed tears and recall all old things.

He had a huge support from all his brothers, sisters, their children and families. Jaya Atthai or his niece Chandra Akka could wage their lives for Appa. They would never speak a word against him, even if they disagreed with him. M.R.S. Athimber was also extremely supportive. Based on Thatha's one directive, all Chittappas extended financial support during Girija's marriage. I learnt about the best advantage of being in a joint family, at that time. Otherwise, we would have found it very tough to manage the first marriage in the family. Subsequently, all the marriages

were conducted smoothly with everyone's support.

Amma strongly stood by him, so Appa did not get into any household details or bothered about running a household. If there was any need for a discussion or any chance of a possible disagreement or difference of opinion, Amma used to restrain me by telling me "let's raise it after Appa has eaten." It seems very funny now but she was very particular and ensured that appa had his food first, to minimize his outbursts. It was a time of struggle on many fronts but a united joint family with its bonds and values was a given fact that sustained us well. Appa has also supported all and Cheenu Chittappa and Dharmu Chitti always recalled Appa's help and support when Chittappa was in the hospital at Vellore. Appa also used to attend all marriages, functions of all the children of Chittappas and Atthais, his nieces and nephews. He loved to meet people. Periya Thatha had a very special attachment for Appa.

I don't want to say anything more as it is not good to blow one's own trumpet about our near and dear ones (Pirandathu perumayai, udanpirandoridum solvadu sariyillai)! I pray that we get the blessings of our parents all the time. ■

Girija

Generally speaking, we should not praise or boast about one's own father but certain great things in Appa's character make me very proud and I want to share a few of them with you all.

One thing about Appa that really touched me was that when we were studying, he never forced us to pursue engineering or medicine or anything else. Usually, the fathers in a family insist on what the children should study or pursue. But Appa never interfered or forced the children. He gave us independence to pursue whatever we wanted to. Even if the mark is low, he would say, try to do better next time. That attitude I liked very much. I attended a technical school after completing formal school. Bhuvana got distinction in Chemistry. In spite of that, Appa was very scared to send her to the University campus. He encouraged her to join the neighborhood college. He was particular about certain things in life and cared for the safety of his daughters especially in the 70s.

When we joined the workforce, he was particular that we should wear neat and tidy clothes. "When you meet with friends, girls or boys, you can bring them home, chat with them and give them a cup of coffee. But don't stand on the streets and talk." That was his advice to me on the first day I went to work.

After the demise of our mother, he had the added responsibility to take care of a household full of daughters. When we were expecting, he would also enquire and find out if we had milk, food or went to the doctor for a check-up. He will monitor our well-being. He would get us almonds and saffron when we were pregnant. He did not want to be a burden to his children. So, he worked even after his retirement for about 10 to 12 years using public transportation even in winters. Anna, Mani and we all told him not to go as his eyesight was not good but he wouldn't

listen and did not want to be a burden on anyone.

He also faced a lot of tension as bad times came, financially. But he never showed anything on his face. From outside, one could not make out what he was going through. Working in the Ministry of Agriculture, Appa gave a lot of lectures and talks during his U.S. visit that got reported in *The New York Times*. Those days, we did not know how to preserve those speeches or press clippings. He was very talented and an intelligent person. He made a good name for himself in the ministry and I feel very proud of him. Since Appa gave us freedom, we all learnt to stand on our own. We became self-reliant.

He loved to be surrounded by people and enjoy a good life. He adjusted with everyone. When he lived with different people, he adjusted with different meal times in different homes. He never complained and adjusted himself to the schedule at each home. ■

Bhuvana

As children we were scared of our father. He had strict do's and don'ts. We used to live predominantly in a Punjabi colony at Old Rajinder Nagar. For the entire colony we were the most disciplined, intelligent children, the reason being exactly at 9 p.m. the entire family would be listening to the English news by Melvo de Mello or Pamela Singh on the All India Radio. There would be no noise from the house, not even whispers. The news was educational information specially during war times and sports events. Similarly, no disturbance during cricket commentary was tolerated.

This led us to speak fluently and confidently in English and have a good conversation. Another habit he cultivated in us was reading the newspaper daily. Especially during vacations, Appa would daily tell us before leaving for his office that at night we have to tell him the matters read in that day's paper. We would diligently read the paper. Of course, he never asked us. But that habit of reading newspapers every morning is still very strong in all of us.

With age and Amma's loss he sobered and became more of a friend than a scary father.

Even while working at the age of 70-75, when he had to travel by DTC bus, he would visit me daily after the delivery of Sri and Jai. With tears in his eyes he would say that's the best he could do in these times for motherless daughters.

We can't choose our parents and siblings, that is God's will. I thank God for the DNA and the siblings my parents gave me.

Sundari

My childhood memories with Appa had been about eating bhuttas (corn) on rainy days. Amma would get angry at him for buying crackers, paisava kariyakkarele. His passion for

getting fresh green vegetables, I recall fondly. Whenever he returned from his farmers' training programme, he would get a variety of mangoes. I got my love for gardening from various books and magazines he got on his return from his overseas subscriptions and government libraries. My love for cricket was from his regular listening to Bobby AFS Talyarkhan's commentaries. I learnt lawn tennis listening to the commentary on the radio during the Davis Cup matches, with him. I loved recording and playing cassettes, thanks to the Philips tape recorder he got from the Netherlands.

I still cherish the long journey we (Manga, Rama and me) took by car from Chennai to various cities with him, on the first and the last LTA that he ever availed of, the year he took voluntary retirement in 1979, from the government service.

My only regret in my life is that I could not fulfill his last wish of taking him to Kumbakonam.

I recall that Appa had a great bonding with my husband Ramjee. He referred to his father-in-law as Balu Mama. Their Kumbakonam connection stayed intact. They both shared jokes, old gossip and love for fresh vegetables. Ramjee was working from home those days when Appa had his cataract surgery done and was staying with us. I went to the office without any worries as Ramjee would take care of appa's food, medicines and put hourly eye-drops in the post-Op week. He even made ghee Mysore Pak as a treat for his Balu Mama.

Appa had great regard and affection for my mother-in-law. He treated all her children with the familiarity of Kumbakonam ties as well as with regard, according to their role in the family after my marriage. ■

Manga

I always idolized my Amma and picked faults with Appa, fiercely arguing with him. I must have been his only bratty adolescent amongst his seven kids. We disagreed and debated over every possible issue, minor or major. But he always allowed me to choose and decide for myself and supported me in all my decisions: whether to study Humanities at school (he preferred Science), study literature at a campus college (he preferred the neighborhood college), go for higher studies instead of finding a job (he had retired by that time but seeing me keen to study further, he took up a job at that age) or my wish to marry Sharat. It must have been pretty tough for him to take such a step in the 80s but he gave us his blessing wholeheartedly and silently took the responsibility of that decision before the extended family. Sharat and Appa were close buddies and bonded well over political gossip, North vs South verbal duels, beer sessions over unlimited namkeens. He had an excellent relationship with both my in-laws, conversing with them in his trademark Hindi. He sported great camaraderie with my brother-in-law too!

When both our sons underwent major surgeries at AIIMS, he would visit the ward during visiting hours every day, without fail, not speak a word except to say, parthuko ma, nalaikku varen. He always bottled up his most intense emotions and anxieties though he could speak

effectively on so many matters. He was in his late 60s or early 70s at that time but would change two DTC buses from his office (where he worked post-retirement) to reach the hospital. His presence at our home during my chemotherapy was a great support. However, he stayed so updated with the latest line of treatment that he began advising me how I should talk to my Oncologist, ha ha!

His huge regard for Periya Attimber (Karnal) and his night long conversation sessions with Periya Atthai during their visits at Rajender Nagar, his bantering with Chandra Akka, Lalita Akka are cherished memories which showed him in a different light, as Amma and us often found him to be a short-tempered and strict head of the family. For nearly a decade, Rama, I and Appa kept the house at 11A/40, when Anna was posted at Ludhiana. He adhered to his schedule of morning puja, rushing off to office and kept us on our toes as we struggled with our college and school studies. But on weekends, he would help us by chopping vegetables, hanging up clothes on the line, treating us to mysore bonda, rava dosai and watching Hindi movies on T.V. He called me Mangesh until I turned 14 or 15 and had put down this pet name in his official records too!

His last days were marked with his desperate efforts to hold on to clarity and control over his memory. Yet, he showed equally amazing moments of lucidity even then. He could sing old Hindi film songs with exact lyrics although he would forget that he had his meal 10 minutes ago. My deepest regret in life shall always be that I did not care for him as much as he deserved. The onset of his dementia went unnoticed as I could not ever accept that such a strong-willed, alert and intelligent father could ever lose his grip over his mind. In fact, he never lost it completely. Even three weeks before his death, he gave me and Ranjini Akka (sisters present at Delhi at that time) manjal kumkumam for Sankranti-Kanu, asked Shashank to get pastries for him and told me what to cook every morning!

Our Amma left us too early and became a goddess for us but our Appa lived long and taught us to accept all with their human frailties, without censure. ■

Rama

It is difficult to put down what Appa meant to me. I lost Amma at a young age of nine and Appa made up for the loss in every way. He was always there for me from the age of nine to 48 years. From school, college, first job, marriage, baby, moving to the USA and continued to be present till the end of his life. Even in his last days, on the phone calls, he used to refer to me as “my child.”

My early childhood memories are filled with him singing Baba bhajans and Murugan songs to put me to sleep in the Rajinder Nagar Charpoy. I took a long time to fall asleep and recall many songs till today. Growing up, I enjoyed watching Sohrab Modi pictures with him. My most cherished memory is of watching Thillanna Mohanambal with him, enjoying a small cup of ice cream, during my last trip to India.

Chitrahaar at 11A/40 was very special. Manga Akka and I used to close the door and study seriously but Appa could not enjoy our favourite Chirahaar without us. In spite of our angry protests, he would open the closed door to coax us to take a 30-minute break and watch with him. If we sang the songs with the playback singer, he wouldn't like it and also he didn't like it when the room was quiet!

My first train trip to the south was with Appa and he made sure I ate and drank something at every station. While Manga Akka was sleeping most of the time due to motion sickness, Appa and I ate every dish and enjoyed Kulhad chai. Till today the train journey always reminds me of Appa. Also, I have a great appetite for fresh fruits because of him. As a kid, I used to relish the seasonal fruits he always used to get us while returning from work. He loved to make excellent sambar and added extra spice or simla mirch when we turned away for a couple of moments to look at another chore!

Growing up, Appa and Amma never gave any of us any monetary gifts on our birthdays. The gift was that the birthday child would not get scolded that day, whatever they did. And we found that very cool and thought we could do whatever that day! However, as our elder sisters got married and moved away and Anna and Manni were in Ludhiana, to cheer ourselves up, Manga Akka and I used to give each other an inexpensive gift from Monday market. That used to thrill Appa a lot. He will hold our secrets and watch us gifting each other and it was exciting and fun for him. When I was getting married, Appa gave me a diary and asked me to put down the birthdays and anniversaries of all our siblings, spouses and grandkids. The list grew and he made sure to update the list.

When I went through Aditya's illness or my own, he was a person of few words. But he would be a silent person of immense strength. We never exchanged words but he was there. I remember the moment when he was very happy that during my labor pain I called out for Appa instead of Amma. That summarizes my innermost feelings for Appa.

I never saw Appa shed tears but when I was leaving for the USA, I remember him holding my father-in-law's hands and both the Appas shed tears. Appa also felt very sad at another time when Aditya left for college. When I asked why he was sad he said, "My child, I feel sad for you as you will miss your child".

When he visited Connaught Place to check his bank account, he would come very smartly dressed to my work place. My friends used to enjoy his company and say: "Uncle is so nice and smart and has such a great sense of humour." I think they wondered how a serious person like me had such a cool father. He will take me to Andhra Bhavan and we used to enjoy hot spicy south Indian food once in a while. When I got increments or promotions, he was very proud of me and enquired if it meant any financial implications or not. He always loved giving gifts and when we wore what he got us, he was very happy.

After his retirement he often came to stay with us in Vikas Puri. My father-in-law and Appa spent a lot of time together and with Aditya. Both had different tastes in food but adjusted to each other's tastes and exchanged a lot of information on everything under the sun. My father-

in-law did not like cricket but because appa loved it, he would ensure that Appa got enough TV time.

After moving to the USA, when I got a job with the Department of Agriculture, he was very happy and proud. I could never forgive myself for not visiting him at the end of his life. But I could not bear the pain of seeing him helpless ever. For me, he will always remain the fun loving yet independent and strong Appa. ■



APPA & SAMBANDIS



APPA & SAMBANDIS



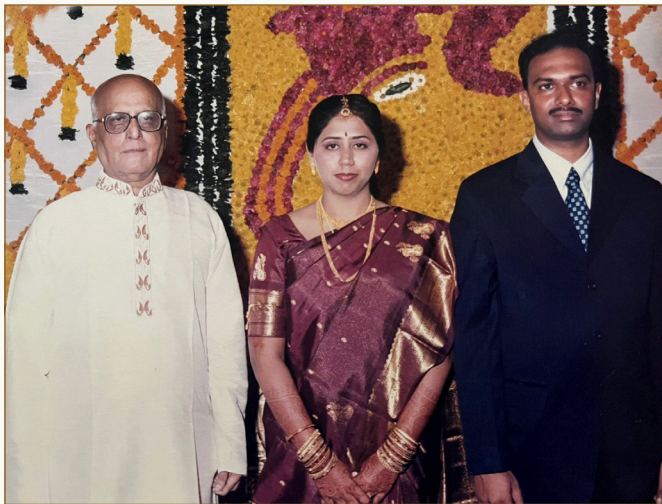


FAMILY WEDDINGS

FAMILY WEDDINGS



FAMILY WEDDINGS



FAMILY WEDDINGS





Grand Children

Bhaskar Arunachalam

Thatha. One thing I knew about Thatha was that out of all the grandkids I was his most favorite by far. He was super partial towards me, whatever I did, good or bad, he will ONLY find the good in that . I really enjoyed that pampering. Whenever I went back to Baramati (my college) he would hand over mota cash to me. He wouldn't give that kind of money to anyone. He loved to eat and never liked dieting even at old age. He and I shared the bedroom until I went to college. During my Boards, both for the 10th and the 12th, he would draw up a time table for me, how many hours of study, rest, which subject to study first, etc. Thatha would not give me permission to go to school on my bicycle until I reached 9th grade. He was too protective. We both loved eating icecreams. ■

Srilekha Arun

Tall, handsome, impeccably dressed, holding his pouch under his arm, walking away briskly to work. That is my earliest memory of Delhi Thatha. All my friends had grandfathers dressed in traditional wear, retired and relaxed, using a walking stick for support. But my Delhi Thatha was all that no other grandfather was. My friends were in awe of the fact that my grandfather actually had a full-time job.

Thatha, as I recall, was a busy man, balancing work and a large family. The house always had a steady trickle of visitors -- married daughters, their husbands, their in-laws, the grandchildren, his siblings and extended family. There was no strict pattern. Anyone could drop by. And amidst all this, Thatha stuck to his schedule. He would greet everyone crisply, make small talk, do his morning pooja – abhisekam of Lord Arunachaleshwar, eat, grab his black pouch and rush to work. Even with his hectic schedule, he always made it a point to come and receive us at the New Delhi Station, every time we went to Delhi for our vacations. He would hurriedly welcome us, and leave for work promising to catch up when he is back home in the evening.

He was a loving man, but did not express it in words. He was generous with his gifts, appreciation and criticism – all in equal measure. He never indulged me in baby talk, hugs, or cuddles (although I did see him soften a lot in his later years with my younger cousins). He always spoke to me as if he was speaking to an adult. He discussed current affairs, sports and politics. We would have heated arguments even when I was in middle school. He would show no mercy (or concession for arguing with someone 1/4th his age) and has reduced me to tears a couple of times. But that only made me prepare better for the next round. I liked it that he treated me as a worthy opponent and not just someone who had to be patronized.

As I grew up, I realized that he was far ahead of his times. He raised strong, independent daughters – all educated and opinionated. He was very proud of all his children and would often brag about them when they were not around. He also had special relationships with each of his sons-in-law and of course, Mythili Manni. He never played favorites among any of the grand kids. Being the eldest, I can vouch for that.

He enjoyed the finer things of life, connoisseur of good food, great sense of humor and a friendly demeanor. I remember, when he would come over to Mumbai, he was great pals with my Suppu Paati too. They would chat happily and even shared notes on movies, serials, etc. He was up to date with current affairs, sports and film gossip too. He was a big Sanjay Dutt fan (among the new generation) and has watched “Sadak” multiple times on TV. He was always the first to call and wish us for birthdays and anniversaries.

Even today, I think of him every time I order Rava Dosai in any hotel. That was his standard order. I think of him laughing when I browse through a crazy Mohan Tamil play. I think of him when I smell “pannir Roja” in the swami room. I think of him when I buy brown bread (he would insist that we don’t buy white bread). I think of him when I cut papayas (he loved them, I still hate them). I think of him when amma says something that he would have said.

Thatha rarely bared his emotions. But one distinct memory is when, one random night, he shared (sometime in 2000/2001) that he felt lonely after the death of Delhi Paati. He remarked that, “In all these years, I have been as loyal and committed to Seethalakshmi as Bhagwan Ramachandra has been to Seeta”. He said this in English, as always, he expressed his strongest emotions in English to us. Thank you Thatha! For never letting me miss my maternal grandmother. You gave me more than enough love to make up for her absence. ■

Vivek Venkatachalam

KRB Thatha, affectionately called Delhi Thatha, I have fond memories of him and was fortunate that I could spend some of my childhood with him, especially during his visits to Mumbai. I can clearly recollect the days when he used to walk with me to my school, early in the morning. My school was a 20-minute walk from home, and he used to be dressed in smart track pants and occasionally in Veshti. So, morning walks to school were easy. Most of my school friends knew him and he would be warm and spend five minutes with all of them and ensure that I entered the premises without any fuss.

In the early 90s He used to totally rely on me, on my knowledge of local transport of Mumbai, and always used to be proud in saying: “Venkat, give the phone to Vivek and he will guide me to reach anywhere within Mumbai”. I used to make sure he would reach the destination with utmost precision, especially to meet his brother in Chembur, K.R.Gopalkrishnan Thatha. Bus No. 382 was his favorite, as it was literally door to door. I used to drop him till the bus terminus, and pick him up from the terminus on his return by noon. This gave me confidence and so much encouragement at that age, as it gave me happiness and joy that I could help Thatha to move around in a city like Mumbai, hassle free. During social functions in Mumbai, he used to always praise my skills with regards to travel in Mumbai.

Then came the mid-90s/ late 90s, my teenage years, where it was total fun with me. I got introduced to Crazy Mohan through him, as he had a great sense of humor (especially in Tamil) all the kadi jokes, and Tamil serials, came into foray. He was like a friend, cracking jokes, meeting my friends (he was a huge hit amongst my female friends, and always used to tease me as well, but in a good way!! ☺). Even my friends loved him especially during birthday parties – the best thing about him was he could gel with all age groups, and that was special about him.

He was a great foodie, and most of my taste changed because of him --- Idli + Vatha kuzhambu was his trademark. He loved his Dosa too, in fact, he used to just love his food! He had a great habit of buying vegetables for the entire family, which I still follow and have learned from him.

He used to buy in generous quantities, and him just bringing veggies was tempting enough for my mother to cook. One thing was guaranteed, when he was with us, we used to be feted with good food at home. ☺

Overall, he was a generous person and had a huge heart. He used to load me with cash during birthdays/ festivals, and was always the first one to wish me on my birthday – as early as 5 a.m., when he used to be in Delhi. I still miss that call during my special days.

I can fill up pages about him, but to summarize I always knew, deep inside his heart I was special to him. I have learnt a lot from him, especially sharing life in abundance, enjoying a good sense of humor, cricket and movies. I have also learnt to lead life with so much warmth from Delhi Thatha, who lived most of his life without Delhi Patti. Even during his last days, he never

lost his will power. He has left his mark in my life that I will cherish throughout my life. On his centenary year, I just wish that he is having a good time wherever he is, and continues to shower his blessings on all of us, and he will be “Delhi Thatha” more than KRB Thatha for me! ■

Kartik Krishnan

Remembering KRB Thatha

I really miss KRB Thatha. He was a wonderful human being, pramaadhamana personality. Very witty, funny, warm, sensitive, supportive, critical, experienced, knowledgeable.

I bonded with him on cricket, how he was a wicket-keeper opening batsman in his young days. He apparently had the Test match wala careful approach – Take the pacers seriously and score against the spinners. He also had a broken/disfigured thumb to prove his catch taking credentials. I remember him coming to one of my school events to support and encourage me. I was happy he felt proud and happy.

Whenever someone would sing or hum a song or cause some noise, he would ask innocently: “You just had something to eat didn’t you?” He had that sarcastic sense of humor. I have been the butt of his many jokes.

But that one time when he had grown old, and was walking slowly, I cracked one joke too at him – “Come on Thatha. By the time you come from the bedroom to the TV room, the Test match will be over!” He laughed heartily. He had such a good sense of humor. Such a sport.

I really love him and miss him. We all do. ■

Ramana Krishnan

It has been just short of a decade since Thatha passed away, but his memory is still very much alive in our hearts. He was the only grandparent that I saw and I was always fond of his company. I remember him as a man of wit, wisdom, and a great sense of humor. And, lots of stories! About his time abroad in the 60s/70s, his work, childhood, etc., that he would narrate occasionally, especially when nudged by us.

Be it in his storytelling or his day-to-day being, he had a distinct witty, somewhat sarcastic, and leg-pulling sense of humor that made us all laugh and smile. Whenever the phone rang, he would loudly say “hello!” just to throw everyone off -- a habit Kartik continues to this day, occasionally.

Thatha was a big fan of cricket. Fan with a healthy dose of criticism towards the then players -- “these players are only good for earning through ads!” whenever they turned in a bad performance. And for a 90s Indian cricket team fan, that was a lot of times. But, if you were a

supporter of some other team, that would definitely not be advisable to announce in his vicinity or during a match!

But, despite his love for cricket, storytelling, and strong opinions, Thatha never forced his opinions or advice on anyone. He was not very interfering or ‘unnecessarily advising’ us (Kartik or me) about what we should be doing, either in terms of the ‘here and now’ (study v/s playing/ watching TV, etc.) or even in terms of the relative medium term (such as one’s career choices).

I was reasonably mediocre in studies and it would have been pretty easy/ expected for someone else in his place to be excessively advising/ guiding on this but fortunately, that was very, very rarely the case with him. This freedom given to me by him was also something that Amma and Appa gave me. His parenting style may have also influenced Amma’s freedom-giving nature, for which I will always be grateful. Or Amma learnt from his mistakes and Thatha had a different style to his children versus that to his grandchildren -- I wouldn’t know.

He also had a very strong joy for life and an innate fighting spirit. Even after some problems or fights in the family, he would be upset but when interacting with us he would seldom show that. And, of course, him having brought up seven wonderful children into responsible adults after Paati’s death is a testament to that fighting spirit.

I still fondly remember his many visits to us at Lodhi Colony and do miss his wit and humor. I also sometimes wonder what his reactions would be about the performances of the Indian cricket team now. ■

Srikant Rajaramaswamy

I have my fondest memories with “Pattu” Thatha and feel lucky to be around him during my childhood days. I always remember the time during any vacation or holiday our one stop for spending the day was with Thatha as both appa and amma used to work.

Thatha was very cool and it was always fun, especially having a discussion with him about cricket. Guess I got that part of the gene from him, passionate about sports. Thatha started the practice of pocket money of INR 10, guess second Sunday of the month, it was a first for us. I waited for the day to come and made sure that I met Thatha that day :).

When I started my career, I remember the day when I got my first official foreign trip and he was with me that day when I shared the news: One of my best moments with him was this one.

Since childhood, I have known him as “Pattu” Thatha never understood why he is called that but today as I write, I realize that in Tamil “Pattu” is sweetheart and he is our Sweetheart Thatha. ■

Jaikant Rajaramaswamy

A calm and composed person with a serious look on his face -- that's how I remember Thatha. He was always smartly dressed, be it formal, casual or a traditional attire. In fact his dressing sense was so impeccable that we (Srikant and I) used to call him "Pattu" Thatha to distinguish him from rest of the Thathas in our lives. He was the only Thatha who got the pattam of "pattu" from us. Rest of the Thathas were name based Thathas for us.

But don't let his calm demeanor fool you. He was very funny. He commanded respect and was someone people loved to frolic around. I remember him bringing the house down with laughter every time he was with Chandra Atthai and Periya Athimber. Even Ammaya could not stop tears rolling down her cheeks from laughter. My early days of interaction with him were very limited, starting from 11A/40 days to Aaram Bagh to Prasad Nagar A-9 and then C-5, before we moved out of Delhi. Later during his periodic visits to our home in Indore and Mumbai I had the chance to interact with him personally. He was the first person to give me pocket money, every festive occasion he'd give me some cash money as a form of his blessing.

He was the most organized person I knew; things were neatly packed in his bag/ suitcase. The same level of organization then spilled onto the little space he had in our home. He was always interested in news; he would wait for the newspaper to be free and read every page with his small green magnifying glass. He chose his topics of discussion based on the person he was talking to. With Ammaya it used to be about TV serials (apart from family politics), with my dad it used to be about current affairs and with me it used to be about sports. We had our share of arguments about the Indian cricket team's approach in Test cricket. He would wake up with me to watch Test matches in Australia that would start quite early in the day.

One fond memory I have of him: It was Girija Periamma and Venkat Periyappa's 25th wedding anniversary and they had arranged a small get-together in their house at Chakala, Andheri. Our cousin Jeetu had come to visit us so he came with us as well. We were watching a pro-wrestling match on TV where a wrestler named 'HHH' (AKA Triple H) was performing. Jeetu mistakenly called him 'XXX' (or triple X if you will :)), Vivek and I being the teenage boys we were, began sniggering at the mere mention of it. Suddenly out of nowhere, we heard Thatha saying: "Paiyanuku Triple X kekurada?". Vivek and I just burst out in laughter! It was that day I learnt that grandfathers are just old-fashioned little boys who love and enjoy spending playful moments with their grandchildren. I treasure all the beautiful memories we shared. ■

Sowmya Ramachandran

"Balu Thatha". My earliest memory of Thatha was going to Prasad Nagar to meet family and Thatha would be there offering snacks. Food was his love language. I remember the time when he was living with us, he would go on his so-called walks and come back with fresh vegetables

and loads and loads of snacks. I remember one time Ma had just bought vegetables from the market a couple nights before and he came back from one of his famous walks, hands full of fresh vegetables and biscuits. I remember, mom was so upset that he was spending his money on things we already had, his cool response with a smirk was: “I can do what I want with my money and I want to spoil the kids.” Mom had no response. She just shook her head.

He was an amazing grandfather. He was always keen on knowing what we were up to. He wanted to know what was happening at school or at work.

He lived a long life. Hope he is now at peace and keeping an eye on all of his grand-kids and watching over great grand-kids.

Happy 10th birthday! ■

Aishwarya Ramasubramanian

My very first memory of Thatha is his early morning birthday wishes on my birthday. For a very long time, he used to be the first person to wish me on my birthday. It was such a special gesture that it became such a habit that I took it for granted for so many years.

The next major memory was his month-long visits to our house and what it would lead to – shouting matches between mom and Thatha, because he would go for his walks and sneakily come with his arms full of breads, veggies, eggs and fruits. They, of course, eventually compromised and settled on agreeing that mom would let him know when we were short of something and he can get it then, but not to get stuff on his own.

The most special memory for me and something that I treasure the most is his love for cricket. Which is where I got my love and understanding for cricket. It was NOT entertainment for him. NEVER. It was an intense experience with him because he would get so involved in the whole process. Cursing for missing runs, missed catches and all. Oh my! What a memory. He taught me so much about cricket growing up, I am forever grateful for that experience. I remember we would literally debate about the game while it was going on and he would treat me as an adult at par and have those healthy intense debates on who went wrong and why. I still remember: He was staying with us during one of those World Cups. I distinctly remember it was one of those intense India-Pakistan matches. We were all screaming at the TV. Thatha, dad and I. Probably heard him curse for the first time as well.

This is how I choose to remember Thatha. Sometimes when I take out bread and eggs, that childhood memory flashes of Thatha getting us bread and eggs after his morning walk. Waited for thatha's call on my first birthday after his death, but even though I don't receive it anymore, I sure remember him fondly for giving me that grandparent experience, which we take for granted as kids. I have lost the will for cricket. I may say it is because there are now so many formats and too much cricket (which is true), but also, I don't enjoy it anymore. If I could just watch one more cricket match with Thatha... ■

Shashank Sharma

A wise man once said, “You are a bloody fool of an ass”. The wise man was none other than my Grandfather K.R. Balasubramanian. There are many scattered memories I have of Thatha, but I will utilize this opportunity to give it a chronological narrative. It would reflect on how Thatha changed over the years and also how our relationship evolved.

Early Memory 1 - Toy Warehouse & Proxy

It was Aditya’s birthday; he was most likely turning six or maybe seven and Parikshith and I were tremendously excited for the event. Not only because we had a genuine affection for our brother, but also the fact that this annual event (alas) would tremendously increase Aditya’s arsenal of toys.

I digress but it is my humble estimate that Rama Chitti and Dilip Chitapa earmarked 45% of their combined annual incomes towards the purchase of Hot Wheels, Gi-Joes, Pokemon paraphernalia and what not. Something Parikshith and I in hindsight believe was a very intelligent and well-timed investment on behalf of Chitti and Chitappa for their beloved son. We still cannot garner the courage to ask pertinent questions such as “Hey, how come we did not get so many toys?” to our parents. But that would be an interesting topic to raise probably 50 years later.

So with adrenalin and whatever pre-teen hormones human biology allowed, we paid 15 rupees to the rickshaw walah and trudged along to Panchwati, Vikaspuri. A heavenly abode of Maggi, infinite toys, ample playtime and of course what’s-his-name, Aditya.

Another digression is essential to this narration, which is the contrast of the professions followed by my parents, Dilip Chitapa and Rama Chitti. While my mother back then was a lecturer, father a journalist, Chitapa an Engineer and Chitti in Nestle, a traditional think-tank would classify their professions as ‘Accretive to Civilization gains’. However, children born in the 1990s completely reject this theory. In no way can a professor, journalist and an engineer inspire more happiness than a packet of Maggi.

In this context, our less than 10-year-old minds found that Rama chitti’s profession was that of producing Maggi Noodles and supplying it to the 90s born progeny. A thoroughly noble profession and rather ‘Civilizational Essential task’.

Upon reaching the toy warehouse, correction Aditya’s home, we were pleasantly surprised that all of our Delhi cousins had also converged with their moms and dads. And I distinctly remember my Thatha sitting in the living room, tall, still slim and reading the newspaper looking towards the balcony door which faced a park.

I greeted Thatha. He patted me on the back and asked me to sit next to him. I asked him, “Kya pad rahe ho?” He handed me the paper and I saw that it had pictures of cricketers. That was one of my first memories that yes, Thatha loved sports and had a deep understanding of cricket.

Later I would learn that he almost always opened the newspaper from the rear.

It was sitting and spending time with Thatha that I taught myself to interpret the previous day's scorecard. 'W' meant wicket. 'C' meant caught, Runs made from extras, etc...

Growing up, during Saurav Ganguly days, I asked him. "Thatha, why do we keep losing matches? What is lacking in our cricket team?" After a five-second pause, his response was: "We need more all-rounders, we are relying on a few players and they do not know how to handle pacers." He further added that "there is little representation of players from South". This statement, I interpreted many years later, echoed the fact that India and perception of India was rapidly progressing to what the North does and not the south.

In an India-Pakistan match, after we lost, incorrectly mixing nationalism with sports I exclaimed, "I hate Pakistan, I will destroy Pakistan". I might have been in 5th/6th standard. Thatha, with great annoyance in his voice, admonished me: "This is not sportsmanship. This match is a sport not politics. Do not say such things" I would be lying if I said that his statement did not hurt. But the importance of this statement is most pronounced today during the present acerbic years. And I am thankful to have learnt this lesson.

Now, back to Aditya's annual toy distribution day. Soon after having copious amounts of Maggi with no quenching of our mental hunger toward this amrit, Parikshith and I encountered four raised eyebrows. Two belonged to our father, where his eyebrows were imperiously questioning us whether we came from an impoverished family! The other two eyebrows were of our mother who was extremely proud that her husband for once resonated completely with her and the feminine eyebrows in no way diluted the emphasis laid on pausing our consumption of Maggi.

We kept our plates away; we were in fact full. And Dilip Chitapa, who was in fact born for the stage, started a quiz competition amongst us kids, who were Aditya's friends and cousins.

Clearly the older kids had a strong advantage and I was not exactly sure if I could get an answer right, unless Chitapa put out some easy questions. But as luck would have it Ramana was quick enough to respond to the easy ones. Ramana and I have a two-year difference so Ramana, in my mind, was one of us – namely Ramana, Shashank, Parikshith and Aditya. He was and has always been more a 90s than 80s kid. As for my other beloved cousins I often found my Thatha less mature and more accessible than them!

Struggling to answer questions and trying to secure more than one return gift, an animated raspy voice came to my rescue. Thatha decided to participate in the quiz via a proxy and that was me. "What is the capital of Maldives?" Three-second pause. Thatha whispered: "Male". I blurted it out. My mother and father almost fell on their knees with relief that a private school education is after all paying off, and Chitappa handed me a pencil box.

Why I did not get a hot wheels which was within a finger reach I do not know. But other kids got it. But I should not digress.

I do not remember the other questions but did, in fact, give correct answers thanks to Thatha. I was too excited to be in the limelight of correct answers. And being faster than Karthik Anna

was a joy I could not fathom back then. This is one of my earliest memories of Thatha. That day was a happy day and in fact one of the good old days which none of us probably realized.

Early Memory 2 - A Double Agent & Non-Diplomat

This time around, Parikshith was in second standard and I was in seventh. Thatha had come over to visit us and was staying for a few weeks. These visits I thoroughly liked as by this time Thatha used to be that type of family member with whom you could ask advice, confide somewhat but he would not judge you or scold you. What he, however, did not like was us using him as an excuse and getting our way with someone else. Example: "Hey Amma, Thatha said that we can watch TV and he has no problem." Such things he disliked. But we learnt this quickly.

I was learning the Mridangam but was somewhat disillusioned with it. I could play it well, but my inner interest was lost. Amma sensed this but wanted to prolong my classes, hoping that I would have a change of heart.

Parikshith was also enrolled in Mridangam classes and his efforts were legendary and hilarious. Our teacher, Guru T.R Dandapani, would come to our home every Wednesday. Parikshith would find inventive ways of just about getting along in the class, not get a scolding, but leave a lingering sensation that his foray into this percussion instrument is probably not going to last.

Amma rightfully diverted her two boisterous sons towards the predecessor of the tabla namely the Mridangam. It was one of the 1st masterstrokes ever to be made. The Mridangam would introduce us to the Carnatic system of music and would also deplete us of excess energy thereby causing less trouble to everybody else. Modi took cognizance of this fact, tried to imitate, but continues to blunder till date, because this master stroke technique was mastered only by our mother.

Amma, leaving for college, requested Thatha to keep an additional eye on her responsible kids. "Appa, remind both boys to practise on the Mridangam".

"OK".

"Appa, tell them not to watch TV after 3:30 p.m."

"OK".

"Appa, remind them to do their homework and tell Shashank to go to tuitions".

"OK"

Parikshith and I returned from school at 2:15 p.m. everyday. We had not even opened our shoes and Thatha said: "Shashank and Parikshith, practise Mridangam, no TV after 3:30 p.m., do your homework and go to tuitions". All of this in a matter of five seconds. This obviously flew out of the window.

Deep in my mind, Thatha was one of us. A pillar of support in the time of need with a certain assurance that he would never hand us over to the authorities.

As expected from two brothers with only grand-parental supervision, we watched TV till 4:30 p.m. Did not do our homework. I just managed to go to tuitions and did not practise the Mridangam. After tuitions we saw Thatha and there was no change of expression. To me it seemed all was quiet on the western front. But rarely does a nuclear missile explode with prior warning.

At 6pm, Amma returned. Amma had barely taken off her shoes when Thatha, Dad in shining armor, blurted out the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so save us god.

“They did not practise Mridangam, did not do their homework and watched TV till 4:30 p.m.” Parikshith’s jaw was left wide open. A walrus might have been proud. Amma gave the terminator-1000 liquid metal terminator look and it was our turn to curdle in fear.

I have faint visual memories of how we were scolded, but it was not Amma’s reprimand which hurt us, rather it was Thatha’s tryst with honesty which stabbed us in the back.

Come dinner time when dad had also returned, we got a second round of passive scolding once dad got the full download. But by 9 p.m. tempers had abated. It was time to sleep and Amma had taught us to wish Thatha goodnight before turning in. Pari walked into the room, Amma and Thatha were sitting there. Parikshith looked at Thatha then looked at Amma and said: “Amma, when is Thatha going back to Saket?”

A three-second pregnant pause later, a raspy laugh broke out from Thatha. And I am sure while he may not have verbalised it, bloody fool of an ass might have been said silently. And all was well again.

Early Memory 3 - Going to Connaught Place

Amma, Papa, Thatha, Parikshith, I and Chacha visited Connaught Place. By now I was in 11th standard, Parikshith was in 6th. I remember, Thatha thoroughly enjoyed his bottle of milk shake at Keventers. He enjoyed the patty at Wengers and had an amazed look on his face. He told Parikshith and me that he was visiting Connaught Place after 30 years. It was also his first and last ride in the Delhi Metro from Dwarka Sector 7 to Rajeev Chowk.

Early Memory 4 - Attitude towards religion

I believe he was very much an agnostic. He practised many rituals and fasts but it was more out of respect for Seethalakshmi Patti. For him all rituals were just a routine, part of the day, to be done and dusted. I remember once asking him: “Thatha what is your favorite food? Mine is vatha kuzhambu”. He replied, “I lost my taste in food after your Patti was gone”. I still often wonder why he would reply like this to an early teenager, but deep down it is my theory that he missed Seethalakshmi Patti. It was also my privilege that amongst all his family it was I who got to hear this.

Recent Memory - Our Last Days With Thatha

Amma and I spent a week, maybe 10 days at Saket. This was Thatha's last year and he was just not the same man we all grew up with. He was physically wasted, had a massive weight loss. Sudden fits of anger followed by spells of remarkable lucidity and rational behavior was the norm those days.

It was very difficult to see Thatha like that. After Thatha's demise, I remember, everyone blessed me that wow at least you got to spend time with him and served him in his last moments. But I would be dishonest in accepting those compliments.

I did not know how to interact with Thatha. And neither did I want to understand how. Simply because I felt that it could not be done. I took a stance of convenience and just settled in the bedroom (but this time I was working and an adult, yet my behavior was not mature). Amma did all the heavy lifting. Faced Thatha's tantrums, placated him, sang songs and even faced a physical blow or two, but she did everything bravely like any child would do for his parents.

In retrospect, I failed in performing my duties as a grandson. I should have risen to the occasion and been by his side more, not just twice or thrice a day.

In one of his temperamental episodes, Thatha said: "Why is Shashank here? He just sits in his room". Frankly he was not wrong. I didn't know what else to do. Nor did I make an effort to plug this gap.

It was our last day, Mama and Manni were to reach the next morning. Thatha

despite his many challenges, still had the power of prescience. He said without anyone's prompting, "You should be leaving now". My last visuals of Thatha were that he was on his bed. He extended a bony hand and wrapped two fingers across my hand. And with great emotion in his eyes said 'Bye'. It was in that fleeting moment when his eyes shone with his former energy. For a second, he was himself. Soon after, he passed away. ■

Parikshith Sharma

When presented with this task, there was this twang of regret I felt. Did I have good memories with Thatha? Of Course, I did. Did he give me lots of love? I am sure of that as well. Was he a fun-loving grandparent? I have no reason to believe otherwise.

But then why regret? It is because I do not remember actual instances. Rather I remember only the emotion. And describing emotion is a hard task. Moreover, as I started grasping life and its uncertainties, the memories I have been left with of Thatha were the most painful and sad ones. But nonetheless these memories also made me what I am today.

Thatha taught me to endure, take it in one's stride, or should I say, be stoic. When he was his most active self, I probably would not have registered this, as I was too young. But I have a feeling

that spending time with him during his last days did educate me on this principle passively. I did not intend to learn or imbibe, but I feel I matured nonetheless. And feelings can be right or wrong to you, but they are very much the ground truth to me.

I remember one thing. He was not strict with me. Rather he enjoyed my innocent transgressions. I must have been six or maybe seven. Having an elder sibling is not easy. It is rather a pain in the posterior, especially when your older sibling himself has some growing up to do. Often in arguments, even if I was right, Anna would disagree and if things didn't go his way he would use physical force to get the upper hand. Be it Gi-Joes, cars, time spent playing video games, my TV time, etc. Hence, my only counter back was snappish responses to his annoying statements. Mind you, we were both not adults, not even teenagers.

At such times I found solace in watching TV. Thatha would often sit with me. We had a silent TV sharing pact. I don't remember the channel but he used to watch this serial "Nambikkai". I did not understand a word but after those bland 30 minutes he would hand over the remote and watch cartoons with me. And on weekends he would watch reruns of the same serial, while I would ask him often, "Thatha, can I please watch? Haven't you seen this?" And he would make his signature laugh in response. His laugh was a controlled, measured response.

At times my brother would want to change the channel during my TV time, I had no defense but with Thatha by my side, I would make a statement or two much wiser for my age, staggering Anna for a bit and getting Thatha's signature laugh in return. It had its effect. He would recount such instances to Amma, saying: "Manga please record this. His responses are gold."

What were my responses I do not remember but I do remember this feeling that Thatha sided with me.

His last few months were painful and confusing times, those moments I remember and will not forget. ■

Aditya Dilip

Thanks to Thatha, I learned to watch cricket. While we watched a hockey game every now and then based on the tournament, Thatha patiently taught me the strategy and process behind the modern day 50-over cricket game. No statistics was too small for Thatha and he would keenly keep an eye on each of the players and their form. No coach was ever good enough for Thatha and he would often question why players out of form are in the line up during major tours in England, Pakistan and Australia. Thatha wanted the players to play well but unselfishly. He would be frustrated if Tendulkar got out at 99 but would also claim that Tendulkar is selfish if he played till 130 not out.

I remember Thatha encouraged my love and following of cricket as many times I would call him to share with him the score and he would give me his analysis on why the team lost or why they didn't win by more. The Indian cricket team was never good enough for him, because like a

parent he had extremely high expectations.

One of my favorite memories with Thatha is that as he got older, he used the magnifying glass to read the main page of *The Times of India* and *The Hindu*. Oftentimes, when Shashank, Parikshith and I were around, he would ask us to read the front page and follow on articles. Reading for him, I often learned more about politics, cricket and local Delhi elections than most people cared for. Eventually Thatha enjoyed having us read aloud the headlines. By reading aloud, our comprehension and understanding of the English language also grew. Often seizing the opportunity to read salacious articles loudly in front of family, I would enjoy reading the latest scandal in Delhi government. Loudly reading the news to Thatha helped me understand politics and sports better as well. And no matter how bad the scandal on the front page was, Thatha always enjoyed hearing about it from us, and giving us his view, which party was at fault and why. He especially enjoyed having optimism for a better future but expecting that things would never change in politics.

Thatha taught me how to properly enjoy South Indian food, specifically sambar and idli. There was a special way in which he would soak the idlis in sambar and combine the two dishes. He always enjoyed eating the sambar piping hot and letting the taste of the idlis improve the sambar. Thanks to Thatha I still eat my idlis soaked in a bowl of sambar and think of him fondly. There are many memories with Thatha that I cherish and hold dear, including visits to Saket, watching Sunday morning Sun TV with him, and his cheerful witty banter regarding cricket. I will hold those memories dear as we celebrate Thatha's life. ■



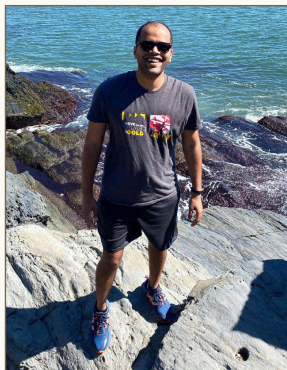
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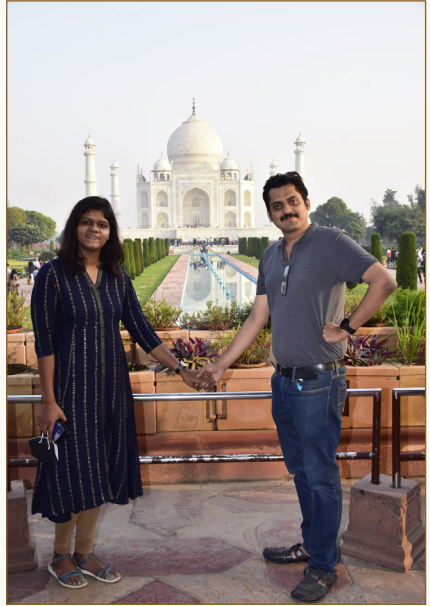
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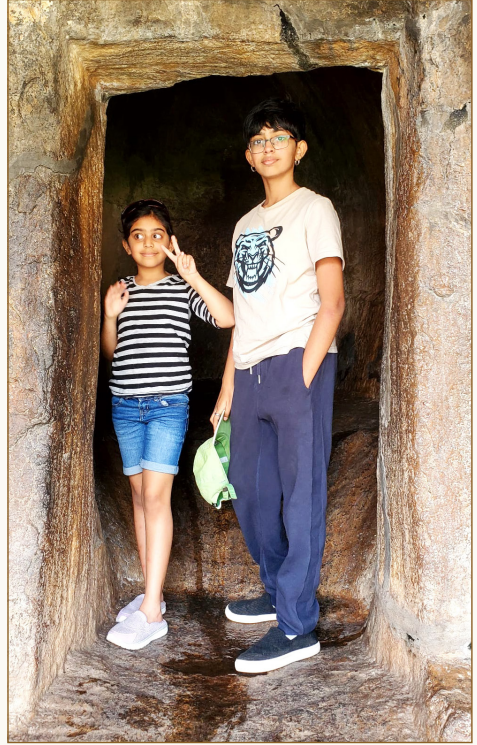
GRAND CHILDREN



GRAND CHILDREN



GREAT GRANDKIDS





GREAT GRANDKIDS

A TRIBUTE FROM FAMILY



A TRIBUTE FROM FAMILY



A Poetic Tribute

Fathers' Day

Fathers who went to work at

Udyog Bhavans and Shastri Bhavans

Had hot frothy filter kaapi with a copy of The Hindu or Indian Express.

Fathers who gave a stern, questioning look on reaching home at 5.45 p.m.

Turning mothers defensive, "she will return in five minutes..."

Fathers who cooked spicy upma or tangy, lentil-heavy sambar

("your Appa uses up three days' paruppu in one meal")

Fathers who read Alistair MacLean or James Hadley Chase

When mothers nagged about daughters turning marriageable.

Fathers who fiercely debated cricket matches

Politics and Noor Jehan.

Fathers who did not buy up DDA flats or opt for government quarters.

Fathers who let their daughters work, earn, contribute, lead

And let them idolise their mother.

Fathers who kept quiet

And quietly left us

To grieve, guilt-ridden,

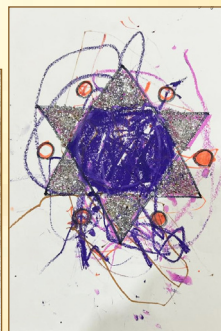
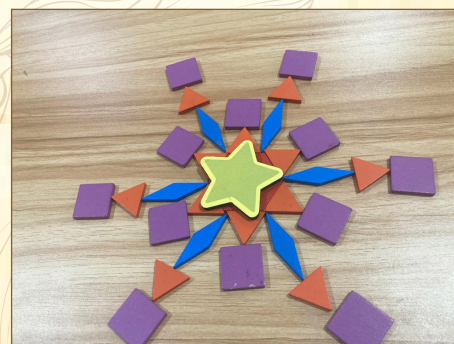
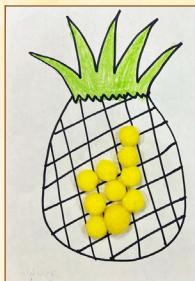
Wondering why Fathers' Day was never celebrated when Appa was alive

Passive, snacking, immersed in fiction.

-Manga

FAVORITE FOOD ITEMS OF APPA





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