

OM SAIRAM

**HEMAYANAM - HEMA HAUNTS**

**The endless story**

It all started when my close friend and first time hostel roommate at the Guntur Medical College men's hostel, old block, room no-66, in the year 1966 had his first precious female baby child delivered at the Government General Hospital, Guntur in the year 1971. We were all happy because the child was born through a normal delivery after a seemingly stormy ante natal period. Mrs.Siva Kumari Seshadri was in her teens during her first pregnancy because of very early childhood marriage. She had a threatened abortion which was successfully averted by the team of our gynecology teachers. In fact, the threatened abortion took place when I and my batch of final year students were posted in the obstetrics ward and the labor rooms as interns. As a very bright, intelligent, hard working and caring student, Ms.J.Hemalata still as a student took interest in Mrs.Siva Kumari, gave her the most needed confidence and reassurance and also the courage to successfully come out of that threatened crisis. As a woman Ms.J.Hemalata fitted in to the most caring role for the frightened first time pregnancy teenage girl. As a friend and well-wisher of Dr.L.Seshadri Rao I was very much touched by Ms.J.Hemalata's interest and initiative. That made Mrs.Siva Kumari more comfortable and confident. Watching from closeness I found a lady doctor of

immense virtues and noble ideas and deeds even as a budding doctor. I knew there were fourteen of us, as student interns with four boys and ten girls, staying twenty four hours at the labor rooms doing round the clock study cum learning stint. Only Ms.J.Hemalata ventured and volunteered to look after my friend's wife. Not that Ms.J.Hemalata took care of only Mrs.Siva Kumari but she did the same to most of the other patients if not all the patients. For example during the same period, one of my high school teacher's wife also developed the identical threatened abortion, wife of Sri Ayyappa Reddy and Ms.J.Hemalata was there right on the spot in the middle of the night helping my teacher and his wife. I was already looking and staring at the angle in Ms.J.Hemalata. We had been working together from our first year course to the final year. We appeared for all the classes, examinations, ward postings and the outpatient postings. We all knew Ms.J.Hemalata was a totally different breed of student. Not that our other classmates were any less, but as somebody said, to get inspiration you have look at the Mother Nature. If you look at a garden in front of you, you could easily pick the rose flower as the best and beautiful. It does not require great skills or education. It is just an instinct and common sense. In fact, my professor told me, much later in my life that the education takes away the common sense. Coming back to Ms.J.Hemalata, the rose in our garden of our class was spotted already by many people in our college, not only by our classmates,

but by the rest of the college students and teachers all put together as she was making ripples as **1<sup>st</sup>** class student. Nobody would miss to see a rose in a flower garden. But the fragrance is known to those who were close to the rose and who got to see the flower, smell the fragrance and also store the same in the mind as an everlasting essence in the memory. Let the rose be left in the habitat for everyone to see, but don't allow the fragrance to go unnoticed lest we should miss it forever.

Coming back to Mrs.Siva Kumari Seshadri Rao the problem was not over. After averting the threatened abortion, she had to take lot of precautions till delivery. Ultimately we were all relieved to see that a live female child was born. But Alas! The child was premature and under weight. She was shifted to the St.Joseph Hospital, just across the road from the General Hospital, where there was an incubator to treat such premature children, probably that was the only hospital and only incubator available at the entire Guntur town in those days. The child came out of the incubator successfully thanks to the dedicated nun sisters working there. The point of our main discussion starts now. Dr.L.Seshadri Rao decided to name the precious baby suitably. He was searching for very good girl names. He was getting the list of all the women's college students' names. He could not wade through the sets of lists and so took me in to the hunt. He got a list of girl student's names from the Stella Mary's College at Vijayawada where Ms.Hymavati was working as a

lecturer. By the by Ms.Hymavati, Mr.Sambasiva Rao, Dr.Banarji and Dr.Jaya Raju and myself were in the list of his best friends. As a token of remembering our friendship, I saw a photo album in Dr.L.Seshdri Rao's house at Guntur where he pasted all our passport sized photos in one page and titled the page as of his very best and close friends. I was very happy in that he included me also in that group.

Dr.L.Seshdri Rao succeeded in getting the list of the girls at the Stella Mary's College where Ms.Hymavati, was working in the teaching staff. She was one of the five life time best friends of Dr.L.Seshdri Rao and she readily fetched the names list to Dr.L.Seshdri Rao, who was frantically looking for a good name. He told me all about his efforts and also showed me the list of the names. I was amazed at the variety of names available and thought that it was very difficult to choose one single name from that mini world. As I always looked for simple solutions, first I thought he would opt for Ms.Hymavati's name as she was a close friend, schoolmate and also a good human being. He kept her passport size photo in his album, along with other four close friends who are all male members, which included Mr.K.Sambasiva Rao, Dr.Banarji, Dr.Jaya Raju and Dr.B.Dibbala Rao, as people close to his heart. But Dr.L.Seshadri Rao wanted to choose a different name to his first daughter and did not want to duplicate Ms.Hymavati's name. But he was very particular that I should seriously go through the list and

suggest to him at least a few choices so that his job became a little bit easy. I thought for a few days and decided to drop all the names in the list because, choosing one name would mean doing injustice to so many other good and sweet names.

I thought of going through the list of the names from our Medical College lady students. Spending a few minutes at the college notice board would help to pick up a good name. But I was disappointed at that attempt as there was no surprise element in all the lists displayed there as a routine. Most, if not all the names were familiar. I knew that none of the names would please or impress Dr.L.Seshadri Rao, as he was very confident of finding a suitable name that would surprise and satisfy all of us. I knew he had the taste, but neither he nor me could pin point it and unravel the veil of the name which was becoming more of a secret.

Suddenly I thought, if not Hyma, why not Hema? Really it was not that sudden development. The name was doing rounds in my mind ever since Dr.L.Seshadri Rao started searching for the suitable name for his first and precious baby girl. But I did not offer my suggestions as I wanted to see that Dr.L.Seshadri Rao had the first and full freedom in choosing the good name to his full satisfaction. I did not want to impose my ideas however valid and good they might be. Dr.L.Seshadri Rao agreed with me on many occasions and approved my point of views but also disagreed yet some times, point blank if he did not concur with me. But, Ms.J.Hemalata was not a

stranger to Dr.L.Seshadri Rao either. By that time, in the year 1971, Ms.J.Hemalata was a well known name in the college both in the student community and also in the teaching staff circles. Her academic record and achievements were the talking point in the college, hostel and hospital premises. She was simple and down to the earth. She never exhibited any emotions in spite of her achievements in the academic angle. People took notice of her when she got her 1<sup>st</sup> class in the first **MBBS** and the only one to get the first class in our batch. She was too small a physical personality and most often got drowned or engulfed or to say even more correctly lost in the big group of sixty and odd lady students of our class. She never stood up even in our class room during the questions and the answer sessions, while others tried to look more eager to project their knowledge and personality. Still the rest of our one hundred and fifty students were eager to see who that Ms.J.Hemalata was. First year examination results gave her an instant recognition for her from our classmates. She was a most uncomplicated personality thus far. Our senior batches of students looked up to glance at Ms.J.Hemalata even though she was not at all the tallest of the ladies. There was a respect and reverence from amongst the seniors for that tiny frame. Our teaching staff, from the assistant professors to the senior professors started to take note of her in the class rooms and in the wards. They gave special note of her knowledge and intelligence. She was too simple, serious, stubborn and

studious. Hence she got commendations, privileges and encouragements from one and all.

For a while let us not go too far and further in to the virtues of Ms.J.Hemalata. But, if a choice was given to the entire college student population to choose a good name for Dr.L.Seshdri Rao's first and precious daughter, I had no doubt that Ms.J.Hemalata's name would have been the first and the best choice. The reasons were not difficult to look at. First, there was no other person in our college with the same name to compare. There were some close names like Ms.Charulata, Ms.Swarnalata and Ms.Premalata. But they were nowhere nearer to Ms.Hemalata in their academic achievements. All the medical college students who joined in the college had all the dreams and goals to become the best like Ms.J.Hemalata. The reasons for my suggestion were two fold. One that as a classmate and batch mate for several years Ms.J.Hemalata became close to my heart, close physical proximity working in the wards and also her progressively increasing greater achievements and heights made me to look at her for day to day inspiration to improving my own professional study career. I must have heard her name so many times day in and day out for any and every academic discussion in the college and the hospital. The second reason was when we reached the final year and most of our classmates were planning to appear for the **ECFMG** examination to go to **USA** I came to the conclusion that our association as classmates and batch mates

was coming to an end. Suddenly there was a fear that I might not hear the name of our most brilliant classmate a few months later. Probably that was not the best thing for me to miss out an inspirational friend and colleague. I had that selfish desire to see and call the newly born child by name. Why not? After all Ms. J. Hemalata had been my good friend, brilliant lady and played a major in taking care of Mrs. Sivakumari in the time of distress. Dr.L.Seshadri Rao had been my best friend and I was not going to U.S.A. Hence I would be meeting the junior more often even if the senior Ms J.Hemalata went abroad. In that background Dr.L.Seshdri Rao searching for a name for his first daughter came as a blessing for me to suggest Ms.J.Hemalata's name for his daughter. After much hesitation I suggested Dr.L.Seshdri Rao to name his daughter as Hemalata. Even though he liked my idea and suggestion he went by his own instinct and named his first daughter as Lavanya. I was a little bit disappointed and depressed that Dr.L.Seshadri Rao did not go my way in naming his first daughter. My personal selfish interest got evaporated and I got reconciled to the fact that Ms.J.Hemalata cannot be replicated or duplicated in the medical records and her name should remain as the sole and the only achiever of so many academic goals and heights. What if Dr.L.Seshadri rao agreed to name his daughter by the name of Hemalata? Would I have still missed the real Hemalata? Difficult to imagine.

Why I have been dissecting so many times about one name was not intentional but by compulsion. The time and emotional gap after her marriage and going abroad to countries like **Canada** and **USA** certainly made me feel like an orphan in my further studies and planning of my own career. Many friends and colleagues both juniors, classmates and seniors I had come across, only created a tickle but no permanent impact on my educational career. How I wished I had some really close contact with my original batch mate and friend even from a distance to get the catalytic inspiration which I derived in abundance during my twelve months of house surgeon period. I always wanted some close friends and class mates or even senior roommates to share my day to day learning experiences which were both thrilling and fascinating. I had repeated ad nauseam that I needed a scaffold to creep, climb and a canopy for cover and confidence. Once I missed out everything I craved for. I found myself in wilderness. Years passed by and much water had flown under the bridge for a decade or more which I am not going to expand at the present juncture.

Why I chose the title that Hema Haunts was a mere compulsion. Not that I did not hear the name of Hemalata or that I did not see or talk to the real Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi on a number of occasions but what happened after I came to Hyderabad on a permanent or semi permanent basis was a coincidence and culmination of so many factors that made me to revive my old

memories about my old friend and classmate. One day when I recovered fully from my heart ailment and started attending the outpatient clinic at the **CARE** Hospital, Banjara Hills I got a phone call from a lady who identified herself as Mrs.Hemalata from Visakhapatnam. She told me that she knew me when I worked as an assistant professor of neurosurgery at the King George Hospital, Visakhapatnam during the years 1978-83. She worked as a staff nurse in charge of the blood bank and helped a number of neurosurgery patients in giving priority while blood sanctioning. I could not recognize her immediately by the phone. I vaguely remembered another staff nurse by name Hemalata who worked in the Ebden's operation theater and assisted me in operating more complicated neurosurgical cases. I have the vague memory of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi who also worked as a theater assistant in her early days of her stay at Canada if I am not wrong. In those days for a specialist neurosurgeon to work and produce good results the role of staff nurses was very much critical and important. I remember the neurosurgery ward staff nurse, the operation theater staff nurses and the blood bank in charge staff nurses who all helped me and my patients in all my efforts to give the best neurosurgical treatment. That particular staff nurse on phone happened to be the mother of one Ms.Roshini, who was preparing for her civils examination by staying at Hyderabad along with her parents. She happened to be the classmate and friend of Ms Divya Boddu my

second daughter at the Timpani School at Visakhapatnam. She identified herself, wanted some neurosurgical help and advice for her friend Mr.Hanumantu who was admitted at the **Yashoda** Hospital. He was about to be operated for a blood clot in the brain. That story was interesting in the sense Mr.Hanumantu met with a motor cycle accident and was admitted at the **Yashoda** Hospital for observation. His parents were poor and incapable of paying so much of money for the hospital charges. Suddenly the treating neurosurgeon, Dr.P.Ranganadham who was my former student and house surgeon wanted to operate on Mr.Hanumantu for a blood clot in the brain. Since Mrs.Hemalata and her daughter Ms.Roshini knew me well at Visakhapatnam, they wanted a second opinion from me. The surgery was slated for 3 PM in the afternoon and I was approached at about 2 PM on the same day. I realized that there was no need for the emergency surgery and that the small blood clot would naturally get dissolved in the course of time. There was not much of a time before the start of the operation. Ms.Roshini, her mother Hemalata and her father reached me at the **CARE** Hospital just one hour before the planned surgery. After listening to me they agreed to bring the patient to the **CARE** Hospital and hand over to me the problem of further management of the patient Mr.Hanumantu. The father of the patient was made to pay rupees one lakh and twenty thousand as an advance, at the **Yashoda** Hospital for the burr-hole surgery with no definite ethical indication.

Luckily for the patient the operation was stopped in time and with a penalty of rupees twenty thousand, the patient was discharged from the **Yashoda** Hospital. I took the responsibility of treating that patient without surgical intervention. As I expected the blood clot got dissolved in a short time and patient was discharged and sent home with almost full refund of his money and also in fully normal state. In that connection I happened to see Ms.Roshini and Mrs.Hemalata on a number of times and never met Mrs.Hemalata subsequently. To complete the story that Ms.Roshini had become Mrs.Roshini after getting her **IAS** degree and their family shifted to Visakhapatnam, back to their original place. Even though I was at Visakhapatnam on the day of her marriage I could not personally attend to Mrs.Roshini's marriage. Coming back to Mr.Hanumantu he was originally working with the **TV9** television channel and now working full time in the cinema field script writing. After his successful treatment he helped and guided a number deserving patients to come to me and to the **CARE** Hospital for their treatment.

I was regularly reading the Hindu news paper ever since I completed my **SSLC** at our school at Pedanandipadu in the years 1964-65. Of late my only habit was to read the news paper completely from first page to the last page without missing any item of interest. On Sunday the paper carried articles written by public, on their subject of choice, depending on their personal interest and involvement in the open page. One day I saw a boxed column with

title “*what is there in the name?*”. The article was written by a Tamilian lady and her experience in writing down her name correctly in the passport and the immigration papers. Her name was something like Alamelu Manga Tayaru Srinivasa Subramanyeswaran. Any spelling mistake or typing mistake would land her in trouble every time she travelled abroad. In that context she was mentioning that there were so many good names that could have made her travel easy. The two names she quoted amused and interested me very much as the two names she chose were Sridevi and Hemalata. Again my memories about my classmate Hemalata went back decades, bringing back those glorious medical college student days.

In the same newspaper the Hindu, one day I read a boxed news items about a Telugu lady writer who went to England to join her husband and work there. When she left India she did not know anything about English. After going to England she not only learnt English properly but also started writing poetry in English. Her book on the beauty of the ‘*Manjeera River*’ was given the Queen’s review and award. Again her name happened to be Mrs.Hemalata. I was thrilled to know that people with Hemalata name are bringing back my old memories again and again.

After getting six stent placements over a period of six months, two at each time starting from the **CARE** Hospital, Visakhapatnam to the **CARE** Hospital, Banjara Hills I was discharged from the hospital

and I went to the guest house at Dr.B.Soma Raju's residence. After staying there for three to four months, I thought I became stable and decided to continue to stay at Hyderabad in the long term interest of my health. I also decided to stay in a rented house close to the **CARE** Hospital, Banjara Hills. I was finding it difficult to move out of the guest house and go to the **CARE** Hospital even for a change. I had to consult Dr.B.Soma Raju as frequently as possible and also meet my friends like Dr.M.A.Saleem and others. In fact I developed a small abscess in my right leg due to an infected sebaceous cyst which required a small drainage and daily dressings. To get transport to go to the hospital was also becoming difficult. There was also some difficulty for people who wanted visit me as I was recovering well. For easy transportation I requested Dr.V.Krishna Murthi to bring my car from Visakhapatnam to Hyderabad by road with the help of his driver. Even though I could get my car finding a driver was the next requirement. Somebody in the **CARE** Hospital drivers group arranged a private driver to help me round the clock both as a driver and as a personal assistant for a salary of rupees eight thousand per month. Still I wanted to move in to a separate residential apartment close to the **CARE** Hospital from where I could reach the emergency room in a very short time in case of necessity especially at nights. I discussed the same matter with Dr.B.Soma Raju and also thanked him for keeping me for an extended period of three to four months in his guest house free of cost both for food and accommodation. He

agreed for my shifting to a private apartment and also instructed Ms.Mamata to look for a decent accommodation close to the **CARE** Hospital preferably a ground floor flat with water, electricity, generator and lift facilities. I also requested Dr.M.A.Saleem and Dr.Laxmi Saleem to find me a suitable accommodation. I requested them to look for a separate cook to make me less spicy, less oil and no salt food preparations. After a few days of vigorous search one apartment was located in the Indralok complex next to the Baskara hotel and the **CARE** Hospital. With all arrangements made to stay there. I shifted to that apartment in the end of the month of May 2009 per a rent of twenty five thousand rupees, seventy five thousand rupees advance and two thousand five hundred rupees monthly maintenance charges. In fact I enquired the rental value of a three bed room house in a flat just opposite to the guest house at Dr.B.Soma Raju's house and found out that it was a whooping forty thousand rupees per month, unfurnished. In addition to that I had to pay rupees five hundred for water charges, rupees three thousand for the house keeping charges for two lady workers who came and worked in their spare time after completing work at the guest house situated at Dr.B.Soma Raju's house. I moved with the driver already appointed and also appointed a part time cook to make lunch and dinner for me. The cook was also a part time worker borrowed from the **CARE** Hospital kitchen for a salary of rupees two thousand per month. Luckily for me the apartment was fully furnished with

facilities for cooking and dining. It was a two bed room apartment with all the fittings including the air conditioners, big kitchen, big hall and an anteroom. It was self sufficient. I had the milk and mineral water supplies. In a way I was very glad to have moved in to a liberally spaced apartment from the single room I occupied in the guest house. It was convenient for me to go to the hospital whenever I wanted. It was convenient for my visitors also to come and go as frequently as possible. Looking back, I stayed at the guest house at Dr.B.Soma Raju's house without spending a single pie for months together. Now I realized how much I must have saved in that time, at least thirty two to forty thousand rupees per month was spent on me when I stayed at the guest house. Immediately, I decided that somehow or other I should not avail such free bees even though Dr.B.Soma Raju was very generous and magnanimous in not demanding or allowing me to pay some amount for my food and accommodation. Not only I, my friends including Mrs Hema Parimi and relatives also availed the free food and accommodation at the guest house, whenever they visited and stayed with me for a few days to give company to me. For that as I was feeling guilty about the free facilities I availed I decided to donate some money to the hospital. I made a check for rupees one lakh eleven thousand one hundred and eleven **(1,11,111)** which was given to the **CARE** foundation, and also as a token of my gratitude to the service and help rendered to me during and after my stay at the **CARE** Hospital,

Banjara Hills I wanted Dr.B.Soma Raju to give some cash gifts to Ms.Mamata, Ms.Anitha and Mrs.Haritha rupees ten thousand, five thousand and five thousand respectively to all of them through the hands of the Chairman of the **CARE** Hospital. In fact when I got discharged from the hospital itself in the month of February 2009 I gave a cash gift of rupees nine thousand to the **ICCU** and ward nurses who attended to me and made my recovery possible. That money was distributed by the hospitality in charge Mrs.Rama Devi. Just to complete the picture when I stayed at the guest house I came to know about the 11<sup>th</sup> birthday of Dr.B.Soma Raju's grand daughter and I was aware of so many guests and relatives gathering at his house and the guest house. Suddenly I had a flash of a thought to buy a gift to that girl but there was not much of a time and also there was nobody to take me to a shop in time to make the purchase. Since it was the **11<sup>th</sup>** birthday I thought of giving eleven thousand rupees in cash. After I made that gift to that girl, it was very nice of Dr.B.Soma Raju to break away from the party and brought the birthday baby to my room and also spent a few minutes with me. He did not miss the opportunity of taking a few snaps with me and his grand-daughter and himself. I was very happy to share a few moments with Dr.B.Soma Raju and his family members on that day. At the time of vacating the guest room I wanted to give some financial support to the guest room cook Mr.Lakshman who looked after me for all my needs in the guest house, including morning

breakfast, snack, launch, afternoon coffee and snack and finally my dinner at night. He also looked after my friends and relatives and the car driver. He was a poor young man with diabetes, having his family and children staying in the same campus. When I offered some money, Mrs.Soma Raju suggested that instead of giving him direct cash it would be nice if I could pay for the school fees for his two children who were going to a private convent school. I thought that was a better proposition than giving direct cash which would be spent without any specific purpose and the money would lose its value. I decided to pay the school fees for both the children once the schools were reopened. It worked out a total ten thousand rupees each for the two children including the tuition and the bus fare. I started paying whenever the school demanded as for their schedule and paid nearly rupees twelve thousand between both the children and could not continue to support any further as I was forced to go for a bypass surgery because, all the stents that were put earlier got blocked and I was at the risk of permanent cardiac damage which was going on silently till I decided myself to undergo the specific tests to know the functioning of the stents. I felt sorry that I could not help Mr.Lakshman and his children's education since I had a huge expenditure ahead that had toppled all my plans and happiness.

My happiness of staying at the Indralok apartment was very much short lived. The ceiling of the bathrooms started leaking from

the top making my stay more uncomfortable and unhygienic. The apartment office manager and the in charge care taker suppressed the fact that there was a leak in the bathroom which was there for years together and many attempts were made to rectify the mistakes without any success. There was a constant dripping of the bathroom effluent from the top floor soaking all the walls, bathroom doors and spilling into the hall making my stay there more miserable. Immediately I requested Ms.Mamata to find a more hygienic house preferably with a ground floor accommodation. Hence I shifted without any second thoughts to the present accommodation at the Venkataramana colony. As I was going up and down to the hospital from the house I was pleasantly surprised to see a name board on one of the houses on the way to the hospital. The name in the board read Mrs.Yeturi Hema Reddy, the house belonged to her and they were in to the business of bio technology. I saw a few pamphlets indicating their business interest mainly growing of the Aloevera plants. What amused me was that I was compulsively looking at that name board every time I passed by that house. I was also looking at the number of vehicles coming in and going out. I tried to look at the inmates either in the house, outside the house or in the vehicles coming and going in that few seconds of time I was able to cross that house. I never succeeded in the locating the inmates, leave alone locating Mrs.Hema Reddy. I was not curious but subconsciously always turned my head and neck to that house and to that board.

Even if I was thinking and talking with somebody else I always glanced toward that house. There used to be another male member's name also on that board earlier but now it is removed and also Yeturi.Hema Reddy name has been just modified as Y.Hema Reddy off late. I even mentioned this observation to Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi also. I showed her the board and the house one day when she visited me at my rented house. It was surprising to find a name board with the name of Hemalata which attracted my attention. There were so many other buildings in and around the road I take every day but I did not find the name of Hemalata anywhere else. May be because I was familiar with the name and fond of my classmate for her academic achievements I did not miss any chance to recognize her name wherever it appeared. Just by sheer coincidence there was another sign board next to Yeturi Hema Reddy's house. The name in the sign board was Sri Devi's Ayush ayurvedic clinic. That amused me much more when I recollected the open page boxed news item in the Hindu paper with the caption ***"What is there in the name?"***. The lady who wrote that open page article mentioned that there are good names like Sri Devi and Hemalata. That could not have been just a mere coincidence that the two names and their two houses are situated next to each other. Whether what I am trying to make a mountain out of a mole or not my observations are more like the Sherlock Holmes observations and deductions which always interested me.

One more place where I accidentally read the name of Dr.Hema Reddy was again the Hindu paper which carried the coverage of world woman's day celebrated at Puttaparthi in the presence of the late Sri.Sathya Sai Baba. There were celebrations for MahaSivarathri, 85<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba along with world woman's day celebrations. That function was chaired by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and one our state ministers Dr.(Mrs).Geeta Reddy, also actively participated. So far it was nothing special. It was a routine every year. I have been keenly following the major activities at the Prashanthi Nilayam especially after I became a cardiac patient. What was striking in the coverage of that meeting was that a guest lecture was given by one doctor from **USA** and her name was also Dr.Hema Reddy and she was also a practicing pediatrician. Whatever be my interest or not it was not just a coincidence that I was able to locate and relate the name of Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata with the pediatrician from **USA** delivering a guest lecture on the occasion of the world woman's day celebrations at Puttaparthi at the Prashanthi Nilayam with the blessings of Bhagavan Sri Sri Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Very recently I came across one discourse in the **Bhakti TV** channel where the name of Hemalata was mentioned. I was amused to hear the name of Hemalata in the **TV** channel and listened to more attentively. During my class studies as a medical student with co-education we mixed up with so many classmates, juniors and

seniors. Any name with **'H'** as the first letter attracted my attention. In my class we had one boy with name Haranath, one lady with her name Hamsa Veni and our lady of present discussion Hemalata. I always looked at the notice board to find similar names in other classes also. Just to mention the name of my land lady where I am presently staying is Mrs.Bhanumathi. I never realized till somebody mentioned in one of the **TV** talks that the name of Bhanumathi was associated with the mighty Duryodana the central character of Mahabharatam and the famous Kurukshetra war, as his wife. Like that I was learning a few things of mythological and historical origins and meanings of certain names and characters written in our mythological scriptures. Similarly I wanted to know the truth when somebody told me that Hamsa the holy bird in the Manasa Sarovaram has got the capacity to segregate the water from the milk. I really wanted some scientific explanation for such observations made in our ancient mythological scriptures. Personally I have not seen a real swan nor did I visit the holy place Manasa Sarovaram. Here I might highlight my ignorance whether the swan and duck or the same or different. I am sure both are not the same. I have seen a number of ducks but never imagined the swan which can swim in the water and also fly in the skies. I also heard an expression called Hamsatoolika Talpam. Somebody mentioned Raja Hamsa. I heard a discourse on Nala-Damayanti Swayam Varam story and noticed that Hamsa was used as a vehicle of communication and messenger

between the most beautiful love pair in our mythology. I have not heard of the name Hamsa Veni in our college or outside except in our class and our batch of students. I think I have deviated from the main topic of my attentive hearing about Hemalata in Mahabharatam. There, I was surprised to hear that the name of Hemalata belonged to one Apasaras from the Indralokam. She married to one serpentine King whose name was Mayudu. The serpentine king was rescued from a wild forest fire where he was trapped and cried for help. Arjuna, who was doing the Rajasuya Yaaga on behalf of the Pandavas, saved the serpentine king Mayudu from the wild forest fire. After completion of the Rajasuya Yaaga all the kings of the country surrendered to Pandavas and gave them valuable gifts as a token of acceptance of the supremacy of the Pandava kings. To continue the story what I heard that the serpentine king Mayudu who was one of the top three or four in their hierarchy wanted to give a novel gift to Arjuna for his rescuing act. As usual Arjuna politely deflected that the honor and the gift should go to his eldest brother Dharma Raju who was the king of the country and whose orders he rightly and dutifully carried out. So the serpentine king created and gave a beautiful gift that was the most memorable Maya Sabha which was the cynosure of the jealous Duryodana and started the process of the ill designs to dethrone the Pandavas as kings and to send them to the wilderness. Coming back to the story of the Apasaras Hemalata who was the Devakanya,

married to the serpentine king Mayudu who was the chief architect and creator of the most elusive Maya Sabha. By the by Hemalata and Mayudu had three daughters and one of them was Mandodari. I don't know whether there was even a remote similarity to the epic pair of Mayudu and Hemalata to our Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata. One definite similarity was that both Mayudu and Dr.S.R.Parimi are the best architects in their era and Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata is one of the best pediatricians of our era. The only contrast was the Mahabharata pair had three daughters where as our friends have got three sons. It is just a funny way of looking at an impossible combination and contrast. I think I told this small observation to Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi, Mrs.Ammaji and Mrs.Krishna and we all had a hearty laughter and enjoyed a few minutes of our stay at Vijayawada.

Hence I can't but think that the name of Hema Haunts even if it is a catch word for my title and for my observation. Please don't mistake the title Hemayanam to either Ramayanam or Premayanam. That was not my intension but was only a proof of my interest and incisive observations.

By the by, who is this Hemalata? Who has been haunting me day in and day out? We have been classmates, batch mates and friends for four and half decades? Is Hemalata a Monster? No. Not, at all. Is she a Banyan tree with its vast expanse, tallness and innumerable branches and roots? Yes, to some extent it was real

that the Hemalata Banyan tree has a vast expanse giving shadow and shelter to accommodate infinite number of people underneath with coolness and freshness of air. It was wrong to say that no other tree had a chance to grow in the shadow of the Banyan tree. Like a rose in the garden, like an elephant in the wild, the Banyan tree is unique in its own stature and value to the environment. Is Dr.(Mrs).Hema a shrub, No? Is Hema an herb, may be. Our ancient scriptures and many living people in the forest including the doctors in the medical practice know the value of herbs and their medicinal values. Even if the herb is very tiny, the medicinal value of each and every part of the herb was designed for the betterment of the mankind. The Banyan tree, in spite of its hugeness and its vastness may not have proportionate medicinal value. Each plant has got its own specific purpose in the nature. Is Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata a climber needing some support to grow? No. She was the supporting tree for other climbers.

Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata with her brilliant academic career has owned a number of gold medals, merit certificates, university ranks and first class in all the medical subjects. Ultimately she was the best outgoing student of the college, of our batch, if not the entire Andhra University. I cannot recollect any other name in our college, a few batches before or a few batches after our batch, getting so many laurels. There were some other bright students in our class but nowhere fully matching with the achievements of Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata.

There were a few boys of good academic record like Dr.Bhavani Prasad in our class, Dr.Vasantha Madhav one year senior to our batch and much more accomplished student with almost matching gold medals two years ahead of our batch in Dr.Krishnam Raju. But all those names were boys and not with the same achievements as Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata. Hence Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata's name as a sole lady student also stood very prominent in those days. I remembered one day that Dr.Krishnam Raju, our senior batch gold medalist commented that Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata disappointed him by not reaching the higher expectations with all her achievements as a under graduate student. If that was the impression of a senior and gold medalist what should be the expectations of her classmates, batch mates, friends and ardent followers like me who took the inspiration and tried to follow in her foot steps to improve my own academic graph.

With all the achievements she remained stable and constant throughout her career and continued to do so ever since. There were no fluctuations or ups and downs but a steadily raising graph of her career throughout. She never openly exhibited the gold medals, the merit certificates or the marks lists at any time. Even though she was my classmate and batch mate, her achievements were never discussed in the open even amongst the small little group of fourteen members of our batch. She kept all her achievements close to her heart and securely hid them in the inner pocket of our white

coat apron. I myself never showed any curiosity in asking her to share with her achievements. More than the curiosity, I was not bold enough or courageous enough or even competent enough to know her achievements or the hard work she had put in to achieve such goals. She was never in a hurry or anxious to perform which came to her naturally. That was in total contrast to the extra efforts put in by my other friends and colleagues but still they fell short, far behind our golden girl. We only heard of her achievements during our college day annual celebrations when the gold medal students were honored and invited on to the dais. Then only we realized the greatness of our friend, batch mate and classmate. By that time the open announcement was made it was already late for the rest of the people to catch up or to think of reaching her ranks. Actually she plucked or picked up her golden fruits as if it was her birth right when others were looking at the tree for the impossible fruit to fall in to their lap. People like me who looked up at the physically short statured academically very tall classmate for inspiration and imitation, any minor improvement in our academic performance; we tried to boast it as the very great achievement in our personal life. For example I will go a little bit out of the way even if it was a shameless submission that I shared my marks with very few people and close friends. That, I got sixty percent in organic chemistry, sixty percent in pharmacology, sixty three percent in pathology and finally in my favorite subject of general surgery, sixty three percent,

today I tried to openly reveal my marks in the medical subjects as I was progressively improving year by year after the shocking performance in the **PPC** and the Anatomy subject, where I just scraped through with just forty percent and fifty percent marks respectively. In the rest of the subjects I fell just short of the sixty percent bar level. I may confess whole heartedly that I got abundantly benefited by closely, carefully and silently watching my classmate. Today I am making a wild guess that what would have happened to my academic medical career if I were not in the same batch as that of Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata. If she was in a different batch and at a distance from my surroundings, would I have achieved anything to write about? First of all would I have been in the list of the successful candidates in all the subjects. When you look at the enormity of the numbers, that eighty six out of ninety boys in our class had to fail in one subject or the other during the long student career. It was different for the lady students that twenty four out of sixty students passed out successfully in all the subjects in the first attempt. That way I feel I was doubly blessed to have a friend and classmate with only the academic activity as a goal and nothing more to distract.

When the time came for all our classmates to take a decision regarding their future plans for studies and their permanent settlement in life some of our classmates made their decisions very fast. I made my decision to take up neurosurgery post graduation

very early in my house surgeon training. But what surprised most of our friends and colleagues was the quick decision taken by Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata regarding her marriage. One thing we were sure was that as the most brilliant and intelligent lady, she would only make equally brilliant selection and choice of her life partner. As we met every day and discussed so many things, especially our experiences as the house surgeons with common friends like Dr.Jayaprada Devi, Dr.Gayatri Devi, Dr.Hamsa Veni, Dr.Surya Kumari and Dr.S.Lakshmi at different times during our working period, Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata's marriage proposal did not come in to our discussion in the early days. She was very clever, confident and concerned about her choice and also the privacy surrounding that decision making. Like the gold medals, she never revealed her selection and the name and other details of the candidate. One thing we were sure was that she would choose a candidate worthy to be her life partner and more deserving person who would complement her own intelligence and achievements. I had no doubt that even though I did not know the person till the date of marriage, even though he was very strange to our group, Dr.(Mrs).Hemalata was the best judge in making a positive and permanent decision. Already some of our classmates married to our own classmates, some of our classmate's married either juniors, seniors or staff members and that was the turning point as far as the marriages was concerned. Even though I and my friends never saw the wouldbe husband of

our close friend, we congratulated her for the very bold decision she took silently and successfully. All our friends joined together for the simple celebration of the marriage of the best brain of our class, on the midnight 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1972. Very many congratulations for completing 4 decades of wedding.

What all I have tried to narrate was only to show that I wanted to write my heart out on some pretext or other and also to prove to the doubting Thomas's that my brain is still functioning normally and I have not lost any memory in spite the number of cardiac arrests and ventilator supports. I also feel that I have not written the last word on Hemayanam as yet.

Earlier in my medical career I was ignorant of many day to day activities required to become a good medical student. The outlook and the goals were very short and few. Hence the daily rigmarole was more of observation, demanding conscious effort to concentrate on the daily classes and lectures. There was no time or necessity to know more than what was in the curriculum. Slowly and steadily the extracurricular activities also entered in to the daily routine, gradually replacing at least partially the academic activities. In that background noticing individual candidates in our class and identifying them by their names was a difficult task to begin with. As the days passed by some students became friends, some batch mates in the practical training became familiar. Because of the habit of our teachers taking daily attendance by calling the names of all

the individuals in the alphabetical order, the names also became familiar along with the individual faces.

In that context I was trying to go back in to my memory lane from the year 1966, 10<sup>th</sup> of October, the day our medical college career started. For the entire 1<sup>st</sup> year in **PPC** I do not have the memory of looking at the persona of Ms.J.Hemalata. Even if I had seen her or encountered with her at any of our classes or the practical it was just like any other lady classmate who were in an imposing number of sixty out of hundred and fifty students. The first and the best memory of looking and noticing Ms.J.Hemalata came after completing the **PPC** examinations and waiting for the results. The results came like a lightening in the sky. One third of our classmates failed in the **PPC** because of some mistake made in the physics practical examination even though those who failed were academically brilliant. Of those who passed some people just scraped through. There was only one candidate in the entire Andhra University who passed with the 1<sup>st</sup> class rank and the rest were all passed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> class. So there was no need to mention that all our classmates started looking for Ms.J.Hemalata to know how she looked and behaved in the group of one hundred candidates who passed the examinations in the first attempt. It was not only the curiosity of our classmates but also of the rest of the college students, the teachers and the staff members. My own first memory of locating and looking at Ms.J.Hemalata was when we were waiting

for the opening of the chemistry gallery classroom for our organic chemistry classes to herald the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of our **MBBS** course. All our boy students were standing in the classroom veranda; all the lady students were waiting at the library entrance just opposite to the classroom across the road to the canteen. Some lady students were standing and other lady students were sitting on the steps in front of the library very close to the library wall where some beautiful climbers were planted. By the by our medical college campus was beautifully designed with a circular road encircling a very carefully maintained garden with flowers and sculptures. If I were going to the description of our garden it would be a totally long and absorbing narration deflecting my present thought process on my classmate to the beautiful surroundings within the campus. So, all my classmates started identifying who that 1<sup>st</sup> class candidate was who came in the newspapers that carried the examination results. I also joined the group of curious boy students who were excited and enamored by the achievement of our classmate in the entire university. I noticed her amongst the other lady students sitting on the library steps, noticing only her face and a few more features. That was the beginning of the marathon of observation of my classmate, ignoring the rest of the equally competent, active, hyper active, attractive, intelligent and beautiful and finally some inconspicuous students who demanded attention in their own abilities and attractions. The paradox of the situation was that the

1<sup>st</sup> class candidate had the one and only feature of attraction that was her university 1<sup>st</sup> class. The rest of the characters and the adjectives did not apply to her directly or indirectly and her achievement was above all other characters and also she was beyond all those things. Once we know the value of her academic achievements and if we get a chance to talk to her you would instantly realize that for an academic achievement no other adjectives were required like if we get a Olympic gold medal you don't have to look at other accomplishments. If I may add one more observations without offending anybody, we had a few more chances of observing some of our classmates from a distance and also within the class room. Usually the hostel students arrived to the college and the hospital in the college buses named Apasara and Aswini. Quite often the men's hostel students reached the college a few minutes ahead of the ladies hostel students because of the differential timings of the buses and also the distance of the hostels. A few minutes of waiting for the classrooms to open gave us a chance to look at the ladies coming out of the bus. There was a chance to watch some of the opposite sex people when they were walking along the roads with in the college campus. There was also a chance to closely watch the lady students when they entered the classrooms in a hurry and passed between the teacher's table and the boy student's benches in the classroom gallery. They were all very small glimpses which never gave a total picture to figure out

any major individual characteristics. I have had a very vague memory of Ms.J.Hemalata and her personality when I put all my small little observations together. She was very small statured, simple, straight and forward looking, unmindful of the surroundings at least when she was being watched by the curious onlookers like me and many other medical students and finally she was very simple in her dress code. If I have to recollect my memory of her face in those days I could see her sweating a lot, especially on her face and lips and could see the armpits full of sweat. That was not the best way to describe my best friend but there was a reason for remembering that small little fact as it had its own value to support my observation. One might question the validity and veracity of my observations and documentation and also question whether there were not the other lady students who would have attracted and demanded more observation and attention. Certainly there were so many other lady classmates that raised the eyebrows in the first year itself till the examination results were announced. After the results were announced there was only one person that attracted attention and started being noticed with more respect and reverence. I do not mean any disrespect to the other and equally brilliant, active ladies with leadership qualities in our class.

Even though, I can go on adding ad nauseam many of my observations over a period of five and half years as students and house surgeons, I would confine myself with a few observations

during our examinations and practical. Having accepted that she was the 1<sup>st</sup> class student in the part-1 of the **1<sup>st</sup> MBBS**, having known that I myself was far behind as far as the examinations and marks were concerned, to be honest that I scraped through the **PPC** with just forty percent of marks. I was finding the ways and means of going beyond that danger mark between pass and failure. The only way, to climb up the ladder was to look at the top and try to reach step by step as much as possible, as close to the top as possible and never look back or down, lest you should fall down in to the gutters and never to get up again. In that direction when I looked at the top there was only one person working her way through the clouds unmindful and oblivious of the people following her, constantly trying to conquer the impossible. As years passed by and proved beyond doubt that surpassing the 1<sup>st</sup> class student, leave alone over taking her throughout the career was a Herculean task and was never achieved. So much so during one of the practical examination in the organic chemistry university examination, just six months after the **PPC** examinations, was the day when I really talked to her. The reason was funny. That the organic chemistry examination was to analyze the chemical substances and find out their ingredients. That was simply known as chemical analysis. We were trained for one and half years in doing those laboratory analyses. The end result of the analysis was very easy to understand provided one followed the steps correctly. In fact the same thing happened to

some of my brilliant friends and classmates during the physics practical in the **PPC** examination, the error costing their career, a precious six months period of time. The same thing was happening to me in the organic chemistry practical examination where I knew the answer but the analysis was not going right. The solution was to repeat the analysis again and again till you got the right end result. I tried many a time with no positive result. Alas! I was in vain. I was looking for some help around. Generally in the **PPC**, organic chemistry, physiology and biochemistry laboratory tests the lab technicians and the attending boys were well-versed with the lab experiments and some of them were always available at hand to help. Unfortunately I could not find any one within the sight. Most of the other students were deeply immersed in their own exercise. With the bad result of the **PPC** in the back of the mind, nobody wanted to make a mistake and fail in the organic chemistry examination. That could have been a much more humiliation than failing in the **PPC** physics examination as there were no recorded instances of any student failing in the organic chemistry university examination. More over the professor of the organic chemistry Sri Harirama Kotayya was very liberal and a broad minded teacher. He was also the in house assistant warden for our Guntur Medical College men's hostel, residing in the same hostel campus. So I was self conscious that I should not make a mistake in the experiment. When everybody was so much immersed in their own work I was looking at

the ceiling and around the laboratory with so many work benches all round me. I found Ms.J.Hemalata was very much relaxed, completed her analysis and was waiting for the examiners to come. I was a little bit surprised that I was not able to complete my analysis; most of the other students were also struggling with their analyses but Ms.J.Hemalata finished her job so quickly and so perfectly that she had ample time to relax which only proved what sort of a metal she was made off, a metal of platinum with no impurities. Having no other person available at sight for me to take help and assistance which was indirectly accepted and encouraged by the invigilators and the examiners never interfered or penalized the candidates for taking help in a genuine situation or trouble. Hesitating on one side, helpless on the other side I had no other choice except talking to Ms.J.Hemalata for a solution. I knew it was wrong, amounting to copying, doing fraud in the examination but I also knew that some of the laboratory tests give erroneous results depending on so many factors that were not in the student's control. I told her my problem that in spite of repeated number of attempts I was not getting the correct result of the analysis. She smiled and kept quite as if it was not that difficult to repeat the test again. I tried my best without any confusion and still did not get the end results. I knew Ms.J.Hemalata was watching me doing the test again and again. Because of the alphabetical order of the class attendance and also the closeness of **D** and **H** we both got the same laboratory

examination table so it was a compulsive observation of what the other person was doing next to you or opposite to you. When I failed to get the correct answer I again asked Ms.J.Hemalata what to do next. That time she opened her mouth and told me to keep doing repeated number of times till I got the correct result. By that I knew pretty well that she would not do what she did not like much against her principles. But still I had no choice. Disappointed that my luck was running away from me as the time passed by I was a little bit disheartened that the story of the physics experiment was repeating at the organic chemistry examination also. I should confess that during my **PPC** physics experiment on sonogram I knew the correct end result of the test but the result was coming differently in spite of repeating a number of times. Never faced such a situation before, never knew how to wriggle out of it I just wrote the correct answer I knew before hand during our training period. Not only me but the rest of the thirty to forty students got the same wrong answer. They wrote the wrong answer as they got it on that day; I wrote the right answer even though I also got the wrong answer. That was an afterthought when all of us discussed about the experiment and the result. Unfortunately those who wrote the same result what they got during the examination were all failed in the physics subject. That was very unfortunate because some of the best brains were penalized for no fault of them. It was later on found out that an accidental switching on of a ceiling fan or the other way round was

responsible for the wrong result. Luckily for me I was the only student who used, if I may say, my common sense and wrote the correct answer as the final result, ignoring the actual result shown on the test. I was under the impression that I was the only student that was going to fail in the examination after talking to the rest of my batch mates. The examiners decided the other way and gave me a pass in the physics and failed a host of brilliant students. I repeatedly told that story to a number of people on different occasions and also claimed that it was not my greatness in clearing that examination and also it was not a weakness of those who failed. Anyhow the **PPC** examiners were bent upon failing one third of our classmates in one or other subjects as a matter of routine and ritual. When I met my classmate Dr.(Mrs).Surya Kumari at Houston, Texas, **USA** and narrated that incident she asked me in a lighter vein whether I cheated the examiners. Looking back, forty years ago that did not look like cheating but perhaps now I would accept whatever name it was given. But what I did was neither a planned one nor an intentional one but only an insight or intuition or an impulsive or a compulsive attempt to get out of the physics gate. So coming back to the organic chemistry examination the entire reel was replayed in my mind as I was repeating the same test again and again like Bruce or Vikramadityudu and not knowing the end result. I just closed my eyes and completed the test and wrote the end result unmindful of the consequences. That was my first encounter with

the 1<sup>st</sup> class student of our class and I knew pretty well that it was not the best way of interacting with an intellectually enlightened student. I was debating within myself whether what I did was right or wrong, in first of all seeking the help from my colleague and batch mate and secondly writing some answers not knowing fully whether it was right or wrong. In those days, passing the examination was the only yardstick to measure the candidate and the percentage of the marks was only a benchmark of the achievement. I am sure Ms.J.Hemalata must have scored more marks than anybody else but nobody knew how many marks she got. That was unnecessary and immaterial for an ordinary and average student like me who set the goal of crossing each hurdle by passing the examination. When passing the examination was a boon, getting sixty percent marks in the organic chemistry examination was a very big achievement if I looked back today. When I think of the forty percent marks in the **PPC** examination, getting sixty percent in the organic chemistry was a big jump in my academic achievement and gave me confidence that I can work hard and improve further. When I passed my **SSLC** examination with sixty plus percentage of marks, one excise inspector travelling with me in the **RTC** bus saw my marks list and congratulated me for the 1<sup>st</sup> class marks I secured and also encouraged me and inspired me to do well in the future. In a way he stimulated me to just not to rest with the result and the marks but to plan for a brighter career which he himself forecast about me and

also blessed me whole heartedly. Till that day I did not realize the marks I got were 1<sup>st</sup> class marks since nobody in our friends circle discussed about the 1<sup>st</sup> class or the 2<sup>nd</sup> class. They only discussed about the total number of marks. Even then I got 362 marks out of 600 was a good mark but never realized it was classified as a 1<sup>st</sup> class mark. Coming to the organic chemistry marks again it was a big achievement for me to be bracketed along with other sixty percent achievers. Coming to the sixty percent marks 1<sup>st</sup> time in the medical college examination, gave me a scope to do better in the rest of the examinations that were very hard even to pass in the first time. Coming back to the encounter with Ms.J.Hemalata in the practical examination I thought that was the first and the last time I was going to discuss with her about anything in the examination hall in the future. That was not to be. That was only the first of the many more encounters soon to come. Coming back to my sixty percent marks, I thought that was a fluke. But I was wrong again, as there were some more subjects where I could score the sixty percent or above marks. I told one day, Dr.V.Krishna Murthi in a different context and situation that there are different yardstick to measure one's performance. It depended on whether you are doing a long jump or high jump for which each one had its own yardsticks and parameters.

Coming back to the square one of the main topic of Hemayanam there were few more instances of my direct encounter with my very

good friend and classmate. It so happened even though we always worked together in the same wards and outpatient departments, operation theaters watching and discussing all the patients every day for nearly four years with the participation of the entire group of fourteen batch mates, sometimes along with some seniors and juniors, it never happened that both of us had any direct talking or discussion face to face about any patient leave alone any personal or friendly discussions. Why it happened so I have no explanation but definitely it had something to do with the unpleasant episode that took place in the surgical unit of Dr.Nutakki Venkateswara Rao in the years 1968-69. But as the destiny was that we had more time to talk and discuss during the university examinations more than during the routine ward works. For that reason I remember two more incidences where I had spent some time during the university examinations and also some time to talk to her knowing full well that I was dealing with some super human species. The second encounter after the organic chemistry examination was within one year during the Anatomy practical examination. Somewhere down the line I mentioned before, the atmosphere in the medical college campus especially from the Anatomy department point of view it was a totally different scenario. First of all there was a scare about the subject itself. People were forced to believe that whatever effort the student puts in there was no guarantee of passing the examination in the first attempt. Then there was the fear about the professor who

kept a silent watch on the movements of the students coming and going out of the Anatomy department. There was also a rumor that the professor of the Anatomy used to maintain a secret record of all the students and decided before hand itself to give a pass or fail to the candidate in question. He had the habit of identifying the candidate who should fail by silently patting the student's back as if he was very affectionate towards that student. The end result was at least to fail fifty percent of the students in the Anatomy subject irrespective of the performance of the candidates. In fact he used to conduct a pre final assessment test in the theory to indicate the probable candidates to fail or pass. He used to display the marks sheet in the notice board of the department and also encircle the marks secured by the candidate with a red ink pen indicating a definite pass mark for that candidate. At the end when the university examination results were published the red ink circled people only passed the examination. If there were any surprises it happened during the Anatomy dissection where if some people did a gross mistake to attract an unexpected failure or a brilliant performance during the dissection that would have made the professor of Anatomy to change his heart and gave a pass mark to a candidate already distained to fail or vice-versa. With that background I appeared for the Anatomy practical examination well prepared for facing and doing dissection of any part of the body. Usually some people got very simple dissections and still failed;

some other students got very difficult dissections and could scrape through for a pass. In the entire examinations of the medical college curriculum, pass or failure was the only criteria that drove both the teachers and the students towards that goal. Very few students were branded and graded as the top rankers. Looking back after forty five years there were not many differences in their performance and achievement whether you belonged to top or low rank. Many major changes and metamorphosis took place from first year to the final year, from **MBBS** to post graduation. We come back to the Anatomy Theater where the students were given part of a dead body to dissect and learn even from the day one. The usual parts given were the upper limb, the lower limb, the abdomen, pelvis, the thorax, the head and neck and the spine. The students used to dissect the dead bodies kept on the marble tables. The dead bodies were carefully processed and preserved to last for long time. The part of the body allotted to a particular batch of the students who on completion rotated to the other parts over a period of one and half year's time. We had good teachers to guide and help. The professor himself was very much interested in the dissection and teaching of the brain anatomy. He was a very good teacher, dissector and demonstrated very minute points in the deeper parts of the brain. Most often the students carried their own tools for dissecting the bodies, usually a scalpel, forceps and a scissors every day. The dissection was done with bare hands. After the dissection, we used to wash and clean

our hands and the tools with the small cube of Life boy soap kept at the wash basins. The fat, grease and part of the tissues of the dead body got fixed in to the hands, nails, the tools, the Cunningham's volumes and ultimately in to the white apron coat pockets. I am frightened, to imagine what was the ultimate hygienic level and probably we all developed the immunity to handle the cadaver tissues inadvertently entering our gut when we ate our lunch at the college dining hall.

On the day of the examination there was a lottery system to pick up the part of the body to be dissected by the candidate. As usual there were eight to twelve tables in the theater with all freshly treated and preserved dead bodies. Each body was allotted for a few students, definitely less number of students than the big group during our training period. It was a strange, pleasant and unexpected coincidence that I and Ms.J.Hemalata were allotted the same body of course by lottery pick up system. My friend and first class student got a very simple exercise to dissect the structures on the dorsum of the left hand. I was given an exercise which was not given before in any of the Anatomy examinations, as we usually discussed with our seniors of the earlier batches about the type of the body dissection that were commonly given in the examination. People usually feared when they get some difficult parts to be dissected like the structures under the gluteus medius or to expose the sub occipital triangle and the parotid gland. Such difficult

dissections were usually the doom of the candidate for that examination. With that background my exercise was to expose the structures on the right half of the face. After opening my lottery piece of paper I realized in that, I lost the examination by fifty percent even before starting the dissection. For a few seconds I did not know what to do. The reason was that dissection was not demonstrated in our training period, such dissection was not given as an examination exercise before and I did not see the entire half of the face and its structures in the Anatomy Theater even once before. I read the theory part of it in the Cunningham's volume on head and neck and also in the Grey's Anatomy text book. Luckily for me, that was my usual habit to read from the first page to the last page of any book without leaving any printed information in all the books of all the subjects including the foot notes. In the Anatomy Cunningham's manual on the head and neck I casually read one day how to dissect the structures on one half of the face. Suddenly I recollected and remembered the type of the incision to be given to expose the structures on the right half of the face. That was the first, bold step I made to begin the dissection. I knew it was a lost cause to swim against the tide and I was going to be swept away by the swirling waters. There was no way that I was going to complete the dissection leave alone the passing of the hurdle of Anatomy. I held my nerve literally and metaphorically till I completed the dissection by hook or crook. Actually the tissues in the dead body become very

hard and fixed and were difficult to cut even with a sharp knife. Even if I could cut the skin part, it was much more difficult to hold the skin edge and lift it off the underneath structures and also do it over the entire half of the face without damaging the muscles, vessels and nerves. There were other important structures like the eye brows, the nose, the lips and the parotid gland on the side of the face with the branches of the facial nerve, the facial arteries and the veins. Holding my heart in my mouth, holding the forceps and the scalpel firmly but dissecting gently I managed to continue for two and half hours without any fear and panic. There was no other go or choice. At the end of that laborious and Herculean task completed, I did not see a single structure on the entire right half of the face and I started shivering for the first time during the entire period of two and half hours. By then I was very clear that I had no chance of passing that examination in that year. I resigned myself to the fate. Suddenly my memory went back and searched for some more reasons to justify my losing or the otherwise of the examination. First of all I attended all the classes, both in theory and practical. Number two, during the one and half years period, the professor of Anatomy never patted me on my back as a signal which he indicated to many other students in advance. Number three, in the pre final theory examination he had given me twenty five marks out of fifty and also encircled my marks with the red ink pen indicating that I was on the same half of the group of candidates he decided to give a

pass. I was not a bad boy to get in to his secret list of students he decided to fail. So looking from all those angles I did not incur the wrath of the professor of Anatomy at any point of time for him to mercilessly fail me in the final examination. In those days failing the anatomy examination was not a big crime, in fact it was an accepted and well known fact that even the best of the students failed in the Anatomy Gate and never bothered in the future. For me failure would mean a big set back because, my parents were illiterate and poor, they would not understand the meaning of failure and its implications. I also had to plan a revised career in case I have to reappear for the Anatomy examination. There was no guarantee that the second time result would be any better than the first. With so many conflicting ideas bombarding my brain I was looking in to the vacant space not knowing what was in store for me in the next few minutes. After completing the dissection I realized that almost all the other students completed their dissections also and were waiting for the examiners to examine their dissection. I was shocked to see that my classmate, the 1<sup>st</sup> class student in the 1<sup>st</sup> year completed her dissection long, long ago, I did not realize how long ago it was that she completed her dissection and was quietly waiting for the examiners to come and examine her. Whether one liked or not, here I should bring in to picture the **FATE AND THE GOD**. The first class and the best student got the easiest dissection and an average student like me got the toughest and the most difficult of all the

dissections. Why difficult, it was not given in the examination ever before. As I was doing my dissection and finding it difficult to lift a small bit of the skin from the face, she easily completed her full dissection so easily and in such a short time. As she was sitting idle and watching me struggling to proceed with my dissection I had the memories of my organic chemistry examination reeling in front of my eyes. Again I was in a dilemma whether to talk to her or not, whether to take her advice or not, whether it was an offence. I thought, as a 1<sup>st</sup> year 1<sup>st</sup> class student she was definitely at an advantageous position to help and guide me. It was impossible for some other student to help in the Anatomy dissection. But it was my desperation to hold on to some straw before I was swept away in to the whirlpool. I pooled up my courage with all the reservations in the back up my mind and asked her what to do next as I was desperately trying to complete the dissection and also I was getting late in completing the dissection. As expected I did not get any answer except a cool stare. I slowly started realizing that the examiners were going ahead and fast in seeing the dissections of the other students at the other tables. They were having their own methods of selecting the candidates and the type of the dissection to start the examination. They started with small and simple procedures and gave more time for the difficult dissections. As the examiners were reaching close to my table I was a little bit panicky

as I was not able to recognize or identify even a minor anatomical structure on the right half of the face.

The time had come for the examiners to come to our cadaver body. They started with some small dissections in the others parts of the body. They completed examining all other candidates except me in our body. The examiners did not waste much of their time in looking at the part of the body dissection of the dorsum of the left hand done by Ms.J.Hemalata, asked her very few questions and coolly walked away from our body without even looking at me or my dissection. My fears were compounded as the examiners decided to skip to examine me after completing the rest of the students especially the 1<sup>st</sup> class student. When the examiners were close to my bench all most encircling the bench I could see and tried to recognize some of the faces of the examiners. The most familiar face was the professor of Anatomy of our medical college Dr.Hari Rao the most dreaded of all the examiners in the Anatomy departments. As I could see his cunning face hiding his feelings, under the cover of thick glasses and pasting a vicious smile with a viper's venom underneath. I could see an imaginary short cutting saw in his hands ready to cut the tails, as and when and whatever that he did not like in a candidate. The second examiner I noticed was a towering personality more than six feet in height in contrast to our internal examiner who was only five feet in height. He was wearing a well pressed suit and tie and was looking like a foreigner. In fact his

name was Dr.Cooper who was a highly respected professor of Anatomy of the Madras Medical College. His spoke perfect and chaste English and he was very nice to the candidates. The third person, about whom I heard a lot but saw him for the first time in the examination hall, he had an artificial hand with a hook attached at the end, with which he used to pull the structures to prove whether they were really the nerves or simply some fibrous bands. His name was Dr.Krishna Rao if I correctly remembered and he came from the Rangaraya Medical College, Kakinada. There was also the fourth examiner who was not very conspicuous or imposing hence I could not recollect his face or name. But those three examiner names were remembered for their outright and outspokenness for good or bad. It was a big challenge to face and please the both the external examiners Dr.Cooper and Dr.Krishna Rao. When all of the examiners left the body I was still holding my station to get my turn. Still confused and partly depressed I had a last chance to talk to my classmate and friend who was about to wind up her place and leave the examination hall as she had successfully answered all the questions put by the examiners. Actually my job was to keep an eye and ear to know the questions and answers taking place at the other parts of the same table without giving an impression that I was hopelessly fighting for the lost cause. In fact Ms.J.Hemalata was sitting just opposite to me while doing the dissection of the left hand as I was dissecting on the

right half of the face. There was an irresistible urge for me to talk to her to get some inputs or encouragement to face the examiners. As expected, she answered my question to what I should do next to show all the structures on the face, the same answer which she gave me one year ago in the organic chemistry laboratory examination. Keep doing and keep on doing. There was nothing less, nothing more, no emotions and no answers. I was only the candidate left in the examination hall and there was a sudden gloom and silence filling the hall. I could turn back to see where the examiners were and whether they were coming to my table or not. In those days there were no closed circuit cameras to be watched by the examiners and no intercoms to examine me from a distance. There was the frightening silence and the time was running out fast. I still could not see a single structure on the face. What was going to be fate? Am I going to face the examiners or not? The ultimate thing was the result about which I am convinced one hundred percent. As the waiting got much prolonged I was just scraping something on forehead of the body. Suddenly as if some God sent gift I could lift a layer of a tissue from the forehead and started pulling it off gently from the underneath structures. I realized it was the layer of the subcutaneous fat tissue that got dried up and became a firm tissue layer as strong as a tissue paper. The moment I started lifting it off I could see the muscles, the vessels and the nerves all over the face. Then I could see all the structures as if it was shown on one page of

the Cunningham's Anatomy dissecting volume. There were no bounds for my joy, and I was happy and elated. The fear of the failure ran away from my heart. I knew all the structures. I recollected all their anatomical features including their names, origin and insertions, their course and the functions. Especially the facial nerve, the facial arteries and the veins were well seen along with the parotid gland. Like a bolt from the blue all the examiners descended on me and started questioning. Dr.Cooper was the first to ask me to show the branches of the facial nerve and also the branches of the facial artery. Dr.Krishna Rao used his hook and pulled out one nerve to test it was a real nerve or a fibrous tissue. My internal examiner never asked me a single question. What it meant also left a question mark in my mind about what he was going to decide on my fate about the Anatomy Gate. Whether I did the right thing or wrong in asking for some help and guidance or just a few words of sharing with my classmate Ms.J.Hemalata was not known but it left bad taste in my mind of some unknown nature. Everybody waited for the most important results of the Anatomy examination and for all the fears and confabulations I got the good news that I was in the list of the successful candidates which was a great relief for me and indirectly for my parents. Pass was a pass and I knew the most difficult phase of the examination was the dissection of the structures on the right half of the face. I also remembered the melodrama during the entire period of two and half

years filled with full of fear and tension. The end result was good and consoling. The most surprising element was that I was given fifty percent of marks for the university examination and it was the same mark given to me by my professor during the pre final examination. That twenty five out of fifty with red ink circle was the bench mark for my professor who had the pre conceived ideas about the candidates appearing for the examination. Those twenty five marks in the pre final examination was the reason that worked in favor of me and my fate was decided long before the university examination or the cadaver dissection. The next surprising element about my Anatomy examination was when I went to the Madras Medical College for my MS neurosurgery training I had to appear for neuro basic sciences theory examination which included neuro anatomy also. It was a pleasant surprise that Dr.Cooper who was my examiner during my **MBBS** days in the year 1968 was still working as the professor of Anatomy and took classes for me in the neuro anatomy in the year 1974. To complete, a small negative remark I received from my professor of neurosurgery, Professor B.Ramamurthi was when I made a small mistake in ordering for an x ray of cervico dorsal spine instead of a cervical spine only, he was very much upset and scolded me and questioned my Anatomy knowledge and the people who taught me the Anatomy.

Many examinations passed by, years of working in the wards and outpatient departments, I made sure myself that I never talked

to my classmate and the 1<sup>st</sup> class student even when I had a genuine reason for interacting with her. The unhappy episode that took place in the wards of the Dr.Nutakki Venkateswara Rao left an indelible mark on my mind that made me to shrink in to a shell. Consequent to that incident probably I did not speak to Ms.J.Hemalata or Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi for years together. As far as the examinations were also concerned we never encountered similar situations as before till the final year examinations. As small side traction, during the pathology examinations, there was a histology section to identify the disease by looking in to the slides put under the microscope. After looking in to the slides and writing down the diagnosis there was a lot of time before my turn came. Without keeping quite I looked at the candidate waiting before me to enter the examination room. She completed her diagnosis and wrote on the answer sheet. I also completed the diagnosis and wrote my answer on the answer sheet. Both of us were waiting. Casually I asked Ms.Gayatri Devi about her answer and she promptly told me it was the thyroid adenoma. I already wrote my answer as pituitary adenoma. There was a difference of opinion. I thought Ms.Gayatri Devi was right and I was wrong and foolishly changed my own answer. At the end both of us made the wrong diagnosis and lost the marks for that. Still I got a six three percent was providential. That was the highest mark for me personally, in the university examination get the Guntur Medical College. That was in spite of my

reexamination in the orals about my theory performance. I prepared so well for the pathology and microbiology but still had a doubt whether I was going to pass the examination or not. So much so pathology subject was very much interesting till I started learning about the general surgery where also I got the identical percentage of marks.

The next encounter during a university examination was when we appeared for the clinical examination in the general medicine. There again the fortunes got reversed. I got a case of rheumatic heart disease with multiple valve involvement like mitral stenosis with regurgitation, aortic stenosis with regurgitation, sub acute bacterial endocarditic and rheumatic arthritis as a long case. It took more than three hours for me for completing the examination and lighting down the case sheet in the chronological order and still not completed the full case sheet writing as there were so many clinical findings I have found in the patient and wanted to write everything that I noticed in the patient without missing a single point. I was struggling to keep pace with the examination time schedule so that the examiners would come to me to complete the presentation. Literally I was only scribbling on my answer sheet so fast that I myself was not able to recognize my own hand writing leave alone the legibility part of it. Suddenly I remembered the similar situation I faced during my answering of the microbiology theory paper where I took one and half hour's time to answer one question on cholera out

of six questions to be answered in three hours time. What I wrote about the rest of the five questions in the remaining one and half hour's time was almost similar to what I was writing in the clinical examination of the general medicine subject. I took more than two hours to examine the patient alone and left with very little time to write down the findings in the answer sheet. The paradoxical situation was that my classmate and the 1<sup>st</sup> class student got a very simple case as the long case and she completed her examination and writing down the case sheet in a very short time. She was sitting idle waiting for the examiners to come to her. I did not have even a second to look up and watch what was going around in the examination hall. After examining my patient I sat down writing the case sheet and suddenly discovered Ms.J.Hemalata was sitting quite and she was allotted the patient next to my patient's bed. For a while I felt jealous that my best friend and the 1<sup>st</sup> class student got a very simple and ordinary case for examination almost like a short case where as I was given the longest of the cases with multiple problems that was difficult for writing down the case sheet even for a post graduate in that very short time of three hours. I was running against the time and was driven mad by my own watch. Every minute trickling down was going to against my performance because I had to write and document all the findings and also should be ready to face the examiners as they were approaching other student and completing their examination very quickly. Not knowing what to

do to next I found Ms.J.Hemalata sitting without any tension or hurry as she was cool and content of completing the examination and writing down the case sheet. As usual like an obsessive compulsive neurotic, I thought there was no harm in discussing with Ms.J.Hemalata and take her input to complete my case sheet. By the time we reached the final year and the final examinations our relations were a little bit soft and the original acrimony that started in the wards of Dr.Nutakki Venkateswara Rao got molten in the course of time and the maturity levels have increased to such a level that talking to each other was not taken as an offence. I would come back to that subject a little later about how and why the attitudes have changed. Coming back to the help I wanted to take from Ms.J.Hemalata, when I asked her what to do as I was running short of time, her first answer was a cool, dry and wry smile indicating that she was also a candidate for the examination and could not help her contribute to overcome my problem. It was the same answer four years ago in the organic chemistry laboratory. I continued my work on hand and there was no way to look back as that was the make or break time. A few minutes passed, I was going as fast as possible in completing the case sheet and my next bed candidate was probably ruminating, all her knowledge and mentally revising the subject of the case was given. She was already recognized as the best student of our batch, of our class and also the entire medical college. Her knowledge of medicine was

impeccable and infallible. Hence seeking her advice was more important than keeping quiet. I took the risk and chance again a few minutes later hoping that there would be some guidance or valuable inputs to wriggle out of that tricky situation of time management. In fact I made the correct diagnosis and I started right note to record the case sheet and I was confident of doing well even without any help from outside. But taking help from Ms.J.Hemalata was the need of the hour and also a beneficial thing as we worked together, presented cases and discussed over a period of three years as one batch student. I knew the vast and enormous knowledge she possessed. Truly she was a gold mine. If there was some other candidate examine in the case next to me, either boy or girl I would not have ventured to ask for any help, would not have bothered to look at the other person what she or he was doing and would have concentrated only on my job at hand like I did for many other examinations except the organic chemistry, Anatomy and the pathology where I made an attempt to talk to my colleagues. I knew it was wrong to talk to the other students while appearing for the examination, I knew pretty well I never wanted to copy from others and I knew that I could answer on my own with all the hard work and preparation which I never shirked during my student days. Then why did I ask Ms.J.Hemalata for help or advice. There was a real feeling that she was a far superior candidate and performance was second to none. She was always right whatever she did. She

never made a wrong step. She brought glory, name and fame to the college she studied and the teachers she worked with. Hence that was the compulsion to look towards her as an angel of knowledge and was probably in a position to give a helping hand when in need. I was not trying to score more marks than others by taking the help. But how to explain my feeling at that nick of the moment was hard for others to believe even if I told the truth. Probably I was feeling in the back of my mind that the best student got the simple case and an average student like me got the most complicated case. May be it was a thought process born out of some sort of an inferiority complex, frankly speaking which I did not have at that point of my career as I was very jubilant after my successful completion of the **ENT** examination and also scoring sixty three percent of the marks in the pathology examination before. But what was my mind worry or concern for that moment in the examination. That was an explainable emotional feeling that subconsciously comparing myself and probably developing an urge to reach as close to Ms.J.Hemalata as possible, if not same as Ms.J.Hemalata and of course never had the desire to overtake her in any of the examinations more so in the medicine examination where she was very strong. It was not anybody's choice but only a lottery system that was followed uniformly in all the subjects. So what was the answer I got from Ms.J.Hemalata was the same cool and calm expression, "**keep writing and keep on writing**". Finally I had the satisfaction that the

angel had opened her mouth and showered a few positive words for which I was more than pleased. If she did not open her mouth that would have affected me negatively and I would have been brooding for her hard stance distracting from the main examination and concentrating on the patient and the case sheet. The same words she uttered four years ago during the organic chemistry practical's were repeated in the medicine examination hall also like a parrot. What happened to my performance, what the examiners asked me, the final result and the marks I obtained was not a great thing to mention here as it would be out of context. But it was very interesting examination with positive result. If necessary I should take some other occasion and opportunity to dwell in to that subject. That Ms.J.Hemalata remained the same without any emotional involvement was the main feature of attraction of her. Nothing on the earth would make her change from her chosen path. That fact of life I had seen and experienced watching her from close quarters.

Other than the examination halls and the encounter with Ms.J.Hemalata during the organic chemistry, Anatomy dissection and the general medicine clinical examination where I should confess that I tried to talk to Ms.J.Hemalata but never got any input to enhance my performance in the respective subjects. That I crossed all three hurdles on my own but I cannot ignore the positive influence of Ms.J.Hemalata working next to me in all the above

examination indirectly influencing me and stimulating me to do my job on my own, to believe in myself and perform to my potential. I am not able to imagine if anybody else other than Ms.J.Hemalata was in the same place, I would not have ventured to look at such a person leave alone asking for help or guidance. I burnt my fingers once when I unnecessarily talked to my nearby candidate in the histopathology examination and changed my correct answer and lost a few marks. That gave me a lesson that I should never peep in to others examination performance.

There were some other situations during my student days that remained permanently etched in my mind and not able to erase them or in the modern terminology delete them. Hence I shall put it in writing at random whether such points were of any relevance or important for others. But for me they are. Going back in to our fourth year medical ward posting under Dr.T.Srinivasan, which was a wonderful experience which needed as separate chapter of its own. At the end of the two months posting there was a get together of all the ward students from the final year to the fourth year along with the unit chief. The get together function was held in the hall in front of the office of the principal in the evening hours. The unit chief Dr.T.Srinivasan was a friendly and open minded happy going individual. After a formal introduction of all the students he asked me a few questions why my name was chosen differently which looked odd for everybody. For that I answered stating that my

parents did not have any other surviving male children and it was their superstition for which he was satisfied with my explanation. He was a worldly wise man. After a few minutes and completing all the introduction formalities of all other students he started lighting a cigarette. He was a heavy and regular smoker. He did not hide his habits. Not only that, he wanted the boys to have a cigarette without any fear if anybody was interested or habituated to cigarette smoking. He encouraged the students to join him and give him company. One or two male students came forwards to light the cigarette. I also decided and dared to smoke in front of the unit chief who was in the most jovial mood. Under the existing rules in the medical college campus students smoking in the campus was prohibited and was an offence. Even some students had the habit of smoking; they didn't in secrecy in the remote corners of the campus without being noticed by the teachers and the professors. But Dr.T.Srinivasan was a totally enlightened and liberated man, with easy ways in life. As a highlight of the meeting Dr.T.Srinivasan asked some of the students to sing some songs. I do not remember exactly who sang the initial few songs but what clearly I remembered was the song rendered by Ms.J.Hemalata which surprised even Dr.T.Srinivasan. The song was "**Karunichu Mary Maata, Sharaninka Neeve**". She was a good singer and everybody expected her to sing a popular cinema song. We heard a number of times her voice in the group songs rendered by our classmates during the annual college

and hostel day celebrations. But she was not noted for solo singing and all the more to sing a song of Christian religion. That immediately attracted the attention of Dr.T.Srinivasan who did not lose time to comment on the song and also her choice of selecting such a song. It was a little bit embarrassing to be in that situation for the singer and the other students. There was nobody coming forwards from the boys group to sing. In fact there were no singers. Somehow my friends like Mr.V.Jaganadha Rao put up my name and pushed me forward to sing some song. I was hesitating a bit but Dr.T.Srinivasan insisted that I should sing. Somebody commented from the group that if I could dare to smoke in front of the unit chief I should also be bold enough to sing whether I knew or not. I pulled up my courage and took my time to start singing a song which I had been singing from my early childhood. It was a song from a Tamil dubbing movie with lead roles played by N.T.Rama Rao and B.Saroja Devi. The song began like this **“Madilo Premanu Kaanuka Itchi, Manusulone Mamatalu Repi, Sokamainee Jeevana Yatra, Todu Needaga Labhinchi nave”**. I just modified a few words from the original lyric and sang like **“Madura Premanu Kanuka Itchi .....**” I almost rendered the full song which everybody listened to with interest and attention. It was Dr.T.Srinivasan who was the first to appreciate the song and complemented me for singing a good song. He liked it for two reasons. The first one was that I was bold enough to sing when no other boy student came forward; the second one was that he was basically a Tamilan and the original song was rendered in Tamil

which was a popular hit song in the nineteen sixties. That was the end of the meeting after which I never showed any interest in singing. I knew that I was not a good singer, not a singer at all and did not have any music sense or knowledge.

The next important event of observation that remained in my mind was my looking into the eyes of Ms.J.Hemalata during one of the clinical discussions in the wards of Dr.Nutakki Venkateswara Rao. In those days we used to have one assistant professor of surgery who was very tall, thin and recently qualified MS general surgery candidate. Actually he was the son-in-law of another professor of surgery who was the second unit chief by name Dr.K.R.R.Mohan Rao. The assistant professor was known for his English language trouble which we used to call as **LT**, meaning language trouble which was there for most of the medical students and the staff who were not good in the languages as they mainly concentrated on the science group subjects to get a seat in the medical colleges where the marks obtained in the languages did not count for securing a seat. The assistant professor was taking the bedside clinics for our batch of students in the **S3** unit female ward. There were two sisters from the same family who were admitted on the same day, occupied the side by side beds. The elder sister had a big thyroid swelling and the younger sister had a moderately enlarged thyroid gland which was called a goiter or in the scientific medical terminology as a **“Thyrotoxicosis”**. Both were admitted for

surgery. The story of both the sisters deserved a separate write up and hence I will confine only to the clinical discussion about the enlarged thyroid gland. To make the story short, when the assistant professor was discussing the clinical features when the case was presented by one of our batch mates we were carefully listening to him. His language was funny and sometimes amusing. All of us were enjoying on one side the difficulty of the assistant professor in his expressions and also the vast clinical features available in the elderly sister who had a big goiter, enlarged veins and so many other systemic features. When the student presented the finding of exophthalmoses the assistant professor stated explaining about the same condition. Suddenly I looked at the eyes of Ms.J.Hemalata and recognized her to have the same exophthalmoses. Instinctively our eyes met and she recognized the fact that I was watching closely at her eyes. I identified that she had the thyrotoxicosis symptoms even before, but dared not to look into her face or in to her eyes to escape myself from any other trouble with all the early experience. I had been noticing that the only lady student in our batch who covered her neck with her sari in such a way that the small enlarged thyroid gland which was fully concealed without being noticed. I noticed her method of dressing even before and thought that she was different from other lady students till that day when the goiter case was discussed in the ward. I could easily connect the enlarged thyroid gland with the mild exophthalmoses Ms.J.Hemalata was having. As

a proof of my recognition of that finding in her I tried to raise my eyebrows and also widen my eyelids to demonstrate what and how the exophthalmoses looked like. Ms.J.Hemalata took note of my eye to eye contact and establishing the existing exophthalmoses. I did not know that she was already under medication. As the years passed by and when we had developed mutual trust and belief on each other, I already developed a hidden respect towards my classmate and the best student, as usual a group of us or two or three of us met in one of the evenings and we discussed many things. Somehow the treatment for thyrotoxicosis surfaced into our discussion in advertently. By the time we became house surgeons, most of our classmates, batch mates and especially the elite group of Ms.J.Hemalata and her friends knew me very well about my story telling and also I enjoyed my own way of telling. In that context I told her about my observation and recognition of her early thyrotoxicosis in the wards and also her attempt to conceal the enlarged gland. During our discussion I also told her that I read one page, in the chapter on the thyrotoxicosis in the text book of pathology written by Boyd, a new edition which I purchased a few days before the university examination in pathology. Every point discussed in the text book on the chapter on thyrotoxicosis was reflecting and stressing the story of Ms.J.Hemalata during her teenage. I read that subject with keen interest and tried to interpret and interpolate each word written in that chapter with my friend. The above discussion

occurred a few months before her marriage. In the same pathology text book there was one more page exclusively meant for the sequence of heart muscle changes that could occur after an ischemic heart disease. I remembered that page so well, I also discussed with Dr.J.Hemalata about my interest in the ischemic heart disease. That happened more than forty years ago and it is showing in my own heart of late. The last word about the thyroid was when Dr.J.Hemalata was working in the casualty. Whenever I had a leisure time I used to go to the casualty to know about many other cases, especially when two **CMO's** by name Dr.B.Visweswara Rao and Dr.R.B.Krishna Murthi were on duty. I also attended the wards whenever Dr.J.Hemalata was on night duties to learn any latest information in her ward cases. One day when I went to the casualty when Dr.J.Hemalata was on night duty, I noticed one teenage girl of eleven or twelve years age who came to the casualty for some other unrelated complaint. I immediately spotted her having exophthalmoses. I told the same to the **CMO** and also to Ms.J.Hemalata. Both of them did not agree with my findings. The teenage girl was wearing a gown with a collar which went round her neck and concealed the enlarged thyroid gland much like my friend and classmate. It was a pleasant surprise to all those people sitting there including Dr.J.Hemalata that the girl indeed had the thyrotoxicosis or at least the pubertal thyroid gland enlargement

when we asked her to show her neck by unbuttoning the collar. I enjoyed within myself for the small little clinical knowledge I had.

When the question of night duties as house surgeons came for discussion, I vividly remembered some more incidences which are permanently etched in my mind. In fact even before the commencement of the house surgeon training a group of us having common interest in working together and learning more, decided to get postings into different wards at the same time as a single group. There was a rumor in the air that there was a clerk in the superintendence's office in charge of the house surgeon posting, who was of some help in giving the ward postings as we requested, of course for a small consideration. One of my best friends from the men's house surgeon hostel told me that, but I did not venture into such a bad practice. So much so, all our friends got postings at different wards at different times. By sheer accident Dr.J.Hemalata and Dr.K.Jaya Prada Devi got posting in to the pediatrics, myself and Dr.Surya Kumari got a posting in to the medicine unit-4 and the rest of the postings were scattered all over the hospital. In spite of our separate postings at separate departments our group remained intact and remained in constant touch. We also made sure that we met in one of the wards wherever we were posted either during the morning shift or doing the night duty shift. The best place and the ward where we all met was where Dr.J.Hemalata was doing her duty especially when she was on her night duty. I have the

memory of watching her doing the night duty with devotion and dedication on a few occasions. The first and the best observation was when she was posted in the cardiology ward. She was so much immersed in her work, she always spent time with all the patients, talking to them, testing them and treating them as per the instructions. During her period of working in the cardiology unit Dr.Surya Kumari's father was admitted with ischemic heart disease. He was in the hospital for a few days and as a matter of concern for Dr.Surya Kumari's father, Dr.J.Hemalata did a number of night duties also. That gave an opportunity for most of our close friends to be together in the cardiology ward at nights giving company and moral support to Dr.Surya Kumari and her father on one side and to Dr.J.Hemalata on the other side. The rest of the group was I, Dr.Jaya Prada Devi and or Dr.Gayatri Devi. We used to share experiences in different wards where we worked and also discussed the rare and important cases about their clinical presentation, diagnosis, investigations and the management. On some of those days I used to take over the lead role and shared my experiences with the professor of neurosurgery Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian. I remembered one day, I read a very old journal of radiology, called "**Acta. Radialogica**" and started narrating, the summary of the initial original articles in the radio diagnosis. One such chapter was on the errors of interpretation of the plain X-Ray findings of the X-Ray chest where people made mistakes in taking the X-Rays and their

interpretation. Even a slight change in the angle of taking the X-Rays gave wrong findings, the depth of the X-Rays also give wrong signals and I was thrilled to learn such findings and also had the happiness to share with my friends. That should not take away the hard work put in by the duty doctor house surgeon Dr.J.Hemalata. In between our discussions she attended to all the calls by all the patients. In fact we all sat together close to the nursing station watching all the patients from a distance. At least on three or four occasions Dr.J.Hemalata went round the ward talking to all the patients in the ward to their satisfaction. At the end of the night duty very early in the morning she made her last round and greeted all the patients with a smile. She enquired about each patient whether he had a comfortable sleep at the night as if she was seeing that patient for the first time in the night. On that day, I only admired her but today with all my closeness and understanding I would say in a lighter vein that when did she allow them to sleep at all? I would also like add that by discussing the in the middle of the ward throughout the night whether we caused any disturbance to the patients. I really admired her sense of duty, devotion and dedication not only in the studies in getting good marks and first class marks but also in treating the patients like her own family members with love and affection. During that admission Dr.Surya kumari's father was given good treatment, he became alright and was discharged from the hospital. Unfortunately he was readmitted

with the recurrence of the symptoms and could not be revived. That was a very sad day for all of us especially the small group of friends of Dr.Surya kumari, we went to her house to console her during that phase of grief. But for that sad event we all worked in the wards with at most devotion and dedication.

The next incident was when she was on her night duty in the medical wards. I finished all my ward work and night rounds and came to know that she was on her night duty through our other friends. I went to see and greet her in the male medical ward in the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. She was fully concentrating on one young boy in his teenage who had a snake bite, was in shock and peripheral circulatory failure. The boy was conscious but he was cold and clammy, his pulse was feeble and his blood pressure was low. He was put on I.V fluids with adrenaline and on regular mephetene injections as and when the blood pressure went down. Without disturbing Dr.J.Hemalata I went through the case sheet and extracted all the information. Dr.J.Hemalata was moving like an angel, checking the blood pressure of the patient every fifteen minutes and adjusting the rate of the I.V fluids by actually counting the drops per minute and also the dose of mephetene. She went by the clock and maintained the blood pressure of the boy from further falling down. In those days it was a routine to cut the vein in the leg to start the I.V fluids which we used to call as vein-section or cut down which was a must for all such cases where the veins were

collapsed. That was the first exercise all the house surgeons were made to learn. In that boy the skin on one leg was gangrenous because of the snake bite and that leg was not useful for the vein-section. With that background what I realized was if there was no good doctor available in the ward at that time and such patients were handed over to the duty nurses only it would be humanly impossible to save such patients. The entire credit should go to Dr.J.Hemalata who did not wink or blink for a second throughout the night and was solely and fully responsible for the boy to recover and survive. I followed that patient closely till the time of his discharge. I congratulated Dr.J.Hemalata for all the good work and service to the poor and helpless patients. I was very sure that but for Dr.J.Hemalata the outcome of the boy's treatment would have been totally different. My admiration to Dr.J.Hemalata started becoming more of adoration.

Two more occasions where I went and watched her doing the night duties were when she was working in the surgical wards of Dr.K.R.R.Mohan Rao in the **S2** ward. When I saw one of her patient's plain X-Ray of the abdomen I was thrilled to see and diagnose a "**stag horn calculus**" which I saw only in the text books till then. The other occasion was when I went to meet Dr.J.Hemalata at the pediatric wards I saw both Dr.J.Hemalata and Dr.Jaya Prada Devi were doing the duty and were fast asleep in the afternoon. I knew the pediatric ward work was a very much tiring job and needed extra

energy and rest to cope of with the heavy load. In fact all of our friends were very much interested in learning the pediatrics and also spent extra time in the wards watching so many beautiful children having a variety of the diseases some were curable and some other cases were incurable like leukemia's. We used to attend some special classes on Sundays and holidays within the wards especially the classes taken by some **NRI** doctor who returned from Malaysia.

One last and final case I remembered was a small infant brought to the casualty when Dr.J.Hemalata was on duty. As usual I had my dinner and went for night rounds starting from the casualty. It was a coincidence that two people whom I liked and respected were both on duty, Dr.B.Visweswara Rao the **CMO** and Dr.J.Hemalata as one of the duty house surgeons. The infant baby was put on a cot with screens all round. The child was crying and making so much of noise, the entire casualty was reverberating with the shrill voice. I immediately understood there was a pediatric emergency and the right person Dr.J.Hemalata was there to take care. After the initial examination the child was diagnosed to have bronchopneumonia and was fighting hard to breath. Out of curiosity I also went and saw the child. I discussed the child's problem with the **CMO** and also with my classmate and friend Dr.J.Hemalata. There was no immediate solution to stop the child from crying continuously. There was a peculiar of observation which attracted my attention. I read somewhere in one of the books that the children

preferred to lie-down on one side only whenever there was a collapse or consolidation of the lung on that side. That particular child was comfortable in lying down to one side but continued to cry. Even if we forcibly tried to keep her in the opposite side she immediately turned back to the side where she was comfortable. I told my observation to the **CMO** and also to Dr.J.Hemalata. But both of them did not agree with me and also did not accept the fact that the child had the consolidation of the lung on the side to which she was turning. As a matter of getting more air in to the lungs the child was trying to keep the normal lung side of the chest on the top and resting on the side of the chest on which side the lung was consolidated. My theory was looking absurd but the child was practically demonstrating that she was crying for breath and turning to ventilate the unaffected lung. Whatever be the outcome of the discussion the child's cry was becoming unbearable and started attracting the attention of everybody. Somebody had to do something to stop that child from crying or making the noise. Much against my wish the child was turned to the side of the normal lung and in a few minutes the child stopped crying. Many people thought that turning to the opposite side made the child more comfortable. I kept my fingers crossed because I was not the duty doctor or the in charge house surgeon in the casualty. A few minutes passed and there was an era of silence. Alas! The child stopped breathing in no time and was no more. Whether my theory was right or wrong but

forcibly turning the child who herself was finding it comfortable to lie-down on one side was forcibly turned to the opposite side. In spite of all that whether the child had a curable condition or not she died faster than the disease could have killed her. It was lesson I learnt by default.

Because of the overwhelming impact of closely observing Ms.J.Hemalata had given me some more chances to learn and follow her ways of studies and also the work ethics. During our fifth year outpatient unit postings we had a partial exposure to less important departments like Dermatology and Venereology, Psychiatry, Dental, Neurosurgery and Thoracic surgery for one week each. During the Dermatology unit outpatient posting we started preparing for the main subjects in the final year which was the hall mark for getting the **MBBS** degree certificate. The subjects were Medicine, Surgery and Gynecology and Obstetrics. The dermatology section formed one chapter in the medicine. There used to be at least one question in the dermatology subject either a full or a short question. We all took even the small chapters very seriously and read them fully and followed the clinics and classes very attentively. One day after coming out of the dermatology **OP** clinic I saw one child of about three to four years age lying down on the floor helplessly with a very big and enlarged head. It was so big the boy attracted the attention of everybody that passed by. I was amazed and amused to look at the child. Later on somebody told me that it was a case of

hydrocephalus and much more correctly a case of arrested hydrocephalus. It was again a case for learning. Accidentally I and Ms.J.Hemalata noticed that boy simultaneously and had a small discussion about that child. During that short discussion Ms.J.Hemalata enquired about me and about my preparation for the final examinations. I saw her carrying the text book of medicine in her hands for the first time. I knew most of my friends were competing to read the best of the text books in medicine like the Price and the Harrison. Most of my hostel mates and even my roommate Mr.Murali Guttikonda were seriously reading the text books of medicine written by Price or Harrison, either one of them or both. I was surprised when my classmate, batch mate, good friend by then and the first class student was carrying the small text book in medicine written by Davidson. I asked her which book she was following in medicine. She showed me her Davidson textbook. I was also following the same book like many other classmates. That book was very good, simple and very easy to read and assimilate. I felt happy that I was also reading the same text book. Out of curiosity, I asked her whether she read any chapters in the text books written by Price and Harrison. She told me that she was concentrating on only the Davidson text book of medicine. I opened her book and found some chapters read by her say, like the chapter on headache and also the stroke. I saw her text book with some points under lined with lead pencil marks. I was satisfied with that interaction for

a short period where I got the confidence as I was feeling guilty that I was not following the big text books in medicine, the Price and the Harrison which were actually reference books and mainly meant for the post graduates. In fact I opened those two text books once or twice in the library and found them to be of very high standard compared to the comprehensive and concise presentation in the text book of medicine by Davidson. I had the consolation and satisfaction that the first class student also justified her confidence in the text book of medicine by Davidson. For some unknown reasons I went through one paragraph on headache in that text book with all the underlined pencil marks of Ms.J.Hemalata and found out the type of headache in the cases of raised intracranial tension which was associated with vomiting without nausea. Such a small highly useful points were not highlighted in the text books of Price or Harrison. Those important points were diluted in the big ocean of such text books. That was the only time we discussed about the books and the preparations for the examination throughout our medical student career.

What I am going to deal with is a totally different phase of our medical education which needed a separate discussion and documentation with little more emphasis on some minor or major points and events. For some people, that was the phase of medical training that made them real good doctors of the future. During our final year training in the year 1971, after we finished our

examinations in the Pathology and Forensic subjects our destination was to prepare for the final year examinations in October 1971. The final year examination consisted of **SPM, ENT** and Ophthalmology as part-1, Medicine Surgery, Gynecology and Obstetrics as the part-2. By rotation the students were posted to work in the labor rooms for a period of fifteen days, working round the clock without going to the hostels. Our job was to take care of all the pregnant ladies that came to the labor rooms either as elective admissions or as emergencies. The students were given in-charge of taking care of the ladies in the labor room. It was both learning and training on one side and giving scientific method of normal delivery to the patient on the other side. We, as students assisted and helped each other, there were supporting staff nurses and orderlies along with the qualified gynecologists on duty. We learnt how the pregnant ladies went in to labor and identified each stage of the labor by carefully observing and monitoring the mother's condition and also the fetus condition. We also identified some complications in some of the cases and managed either on our own or with the help of assistant gynecologist on duty. It was a great sense of satisfaction when we delivered a child in a normal condition without any complications or problems. It was also one of the best moments in all the medical students' life and career when we watched the first breath taken by the child and when we heard the first cry of the baby indicating the beginning of the human life on the earth. Oh! God! What a fascinating event that

it was. It was a great pleasure and happiness for the mother, for the relatives, for the students, for the nurses and everybody that was involved in that process. At that point of transition from the mother's womb to the outside world when the real life began was a Gods miracle. That point was very well emphasized and told to us during our physiology theory class by the most wonderful medical teacher and a great orator Dr.Gummadi Joseph. By the by Dr.Gummadi Joseph was the professor of physiology during our student days, he was the most charming person in the campus, he presented a happy smiling face, he was well dressed and well mannered, he spoke the best Shakespearean impeccable and flowery English. Ultimately he was student friendly and never harmed any student for any extraneous reasons. The same event of the beginning of the life was dramatically discussed in the text book of physiology written by Guyton.

We repeated our learning rituals in the same way to all the ladies in labor. Starting from the false pains to the real labor pains, the rupture of the membranes, engagement of the fetal head, dilatation of the cervix, the type of the presentation either the more common anterior or the rarer posterior, whether there was a cord around the neck and how to release the cord before the delivery, cutting the umbilical cord correctly, collecting the cord blood for grouping and cross matching if necessary, using the mucus succor to remove the mucus and the amniotic fluid from the baby's mouth,

noting the **APGAR** score and handing over the baby were the main and important steps we followed scrupulously in every case. The child was given a label for identification. We also took care of the mother by preventing excess bleeding by giving timely injection of Methargin after the separation of the placenta for the involution of the enlarged uterus. The mother was given episiotomy as and when required and such episiotomies were also sutured by the students. The child was given tetanus toxoid injection for the prevention of tetanus. In those days of buzzing activity there was no time talking anything other than about the patient on hand. But as students with no other distractions and diversions all of us spent almost all the time in the labor rooms only. Our original batch of fourteen students continued our posting in the labor rooms as a team.

When we decided to shift our stay for fifteen days from the hostels to the accommodation provided in the gynecology department, there was a problem about the meals arrangements. The men's hostel had no provision for sending meals carriers to the labor rooms for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I and Mr.V.Jaganadha Rao both from the men's hostel had difficulty in the arrangement for the food. Luckily the ladies hostel mess was providing food for the lady students working in the labor rooms along with us. They were getting meals carriers regularly. Hence we requested Ms.J.Hemalata and Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi to help us with the extra carrier for both of us for which they agreed and came forward to help. There was a

little difficulty as Mr.V.Jaganadha Rao was the only vegetarian amongst the four of us. Somehow he managed to adjust with the food supplied by the ladies hostel mess. I really did not remember whether it was a free food or with the guest charges. Whatever was the arrangement, I and Mr.V.Jaganadha Rao got on interrupted food supply. But for that, both of us would have been forced go to the hostel everyday wasting lot of time in commuting. Or we would have been going round the small hotels or messes available around the government general hospital that could have pinched our pockets and also wasted the valuable time we wanted to utilize working in the labor rooms. To our great relief, joy and happiness our hosts, both Ms.J.Hemalata and Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi were very kind and nice to both of us. They took pains in getting the food from their hostel and also personally served us the food with great affection. It was for the first time that I felt like eating in my own house and the food served was so good as if it was cooked in my own house and also was served by my own family members like my mother and sisters, after I came out of my house in the year 1965. I was literally in tears and expressed the same to Ms.J.Hemalata for all the love and affection however transient it was, just for fifteen days. I still remembered that picture in my mind of both of them serving me with so much of affection I really craved for each meal that tasted like nectar or Amrutham.

The main idea of the posting and working in the labor rooms was to apply our mind for each and every minute detail of the patients in labor pains who came to the government general hospital for help and delivery. It was the training under supervision of the qualified gynecologists. It was also a self learning, self confidence boosting and ultimately direct exposure to the events taking place in the two labor rooms situated opposite to each other. All the normal delivery patients were pooled in to the first labor room where the intern students took the cases by rotation and all the patients with any complications and that required surgical intervention like caesarian section were put in to the second labor room where the qualified duty assistant gynecologists and the post graduates attended to such patients. The one most important principle in conducting a normal delivery was ***“watchful expectancy and masterly inactivity”***. That meant, left alone and given enough time the pregnant ladies delivered normally without any help by the qualified doctors. That was what was happening in the remote villages where the local people conducted the normal deliveries with the help of untrained village ayahs under unhygienic conditions. But normal deliveries conducted in the institutions under the supervision of trained medical personal was to conduct the deliveries in the scientific way, prevent complications for the mother and child and finally reduce the mortality rate for the mother and child. In that direction most of the students discussed the cases for mutual

benefit and attended to more than one case at a time improving our own standard of learning and bringing us close to each other. Some times during the watchful expectancy the waiting period was prolonged as long as the labor was prolonged. During such intervals some of us discussed the cases on hand and also some of the related theory subject written in the text book. Coming to the point of reading a text book I sometimes deviated from the normal course of studies followed by all our friends and classmates. I trusted mostly the notes taken during the theory classes taken by our professors and assistant professors. The best theory classes in the gynecology and obstetrics were those taken by the professor of gynecology and obstetrics, Dr.(Mrs).N.Subhadra Devi. The classes by the additional professor of gynecology, Dr.K.Ramamurthi, the assistant professors of gynecology from seniors like Dr.(Mrs).Rani Hithavachani, Dr.(Mrs).Ammani, Dr.(Mrs).Vara Lakshmi, Dr.(Mrs).Surya Kumari, Dr.(Mrs).Kamala and Dr.(Mrs).Hymavathi who was the junior most in the department during those days. All of them were good teachers and also were good clinicians. I trusted my note books more than the text books. Most of our classmates read the only one and the best text book in gynecology written by Dr.Mujmudar which was universally followed all our India. All the under graduates and the post graduates also followed that text book very seriously. That was really a very big and comprehensive treatise in gynecology. Those who wanted to become gynecologists in future should read that book

only. If that was the requirement I deviated from the beaten path of becoming a gynecologist even as early as my intern days. Honestly I did not realize that fact during those days. We mechanically learnt everything with the ensuing examination in the mind as the only sole goal to pass the examination. Even though I did not show much interest in the Mujmudar text book, I read very seriously another text book on obstetrics alone written by Dr. Johnston **FRCS**. Not many people showed interest in reading that book. That was when I went to the library and started looking at all the books available in gynecology, I found that the text book of gynecology written by Dr. Mujmudar was a hard nut to crack like a coconut and the text book written by Dr. Johnston was like a banana fruit easy to read and understand. I found it was interesting to read the Johnston's text book to compliment the class notes. Before I came to the posting as the intern, I read most of the text book written by Dr. Johnston hence I was well versed with the steps of the normal delivery and also observed all the clinical findings described in the text book in all the patients that I attended to in the labor rooms. I was very keen on finding the complications during a labor earlier than most of my classmates. Sometimes my classmates did not believe in my findings and waited for the proof after the delivery. One day I examined a lady in labor and diagnosed her baby was having an occipito-posterior presentation by doing the internal examination. I palpated the posterior fontanel which was open and

also could be felt with the finger tip. I made the diagnosis which my friend did not agree. We waited for the normal delivery to take place and confirmed the occipito-posterior presentation. I was delighted with my diagnosis and correct observation. Actually that point was given only in the text book written by Johnston. Like that I managed many episiotomies, cord around the neck and **CPD's**, cephalo pelvic disproportion indicating surgical intervention or forceps application correctly. Like that I had a number of day to day, face to face discussions and interactions, contradictions and confirmations and ultimate successful learning on every opportunity thrown at us. That was the period where many of my nascent qualities and talents spontaneously came out. That was the time when I also realized that in the company of intelligent and hard working people I could also raise to the occasion and improve my own knowledge and skills. Ms.J.Hemalata contributed as a colleague and highly knowledgeable and intelligent batch mate for my own successful learning. That was the turning point in my career when I realized that why some students become better and better day by day and some people go astray and down the hill.

There was some other negative and unfortunate events that took place in the other labor room where complicated cases who were given drips to induce pregnancy, who had prolonged labor, who had complicated pregnancy, who were waiting for a surgical procedure, who had premature rupture of membranes, who had

intrauterine death of babies, placenta previa, late primies and many other people waiting for the qualified gynecologist to come and do the necessary intervention or treatment. It was a pathetic situation that such highly risky pregnant ladies were not given their due recognition and importance. More over some of the senior assistant surgeons treated them like street woman, scolded them in the unprintable words and even physically assaulted them mercilessly. Some assistant surgeons whom I liked very much for their knowledge and interest in teaching were totally different when they entered the second labor room where all the complicated pregnant patients were lined up. I had seen some of my favorite assistant surgeons pinching the skin of the thighs of the patients, slapping them anywhere and everywhere and scolding the patients when they were crying with severe pain saying they should have known about the pain of their labor before they wanted to have the baby again in the most unprintable language. It was a different matter that I still liked and respected all those assistant professors ignoring their nasty behavior within the four walls of the second labor room.

The environment in the labor room arena of the department of the gynecology was always vibrant bubbling with activity of people coming in with severe pains and going out with smiling faces with a babies in their hands. In between the two events a big drama was enacted showing all the shades of human emotions and life. One had to keep his senses open all round the time, to only appreciate

what a great event the birth of a child meant for everybody. That some people took it very lightly was unfortunate. To compliment the practical and live training with in the labor rooms there were theory classes taken by our teachers in the evening hours. Quite often the good assistant gynecologists took all the classes on all the days. The best classes were taken by Dr.(Mrs).Rani Hitavachani, Dr.(Mrs).Ammani and Dr.(Mrs).Vara Lakshmi, not that the other assistants were bad but only to highlight the personal interest taken by those three senior assistant surgeons. In addition to the classes taken by the assistant surgeons, Dr.G.Ramamurthi the additional professor of gynecology and obstetrics who used to come to the department, every day to take a class without missing. He used to play tennis in the evenings, came straight from the tennis court to the classroom with in the ward in the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the department and took us a class on some subject of interest specially related to the obstetrics which was relevant to our posting in the labor rooms. It was a very good experience for the students to have the practical and live training of delivering the babies and also learn the related theory simultaneously. Some of the senior assistants used to ask some tricky questions in the obstetrics and wanted to elicit the answers from the students. It was my habit not to answer any question during a class even if I knew the correct answer because; I wanted other and better students to answer them and to get their satisfaction. There were a group of our classmates who tried to

answer any and every question asked by the teacher to show their knowledge and interest in the subject. That attitude I had been watching, from my 1<sup>st</sup> year **MBBS** studies onwards. Unfortunately the number of such people started slowly dwindling year after the year with each examination filtering away some very good students. Those students who were average and less ambitious continued to maintain their low profile. Even our 1<sup>st</sup> class student friend always maintained a low profile in spite of her knowledge and achievements.

Coming back to the tricky questions asked by the assistant professors especially by Dr.(Mrs).Rani Hitavachani and Dr.(Mrs).Ammani. When nobody in our batch came forward with the proper answer and on repeated questioning, with all hesitation I used to raise my hand and answer some of those tricky questions which sometimes were appreciated and acknowledged by our good hearted teachers. I was able to answer such tricky questions only because I read that text book on the obstetrics written by Dr.Johnston. The answers for such questions with practical knowledge were available only in that text book. Since I read that text book I was able to correctly answer such questions. That those evening theory classes in a small closed room in the ward corner brought our entire batch mates close together in to a compact classroom and also the teacher at a handshake distance making the teaching and learning a happy encounter. As the final year students

we were all grown up and mature enough to eagerly learn and assimilate what was going on within the four walls of the department. The labor rooms and the classroom in the ward made the best places for learning obstetrics correctly. During our posting a dramatic thing happened that was quite unfortunate in one way and surprising in the other way. All our classmates took our **ENT** and ophthalmology examinations, about fifty students in number and were waiting for the final results. Usually in most of the subjects the results were announced by the same department within twenty four hours of completion of the examination. The list of the successful candidates was personally informed by the senior most assistant surgeon in the department. The official results from the university used to come as for the schedule a few days or weeks later and the marks list was sent to all the individuals on payment, by the university authorities. For the reasons best known to the professors of **ENT** and ophthalmology the results were with held for an unusually long period without giving any hint about the fate of the students who took the examinations. Unmindful of the results of the **ENT** and ophthalmology we all continued our preparation for the ultimate final examinations in the subjects of medicine, surgery and gynecology and obstetrics. There were a lot of discussions and debates about why and how the results of the **ENT** and ophthalmology examinations were not announced without any hint of the candidates who passed or failed. That was a minor distraction

from our whole hearted preparation for the final year major subjects. The gossip rounds were making people a little unsettled not for the fear of failing but for preparing for the reappearance in the examination in case somebody failed in that subject. In the history of the medical college examination, not many students failed in the **ENT** and ophthalmology. But in our batch there were strong rumors that a large chunk of our batch mates were failed, which remained unscathed throughout the **PPC** and the Anatomy **GATES**. To my knowledge almost all our original classmates were hard working and good students. There was no reason for any one student to fail in the examination or to reappear for the same subject. One of the many rumors was that the professors of the **ENT** and ophthalmology took grudge on some of the students who did not give them proper respect and importance during their posting in the department. There was another rumor that one professor of ophthalmology by name Dr.Musalappa Reddy always wanted all the lady students to attend to his clinics and clinical demonstration. He had the vicarious pleasure of teaching the lady students with in his physical proximity. He was unhappy and upset when some of the lady students decided to keep away from his clinics which made him angry and also wanted to take punitive action. Added to that one of our classmates Mr.P.S.A.Sharma, who was a very brilliant student and was totally obsessed with the subject of the ophthalmology. He was so knowledgeable that he started taking classes for our own

classmates parallel to the classes taken by the additional professor of ophthalmology, Dr.Musalappa Reddy. Not only that, Mr.P.S.A.Sharma attracted all the lady students to his clinical demonstration diverting all the lady students from the clinics of Dr.Musalappa Reddy. That made him more angry and wanted to fail all the candidates or as many candidates as possible in the subjects of the **ENT** and ophthalmology. Because of the in-ardent delay in the announcement of the results of the examination there was some guess work going on within our friends discussing who would pass or who would fail. At one point of time Mr.P.S.A.Sharma announced openly and challenged that the examiners could never fail him in the examination even if they failed the entire batch of our class. He was so strong in his subject and he was so confident of passing the examination on his own merit and knowledge. Whatever was going to come out of that debate we did not have any inside information and we had no control on what was going to happen. We all resigned to the fate and waited for the results with our fingers crossed. During the middle of the postings in the labor rooms, the official university results were announced nearly one and half months after the examinations were held. There were many surprises and the most shocking result was that Mr.P.S.A.Sharma was mercilessly failed and he was the big head to roll first. To mention a few other very bright students that failed in the examination were my own roommate Mr.Murali Guttikonda who became almost the number

one neurosurgeon in America by now and the second important person very close to me was Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi, the roommate of Ms.J.Hemalata. That Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi took the examination for the second time and came out with flying colors scoring seventy five percent of marks in the **ENT** and ophthalmology examination, probably the highest marks ever scored in any medical subject to my knowledge. Those two examples only proved that the results of the examinations in the medical subjects were not always fair to the bright and hard working students. There was also an element of bias and prejudice by the teachers. Not only that, pass or failure was not an index of their future achievements. In that background the candidates who passed in the **ENT** and ophthalmology were no more great or superior to those who failed to clear examination in the first attempt. Why I was mentioning elaborately that event was, because the results were closely monitored by our teachers in the next ensuing examinations in medicine, surgery and gynecology and obstetrics. It was a testing time for both the students and the teachers of the other subjects. The timing of the announcement of the results coincided with our peak involvement in the learning of the labor room procedures. For some strange and obvious reason, that subject of our results became a talking point for sometime both in the students and our teachers. One day during one of the evening classes Dr.(Mrs).Ammani wanted to know the candidates who passed the **ENT** and ophthalmology examination. There were many

lady candidates who stood up in the class outnumbering the boys. She also wanted to see the boy students who cleared the **ENT** and ophthalmology examination. With all hesitation and humiliation I was the only male student to stand up in that evening class. Dr.(Mrs).Ammani was already very fond of me for my involvement in the learning of the obstetrics and was pleasantly and expectantly felt happy that I could clear the **ENT** and ophthalmology examination to her satisfaction. I could see her face and notice how happy she was about me. Not that I passed the examination but she really wanted me to pass that examination for some unknown reasons and bonding. I always liked her teaching and her way of dealing with the patients and students. In fact I was one of the four candidates who cleared the ENT and ophthalmology examination in the first appearance along with twenty three other lady candidates. To complete the story there were only twenty seven students who completed all the subjects from PPC to the final year in the first attempt out of one hundred and fifty candidates admitted in our class. To highlight Dr.(Mrs).Ammani's encouragement, given to me and also her personal longing that I should do well in my studies came into focus when all our batch mates gave a farewell party after completing the intern posting. The party was arranged in the hospital canteen and the only staff member who came for that party was Dr.(Mrs).Ammani. That was a lovely evening where we had hearty discussions and also interactions on many personal and

professional subjects. The highlight of the party was that Dr.(Mrs).Ammani wanted some students to come forward and sing some songs for which some ladies responded well and made the function complete. There were one or two boys who also sang a few songs. Somewhere from the corner of the bench one of my friends Mr.V.Jaganadha Rao proposed my name to sing a song and recommended to Dr.(Mrs).Ammani. Dr.(Mrs).Ammani did not leave me without singing in spite of my repeated pleadings that I did not know any songs and also how to sing. I was feeling very humiliated for my own inadequacy in music and singing. Ultimately, not to disappoint Dr.(Mrs).Ammani I pooled my courage and tried to sing the same song, the only song I knew with some lyrics and the one which I sang during the ward students party meeting with Dr.T.Srinivasan two years ago. The song **“Madilo Premanu Kaanuka Itchi, Manusulone Mamatalu Repi, Sokamainee Jeevana Yatra, Todu Needaga Labhinchi nave”**, I rendered with all my emotions amalgamated. I could see the happiness in my teachers face and she did not hide her joy in openly and loudly praising me in the function. That was the most and the happiest moment of my intern posting. After that party and my uninhibited singing made much more difference in the way Dr.(Mrs).Ammani treated me whenever I greeted her even after completing the intern posting, the final year examinations and also during my house surgeon posting. There was a lot of affection, warmth and closeness which I enjoyed always. Even today four decades after I experienced the teachers love and

affection, even though I have not seen her for the last four decades I feel the closeness and proximity still fresh in my mind. I always wanted to meet her and see her physically but that did not happen. Why I was deviating from the main topic of Hemayanam to the fringes was only to highlight that what all I was doing in the internship posting was all in the presence of my classmates and especially in the proximity of my friend and batch mate. The direct and indirect influence of interactions with the first class student of our batch made me more determined to do better and even better every day with a hidden desire to better the best in the class. That was only an ambition I nursed within myself without getting exposed unnecessarily. But not to out beat or overtake my friend whom I started already admiring and adoring. One might question why single out only Ms.J.Hemalata when so many other people were also available in the same place within the four walls of the labor rooms and the classrooms of the department of the gynecology and obstetrics. It was true that my hidden desire and ambition was to learn everything and anything from everyone who had the knowledge, experience and the talent. Just because I was following keenly only one person did not mean that I was ignoring or indifferent towards the other people both medical and non medical. But even if I was more inclined to observe and follow one person only was because that she was the only resourceful person in the entire batch where there was the treasure of knowledge and

involvement in the patient management. Her involvement in the patient management and her outreach to extend a helping hand was evident when she attended to my friend Dr.L.Seshadri Rao's wife and also my teacher Mr.Ayyappa Reddy's wife when they were brought to the hospital in the middle of the night with threatened abortion. The way she attended to them with concern and compassion was there for everybody to look at and notice. Not only myself but all our other batch mates also looked up for inspiration only from Ms.J.Hemalata. That she was open for discussion and sharing her knowledge was one main reason for her attracting all other batch mates including myself. Of the four boys in our batch, I was the only one who took the advantage and initiative on my own. The entire labor room environment was filled with knowledge and activity; there was no dull or dry moment only because of the one person who was on her feet all the time exploring many unknown facts and practices. If I did not have such a batch mate who was deeply involved in the patient care like Ms.J.Hemalata I would not have become so much motivated. Those people in our batch who ignored or did not take the serious notice of our classmate probably missed the essence of the labor room posting and the consequent exposure to the vast treasure of knowledge. I felt proud and blessed for the most of the opportunity.

I would end the labor room internship experiences with two more landmark memories I had been keeping in the back of my

mind's strong room. That I need not repeatedly emphasize the fact that the entire team of teachers in the department of the obstetrics and gynecology were very much academically oriented and they were very strong in their knowledge and experience. One example I would like to quote was a young lady who was brought with high fever and symptoms of toxemia probably following an attempted and incomplete abortion. All our senior assistant surgeons in the department examined that patient and made their own diagnosis and expressed their opinions which were not correct. The case was presented to Dr.(Mrs).N.Subhadra Devi, the professor of gynecology and obstetrics. She immediately made the correct diagnosis of "Pyometra" and wasted no time in shifting her to the operation theater and made the diagnostic and therapeutic procedure by opening in to the abscess cavity in the Douglas's pouch. She drained a few liters of pus to the great relief of the patient and also the surprise of the students and the staff who witnessed the procedure from the beginning. Dr.(Mrs).N.Subhadra Devi was the gold medalist and the best outgoing student of the Madras Medical College during her student days. She was one year senior to professor B.Ramamurthi, the famous founder of neurosurgery in India who himself was the gold medalist and the best outgoing student of his batch. Both the facts were known to me only when I was doing my house surgeon posting in the department of neurosurgery in February 1972. But I was already working with my classmate and

best friend a gold medalist and the 1<sup>st</sup> class student. I did not realize at that time that she would become the best outgoing student of our batch and the university. Looking back, I was lucky to have the close association and teachings from the gold medalists and the best outgoing students of both Madras Medical College and the Guntur Medical College. I worked with them without the prior knowledge; still I got the essence of the great people who were born to become great achievers in their academic activities.

A few more lingering thoughts that still haunted me were equally important for me to savor. As a hard working student I was getting noticed by all the staff members in all the departments, more so in the department of gynecology and obstetrics. The next best person after Dr.(Mrs).Ammani was Dr.(Mrs).Rani Hitavachani who took more interest in teaching the under graduate students. She must have noticed some good qualities in my approach to the subject of gynecology and obstetrics. She was the next best teacher in theory and surgery after Dr.(Mrs).N.Subhadra Devi who was the professor and head of the department and also the vice principal of the Guntur Medical College. As usual there were prize examinations in all the subjects in the medical college, generally conducted a few weeks before the final university examinations. I knew many people specially prepared for such prize examinations and got instant recognition even for appearing for the examination. For those who really got the prize in the subject it was a green channel to walk

through the final university examination. Getting a prize in a subject was recognition for the student's hard work and preparation. That some people really prepared well for the prize examinations and succeeded only spoke of their talent and foresight. People like me who rushed to catch the bus before we missed the last minute preparation for the final university examination, never knew when the prize examination were conducted, how the prize examination were conducted, how many people appeared for the examination and finally who got the prize in that particular subject. The news of the prize winner was slowly leaked into the classroom or announced on the dais during the annual day celebrations of the college. For people like me who never dared to know or think of the existence of the prize examination it was routine information that somebody was given the prize. It did not impact anything on the minds of people like me who were plenty around both in the medical college and in the hostel. The main goal of most of the medical students was to aim at passing the examination in the first attempt. There was no incentive to get more marks or to get first mark and finally even to think of a first class which was beyond the comprehension of an average medical student. Actually those students who could not clear the subjects in the first time were a little bit low in motivating other students who were able to clear the hurdles. The negative impact of the referred students was more on the performance of the regular students than the possible positive influence of the merit

students, the prize students and the first class student. On one side there was always the lurking fear of failing in an examination and joining the ever increasing group of referred candidates and on the other side the desire to compete with the better students and to keep face with them. There was always an urge to do better with each passing year and with the passing of the subjects. In that conflict the fact remained that even if I am going to repeat the same information again and again only proved what the medical education was in those days at least. Just to recollect, out of the one hundred and fifty students that were admitted in to our batch in the year 1966 nearly sixty students or roughly more than one third of the students were with held in the **PPC** examination itself, more precisely in the subject of physics. Another fifty students out of the ninety again roughly fifty percent of the regular candidates were failed in the Anatomy subject. Of the remaining forty and odd students only twenty seven could cross the **ENT** and Ophthalmology **GATE**. To complete that story that only four boys and twenty three ladies would clear all the examinations in the first attempt itself. In that scenario to think of the prize examinations, first marks, gold medals and the most elusive first class were not the priorities of most of the students. There was also the fear that people who appeared for the prize examination without proper preparation more likely to be axed by the internal examiners than the ordinary and the average students. There was a wrong notion that those who tried to show off

by appearing for the prize examination with the idea of attracting the attention of the professor and assistant professors sometimes boomeranged against them. With all those fears in mind most of the students kept away from the lurking danger under the guise of the prize examination. To tell the truth most of the students prepared for the examinations in the last minute trying to catch up with time, neck to neck race and almost a photo finishing clearing the hurdle called the examination. With so much of information in my mind, catching up with the time and the subjects I got a surprised call one day by Dr.(Mrs).Rani Hitavachani. When I met her she asked me to appear for the prize examination in the gynecology and obstetrics to be conducted on the day. I was taken a back and was surprised at the mention of appearing for the prize examination. I politely refused to appear for the examination. But Dr.(Mrs).Rani Hitavachani insisted that I should appear for the examination as I was one of the potential candidates to get that coveted prize. Suddenly a shiver went down my spine that I never realized that I was one of the potential candidates for appearing for the prize examination in any subject leave alone the gynecology and obstetrics. In the heart of the heart I was very happy that Dr.(Mrs).Rani Hitavachani thought of me and sent word for me specifically ignoring the rest of the boys and many other girls. I had that fear in the back of my mind that I was not a prize student material but to have drawn the attention of some of my teachers was itself a satisfaction and achievement. If I

remembered correctly that Dr.(Mrs).Rani Hitavachani's voice gave me an indirect indication implying that I only needed to appear for the examination and take the prize which was there for me assured. I dare not take that step and politely walked out of her room stating that I never appeared for any of the previous prize examination conducted. I was content with passing the examination and not interested in competing with others for the prize. To my knowledge there were many students worthy of the prize like Ms.J.Hemalata, Dr.Bhavani Prasad and Dr.Indira. Their talent and qualities were already established and recognized. Actually an unknown commodity suddenly surfaced to appear for the prize examination in the gynecology and obstetrics in the form of Ms.Sujatha. She was quite unassuming and kept a low profile throughout her career till she reached the final year. She appeared for the prize examination in the gynecology and obstetrics and was awarded the same and she surprised everybody with her achievement. That was not a fluke was proved again when she got the university first mark in our class in the general surgery university examination.

On my own with all the inspiration and motivation derived through observation and hard work, with the association of the best of the brain in our class and the love and affection given to me by the staff members of the department of gynecology and obstetrics I was more inclined to take the gynecology and obstetrics in my post graduation studies. I was totally immersed in the subject, not that I

neglected other subjects like medicine and surgery. Suddenly the results and the marks in the final year examination made me to change my decision to go for the post graduation in the general surgery subject. As the fate would decide, even before I joined the general surgery post graduation my mind was diverted to seek post graduation in neurosurgery after the visit of Professor B.Ramamurthi to the Guntur Medical College when I was doing my house surgeon training in the neurosurgery department in February 1972. That changed my career totally and made me go from one best outgoing student of the Guntur Medical College to the other best outgoing student of the Madras Medical College.

Ever since I started closely watching and following Ms.J.Hemalata the student, to Dr.J.Hemalata the house surgeon and colleague I developed a sort of a curiosity subconsciously watching for the name of Hemalata and also their educational achievements. Somehow I was thinking at least one name of Hemalata would be anywhere nearer to the academic achievements of Dr.J.Hemalata. In that scenario I came across some names of Hemalata not during my student days or house surgeon days but none of them were comparable to Dr.J.Hemalata's achievements. Indirectly hoping that nobody should reach close to the achievements of Dr.J.Hemalata I myself tried to associate her name with somebody else whom I liked as much as Dr.J.Hemalata or wanted somebody to achieve the impossible what Dr.J.Hemalata

achieved. My desire became more of an obsession to find a replica of Dr.J.Hemalata. Whenever I encountered the name of Hemalata I was disappointed to know that she was not the real Hemalata I was looking for, but only a duplicate. My search never ended till now. Actually the search was more intense when Dr.J.Hemalata got married immediately after our house surgeon period and left the group of common friends who all flocked together like the feathers of the same bird with common educational interests and goals. In that direction of identifying individuals bearing the name of Dr.J.Hemalata, I came across some more persons bearing the same name but never met some of the individuals bearing such a name. I was not disappointed but my eyes and mind always recognized such name even when I accidentally noticed. I have already mentioned a few instances of similar nature before. When I thought I was almost close to the completion of the list of the situations or places bearing the name of Hemalata some more recent findings of some hoardings and name boards on the road side drew my attention to the name of Hemalata again. One was when I was searching for a residential accommodation in and around the Banjara Hills I passed across an apartment bearing the name of Hemalata. When I was visiting Visakhapatnam on monthly basis I suddenly saw a hoarding on the side of national high way near Marripalem bearing the name of Hema constructions. When I visited Poranki and was travelling in a car to attend a marriage function along with Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi

and Dr.(Mrs).K.Jaya Prada Devi I suddenly noticed one hoarding with bright lights displaying the name in very bold letters as Hema Textiles. During my last visit to Vijayawada I saw one more sign board of Hema iron and hardware shop. The latest hoarding I saw bearing the name of Hema was next to the Corporation Bank opposite the district judge court at Visakhapatnam as Hema builders. Even very recently as a few days before I saw a TV scroll displaying the word Hema Traders. I am sure I am going to find the name of Hema on many public displays in future on some business or non academic situations. It was not so about forty years ago. Like that my interest in finding the name of Hemalata got renewed again. Very recently in the month of May 2013, I saw one caption in the Hindu paper, the magazine section under the head of the habitat, an article written by Hema Vijay on the importance of growing green trees and fruit bearing trees in all the residential premises. She was mentioning that the ripe fruits would attract all varieties of birds that will make the environment lively and healthy. She also mentioned the sounds made by the birds like parrots and their colorful presence on the trees would be a treat to watch. I thought that was an occasional column written by Ms.Hema Vijay in the Hindu Paper. Later on I found a few more articles written by her on different subjects like the usefulness of the coconut peat in growing indoor plants and also the Bonsai plants. I really do not know what her qualification or her profession is but she must have been an

environmentalist. I am sure I am going to find more number of articles in her name in the Hindu Paper in the days to come. Behind all those funny observations I had a serious desire to see the name of Dr.Hemalata a real medical doctor with some sort of similar professional achievements. I did not do any serious research but the subconscious effort continued as undercurrent water in the river. By some accident I read the name of Dr.Hema in one of the Hindu paper issues while I was at Visakhapatnam. Except the fact that she was the wife of one of the leading radiologists running the Vijaya diagnostic center Dr.Suman, I don't have any further information about her. I never saw her physically also, but she was not known for her medical qualification or achievements. I thought I had come to the end of the list of the names of Hema associated with many academic, non academic, business and many more situations including the medical field. I decided to ignore the incidental finding of the name of Hema or Hemalata in future as the list was going to be a never ending phenomenon. But I changed my mind when I came across a series of three persons with the name of Hema and hence I would like to mention those names also to complete the list and also to fulfill my quest. Recently when I went to Visakhapatnam I was searching for the professor and head of the department of Telugu at the Andhra University. I read his name in the Hindu Paper in connection with the forty second death anniversary of late Sri.Jashuva who was a literary genius. I wanted to meet the

professor for two different reasons. One was to take his help to read the manuscript of some of the articles I had been writing in Telugu. The second reason was to know more about our Telugu contemporary and past writers through him. I took an appointment to meet him on twenty ninth of August, 2013. But he was giving a guest talk at the A.S.Raja Women's College at MVP colony. I was curious to listen to him as he was talking on the occasion of the hundred and fiftieth birthday celebrations of the late Gidugu Ramamurthi Panthulu Garu at that school. At 11 AM in the morning I went to the college and found that the classroom was over crowded with the women students studying there. I could not go in to the class room for the fear of disrupting the guest speech in progress. In the concluding part of the meeting the prizes were distributed for the bright students in the Telugu examinations conducted in the previous year. Suddenly I heard the principal of the college announcing the name one girl student who scored ninety nine percent marks in the Telugu language in the first year final examination. Her name was Ms.Hemalata. I wanted to see her but she could not be seen in the crowded class room, I wanted get more information about her but it was too late and sultry for me to stay any longer and I decided to trace her where about at a later date. The next name of Hema I watched with curiosity was when I accidentally heard an interview in one of the popular TV channels when a character artist cum comedian by name Hema. She was a

very successful lady cinema artist portraying the character and comedy roles with ease. The third and the last but not the least was when read the Hindu Paper dated sixteenth of September, 2013. I saw the photograph and the news item about one Dr.Hema Diwakar. She was the president of the Federation of the Obstetrics and Gynecological Society of India (FOGSI). Dr.Hema Diwakar was also leading the Karnataka State Expert Committee. One may think why I have so much of obsession regarding the name of Hemalata when so many other prominent names were available in our class and also the college at the Guntur Medical College campus. To scratch my memory back for a few decades during my elementary and high school education we did not have any girl students in our classes and many of them dropped out during their studies halfway through. At least my own sister Ms.Adilakshmi and one more girl student by name Ms.Katragadda Sandhya Rani studied up to the **SSLC**. There were some more lady students in the other classes but their names did not become popular as they could not reach the college education for different reasons of their own and also the compulsion of their parents to get them married as teenagers and settled down in the family life. There were two exceptions for that statement; my own sister who did join in the **PUC** at the women's college Guntur, one more lady student from our neighboring village Annaparthi bearing the same name as my sister, Ms.Adilakshmi who studied BVSc, a veterinary science degree which

was a strange choice for her and might be the only veterinary surgeon from our school and definitely the first veterinary surgeon that too, a lady veterinary surgeon. I studied my **PUC** at the Hindu College, Guntur, where there was no co-education and hence I did not come across girl student names. Not only that the name of Hemalata but also any other girl students with the similar educational achievements. That would justify my eternal search for a matching personality either by name or fame in the Guntur Medical College not only in the lady students but also the entire college both men and women put together. I was not trying to justify the search for the name of Hemalata solely. When I was reading the clinical methods of surgery written by Dr.Das and specially the topic on the head injuries I was impressed by the name of Sir Dr.Victor Horsley, who was the Father of the Neurosurgery, who did the first spinal cord tumor surgery in the year 1872. I read his name a number of times throughout my **MBBS** studies, house surgeon training, post graduate training in neurosurgery, as an assistant professor of neurosurgery teaching the students and the post graduates and finally as the professor of neurosurgery at the **SV** Medical College, Tirupathi. My teachings never failed to mention the name of the Father of the Neurosurgery to the students. So much so, when I was working at Tirupathi, I came across the name of the Horsley Hills at Madanapalli in Chittor district. Since the name of Horsley was close to my heart, I wanted to know whether the

neurosurgeon Sir Dr. Victor Horsley and the Horsley bearing the name in the Horsley Hills was the same or not. Hence I went on getting all the information about the Horsley Hills and also the bio-data of Mr. Horsley of the Horsley hills. After gathering so much of information I was utterly disappointed to know that both the Horsleyies were different, one was a doctor and surgeon the other was a revenue officer and collector. Even though it was not happy news I wished that both of them were the same person so that I could have read about the historical personalities and connected them. Still my interest did not evaporate with that finding and still went ahead and reached the historical summer abode of Mr. Horsley the revenue officer at Madanapalli and stayed there in the guest house for a day satisfying my interest in somehow getting connected with the name of Horsley. In fact I drove my car from the temple town Tirupathi to Madanapalli by road and took a twenty five kilometer drive off the main road to reach the historical hill station and satisfied my long pending desire in the year 1987 even after I left Tirupathi as professor of neurosurgery. So to see my search for the name of Hemalata in isolation was an aberration.

### **The Marriage:**

It was said that the marriages were made in heaven. I am sure nobody had seen the heaven we speak about. But if the place where marriages took place was heaven it is the heaven on the earth itself. Marriages are inevitable from the times immemorial. In spite

of our best efforts all marriages do not follow the same known pattern and each marriage was unique in itself. Some marriages were simple and heartening and some more were grandiose with heart breaking. When I was studying in the medical college at the Guntur Medical College, it was the age where the teenagers turned into adolescents and adults. Certainly it was not the age or time for the marriages. Majority of the college students concentrated on learning the medical subjects and gaining more experience as would be doctors. It was a Herculean task to beat the educational schedule, cross the hurdles of the examination and meet the vagaries and fads of the teachers and examiners. Most of the student's time was pre-occupied with the studies and the examinations and everybody wanted to complete the course as soon as possible and then think of settling in life either by doing post graduation or going abroad or to settle down in life. That was not the same pattern in all the cases. For various reasons some people married even before or immediately after joining the medical college. There were rumors that a section of the medical students selected medical course to bait rich girls either from the medical college or from outside the medical college to fetch more dowry. On one or two rare occasions there was a real financial constraint for the male medical students to get married early in their career. When we reached our final year medical education there was a new and compelling trend to appear for the more lucrative **ECFMG**

examination to go to the **USA**. Many of our classmates especially the boy students did not have enough resources to go to Kuala-Lumpur to write the qualifying examination and later to fly to the **USA**. That also forced some of my friends marry early to overcome their financial constrains. It was strange to notice that only the male medical students preferred to get married early and it was not at all the priority to the lady students for such early decisions except and unless their parents forced the marriage upon them.

In our class during the medical college education there were a few instances of our classmates getting married very early. One boy from Vijayawada a good friend of my by name Dr.D.P married very early if not even before joining the medical college. One Dr.R.V.D.M.Prasad married my own classmate Dr.Sunanda alias Ms.Subbayamma during the course of studies itself. Like that some people married our own classmates at different stages of their career, some of our classmate boys married our junior lady students some of our classmate ladies married some of our senior colleagues or even the more senior staff members. I off hand remember a few couples amongst our own classmates who got married very early. I really do not know the exact sequence of the marriages in the chronological order but try to recollect some of their names. The best and close friends to me, Dr.M.A.Saleem and Dr.T.Lakshmi, married at Chandigarh during their post graduation there. Dr.Paparao and Dr.Indira; Dr.Sharma and Dr.Laila Kumari; Dr.P.S.A.Sharma and

Dr.Janaki Radhakrishnan; Dr.Atluri Venkateswara Rao and Dr.Vijaya Lakshmi; Dr.Govardhan and Dr.Sowbhaghya Lakshmi; finally some of our lady classmates married doctors from other medical colleges also many even married non medical people in either gender.

Coming back to some of my close friends who have been my batch mates throughout our career started marrying during our house surgeon period. If I remembered well that Dr.Hamsa Veni was the first to marry from our batch of fourteen students. She married to an anesthetist and both of them got settled down in **USA**. The next one to get married was Dr.J.Hemalata immediately after we completed our house surgeon training. Dr.S.Lakshmi married to a doctor, Dr.Jayaprada Devi married to a doctor, Dr.Gayathri Devi married to a doctor a few years before or after completing the house surgeon training period or during their post graduation. Not many people remained unmarried till very late in their lives except me who got married in the year 1981. I do not have the proper memory of attending to many of our classmates marriages except Dr.Hamsa Veni and Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata, both the marriages were performed in the Guntur town. So it was easy for me to actively get involved in the entire proceedings of their marriages. Dr.Hamsa Veni's marriage was performed in her own residence at the Lakshmipuram. I, Mr.Babji and his wife, Dr.Hemalata, Dr.Surya Kumari and many other friends took part in that marriage ceremony. But what was more interesting

and long lasting memory was the marriage of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata which surprised many people both friends and family members. I have many memories of so many events that took place before, during and after the marriage of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. Some memories were good and pleasant and a few were a little bit bitter and if not sour. I shall dwell into some of my memories as they still lingered and surfaced on and off in my mind.

First of all let me congratulate Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi and Dr.S.R.Parimi for their fortieth marriage day anniversary which happened on twenty fourth of December 2012. ***“Many Happy Returns of the Day for both of you”***.

Somewhere during my browsing through some of the books casually I came across somebody trying to analyze the events that were taking place around us. For every event there was something called the ***PRE-EVENT***, the ***EVENT*** and the ***POST-EVENT***. Even before I read that book I was aware of the format in which I remembered the event of the marriage of my close friend Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. So it suited me to write the story of the marriage of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata as I remembered today.

During our ***MBBS*** studies as I mentioned earlier marriage was not the top priority for many of our classmates and friends except for a few exceptional cases. If anybody suggested the idea of marriage people would have laughed at each other for such a

premature decision. It was also a strange feeling for even amongst the friends, there was a difference in the behavior and the attitude to mix with married people. There were some psychological barriers of unknown origin between the married few and the bachelors. In that background to think of somebody like Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata getting married during her student days or house surgeon days was never a point of discussion in the college campus or even amongst her close friends with the exception of Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi who was her roommate and heart and soul. A person of the caliber of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata, who reached the most impossible academic heights, achieved gold medals, merit certificates, first classes in all the subjects of the entire medical curriculum and examinations and reached the pinnacle of the medical profession by becoming the best outgoing student of our batch. One would have imagined that she would go up further and further in the academic ladder to become a role model for many doctors to follow suit. Her presence in the teaching medical colleges would have inspired many a dull heads like me to look at the star in the skies and to follow the star forever. Not that the marriage was of any hindrance or interference for further medical training but it would have certainly reduced her level of performance to a particular level. If I am not putting the cart behind the horse, I quote a comment very recently made by one of our senior colleagues from our college who had very high expectations about her future achievements after the **MBBS**. I quote ***“That Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi disappointed him by her under achievement***

***and not to his expected performance compared to her under graduate laurels”.***

Marriages are inevitable and should naturally take place at some point of time or other in one's life. If somebody thought of the marriage of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata the answer would have been a totally blank and cold stare from her and also would have raised many an eyebrow. Till the ultimate decision was made and revealed to a very few close circle friends it was not a matter of publicity or debate in the campus. Usually if somebody was getting married in the college campus many people would come to know instantly without any inhibitions. Regarding the marriage of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata nobody had an idea of inkling in to the thought process in her mind. Nobody knew her interests or priorities. If one had to follow the set pattern of the marriages taking place in our class and the college campus there was no chance of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata falling into that set pattern. For example as I quoted earlier some of our class mates got mutually engaged and got married. There was no such chance for Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata as there was no suitable candidate in our class to propose and marry her as her academic achievements and simplicity would not match any of our classmates. I did not hear anybody showing interest in marrying Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata except respecting her academic achievements. Many of our classmates must have felt safe and secure to keep at a distance from the shining star of our class. If anybody had the foolish thought of reaching out to her to

propose would have been totally disappointed if she decided to say an outright no to such a proposal. To the best of my knowledge there was no equal match for Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata in our class at least. Some of our classmates married the seniors in our college but in the case of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata I did not come across any such proposals coming from our senior batch mates either. Some of our classmates, even though very few in number married our teachers who were the eligible bachelors at that time. Again, except a few rumors I did not have concrete proof or information that some of our teachers in our college were interested in proposing to her. Nor did I hear from her side that she was interested in marrying any of our staff members like what her close friend Dr.(Mrs).Rukmini did. I was also not aware about her plans to marry any doctor from any other medical college to the best of my knowledge. She had friends and cousins in other medical colleges but not in tune with her preferred life style. I did not even know that anybody in her relatives or family members were in line to marry her. I did not have any semblance of her parents trying for an arranged marriage. Last but not the least I would be surprised that she would prefer a love marriage to the arranged marriage. I did not come across any signs or symptoms of her love affair with anybody. If somebody wanted love her to lead to the stage of marriage would be a farfetched desire and would have remained as a mirage forever. With all said and done nobody exactly knew what was in her mind, what was her choice and also what was

her priority by that I mean a totally academic pursuit, immediate marriage and or both. Suddenly I remembered some of our classmates started pre-mature love affairs and allegedly committed suicides, at least on two occasions in different contexts. That was unfortunate for them and for their families.

With that background I wondered what was there really in the mind of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and nobody had inkling in to her thought process. She was a deep ocean with stillness on the surface. It was difficult to estimate the under current feelings of a person like Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. But whatever her feelings were and other's perceptions were the real fact remained that she should get a person of her choice, her stature, her interest and ultimately to suit her intelligence. If I did not find adequate adjectives it is my fault to expect the qualities of her choicest husband to come from. To be fair to Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and her personality it was better to leave that matter to herself as it was too personal a matter for us to interfere or interpret.

During our house surgeon period a few unexpected events took place unconnected to the actual house surgeon training. Ever since I started showing extra and additional interest in watching learning from Ms.J.Hemalata the student and Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata the doctor I was fascinated by her depth of her intelligence and imagination. Whenever I learnt a new point or observation in the medical subjects and tried to share with her, she was already aware of such points

and observations ahead of me if not everybody else in her circle. It was not only in the medical subjects or the ward work, even in the extracurricular activities. She had a bunch of trusted friends and followers in our class and also a few immediate seniors. All of them were lady students or doctors. All most all of them have been our batch mates in the sense we worked and trained together as a single group from first year to final year and till our house surgeon period. Hence there was a real unexplained bonding between all of us. Even though all her close friends were ladies, for some strange reason I also found a place in her close friends circle group. It was my embarrassment from my early clinical years posting to work with a large group of lady students and with a small number of reluctant male students in our batch. It had its own good and bad effects on my own learning capabilities and clean performance. As I mentioned on a number of occasions I was very cautious in mending myself in dealing with our lady class mates and friends. Because any wrong step taken would go totally against my career and detrimental for my own future and survival. Keeping that fact in my mind I worked diligently on everyday watching my steps and pacing my journey safely and securely. When I was keeping all my options wrapped close to my heart it was more heartening to be a part of the inner circle of close friends of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. Fortunately or otherwise I was only one male person in that group for which I really felt happy and also wanted to be associated with that group forever

because the people were good, nice, intelligent, hardworking, pure thinking and great friends. Such a group had only one thing in mind that was pure friendship. There were no bounds for real friendship. The time only proved for decades together we have been friends forever notwithstanding the vagaries of different life styles, situations and time periods.

It was a surprise that in the initial stage of our house surgeon period which was an all together a different style of working and responsibilities compared to the student days, I got a invitation to participate in a tea party hosted by Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata in our college canteen on exactly twenty fourth December, 1971. Other than those student days hostel day annual day celebrations when we exchanged mutually invitations from our friends there were not many occasions when we had personal or private parties, the tea parties popularly known in those days. I expected a large group of our classmates to come for that party arranged by our very popular and good friend. Nobody would refuse her invitation which would be any how rare. On the D day at the exact time in the evening I went to the canteen for the party and did not find many people or friends. There were the same old close circle friends of our Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata who made the party look very ordinary and simple. The invitees consisted of her eternal heart and soul, classmate, roommate and best friend forever Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi, her elder brother Sri. Udaya Sundara Rao, popularly known as Mr.Babji, married and

working as an assistant engineer in the electricity department at Guntur, Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari, Dr.Ms.Gayatri Devi, Dr.Ms.Hamsa Veni, Dr.Ms.S.Lakshmi and the lone male member of our class that was myself. All our friends were known to me but not so closely as to be the soul male class mate. Mr.Babji was not a stranger because I met him once or twice before along with his parents when they visited the Guntur General Hospital to meet Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi and also to get some medical tests done at the hospital. My lonely presents in the close group of half a dozen friends made me feel a little bit inconvenience but I managed with a bold face and also the inner strength derived with my long association with our good friends over the years at the medical college. My sheer hard work during my student days, which contributed for my uninterrupted educational career and with good academic record comparable with all our other friends except Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata might have been one of the good and valid reasons for accepting me into that elite group. The simple function was down to earth with a few snacks of tasty Samosa's and hot cup of coffee or tea. A strange thing happened during that function when everybody started singing songs of their choice. All most all of them were good at singing, especially Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari who was a very good classical singer who gave stage performances and also won the prizes in the college and hostel competitions. Others were no strangers to singing. They were all good at light music and sang some very good cinema songs.

Mr. Babji was also good at singing. I was also asked to sing a song for which I was not prepared at all. I did not know how to sing a song except humming a few lines here and there. Ultimately I yielded to their pressure and persuasion and started to sing a song in Hindi without really knowing the lyrics of the song properly and also the tune. I mixed up both the lyrics of one song with the tune of another song and made myself a fool of an ass when my friends silently closely listened to my blabbering without showing any expressions on their face and suddenly burst in to a big laughter forcing me to abruptly to stop my song. That was a big embarrassment in a small group of classmates. I was not hurt but I realized my mistake that I should not have attempted to sing that song at all. But what made me to feel safe and secure in that company was the comfort zone in which I was placed with the added freedom of expression that wiped away my inner inhibitions. In fact I did sing a good song on two occasions in the batch mates get together ward parties that pleased me, my friends and my teachers. At least I could have selected that song for our get together hosted by Dr. Ms. J. Hemalata. Even though it was an impromptu party and getting together there were no major hiccups or mishaps. But what made me wonder was how on the earth I was invited for the party as sole male candidates from our class. Whatever was the reason I got fixed into that group permanently and our association grew day by day into a continuous process of meetings, discussions,

interactions, mutual trust and respect culminating into a real bonding and friendship which in my opinion is the best friendship I had ever experienced in my entire life.

During the peak of our house surgeon training, in the month of May 1972 the Sun was blazing at his peak and the temperature in Guntur was so high it was not a surprise if there were fire accidents every day at some part of the town or other. Even the tar on the metal roads boiled with bubbles coming out making the life more measurable to walk on the road. The heat waves blasted all round till late in the evening making the travel even in a bus impossible. As a doctor I could see the reports of so many heat wave deaths. Working in the Infectious Diseases Hospital (**IDH**), in the month of May was a real punishment posting for me. But still I enjoyed working there in-spite of all the transient troubles. In fact the **IDH** was situated on the Amaravathi road a few kilometers beyond our medical college men's hostel where I stayed during my student day period for more than four and half years and also in the Hindu College Hostel for one year before I actually joined the medical college men's hostel. The route, the location and the hospital were all familiar to me. Luckily I was given duty hours in the morning shift that was from 8 AM to 2 PM on all the days. The posting was for two weeks. Usually the doctors reached the hospital at 9 AM and completed the work around 12 noon and caught hold of the next available transport bus to reach the house surgeon quarters. On

some days I was posted in the afternoon shift to give round the clock injections and **IV** fluids to the very sick and dying patients with dreaded diseases like tetanus, rabies and **GI** infections. It was very miserable to see the suffering of the patients with tetanus having spasms and the rabies children crying and shouting. I pitied such patients especially the young ladies who developed the post partum tetanus for no fault of them. They needed round the clock Largactil injections to make them quite. The end result was very well known and very few patients went back to home alive. Still as doctors we had to do our duty especially when we were getting the training as house surgeons. Just to complete the story we had a very good and understanding assistant general surgeon who was posted as the in-charge superintendent of the **IDH**. He was very closely known to me as I worked under his wife Dr.(Mrs).K.Rajya Lakshmi when she was posted in the neurosurgery ward as assistant professor of neurosurgery in the month of February 1972. That was the landmark posting for me in the neurosurgery ward where Dr.(Mrs).K.Rajya Lakshmi MS and Dr.R.B.Krishna Murthi MS, FRCS inspired me and pushed me close to the professor of neurosurgery Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian who started the department of neurosurgery at Guntur Medical College in the year 1969. That was the golden period when Professor B.Ramamurthi also visited the Guntur Medical College to give an oration. Hence Dr.Prasad, the husband of Dr.(Mrs).K.Rajya Lakshmi helped me in coping with the **IDH** work

and also to wade through the hot summer conditions even though he was qualified general surgeon who later became a pediatric surgeon. Why I have been dwelling with so many details about my **IDH** posting while writing about the marriages was that was the small phase and period where and when I got the information and news of the turning point in life of somebody very close to me. With that background, when I was fully immersed in my ward work at the **IDH** I got a phone call from the Guntur General Hospital, from the ladies house surgeon hostel from one of my colleague house surgeons who worked with me as a co-house surgeon in the neurosurgery wards. I was a little surprised and distracted from my busy work schedule. She was very quick in telling what she wanted to tell as quickly as possible. I shall quote in her words **“pellanta?”** **“hostello andaru cheppukuntunnaru, congratulations, don’t tell lies, I know everything”**. She went on blurting what she wanted. I did not understand what she was talking in the beginning. It took a few seconds of my time to realize what was in her mind. She must have heard about the marriage proposal of somebody else and misinterpreted that person to be myself. Or there was some gossip going on in the ladies hostel which was not knew to understand. As I mentioned in the beginning about the fire accidents in the month of May, there was no smoke without the fire. She might have seen some smoke somewhere in her quarters. Why she wanted to communicate that information in such a hurry to me especially when I was deeply involved in the management of very sick patients

at the **IDH**. She did not have any other work to get involved and hence the devils work shop. Suddenly I stood up in great surprise when Dr.Ms.Sarada ultimately let the cat out of the bag and hung up her end of the phone stating that Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata was getting married. It was my turn to think and ponder about that news which came like a bolt from the blue. I started imagining whether the news was correct or not and what was happening at the other end started bothering me to no end. I was not too much disturbed or distracted from my work on hand which I diligently completed, keeping the patient's life and disease on the top of my mind without showing any anxiety or curiosity to immediately know more about the news I heard from Dr.Ms.Sarada. I had cultivated a habit, may be from my childhood days to separate and perform my immediate duty and responsibilities from my personal needs and interest. Quite often I ended up losing the later part to the former part of the two sides of the life. I had suppressed many of my thoughts and impressions within myself to give priority always to the other persons concerned or involved. Even though I was very happy to know the good news I was equally curious to know the full details and the impact of the news on the recently budding and blossoming true friendship between a group of likeminded friends and classmates. Nevertheless I wished that I got the first information from the horse's mouth itself. I was sure that the news would come sooner than later. I was

mentally getting ready and prepared for the pleasantly surprising good news. It was only a question of a few minutes or a few hours.

As usual I completed my hospital work and reached the house surgeon's hostel for the lunch break. Under normal circumstances, as per the routine schedule our plan and program was to meet as frequently as possible in a day or at night whenever there was a free time for one of us. Even if some of our friends were on duty at other wards rest of us tracked down the duty schedule and gathered together at the particular ward or the place to discuss the latest experiences of each one of us. It was happening at such a rapid pace and frequency there was no issue that was left for sharing for the next day. The meeting between me, Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi, and Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata were almost nonstop round the clock wherever we were and whatever was the work we were doing. In those days, the present day expression of 24X7 concepts was not known but very much aptly applied for our association. Strangely, on that day I did not get any phone call in the post lunch period that made my curiosity to buildup more and the waiting period became more laborious and heavy. I did not intentionally call my friends at their hostel lest it should expose that I was eager to find out the hot news. I wanted to give them enough time to organize themselves before they could contact me and break the news. In recent times such an amount of delay in communication between us was too strange a think which did not take place of late. Whatever was the news I was

happy for one thing that Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata ultimately arrived at the stage of selecting her own life partner. First of all I wanted the real confirmation of the news either from Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata or from Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi or from both of them. As I understood their psychology from the beginning, with a few past experiences I could guess what was going to happen and who, was the going to break the news. If my observation was correct, if the information regarding Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi had to be revealed the mouth piece would be Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and if the information about Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata had to be broken the mouth piece would be Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi and vice-versa. It had happened time and again and it was not new for me. After a few hours of waiting I really got the phone call from Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi who wanted to share some important news with me personally on that day itself. It was not matter to be told over the phone. It was not possible for various reasons to meet immediately. She wanted to meet as usual after our dinner and ward work was over around 9 PM at night under the big banyan tree in the college campus close to the **NCC** grounds near the open auditorium. I did not show any undue interest or haste in forcing Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi to reveal what she wanted to tell me late in the evening or night. I did not give any impression about the news I heard over the phone from Dr.Ms.Sarada in the afternoon. I was very good at suppressing my own emotions and feelings and also keep other's privacy as the top priority. I learnt it the hard way and

practiced it at all given situations. After the brief phone call conversation was over, I got relaxed a little bit and focused my attention on my first priority in learning the neurosurgery subject. That was the month and the time when Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian wrote a letter on my behalf to Professor B.Ramamurthi regarding my eligibility to join the MS neurosurgery post graduation course at the Madras Medical College. Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian also took a bold step in making me to do the first burr hole on a young boy to make me confident to take up the neurosurgery program in my post graduation. That was the first time that a house surgeon was made to do a burr hole and for the first time Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian allowed any house surgeon for that matter to do that procedure. To his great magnanimity he himself washed up and assisted me to do and complete the burr hole. My mind was bent more on neurosurgery than anything else. Friendship, food and personal comforts came next in the priority list. Not that I neglected any of those aspects intentionally. My discussions with my friends mostly revolved around our professional interactions and experiences on day to day basis if not on hourly basis. That was the golden period of my career as house surgeon. If the month of February was the landmark time, the month of May was the peak of activity in many ways which I will not go in to the details at present.

Even though I was focusing myself very hard on the neurosurgery which became my first priority even pushing my

parents, some close friends and even the **ECFMG** examination into the back seat. The subject of neurosurgery was compelling me and captivated me beyond my own imagination and capability. The persona of Professor B.Ramamurthi, Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian, Dr.R.B.Krishna Murthi and Dr.(Mrs).K.Rajya Lakshmi were the real magnetic forces that constantly attracted me and made me feel as one of them and comfortable in their company. Hence spending the afternoon time for a few hours in the fully absorbing ward work was not difficult on any given day. But that day was different I had to restrain my thought process from going astray beyond the scope of my imagination. One thing was bothering on the top of my mind was the curiosity to know whether news was correct or not. Why did not Dr.Jaya Prada Devi straight away break the news to me and why she had postponed the meeting to the evening as she always discussed all the matters without any inhibitions all through our association? Why did Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata not talk to me directly and shared that important good news with me as I was not a stranger any more. Had Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata spoke to me straight away the waiting period could have been avoided and my expectations would have been solved leaving me free and fresh for further discussions? I also wondered whether other members of our team of close friends like Dr.Ms.Gayatri Devi, Dr.Ms.Hamsa Veni, Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari and Dr.Ms.T.Lakshmi were aware of Dr.Ms.Hemalata's latest decision or not. Were they also kept in suspension like me? Were they going to

participate in the evening meeting as usual were all left unanswered questions in the back of my mind? All those thoughts I pushed to the background continued to concentrate in my ward work and waited patiently for the usual meeting time.

At 9 PM in the middle of the month of May, on that day at the college campus under the banyan tree, Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi broke the ice and silence, started slowly speaking on behalf of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata who was keeping a stoic silence as if everything was a settled matter and nothing from herself to reveal. Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi told me that Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata decided to get married and the person was already selected. She liked him for his capacity to understand others and also to respect others feelings impartially. He stayed at Canada, he met Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata before and he did his PhD in structural engineering and was doing his post doctoral fellowship. He himself liked Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and proposed to marry her. The marriage date will be fixed very soon. Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata had to take a quick decision to confirm and to accept his proposal. Both of them were made for each other. The marriage would be performed as early as possible. There was some pressure on Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata from other angles also which she told me honestly but I am not going to put on paper today to purely protect her personal interest and privacy. Strangely the meeting was exclusively between three of us only. The rest of our close friends were not there and their missing was very conspicuous. If only all

other friends were there, the news could have been equally shared by all of us reducing the weight of the weather and the burden of the heavy air surrounding that silence. As I knew the news partially a few hours before itself, it was not a surprise for me altogether. I was only waiting for the official confirmation and also to hear from the actual person concerned as it involves the important decision, one time in a life decision about my close friend and associate, to say the English idiom that we should ***“hear from the horse’s mouth”***. I behaved as if I did not hear that news before and only responded in such a way that I got the news just then and there only. I was surprised to know the reason for such a quick decision from Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and also for the exclusive meeting with me only without the presence of rest of our group of common friends. I reacted as I should in such a situation. I congratulated her profusely, wished her all the best in her future life and also complemented her for choosing the right person of her choice and her stature if not a better person. At that juncture I was not given the full information about the person she was proposing to marry. Some piecemeal sketch was given by Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi that did not stick in my mind immediately and I could not recollect the name of the person she was going to marry even after hearing his name on a few occasions, almost till the date of the marriage was fixed and announced.

With the information gathered on and off, some sort of a personal picture of the would-be husband of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata started getting in to my mind's imagination. I was told the name of the person was Dr.Sri Ranga Parimi. He was a close friend and class mate of Mr.K.Udaya Sundara Rao fondly known as Babji Annayya as Babji was the own brother of Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi, the heart and soul of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. Dr.Sri Ranga Parimi was staying at Canada and did his PhD in structural engineering. Dr.Sri Ranga Parimi was simply called as Dr.S.R.Parimi by strangers like me, as Dr.Parimi by his students and disciples, as Ranga by Babji, as Ranga Annayya by Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi, simply as Parimi Garu by Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata before her marriage. Slowly and steadily many more trivial bits of information started trickling from different angles and from different sources. One thing I came to know was Dr.S.R.Parimi used to visit Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi whenever he was at India, along with Mr.Babji. As Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi was the heart and soul and close friend of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata, Mr.Babji was also a similar friend to Dr.S.R.Parimi. They mutually trusted and respected each other to the extent that Mr.Babji took the initiative in proposing the match between Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and Dr.S.R.Parimi. Dr.S.R.Parimi belonged to Bapatla town close to Guntur.

I started realizing that the reason for our one to one discussion about the marriage proposal of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata was to prepare all

our common friends in our group to slowly reconcile to the fact that we were all going to stay together only for a few more months and we should spend all the rest of the time before her marriage more usefully and fruitfully. It was also a well thought out plan by the two very intelligent friends who decided that none of our class mates to have any heart break or negative feelings about the imminent loss of our close and dear friend from our group. I really lost the track about what all happened before and after the proposal. I concentrated on to my day to day work and friendship with our classmates as usual. Absolutely there was no change in my attitude or outlook, the days and months passed by smoothly and I reinforced my interest in the neurosurgery with much more vigor and enthusiasm. My association with the department of neurosurgery became more of a bonding.

At the end stage of our house surgeon training period, because of the Jai Andhra agitation there was a general strike and closure of all our educational and hospital institutions. So there was more free time for our classmates to meet frequently and discuss about our future plans and career. On one such occasion almost the entire group of our friends in full strength met under the banyan tree in the medical college campus. Each one of us discussed and expressed about the plans for their future. Most of our classmate friends mentioned about their plans to join the post graduation. Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi, Dr.Ms.Gayatri Devi and others wanted to do

post graduation in gynecology and obstetrics. I wanted to concentrate on doing post graduation in neurosurgery at the Madras Medical College, a direct five year neurosurgery course if the course were to start as per the expectations of Professor B.Ramamurthi. Even otherwise I was eligible to join the post graduation in general surgery, preferably at the Guntur Medical College itself. My goal and decisions were fixed as I did not appear and qualified for the **ECFMG** examination which majority of our classmates passed and ready to leave to the **USA**. When everybody insisted that Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata also should pronounce her plans for the future, she was silent for a long time and ultimately revealed her mind and said that she was concentrating on her marriage, thinking about her husband Dr.S.R.Parimi and also about how to lead the life after her marriage. She did not speak anything about her plans regarding the future educational pursuit in spite of our repeated demands. I was aware that she also did not appeared for the **ECFMG** examination and hence she was not originally inclined to go to the **USA**. Even though the marriage was inevitable and fixed, the person she was going to marry was also known we all wanted Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata to reach more academic heights than what she had already achieved. We all hoped that she would continue to take the lead in the medical educational field and show us the path to become good medical teachers and professionals. Our own selfish wishes were that she should not leave our group permanently as we all developed very

good bonding and friendship. I personally felt that not having the motivating factor and the catalyst to stimulate to reach the unknown goals and frontiers would be a setback for me. All through the medical curriculum, I took the inspiration from the academically brilliant person Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. When she was running in the fore front with gold medals and first classes I was lagging so much behind to catch up with the bare minimum pass marks in all the examinations. That I made rapid strides in trying to bridge the gap of our academic achievements, I could succeed only to some extent taking the example of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. In that process I am glad and proud that I could overtake some, many, if not most of her competitors but could never reach to her standard. In some subjects I could break the sixty percent barrier to reach the front runners in our class to get some sort of recognition. That gave me incentive enough to work hard, as hard as Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata as she was always a constant source of inspiration and leading light as a distant star from the skies. By some fluke, if I am right, subject to correction I scored more than sixty three percent marks in the final year examination in the subject of general surgery may be a little more than Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. I never, till today asked her percentage of marks in her subjects as there was no need for such frivolous and impertinent questions as she always passed with first class rank in all the subjects. Hence my immediate concern when her marriage was announced was to whom I was going to look

forward to for inspiration, showing the path, breaking the path and reaching the new horizons. At that point of time I was on the right platform to take off. I tasted the fruits of hard and dedicated work. If I lost the rudder then I might be left lurking deep in the seas for want of the light and direction. I never wanted to lose the sight of the shining star, however distant the star was at. Having accepted that we had very little time before the major turn of events we did not dissociate totally from each other and to some extent utilized the time fruitfully with many visits to the college library, the hospital wards and our private group meetings. Honestly I could say that the outlook had definitely changed. To quote a few incidences which I intentionally and practically enforced keeping my responsibility in my mind about dealing with a person who was going to get married well very soon even though she happened to be the best friend of me. When we both planned and went to the library together in the evenings we walked the entire distance from the hospital to the college library without talking a single word, keeping the distance between us both literally and metaphorically. That did not mean that we did not want to talk but there was more to communicate in emotional mute expressions than the words or the physical proximity. After spending a few hours in the library sometimes we sat in silence in the college garden, on the cement benches nearer to the Atlas statue that reminded us the Herculean task in the life ahead. Many a time we left the garden in the same state of relaxed

mind with no questions or answers or discussions. The meeting and journey itself was self explanatory and self sufficient. It was always my practice when I walked back to the hostel and the hospital in the company of our lady classmates I made sure myself that I did not make an accidental physical contact with any one of them during that heavy traffic on the road. I always folded my hands either in front or back so that I did not swing my hands loosely to prevent that risk of accidental contact. I never kept my hands in my pant pocket as that would give an impression of a road side Romeo or somebody trying to pose like a cinema hero. I also took care while I walked in the college or hospital campus on the roads not to pluck the leaves or the flowers of the road fencing. I did not hear the song by that time that was sung by the great singer Sri Gantasala Venkateswara Rao on ***“Pushpa Vilapam”*** but practiced the same principle on my own. I had seen some of my male classmates taking a dry staff and whipping off the leaves and the flowers from the garden fence without any inhibitions or remorse about what they were doing. I learnt from them what I should not do. Coming back to our endeavor to make as many trips as possible to the library and back I vividly remember one day almost very close to the date of the marriage of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata we followed the same ritual of reading some books in the library, sitting on the cement bench in the garden close to the Atlas spending the deadly heavy and slowly running minutes and seconds as if hours and days have had passed by

without uttering a single word till then, I said that we should leave and she replied that it was already late. We knew what it was and we knew that we never discussed it nor did it cross our mind before till that moment. We completed the ritual of walking back slowly, silently and self consciously.

Whatever be our selfish perceptions might be the real truth and the bigger picture was that the event of the marriage Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata was a landmark decision for her life the rest of our feelings were secondary and inconsequential if not irrelevant. To some extent, our feelings were temporary, effervescent, impulsive and unimportant for the total scenario. As I look back today and also as I thought of the event in those days forty years before, with an overall picture I realized that what the decision Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata took was correct, proper and very intelligent decision. Why I said that was if I surveyed the entire college atmosphere I did not encounter even a single person worth holding the hand of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata, either in the bachelor staff members, eligible post graduates and house surgeons in those days. I was sure there was no single male soul in our class who could dare enough to propose to marry Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata.

Slowly and steadily the fact was accepted, the background activity for the eventual marriage preparations were going on from both the sides even though I was not aware of the actual facts of the day to day activities. From what I had gathered from our own

classmates and friends, from our distant friend Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy and known and unknown sources but never directly from the mouth of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata the marriage date was fixed on 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1972 and the time was in the middle of the night. I never cross checked the significance of that day whether it was Dr.S.R.Parimi's choice or Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata's choice or both of them mutually agreed for that day. The date and time raised some curiosity in my mind, one was that happened to be the date and time of the birth of Lord Jesus Christ or to say the Christmas day. Since Dr.S.R.Parimi had been staying at Canada as a guest of a Christian family was he somehow got attracted or influenced by the Mr and Mrs Templin's who actually accompanied Dr.S.R.Parimi to India and to Guntur for his marriage. There was some other unconfirmed doubt in my mind whether Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata had a soft corner towards the Christianity as I vividly remembered her singing a song ***"Karuninchu Merry Maata....."*** in one of our classmates get together that attracted Dr.T.Srinivasan to comment in a lighter vein. I also tried to somehow connect her decision to host a small tea party in our college canteen on exactly 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1971 for a small group of our friends that included me and Mr.Udaya Sundara Rao, alias Mr.Babji. That was a small irrelevant imagination of me. In the about six months time after the marriage was fixed and performed, even forty years after the marriage and till today I never asked, took the advantage of asking and if not

consciously desisted from asking the details or the inside information about their marriage from either of them more so not from Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and not at all from Dr.S.R.Parimi. There were two or three reasons for that. The first and the top most reason was, myself imposed decision not to probe in to the privacy of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata, who was so close to me till that time sharing all the information as for as the academics and the patients care were concerned. I only received information that was given on and off but never showed any curiosity or inquisitiveness on my own to know more details. Once her marriage was fixed she was going to be somebody else's wife and property and I should not interfere with her thoughts, decisions and actions. I did not want to distract her from her interests and involvements. Not that I was any position to interact with her and impose any of my thoughts or feelings. Neither she was interested in getting any inputs or help from my side. It never happened before and she never required any such assistance from me or anybody else. It was the other way round that whoever was with her we only took the help and assistance in any matter of importance. Hither to I was able to meet her and talk to her face to face looking into each other's eyes straight without any inhibitions, I changed my direction and started meeting her from sideways, not looking into her face or eyes straight and suddenly developed some sort of inhibitions as if we were the first year medical students and strangers to each other, not at all the doctors who were undergoing

their house surgeon training. Some unknown barriers and self imposed limitations became very clear and obvious. That did not disrupt our friendship and intimacy all together. As for Dr.S.R.Parimi his name started slowly sinking in to my mind and what was difficult in the beginning started becoming familiar and famous as the days passed by.

Even though I received some information about some minor hiccups that developed in the families on both the sides that aspect did not come to our knowledge at that time. I was told that Dr.S.R.Parimi's family was very rich and affluent and Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata's family was not so rich or equal to Dr.S.R.Parimi's family and the financially equation was not good. There was some initial resistance from both the families entirely for different reasons that were sorted out amicably. It was so trivial and frivolous the objections and resistance from both the sides was extinguished in the beginning itself by common friends and well-wishers of Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. Mr.Babji annayya was so much attached to Dr.S.R.Parimi whom he fondly called as Ranga was instrumental in fixing the small little problems which never reached our notice. Whatever those minor issues were, they did not come in the way of the marriage which took place in a simple, happy, congenial atmosphere, performance and celebration.

The **D** day had come on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1971. The venue was the **IMA** Medical Hall situated very close to the Guntur Medical

College ladies hostel, where Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi and all their friends stayed for years together during their **MBBS** studies. So the location was not unfamiliar for them. I also attended a few **IMA** meetings in that Medical Hall before as a guest of Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian. So I also was not a stranger to that venue. I liked and appreciated her decision to get married in the **IMA** Medical Hall instead of some private place or a hotel. I, Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy actively participated in some of the minor arrangements required for the marriage. Till that time I did not see or meet Dr.S.R.Parimi except at the marriage venue. Even if I had seen him before, for a short while I do not have that memory as he was all the time in the company of his guests from Canada or his family members. Hence I did not have a chance to either meet him or talk to him for any real acquaintance before the marriage. I was all the time in the company of Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy and some of the family members of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata. I clearly remember that Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata's younger sister was already married and Mr.Puroshottama Reddy and Mrs.Madhuri along with their other relatives were accommodated in a lodge or a hotel near the Saraswati Mahal junction. That place of accommodation was very close to the general hospital where I stayed in the house surgeon and PG hostel and took Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy as my guest. So, it was easy for me to mingle more frequently with Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata's family than Dr.S.R.Parimi's family. If that was

my situation as an unconnected person with both the families except the fact that Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata had been a classmate and good friend, think of the active role played by Dr.K.Jaya Prada Devi the roommate and the heart and soul of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata, Mr.Babji annayya who was the good friend and ardent admirer of Dr.S.R.Parimi and many of our friends and classmates. All of us were in a festive mood on that beautiful day of their marriage.

I can't but remember a few lines in our Telugu film songs that have been popular and often played during the marriage festivals. **“Sitamma Pellikuturayene” “SitaRamula Kalyanam Chootam RaaRandi” “Sri Rastu Shubhamastu” “Pellante Noorella Pandaga”** and many more. By the evening of that day we all assembled in the **IMA** Medical Hall ground floor as people started preparing the bride and bridegroom for the auspicious occasion. On behalf the bride I have joined the family members of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata at their hotel accommodation and accompanied them to the marriage venue. Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and her close friends were sitting on the floor. Each one of her friends and relatives started decorating her from different angles. What was conspicuous was the absence of any ornaments that were routinely noticed and displayed during such occasions. Good cloths and flowers were all there in plenty. I myself went in ordinary daily wearing cloths. After all we were still students and just leading our simple lives solely depending on the monthly stipend of rupees two hundred per month which in fact was

enhanced from one fifty till the month of October 1972 and we had been on strike for the Jai Andhra moment from the month of November 1972. To tell the truth our house surgeon training period was over by the fiftieth of November, 1972 and there was no stipend in the months of November and December. Even though our pockets were empty we had lots and lots of love and affection for our great friend which we took to the venue to be showered on both of them in abundance.

There were one or two small little incidences that got really imprinted in my mind on that occasion which I feel worth recollecting as I found it difficult to wipe them off till today. One was a little bit funny if not embarrassing to write or to remember. The first one was when Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata was getting the bridal decoration at the **IMA** Medical Hall most of her friends and family members flocked together and sat next to her around her as if we were the bridal party. I also became a bridal party member voluntarily and just sat opposite to Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata watching curiously the tamash of the decoration. I was elated watching all the small details as if my own family member was getting married. Sincerely speaking I was not too far away from being her own family member as I was well known to all her family members and the close relatives who treated me very affectionately. I had seen Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata surrendering herself to the people who took the initiative of her bridal decoration. She sat on the floor and offered

her both hands for what looked like the mehindi application on her palms. It was a time consuming and taxing procedure that required skill, patience and perseverance from both the sides. Once the process was started it had to be gone through to the stage of completion. I was watching how helpless Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata was in that precarious situation but it was an important step a few hours before the marriage. As the mehindi was being applied on her palms it so happened, that her **“pattu saari chengu”** slowly slipped off her left shoulders on its own weight, halfway through that process. Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata was not aware of what happened, her friends and relatives who were deeply immersed in the decoration process and nobody recognized or helped her to rearrange her **pattu saari chengu**. I was helplessly watching and waiting for somebody to take the initiative and make the amends. I could not tell anybody because I felt too delicate and I was not sure whether I should expose myself watching the unnecessary trivial things. Actually it was the bride’s privacy place and also the decoration was the ladies prerogative. In the first place I should not have been there sitting in front of the bride under decoration, the secondly I should not have noticed small things like slipping of her chengu. But as a very thick and inseparable friend and close ardent of the bride I had no other proper place or right place in that hall than to be with her at that moment. I was not ashamed or guilty of myself. But what drew my

attention was that the extreme helplessness and the unusual predicament that Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata was placed in.

Decades after her marriage and the decoration part was over, I ruminated many memories that revolved around Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata who got transformed in to Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. On a hilarious occasion when I felt reminding or mentioning that particular event was not too much of an offence or intrusion into her privacy, knowing full well that she was a married woman with family and her kith and kin including her husband were around I still took the uninhibited initiative and mentioned to her what exactly happened on that day of her bridal decoration. She was a little bit shy and amused to learn to know about that small little incident and immediately reacted in a happy way stating that if nobody helped her to rearrange the chengu why I did not do it myself, she sincerely thought I should have helped her from that tricky situation. That was long, long after her marriage.

The another scene on the day of marriage, at the venue and on the exact time of the wedding if I should call it the muhoortham, 12 'o' clock in the mid night of 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1972 I only remember that the marriage was performed in a very simple way by the exchange of garlands by both of them in the presence of friends and relatives. I am sure that we had a hearty and sumptuous dinner before the marriage itself. I am also sure that somebody took the photos of that memorable occasion but I did not remember to have

seen any of them. There were at least two or three important people close to Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi who were closely and deeply immersed in the marriage activity and I am not able recollect what exactly they were doing. Very recently on a casual discussion with Mr.Babji Annayya I was told that the marriage was not as simple as just the exchange of the garlands but there were some native purohits who performed some marriage rituals and pooja. That part was not recorded in my memory. But that was not a point of any interest for me either.

A few more isolated incidents that still lingered in my mind are worth mentioning for whatever may be the inference. One was a few days after the marriage, Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi went round the medical college and the hospital and met some of the staff members, well-wishers and friends as a matter of introducing Dr.S.R.Parimi to some of those people who could not attend to their wedding. On one fine morning I and Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy accompanied the newly married couple to the Government General Hospital. Most often we all moved together by walking from place to place. There were not many transport vehicles to cover short distances. Even if there were a few taxies we preferred to walk than to hire the taxies. Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy borrowed a motor cycle from one of his friends which was convenient for him to cover from place to place to save the time. One other cheap and best transport easily available in those days was the rickshaw or tri

cycle manually driven. I myself rarely used any such transport as our college buses were available most often. Whether Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi used the four wheeler during that occasion or not was also not in my mind and has no bearing on the topic I am broaching. By whatever mechanism of our transport all four of us reached the portico of the general hospital where we started meeting and greeting some of our teachers who were rushing to report to their duties in the morning. We suddenly bumped against one Dr.(Mrs).Varalakshmi, a senior gynecologist and obstetrician who was very fond of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi as she was the brilliant student in our class. She was very happy to congratulate her on her marriage. Dr.(Mrs).Varalakshmi was a good teacher and a bold surgeon. She liked all of us during our intern posting in the obstetrics. She knew me also very well. She happened to be the wife of another senior orthopedic assistant surgeon Dr.Venkateswara Rao. With that background she was very eager to find out whom Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi married. As a matter of curiosity or slip of tongue she made a query to Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi to show who her husband was out of the three people standing with her. I was a little bit embarrassed to be in that group as Dr.(Mrs).Varalakshmi knew me so well that she could have avoided including me in that group of three. One thing was obvious that Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi were standing next to each other and both were looking fresh immediately after their marriage

and she could have made a wise guess to find out who the bridegroom was instead of making a wild query. That was a minor embarrassment for me for closely moving with the newly married couple. That we had been closely attached to each other for years together to the extent we became inseparables was a fact that needed no hiding, it was an open secret. It was a good friendship and nothing to imagine beyond that.

A few days after the marriage, Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi along with the Canadian friends stayed back at Guntur. They took a hotel room accommodation near the Saraswati picture palace junction very close to the general hospital within the walking distance. I and Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy stayed in the house surgeons and post graduates hostel located in the hospital premises. So it was very easy for all of us to meet as frequently as possible within a short time. In those days the Jai Andhra moment was in its peak, public were very much enraged and were violent, destroying the public properties to achieve their goal. The central government imposed the President's rule; the Governor was running the state administration and the **CRPF** forces were deployed enforcing the 144 section all over the state. More than four people assembling at one place was prohibited and the shoot at sight orders was in force. The **CRPF** people started firing at the public indiscriminately killing scores of people every day. On one day at least fourteen people died of the firing at Tenali situated very close to the Guntur town. To

protect the government establishments like the railway station and the general hospital which were situated close to each other, the **CRPF** people were posted in large number at both the places making the entire area a military fortress. Hence our free moment even for that hundred yard distance from the hospital to the hotel was made very difficult and unsafe. There used to be some intervals of lifting of the 144 section and the prohibition of the people moving in groups so that the public could utilize that time for acquiring their day to day requirements like food, water and milk. Even in that break period the **CRPF** vehicles made frequent rounds in the streets to keep the people frightened of them to prevent any flare-up of the violence. Hence we moved with caution all the time expecting the attacks either from the public or from the **CRPF** people. On one evening I stayed back in the hotel where Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi were staying along with their two Canadian friends and guests, both of them were ladies. I remember that Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari, Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi and Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy were also with us giving company to the newly married couple. We all knew that our association was going to be there only for a short time and we wanted to utilize every minute of it happily and purposefully. The joy and happiness of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi getting married overshadowed the imminent fear of loss of the close friend in a short time and may be forever. That fear factor was not allowed to surface and spoil the day to day wonderful interactions, more so to know as

much as possible if not all about Dr.S.R.Parimi who joined our group all of a sudden from an unknown corner at least for me. In those days, every day was an eventful day and I was enjoying my life to the brim. On one side I completed my house surgeon training along with all our friends including Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. I was about to go for my post graduation either in MS neurosurgery at the Madras Medical College, if not MS general surgery at the Guntur Medical College I was very sure of getting selected for. Because of the state wide strike by all the government employees including the civil assistant surgeons, the hospital work became almost totally paralyzed, the civil surgeons were posted on duty, doing the emergency treatment round the clock and my beloved professor Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian was fully involved in the new role as a duty doctor. I had a direct access to him whenever he was on duty and learning from all the emergency operations he did and also the rare bullet injury cases that were admitted after the **CRPF** indiscriminate firing on the innocent public. I was also getting actively involved in the post wedding activities of Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. In those days I used to listen with all interest and curiosity to gain more medical knowledge, the radio news of the Voice of America in the morning times. I made it a point to note down all the information that was read out during those news bulletins without missing anything. On that day when I stayed back with the newly married couple in the hotel I accidentally came across the news in

the Voice of America broadcast about the Auto Blood Transfusion as a new innovation in the surgery of thyroid gland, especially for the thyrotoxicosis patients. What they did was to withdraw a few units of the patient's own blood a few days before the surgery for the thyrotoxicosis and transfused the same blood to the patient on the day of the operation during surgery and if necessary in the post operative period. It was a well known fact that there was profuse bleeding and blood loss during the partial thyroidectomy surgery, needing heavy transfusions. In fact, I had seen myself a young girl during my student days bleeding profusely on the operation table and dying. I remembered that case when I heard the Voice of America news broadcast and thought that the unfortunate girl's life could have been saved if the surgeon had the prior knowledge of the Auto Blood Transfusion. But it was too late. I also felt that she lost her life not just because of the blood loss alone but there were many other factors contributing for the bad end result like, poor preoperative preparation with the Lugol's iodine, bad timing of surgery as her own younger sister was just then recovering from her thyroid surgery. The younger sister did not have as a big goiter as the eldest one. Also the crud and hasty surgery done by one of my very good teachers in surgery contributed for the unfortunate event. That apart, I realized that the Auto Blood Transfusion not only provided the required blood components during surgery but also provided the patient with her own antibodies to protect her with

adequate immunity. That was a new knowledge for me as I kept my eyes and ears open all the time for learning newer things. Why I have been writing in such a detail about the thyrotoxicosis and the Auto Blood Transfusion was that I was immediately concerned about the health of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi, who was under treatment for the same dreaded thyrotoxicosis. I was sure that her problem was under control with medication. Even though I was aware of her medical condition I never discussed with her or our friends directly or indirectly at any time and at anywhere. We mutually understood but never openly discussed the fact. My interest was that since Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi was going abroad to Canada and most likely to the **USA** at later date she should be aware of the concept the Auto Blood Transfusion and its beneficiary effects. That information I shared with her in case she was not aware of it by that time. Whether she was aware or not it was my constant endeavor to discuss and share with her any trivial information I gathered with the round the clock medical vigilance I was doing. To assume that she was not aware of such a knowledge especially when she herself was under the treatment for the thyrotoxicosis was my ignorance about her and also an understatement if not an under estimation about her knowledge and intelligence. Time and again I was fooled to learn that what I tried to share as a fresh and new knowledge for me with her, she was already aware of and in the know how about what I was eagerly exhibiting. Sometimes I had to retreat from my own

statements as she enjoyed the fun at my self-admiration as if I had discovered great things in the world for the first time. That was one aspect of our discussions in the hotel that went up to the dusk and the darkness. As things turned out nearly forty years after that discussion I am delighted to know and to note that Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi got completely cured with medicines alone from her thyroid problem and never required surgical intervention leave alone the need for the blood transfusion or the Auto Blood Transfusion and my fears were proved wrong. Contrary to my fears about her, the reverse had happened exactly thirty eight years after I discussed that point with her; I required a large quantity of blood transfusion and the real Auto Blood Transfusion when I underwent the arterializations surgery for my heart. We put that part aside and comeback to the recollection of the memories of the marriage of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi.

Suddenly the electrical lights were switched off as a part of the curfew. The **CRPF** vehicle moment became more frequent with blowing of the horns and blaring of the loud speakers asking the people to stay in-doors lest they should be shot dead. In fact the indiscriminate shooting had already started and we all could hear the riffle firing shots all along the streets and also all round the hotel we were staying. Till that time we were sitting in the balcony in front of the room which was a peaceful and happy place till then and we became panicky and frightening in a fraction of a second. I was

already aware of such indiscriminate firings elsewhere and the end results. Some of our friends went into the room in a haste to hide themselves. Some of us stayed back in the balcony far away from the range of the bullets, still trying to come into grips to what was going on in the streets surrounding the hotel. There were no lights and no candles as the bullets would be fired at wherever there was light.

I was in that panicky situation for the first time in my life. Ever since the Jai Andhra agitation was started and the hospitals were closed from the beginning of the November, I had been hearing only the disturbances taking place at other places, read the reports of violence and firing in the news papers and heard the All India Radio news about the latest events, developments and the number of casualties every day because of the firing. It was a frightening even to know the events from a distance and to directly face the situation to be in the shooting range of the **CRPF** people that were imported from other states and also descended in our land like vultures trying to prey up on the innocent Andhra people. In fact it was a political drama created by some vested interests to stall and to preempt the efforts of people fighting for separate Telangana state. Whatever be the rationale of the strike and the violence, innocent people sacrificed their lives and fell to the bullets. Going with Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian during his ward rounds when he was in the hospital on duty during the strike period I had seen a variety of the

bullet injuries for the first time in my life. The bullets not only killed some people on the spot who were brought for post mortem to the mortuary of the general hospital, some people who could not reach in time to the hospital because of the lack of proper transport facilities after they were shot at and died before reaching the hospital, those people who sustained bullet injuries in the head, neck, chest, abdomen and in the limbs reached the hospital in time for proper treatment and timely surgical intervention. Having got the picture of the shooting and the after effects, I was more concerned about my own safety and also the people who stayed with me in the balcony of the hotel right at the time of in the real shooting. In my anxiety I made an alarm that everybody should move in to the rooms till the shooting spree was over. As I was telling the two ladies, the Canadian guest visitors who were oblivious of the mad shooting taking place were keen on watching the shooting tamash from the balcony itself and reached the road side end of the balcony. I was more concerned about their safety than protecting myself and shouted that all the ladies should go in to the room first and save themselves from being hit by the police bullets. I was really mad in that the ladies did not heed to my shouting or pleading. Ultimately they left the balcony and went inside the room protesting against my unsolicited advice or warning. I did not know what was spoken to and discussed within the four walls of the room, I got the taste of a sort of a thing for the first time in my life, for the first time after their

wedding a few days ago and for the first time by Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. It was a bigger shock than the **CRPF** firing itself that did not touch me even from the close range. I was told in no uncertain terms by my own trusted friend and colleague that I should not have talked, shouted if not barked like that, what I did in demanding the lady guests to move inside to the room and not to get directly exposed to the firing of the bullets. I was hurt, kept quiet and did not utter a word of protest against the happily married Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. I introspected myself and realized my mistake that I should know my limits especially when I was dealing with ladies who were brought up in a foreign country like Canada where the woman were well educated, socially liberated and equal to the male counter parts in many ways. Their way of life was totally different from our Indian woman folk who were mainly confined to their houses and kept themselves most of the times working indoors not knowing the world outside. Only our generation of ladies was becoming educated and employed, liberating themselves from the old shackles. I would have taken it very lightly if only the ladies from Canada directly talk to me and told me that they did not like my way of dealing with them. I would have appreciated their direct response to my direct appeal. No doubt there was enough reason in the Canadian ladies objection and protest for the undue advantage taken by an unknown, uncivilized and strange person like me. I did not mind that. But what hurt me most and made me feel ashamed

was the strong reprimand made by my trusted friend and colleague who all along shared my views and thoughts on many issues and complemented my own observations in a positive way. Not only that, instead of supporting me for the timely intervention she took the side of the ladies who have been known to her personally only for the last few days. Even than I did not make any big mistake or insulted the lady guests who were equally respected by me as much as Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi and our lady class mates as the **VIP** guests of Dr.S.R.Parimi. For awhile my thought process sent shivers down my spine when I imagined if somebody in our group were injured in the firing that took place all of a sudden. What if the Canadian ladies got injured and I did not alert them in time to save them? What would have Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi told me in that unfortunate and avoidable event? Would she have scolded me for the lapse on my side? Would I have regretted for not taking the bold initiative which I took and thought that was very appropriate for that moment? My thoughts went far and beyond the confines of the hotel room and the tenants staying there. I had to debate constantly forever and till now what was right thing for that moment. Was there anything wrong that was committed by anybody? I looked from the both sides. Looking from the point of view of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi, I could easily understand the reason for her momentary reaction if not an impulsive reaction. On one side she got married very recently and must have been on an emotional high tide. The next one she

was dealing with new persons with newer ideology, culture and civilization. She had to come in to grips with the new people and the new environment. The next point in support of her outburst was that she was going to live with the new group of people who would matter more in her future life and endeavors. Last but not the least reasoning to defend her from my point of view was that we had been classmates and friends for the last five to six years, we were going to depart after a few days time and there might not be an occasion to meet or face each other in the rest of the life. So there was nothing that was binding and worth remembering than disowning and discarding the past and frivolous. To analyze from my side, the first and the foremost thought that surfaced in my mind was to question myself why I was there on that spot in the first instance. Was I invited to be there by anybody or invited myself and got involved in the tangle. What was my role in clinging on to the intellectually and culturally superior class of people? Was it a planned or unplanned meeting? Did I not have any other work than submitting myself in to an awkward situation? What was my motive in moving around the newly married couple? Was there any selfish and ulterior design or desire that forced me and tethered me to the temperamental group? What happened to my earlier decision and determination to keep aloof of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi immediately after the news was announced and confirmed about her marriage six months back itself. Whatever was the reason, valid or in valid the damage was

done then and there itself and I was accused of a crime not committed by me knowingly or intentionally. In that process the judgment and the punishment were delivered in one stroke. Nobody realized how much I was hurt and what went in to my mind at that point of time. None came to my rescue or defense. I was a loner and nobody to console me, maybe I did not deserved any such favors. If I were not hurt so deeply I would not have remembered the event in such a detail, as a deep burn scar that has been hurting even today. If that was not enough, there was saying in Telugu **“Pundu Meeda Karam Challinatluga...”**; **“Goru Chuttu Meeda Rokali Potu...”**; **“Atta Meeda Kopam Dutta Meeda Chupinatluga...”**; **“Atta Tittunanduku Kaadu Poriginti Avida or Pedda Kodalu Navvinanduku”** I really don’t know which one of the above lines is more appropriate but what I remembered was that the Canadian lady guests were carrying their camera with them and took some photos covering the wedding and the later events. That I realized long after the marriage and departure of the marriage party including the new couple who left for Canada. I was sent a photo of myself reminding my association during and after the marriage. I should get back to that part of the discussion about the photo at a later and appropriate time and sequence. For the present we should continue with a few more interesting incidences still preserved in my memory lane.

I did not learn my lesson properly even after that hotel episode. I swallowed my pride for a while in spite of the insult. I was not the person carried away by the emotions that would ruin the long term

friendship. If my parents scolded me, if my teachers bashed me and if a good friend like Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi reprimanded me I should not take it as an insult on my person but use that experience as a lesson to learn from each of such episodes, which were not too many to forget so easily. Till today I did not broach the above topic with anybody else and kept it close to my heart only to draft it in black and white today as a part of a completion of the narration of the headline topic. Without brooding over the past few events I behaved as if nothing serious had happened of late. After the hotel event, probably the Canadian guests left Guntur, where they went I had no knowledge, the bride and the bridegroom shifted their stay from the hotel room to the Babji Annayya's residence, a rented house in the Aurundel pet. Because of the law and order problem prevailing in the town the free moment of the public was almost paralyzed. People moved out of their houses guarding their lives and their kith and kin. There were periods of lifting of the curfew for a few hours in a particular time schedule. I and Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy, who were staying back at Guntur for a few more days, who gave me his company and stayed with me in the house surgeon and PG hostel which was safe, secure and convenient for commutation. We both decided to go and meet the newly married couple who were put up at Babji Annayya's residence. It is worth while recollecting that Babji Annayya was a good friend and admirer of Dr.S.R.Parimi whom he often fondly called as Ranga. Also Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi was the

heart and soul of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi not only was a good friend but was attached to her as her roommate for several years. Both Babji Annayya and Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi were instrumental in fixing and performing the marriage of Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. By that time Babji Annayya was already married to Mrs.Kamala Kumari and having two beautiful daughters with whom we used to play around when we visited their house. So it was mandatory for the newly married couple to spend a few days with their friend's family. With that background I and Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy planned to visit the house of Babji Annayya on one day, may be the next day after the hotel event took place. We started during the relaxation of the curfew and decided to avoid walking on the regular main road across the over bridge to go the Aurundel pet. We choose to walk along the foot pathway crossing the railway track beyond the railway station and the platform so that we were not noticed by the **CRPF** police and also in case of any trouble we could hide in some of the residential houses in the crowded Aurundel pet lanes and by-lanes. We reached safely our destination. Babji Annayya's rented house was a very small place but the people living in there were very large hearted and happy couple. Even before the marriage took place, as a group of common friends Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi, Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata, Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari, Dr.Ms.Gayatri Devi, Dr.Ms.Hamsa Veni, Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy whenever he visited Guntur from Visakhapatnam and myself were the frequent

visitors to the Babji Annayya's house. It was within a walking distance from our hospital and the hostels. On that day we reached the house safely and happily with a heavy heart and a lurking fear of what was going to unfold in that meeting as I was getting brick bates for no fault of mine whether I deserved it or not God only knew. I never wanted any bouquets which I feel I really did not deserve. Keeping my mind blank, trying to be happy even in an adversity, masking my face and feelings with borrowed smiles, I thought I would go through the rituals without contributing myself towards any misunderstanding.

In the entire episode of the event of the marriage of Parimi's the major role, activity and contribution was by Babji and Jaya without any doubt. Between both of them I could see Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi was more emotionally involved and took it as a personal pride in the arrangements and the organization. Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi spoke and did everything on behalf of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata, when Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata herself was quite and silent. The happiest person in that occasion no doubt was Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi. She was in a trance and was almost mesmerized by the words and personal fads of Dr.S.R.Parimi and his Canadian guests. She was watching them so closely I might be right in saying that she was hypnotized with the aura of the new acquaintances. When I and Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy reached the house of Babji Annayya, wading through the outskirts of the slums in the Aurundel pet, we joined a hilarious

group of our friends. As per the lessons learnt as recently as a day or two before, I kept a stoic silence suppressing all my emotions. Ultimately Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi dragged me into some sort of a discussion and she was so deeply involved and closely observing the minuet details of the strangers. She asked me to demonstrate how to use the tooth brush. I knew all of us have been using the tooth brush from the time we joined in the college studies. Each one of us has got his own personal preferences in brushing the teeth. The idea brushing the teeth using the native neem tooth sticks to the modern plastic brushes with bristles was only to keep the teeth clean and not to take out the enamel layer from the teeth to make them look white and bright. I had seen a number of modifications in the methods of brushing the teeth by the hostel inmates. Some people took hours together to brush their teeth, producing the noise from the brush which could be heard from a few rooms away; where as some other students just rinsed their mouth after a few strokes of the brush. I also noticed, watching my friends in the hostel making the big noise with the brush and also while they gargled their mouth to the extent of causing nausea to the next in line waiting people at the wash basin. I had also seen some people bringing out lot of foam by continuous brushing. Some preferred to keep the foam within their mouth as long as they continued to brush their teeth neither spitting out nor swallowing and also trying to talk or make noise while brushing with foam in the mouth. Some other section of the

people preferred and did not mind the dirtiest way of brushing their teeth by allowing the foam and saliva dribble and drip from their mouth, to the hands up to their elbows. That apart I had seen some people applying so much of the tooth paste on the brush in multiple layers as if it was a part of their breakfast. Last but not the least the hostel mates never left any paste unutilized in the tube and they squeezed it in such a way that not only the paste, the lead inside the tube but also the smell of the paste was removed totally. For that some people joked stating that one could as well put the tooth paste tube on the railway track under the running wheels to get the last bit of the paste! I did not know what answer Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi wanted to me to tell. Whether I gave the answer or not, whether I knew the answer or not, whether I interested in answering her question or not, I knew I was totally preoccupied with something else in my mind and also I was not prepared to answer to such questions, she was too eager to demonstrate the right way of using the brush. Not only that, she was too quick to demonstrate even before I answered her question. She demonstrated what she learnt from Dr.S.R.Parimi and his Canadian friends and guests. She exposed all her teeth and showed the direction in which the brush should be used by stroking the brush from upwards to downwards and the vice-versa. That was the right way of doing it probably to remove the food particle debris stuck between the teeth. That was new and useful information as hither to we had been using the

brush from front to back and back to front. Not only me, almost all the hostel mates and even the people at the village who used the natural tree branches as tooth brush used the later method of brushing teeth only. Even after learning from Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi I could not change my way of brushing except on some specific occasion to remove the debris. After starting to demonstrate in the correct way of brushing the teeth Dr.K.Jaya Prada Devi continued her demonstration for a long time reinforcing her commitment to change, if she had not changed already. Not only that, she started giggling and enjoying to the brim. We also enjoyed the demonstration even if it was not the appropriate time or occasion to know the skills of brushing teeth in the afternoon. That was only to highlight how Dr.K.Jaya Prada Devi got totally immersed in her admiration, love and affection for Parimies and their company. I am happy that the same attitude is continuing even today with the same undiluted vigor.

While the Parimies continued to stay at the Babji Annayya's residence for a few more days it was my routine to reach them every day at some point of time in the day before it was too late. I used to have the company of Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy who over stayed after the marriage and stayed with me in the house surgeons hostel in the initial days. After Dr.T.Rama Krishna Reddy left for Visakhapatnam or when he preferred to stay back with the Parimies at Babji Annayya's house I had the company of Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari

for a few days. We used to meet at the hospital and walked together all the way to the Annayya's house. On one day after the lunch we started going to the Annayya's house crossing the railway track across the over bridge. As we were climbing up the stair case, Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari a very keen observant of the surroundings noticed a cinema poster across the railway track at the Sessa Mahal cinema theater. It was a Hindi cinema poster which I was not very keen on looking at or seeing such pictures. Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari was good at Hindi and also watched a number of Hindi pictures. Not that I did not see any Hindi pictures at all but my interest in them was only secondary to the Telugu movies. More over my mind was totally preoccupied with the visit we were going to make to the Annayya's house and to see the Parimi couple. Hence I could not place any serious attention about the cinema poster. But Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari insisted that I should look at the poster and also the title. She was smiling within herself, her smile was always characteristic of her happiness which she could never hold within herself and always preferred to express it openly. It was never easy to miss the smile and sound laughter made by Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari. Even if her presence was not physically seen, her voice could be recognized even from a distance with her classical smile. I was walking so close to her I could not ignore or be indifferent to her statement. She was very sharp in making the comment that the poster was displaying the title of the cinema "**Amara Prema**". She also told me the lead

actors in the picture as Mr. Rajesh Kanna, Ms.Sharmila Tagore and Mr.Vinod Mehra. She told me that it was a triangular love story and Mr.Vinod Mehra sacrificing his love and life for the sake of his best friend. Later on I also saw that picture and was very much moved by the triangular love story. I still remembered one sequence where in Mr.Rajesh Kanna returning from a foreign country after his higher studies, went in search of his missing lover Ms.Sharmila Tagore. Ultimately he traces her in a house in a remote village working as a maid servant. On meeting her in the most pathetic condition he ventured to ask her why she was not crying after seeing him after a very long time. The reply given by Ms.Sharmila Tagore was that her tears got dried up after weeping for days, months and years together while she made a futile search for him and in her vain bid that made her completely emotionless. That was the story of the picture as I remembered today. The second hero Mr.Vinod Mehra passed away in his real life when he was very young and Mr. Rajesh Kanna passed away very recently with some unknown serious illness. During the obituary comments made about Mr. Rajesh Kanna, the picture Amara Prema was supposed to be one of his five best pictures all starting with the alphabet A. the other four picture starting with A are Aradhana, Anand and Andaaz etc. What made Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari to observe that cinema poster so keenly and narrate the story to me with all seriousness was not known. But what she implied was that the love should be eternal and not

distracted or destroyed by trivial things in the life. She also implied at a tangent that my love story was also eternal and she thought that I would never deviate from the good decision I had taken. She also probably indirectly indicated that I was in love with somebody least of all with Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata which was an erroneous conclusion. What made her to think in those lines was not directly known to me. It was not just Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari alone who made such indirect observations but it was the same with Dr.L.Seshadri Rao in the month of March 1972, Dr.Ms.Sarada in the month of May 1972 and Dr.V.V.Narashimha Rao who made such an inference in the year 1997 immediately after hearing my narration about our association as classmates and best friends. The statement made by Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari in the month of December-January immediately after the Parimies marriage probably had its roots elsewhere. But I made my stand very clear that I watched Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata from very close quarters, observed her during studies and examinations, liked her behavior and her relations with colleagues and friends, admired her achievements more than anybody else in our class and finally ended up adoring her to the eternity. If all those aspects were put together as a simple and useless term called love which was a superficial lip service in comparison to a real good friendship which could last long and forever. As the final inference and the message from the love story

picture was ***“A True Love is Never to Say Never”*** or my own modification of it as ***“A True Love is Never to Say Sorry”***.

Every story has to come to an end. I shall also try to reach the concluding part of the story of the marriage of the most loved couple in our group. In spite of any small misunderstandings there was never any major cause for concern or conflict leading to any contradictions among us. As long as the communications were good there won't be any major issues that could not be surmounted. Somewhere down the line, after all the formalities of their marriage were over the Parimi's couple planned their travel to Canada. The journey started from Babji Annayya's house, after a good breakfast around 10 AM in the morning. An Ambassador car was arranged for the trip from Babji Annayya's house. I really don't remember all those people who were inside the car along with Dr.S.R.Parimi and Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi, I am sure Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi was there as a constant member of the team and myself in the group. In spite of all my reservations I really did not know how I got fit in to the group. Even with all the frequent meetings and interactions I still felt strange and misfit in to that group forgetting my long association with my classmates and good friends. Whether it was an inferiority complex or the fear of making any unknown mistakes causing further heart burns for me or to the others, the constant knowledge and awareness that I was in the group of elite people with higher goals and broader vision where I was totally a misfit, made me more

uncomfortable to open up fully and get involved as much as I wanted to. I was not like Dr.Ms.K.Jaya Prada Devi who did not have any inhibitions or bars to hold. Coming back to the farewell journey, we reached the place where I was to alight from the car and proceed to my destination that was my hostel room at the house surgeon and PG quarters in the general hospital. Under the over bridge, near the railway hospital compound, on the way towards the Guntur Medical College campus I got down from the car may be from the front seat and bid good bye to everybody and happy journey for the Parimi's. Till that time I did not have any direct personally interaction with Dr.S.R.Parimi on a one to one basis except on one small little occasion. I always met him in the company of all or some of our friends who never allowed the newly married couple to settle down or have their privacy. None of us were bothered or concerned or gave a thought for such nice things. We were in a totally different world enamored by the events taking place around the marriage of one of our very good and if not to the greatest friend ever to have. For some strange reason one day Dr.S.R.Parimi was left alone and he had free time to give me company for lunch. As the house surgeon posting period was over, I was not a member of the house surgeon hostel mess and hence I was dining outside on a daily basis at different places. The mostly frequented hotel was the Sankar Villas situated at the famous Brodiepet center, the air conditioned dining hall located in the first floor. My usual lunch menu was

parota with green pea's masala which used to cost seventy five paisa per head. That was good enough for a moderate lunch. On that day when Dr.S.R.Parimi had a free time for lunch he agreed to join me at the Sankar Villas hotel. He enjoyed the same menu even it was not a sumptuous lunch. As far as my memory goes back, that was the first and the best lunch and the best time, I had with Dr.S.R.Parimi during that period of his marriage celebration.

Coming back to the farewell as such, the proper word I learnt much later was to bid adieu to my inspirer and the best friend for the last time. When I got down from the car, Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi came out of the car on her own then the rest of the occupants remained inside. It was nice to have a few words with her and finally we decided to take leave from each other. She stretched her hand and shook hands with me as a matter of final dispersal. I was not prepared for that handshake from her. All through my association with Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi and our batch mate ladies who were predominant in numbers, I took care never to physically touch anybody even by accident during our association in the college. That was the self discipline I imposed consciously on myself for years together. The shaking of hands with my close friend was the first of its kind. After that I walked back to my hostel and got totally immersed in my academic activities in the company of Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian, who was my mentor and always treated me with love and affection. In a way, Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi getting

married and leaving the country was a blessing in disguise for me as there was more time for me to spend with, in the close proximity of Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian who was bent upon making me a neurosurgeon, not just a neurosurgeon but a product of Professor B.Ramamurthi at the Madras Medical College.

I am going to have a little digression from our main story of the handshaking. Just as a matter of remembering my final year **MBBS** clinical examination in the subject of medicine especially the viva part of it and also as a token of respect and regard to my the best teachers who conducted the examination. Somewhere down the line I had dealt with in detail about that examination earlier in this same chapter. After very strenuous and laborious long case examination and presentation, the short cases and the viva examinations were a simple cake walk. I had very interesting and familiar cases, simple and straight forward cases for my short case examination like the Bell's paralysis which I had examined and presented during the ward clinics umpteen number of times. As a part of icing on the cake, the end of the examination was the viva. After a few questions by the group of four examiners that included the very famous self styled cardiologist and the best English orator Dr.P.Lakshman Rao, my highly respected teacher whom I idolized, Dr.T.Srinivasan and two other external examiners made me feel relaxed during the short case and the viva examination. The way they conducted the examination made me feel that I was through the examination and

the viva was only a formality. After a few direct questions by the rest of the examiners, my beloved professor asked me a funny question with indirect meaning which made me think a little bit. He asked me, what were all the diseases that could be diagnosed by shaking hands with the patients? I was taken aback for a little while before I could gather my senses and courage and started answering to his question as if I was aware of such an answer or as if I read that topic in a book before coming to the examination or even to think of the absurd possibility that Dr.T.Srinivasan himself had briefed me about the question and the answer just before the examination commenced. I myself never came across a consolidated compilation of an answer for such an imaginary question. Even as a matter of joke none of our teachers discussed even similar clinical findings, not simply a direct handshaking event. I was a little bit elated as I was answering without any break in my thought process and also I was surprised at the number of clinical situations that could be suspected or diagnosed by a simple handshake. Suddenly I remembered even before I started answering that question, a monogram on clinical methods in medicine, other than the Hutchison and Hunter which was the main book of reference followed by all the students of medicine, which directly dealt with differential diagnosis of a number of clinical findings like coating of the tongue, purple patches on the skin and claw hands etc. I did not lose much time in recollecting some of the very common neurological

problems that could be diagnosed by shaking of the hands with the patient. Some of the common diseases even today are weakness of the hand muscles, wasting of the hand muscles like in claw hands in leprosy, hyperhidrosis in anxiety and thyrotoxicosis, dry skin and acromegaly in pituitary tumours, cold and clammy hands in peripheral circulatory failures, hyper pyrexia, tremors of the hand like in Parkinsonism and many more that I could rattle off hand, in no time. The examiners were amused and encouraged me to continue my narration. Two more clinical entities impressed them and made them very happy and relaxed. The first of the last two situations I mentioned was the diagnosis of pulses alternance or the collapsing pulse seen the aortic stenosis and regurgitation cases of rheumatic heart disease. That made them burst in to laughter and Dr.P.Lakshman Rao jumped out of his chair breaking into an unstoppable laughter and he made a comment whether I was going to hold the patient's hand in the process of shaking hand with the patient along with the patient's wrist and forehand together as was done by the then professor of medicine Dr.K.Kodanda Ramayya who had the habit of holding the patient or friends hands with both of his hands and continuously shook them to the utmost discomfort and displeasure of the person who offered his hand and also as an amusement to the on lookers. All other examiners joined Dr.P.Lakshman Rao and enjoyed the joke at the expense of the highly respected clinician, professor and head of the department of

medicine Dr.K.Kodanda Ramayya Garu who was under the verge of transfer to some other medical college and hence could not become an internal examiner. If that was not enough I told them the next clinical disease, which I read for the first and last time, and only one time in the text book of medicine by Dr.Davidson and suddenly remembered, which I blurted out instantaneously. That was the disease called myotonia congenita, where in the patient had the difficult in loosening his gross of the hand because of the difficulty in the relaxation of the muscles that was the **“sign quo-non”** of the diagnosis of myotonia congenita. As I was going nonstop as if I was given the license to talk, very comfortable in their presence, Dr.T.Srinivasan himself took the lead to stop my train of the thought process and asked me what would be the inference if a girl had given you the warm shake hand. I stopped my narration and went in to a silent mode as if I did not know the answer at least I did not want to answer his question knowing full well what he wanted. I allowed him to answer his own question which he glee fully answered by stating that if a young girl gave the handshake it would mean her love for the opposite person. For the second time in a few minutes, the entire group of four examiners burst in to a hearty laughter and enjoyed that moment to the brim as Dr.T.Srinivasan was very well known for his lively jokes and also his open heartedness in sharing and enjoying the life. I really did not understand the seriousness of Dr.T.Srinivasan’s implied meaning for his question and his own

answer at that point of time and it took a little longer time for me and for that issue to sink in to my mind. What was on the top of my mind at that time was to get through the final year medicine subject examination which also happened to be the last of the examinations after completing the surgery, gynecology and obstetrics, hopefully and successfully. The way the examiners played and toyed with me in the clinical examination of the medicine subject not only made me happy and comfortable and also made me feel the sense of security that I was going to pass through the examination without any difficulty at any stage. I should confess that for reasons best known to Dr.T.Srinivasan himself, I was aware of that fact in the heart of my heart also that he had a soft corner for me, loved and liked me so much, showered his affection in abundance on me and I felt safe and secure in his presence. I had no fear or inhibitions to face Dr.T.Srinivasan in any situation. It may not be out of place if I recollect a few incidences to support my inner feelings that he always liked me as one of his students. We had our posting as fourth year medical students in his wards where he gave me priority over other students in examining the cases, especially the patients with cardiac murmurs when he himself placed his stethoscope on the patient's chest, pulled me from the back of the pack of the students of our batch which consisted mostly of the girl students and made me listen to the heart murmurs through his own stethoscope. The most important murmur he demonstrated, among

many other clinical features was the crescendo murmur in mitral stenosis cases. Also during the get-together party after the ward posting was over he openly encouraged the students to smoke the cigarettes in his presence without any inhibition, which invitation I accepted and gave him company for smoking. I also accepted his invitation and took courage in his presence to sing a film song from the old cinema "**Prayachittam**" for the first time in my career to sing a song in a group of people in the college, more so in the medical college. The song "**Madilo Premanu Kanuka Itchi .....**" impressed him so much that he had openly acknowledged the same. During that ward party held in the reception hall at the principal's office, he identified all the students by their names and when it came to my turn he question me why I was given such an odd name. I answered without any hesitation that my parents were superstitious about the survival of their single male child, for which he was very much satisfied. Not only that when he demonstrated a number of lung diseases in the outpatient **MMR** screening dark room he always called me by name and checked whether I was keenly following what he was demonstrating on the fluoroscope. Personally, whenever I needed some consultation and advice for my own sickness I took his help and treatment from him only. No doubt that he treated me as an inpatient, for my self-medicated drug induced crystalurea and heamtorea when I was doing my house surgeon training. Hence it was my love, affection, respect and regards for one of my best

teacher physician. It was all together a totally different context if I state that he was the chief guest to preside over my wedding reception function at Kakinada in June 1981.

Whatever could be the inference one would draw to connect the question asked by Dr.T.Srinivasan in my final year viva examination and his own answer to that question, the warm handshake given by my esteemed classmate and friend one year after my final year examination, I personally did not have any feeling of interconnection between the two events. When Dr.T.Srinivasan gave his answer my mind was blank and did not have any inkling to the handshake which I did not receive till then. When I ultimately received the handshake I was in a different state of mind and shock and tried to absorb the pressure of departure and the pleasure of handshake. On its own weight a simple handshake from my good friend without the burden of the other circumstances I could have savored such handshake as a once in a life time happiness but the feeling that I was bidding a permanent farewell to a blossoming friendship which till then gave a false impression of a permanent or eternal understanding and association. The handshake also meant a deadly blow on my nest and nascent next generation of ideas and planning. The scene in the viva examination hall and the scene on the road at the railway hospital junction gave me the essence of equanimity and balance of mind not to get too much of any disturbance in my

attitude and acceptance of the truth of life, however sweet or bitter they might be.

Before I wondered what would be my fate without a great friend like Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi I started walking back towards my hostel where the rest of my future activity was going to rest with. You may be wrong that I was jumping in joy and hopping to the hostel after the handshake. But the truth was that I did not have enough time to feel the pleasure of the handshake but there was the lurking fear that the end of our friendship was coming to the close, round the corner in a very short time to come. My feeling was as if I had lost a precious diamond from my position and from my friends group. Who would feel happy to lose a precious diamond from one's hand, I did not immediately realize that the cruel handshake was also the end of golden period of our friendship, it also meant the slipping off the precious diamond from my close proximity forever. It was stupid thought from me, of possessing the most valuable things in the world as your own, with short term and selfish interest. If one had the desire or ambition to possess the most valuable stone like the **"Kohinoor Diamond"** it would have been a foolish thought or desire. Some people would get a lucky chance and were fortunate to physically see the Kohinoor diamond but to think of possessing such a valuable item would be too foolhardy. Many people who heard of the existence of a diamond like a Kohinoor diamond could never have got a chance to see the diamond in the physical form.

Fortunately for me I saw the real Kohinoor diamond in its physical form when I visited the Royal museum at London in the year 1997 and felt how lucky I was. Then I realized that a diamond of the caliber of the Kohinoor diamond should only be in the Queen's position and ordinary mortals could only see it as a piece of valuable exhibit in a museum. The diamond also got its value enhanced if it was to adorn the Queen's crown. Elsewhere in the earth there are many more hidden and much more valuable diamond stones but the one that adores the Queen's crown had found its proper and esteemed abode. Hence I felt doubly fortunate to have had the company of the live diamond worth many times more than the Kohinoor diamond during my medical college study career and also her friendship, love and affection more than anybody else especially of the male students in our class. As people said long before that the **"Ratnam Ratne Vibhathu"** meaning that a diamond can be sharpened or cut by another diamond only. Ironically, one doctor, a magazine editor of our Guntur Medical College by name Dr.Raghunatha Rayalu sent me a paper cutting, many years after we left our medical college. It contained my photo and carried the caption which surprised me to a great extent, **"Mattilo Manikyam"** I felt embarrassed for such a complement from my senior colleague which I felt certainly did not deserve to be quoted like that but felt very happy that somebody was thinking in those lines about me. Whether it is relevant or not I should take out an extract of quotation from

our college magazine when some of our classmate lady students unanimously declared and gave a title to one of our male classmates that he was ***“The Pearl among the Pebbles”***. Whether the rest of the boys were pebbles or not, the real pearl did not come out from the English poet of our class, proving all that glitters shines was not gold. Whatever be the story of the other diamond, I was more than happy for Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi, the Kohinoor diamond of our class reached the right place, the deserving place of her destination. She was safe and secure and to become even more valuable in the company of her equally great life-partner Dr.S.R.Parimi.

Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi, the academically brilliant and all time achiever getting married and going to Canada along with her husband was quite a natural sequence of life for anybody and more so, in the case of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. There was nothing surprising or unexpected as many of my class mates took the similar path already. The time and the sequence were different in each individual case and it was the same with Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi also. What was bothering me was missing her permanently from our close friendship quarters, missing her personally as a friend as she acted as a catalyst for my raw talent and knowledge and finally a professional colleague with so much of wisdom and insight into medicine. It was not just me alone that was going to miss her brilliant association but the generations of students in the medical college were going to miss her permanently as, if only she stayed

back in India and worked in any of the medical colleges in the teaching faculty she would have inspired many batches of the medical students at least for thirty to forty years. Younger generation doctors could have noticed her great academic achievements and at least a few of them tried to emulate her if not equaled her achievements. Hence it was Dr.B.Dibbala Rao, the medical students in the medical colleges, the public and the patients in our state and our country and the medical profession as such were going to be the losers. I would substantiate the monumental loss that caused by missing one single person from our country when I heard a live radio talk by one of our country's great luminaries. After Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi left for Canada in the month of January, I was waiting for my selection in to the post graduation course. The after effects of the Jai Andhra agitation spilled into the next academic year of all the students including the medical students. I had a few days of time to go and relax of my village as there was a big vacuum at Guntur because of the strike and also the departure of the good friends, one after the other. It never happened in the last few years for me to spend two consecutive days at my native place after I came to Guntur for my studies. I was finding it very difficult to kill the time literally. News papers, friends and relatives could not compensate for my hectic daily routine at Guntur. On one such a day I found my Philips radio as the best companion for me to listen to many interesting programs hither to I

did not concentrate so much. That particular day in the afternoon there was an announcement in the radio program about the live broadcast of the speech by the well known scientist Mr.M.G.K.Menon the Director of the Science and Technology of India (**DST**). I was curious to listen to such inspiring talks by eminent people. I was going to listen to Mr.M.G.K.Menon for the first time. Hitherto I was concentrating on listening to the news on Voice of America. In that live talk Mr.M.G.K.Menon gave an elaborate picture of the effects of the Brain Drain from our country. It's economic, scientific, technological and the psychological implications in our country and on our society. What I tried to interpolate that talk was on the departure of my great friend Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi on me, the medical profession and the country as a whole. As it so happened that after our batch of medical students decided to leave the country or decided to work only in the private hospitals and clinics, the government medical colleges in Andhra Pradesh were depleted of the efficient and intellectually superior students who did not become teachers. Slowly and steadily the standards in the government medical colleges have taken the downhill course and were not the same when we studied in the medical colleges. Alas! Even those government medical colleges were slowly getting defunct after the emergence of and mushrooming of the private medical colleges doing a fabulous medical business. Not that Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi could have changed the entire picture in the medical education, but she

would have definitely made a mark in molding the medical students careers with her devotion and dedication.

My thoughts were further reinforced later in my career when I joined at the Institute of Neurology at the Madras Medical College. The professors and teachers were all foreign returned after getting their fellowship degrees like **FRCS**, **FRCP** and **MRCP**. They did not stay back at the reputed foreign institutions but preferred to come back to India and work in the medical colleges where they were trained. Why they returned to India and stayed back in the medical colleges was only purely out of their love for their mother country, the love for the medical profession and their liking of the medical teaching. During the peak of the career of Professor B.Ramamurthi he was attracting the patients and the students from foreign countries especially our neighboring countries as excellent neurosurgical facilities for the treatment of the patients and training of the youngsters were available at the Institute of Neurology Madras. In those days Professor B.Ramamurthi wrote some scientific articles highlighting the stoppage of the brain drain from India and also reversing the brain drain meaning attracting the foreign medical students to come and learn the most advanced neurosurgical procedures that were being done at the institute, especially in the field of stereotaxic surgery for which the Institute of Neurology was the only center in India. As the best outgoing student of the Madras Medical College Professor B.Ramamurthi could reach such heights

and reverse the brain drain with his own efforts I wonder what the best outgoing student of our class and college could have done to the medical profession as a whole. That was my dream and desire but the destiny decided otherwise.

Most of my classmates left to **USA** and **UK** for better studies and greener pastures and most of them I did not even have a single occasion to meet them at least once after they left the country. I thought that was the end of our association with our friend Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi also and started realizing the sweet and bitter truths about the life as it unfolded as the times passed by. There was no sadness or happiness when one achieves the equanimity and tranquility in isolation and solitude. But there was a huge unfilled vacuum created in the world of true friendship. As a matter of destiny my studies continued at the Guntur Medical College when I joined my post graduation in the MS general surgery subject, my association with Dr.M.V.Subrahmanian grew strong and firm and life continued as it should for everybody. A few friends like Dr.(Mrs).Surya Kumari my classmate, Dr.(Mrs).Atmaji a house surgeon in the **S1** unit became close friends for a short period before they got married and left for **USA** and **UK** respectively. Their short association gave me some solace and consolation for a big loss but it was never a total replacement for the best friendship I ever had with Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. I came to the state of mind of acceptance that

the friendship ended then and there itself immediately after the handshake.

Days, weeks and months passed by after Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi left the shores of India. I did not have any direct information from her except some bits and pieces that trickled down unintentionally through some indirect sources. Since Dr.Ms.Jaya Prada Devi left Guntur and joined her post graduation at the Andhra Medical College there was no direct communication or information from her as she was the heart and soul of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. Mr.Babji Annayya shifted his family to Vijayawada after his transfer and so the next best source of information from Babji Annayya, who was the brain and master mind behind for the successful planning and arrangement of Dr.S.R.Parimi's marriage. The only other source for a few more days was Dr.Ms.Surya Kumari who never failed to share with me even the trivial things about the Parimies family. The best information I got was that Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi appeared for her **ECFMG** examination and passed the examination in flying colors scoring more than ninety percent or more of the marks. I also got the information that Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi started working in the hospital on a temporary basis as a surgical theater assistant. I never expected Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi to write a any letter to me directly. There was no need for that either. She never mentioned that she would write to me after going to Canada nor did I ask her to write to me. It was a mutually accepted unwritten, un-talked of

understanding that we never wanted communicate with each other. I would not have found fault with her if she did not write to me at all I also we should that way and I never wanted to be a third person. I wanted avoid all sorts of confusions, contradictions and controversies which were not there anyhow, even if they were purely my imaginations. In the other way round I would not have written any letter to Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi on my own under any circumstances. If that was the frame of my mind I could as well imagine the similar feeling from Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. There were no hard feelings between both of us; there was no chance for anybody to know whether there were any feelings at all.

Suddenly I received a letter from Canada written by Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi nearly one year after she left the country. It contained a beautiful brief narration of her daily activities, her association with Dr.S.R.Parimi and also about her future plans. Not only that the letter carried a snap shot photo taken during our brief stay at the hotel near the Saraswati picture palace junction just a few hours before the **CRPF** firing. The photo was taken without my knowledge and probably it was the handy work of the Canadian lady guests. The letter and the photo made me sad for more than one reason and unhappy on one side insulted and belittled me on the other side. The happiness of receiving the letter got evaporated within no time after reading the contents. The first bitter truth that surfaced was that Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi totally forget about me as

she was deeply immersed in setting up her family and also identifying the likes dislikes of Dr.S.R.Parimi which was understandable without mentioning. I would not have felt bad or hurt if Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi did not write to me any letter at all. But what made me feel really sad was that but for the fact that Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi's family members reminded and reprimanded her for not writing to me even a single letter after going to Canada. How they came to know that she did not write to me was, they visited Guntur General Hospital for a medical checkup of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi's father or her father's elder brother Mr.Rami Reddy whom I examined and advised some treatment. At that time I had some close interaction with Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi's family members who stayed for a couple of days at Guntur. Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi's mother and her second daughter Mrs.Madhuri were very much surprised and shocked to learn that Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi totally forgot about me, became in-commune do and neglected me to such an extent that they got very much hurt and also conveyed to her that I was also equally hurt and unhappy for keeping me totally out of the picture for an year or so. In fact, I did not expect Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi's parents to write to her in such a passionate manner that forced her to write a letter to me in such a hurry and haste. That was the reason for my unhappiness because the letter did not come spontaneously and it was forced upon her. The contents also made me feel unhappy, that was the first and the last

letter for several years before I got a second one which was much more shocking. Coming back to the enclosure in the letter, a photo snap shot which showed me in a very poor light hurt me even more deeply. In those days I had some funny mannerisms that I carried from my village environment, high school friends and even from my relatives. There was a saying in our local lingo that we carry some of our traits from our ancestors, closed relatives and especially from the immediate uncles and aunts. One of my maternal uncles used to put out the tip of his tongue whenever he was doing any concentrated work specially an important work. It was his habit and carried forward by me unknowingly. So when I was spending some time in the hotel where Dr.Parimi's were staying for a short period along with their Canadian guests some of our friends and classmates of Dr. (Mrs).Hema Parimi also stayed there. Unknowingly I was putting out the tip of my tongue which was not a civilized way of behaving in the company of strangers and foreigners. I was not aware of what I was doing and also I was equally oblivious of the fact that I was annoying the guests with my bad mannerisms. Without my knowledge they took the photo while I was putting out the tongue and carried that memento all the way to Canada. When I received that photo print it was disgusting for me to see myself in such a poor light. Not that I looked better or beautiful without the protruding tip of my tongue, but somebody taking a photo and carefully sending it back to me to India when I almost refrained

myself from the flashbacks and ruminations. What forced me to think deeply about that photo was not the physical form of it but the psychology part of it. She did send me the bunch of the marriage photos of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi and Dr.S.R.Parimi to feel proud and happy and also for me to keep them as souvenirs. But Alas! I got only one photo print of the monkey face, which made me feel that I only deserved that much and nothing more. Had that letter been sent to me without any compulsions from her family members and had it contained many other marriage photos I would have been more happy and different in my outlook. Anyhow as I decided long back, as long back as the day Dr.(Mrs).K.Jaya Prada Devi announced the marriage alliance of Dr.Ms.J.Hemalata and Dr.S.R.Parimi I made up of my mind to put all the thoughts about our friendship and should remain as distant as possible without showing any undue interest in their marriage or their life after the marriage. I feel proud that even today I did not cross the Lakshman Rekha to the best of my knowledge as I always made a conscious effort towards that direction.

One more minor point of note was there, in the letter that reflected the inner feelings of Dr.(Mrs.).Hema Parimi who wrote that she was trying to learn the food fads of Dr.S.R.Parimi and learning to cut the onions with tears welling out from the eyes. She mentioned in a lighter vein that Dr.S.R.Parimi would misunderstand her if he were to read her letter to me as she was revealing personal

and family matters and sharing with me. Even though that was not a big issue for discussion I could understand her frame of mind under those circumstances. I also understood from that letter that she wanted forget the old memories as quickly as possible and get in to the new frame of mind under the new circumstances which was more important and was her priority.

Whatever were the contents of the letter good, bad or indifferent the letter was a letter, the first letter from the best friend, the precious letter if not a golden letter. It contained the beautiful Telugu words, hand written and it was worth preserving. I kept the letter safe and secure in my clinic plastic folder ready to read, as and when I felt like doing so. The photo was also preserved along with the letter. The letter and the photo were there with me as long as I stayed in my own house and ultimately lost the track of both the items for the last twenty five years. I lost the interest in tracing the letter as I have no hold on the events that took place beyond my control.

The ultimate question anybody would raise was whether I replied to her letter. No. I never wanted any two way communication; I never wanted even the one way communication also. Not that I was angry, disappointed or disgruntled person but I wanted to keep aloof. I strictly followed the rule laid down in our Telugu saying **“Noppinchaka Tanovvaka”**. But that did not stop me from writing letters to her at all. After going to Madras I had so many memorable

personal experiences as I started swimming in the huge ocean of clinical neurology and neurosurgery. My day to day interactions with Professor B.Ramamurthi, on one side and the absorbing events taking place on day to day basis on the other side was even more enthralling. Each one of my experiences would become a letter for writing just for the sake of letter writing itself. Had I really wrote those memories it would have become a big volume by itself. I wanted always to share my day to day new knowledge with my very close friend and academically brilliant friend like Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi. In fact that was what I was doing during my student days and more frequently during the house surgeon period. That was what I feared most after the marriage of Dr.(Mrs).Hema Parimi was announced halfway through our house surgeon training period, that I would miss a great friend and understanding colleague for the rest of my life. So, on a number of occasions, after a hard day's work, when I walked back to the hostel room, alone in the streets in the middle of the nights, carrying my briefcase and mind full of unending thoughts I wrote a number of letters, an unknown quantum of letters reminiscing my day to day endeavors in the department of neurosurgery at the Madras Medical College. I might have written hundreds of letter in my mind that could never go on to a paper with a pen. All those letters were written in the air hoping those letters would reach the right person thousands of miles far off. I wish there was a Megha Sandesam, Hamsa RayaBharam or some

extrasensory perception (ESP) or Telepathy to do the job for me. Alas! None came to my assistance. The letters contained nothing personal but only the professional matters. The only letter I replied in the physical form to her was from Visakhapatnam where I had to express my opinion on a very sensitive matter in a negative form.

At the end, if there is an end what I was trying derive or drive home was the point that precious person who should have been on the top of the medical world in Andhra Pradesh in India, should have achieved what people like Professor B.Ramamurthi achieved was missing from the medical teaching fraternity. What I was looking was not the physical form but the metaphysical form. The inner beauty and wealth of knowledge, which only very few people inherited and possessed. The loss was total and permanent with irreversible consequences.

What happened subsequently will find a place somewhere else, sometime later and if at all I have the time and mind to document it.

The end of the endless story