

## **THE BRIDGE**

### **MEMORIES OF P.U.C – THE PRE UNIVERSITY COURSE**

When I started school studies at the age of five years in our village social welfare elementary school in the year 1955 or when I started my high school studies at the age of nine years in the year 1959 at our Zilla Parishat High School at Peda Nandi Padu located one kilometer away from our village, I did not have any idea of the existence of a college education called the Pre University Course (**PUC**). In those days education was not the priority for most of the villagers. There was hardly a hand full of people who could read and write in our village and many people could not even put their signature on the white paper. Mostly the official transactions or money lending business was done with the proof of the thumb impression only. So going to the school studies was neglected and priority for the agricultural work and the farm labor was the need of the day for all the families as it provided the daily succor. But the trend started slowly changing and at least one person went to the school from each of the families, people who did not know to read or write Telugu started learning the **A, B, C, D** in English and also some Hindi language. The availability of schools and teachers also started attracting students to go to the school. In my own family my mother did not go to school, nor did any of her family members like her mother, father, brother and her sisters go to school. My father got frightened to go to school and preferred to hide in the furrows of the

tilled black cottons soil fields. But somehow managed to learn at a later date to read and write a few Telugu words and was able to put his signature in Telugu. Coming to my siblings, my elder sister started going to the elementary school in our village a few years ahead of me. When it came to my turn to join the school I preferred my father's way and tried to run away from the school. The reason for that was the school teacher late Mr.Somayya was notorious in beating the school children mercilessly, driving away the children from the school studies who were already in a reluctant mood to go the school. My sister going to the school ahead of me did not inspire me to any extent. Still with the persistent efforts and perseverance of my mother I could join the elementary school many days after the classes were started for that year. I was late by nearly one month for admission. I learnt my alphabets in Telugu and the person who taught me Aa, AAa and made me to overwrite a number of times the same letters was the lady teacher Mrs.Nakshtram none other than the wife of our teacher late Mr.Somayya. Mrs.Nakshtram is still alive for me to renew my contact with her and also to pay my regards for the initiative she took in teaching me the first few letters in my life. From then onwards I never looked back in my education. In those days our elementary school was upgraded up to seventh standard, but for some strange reasons it was derecognized, discontinued and was curtailed up to fifth standard only.

The teachers in the elementary school were educated only up to the eighth standard and they were given teacher training program to teach the elementary class students. The training course for about one year was called secondary grade teachers training program, to be precisely called lower secondary grade teacher training to differentiate from the higher secondary grade teacher training program of two years period and the qualification for that was to complete the high school studies up to **SSLC**-Secondary School Leaving Certificate. Hence the eighth classed passed teachers taught the elementary school children or the primary school children that was from first to fifth standard. The **SSLC** passed teachers were eligible to teach up to the eighth standard in the high schools, which was also called the lower forms or in the upgraded elementary schools. Only the degree holding teachers were eligible to teach the higher form students in the school that was from ninth to eleventh class. Hence the goal of the students who started going to the school was only to become a school teacher or popularly known as school master. No doubt that my father also dreamt of making me a school teacher at least, when the rest of the students parents wanted their pals good enough either to read the news paper or at least to put their signature on the stamp paper or to read or write a post card which was the only mode of communications in those days.

Nobody had an idea of what to do next beyond the **SSLC** and the secondary grade teacher training program. In spite of those

handicaps there were at least half a dozen persons in our village who completed their B.A degree in the nearby colleges and they never utilized their degrees for their further progress in their education or to inspire the next generation students to go to the college level of education. A few of them, I still remember are late Sri Addepalli Basava Punnayya, who was the first to get a B.A. degree from our village, started his business in the rice mill as a partner of late Sri Challa Nageswara Rao who did not complete his **SSLC** even. Luckily late Sri Addepalli Basava Punnayya educated his second son Mr. Addepalli Laxminarayana to go to the college education and also to get the Ag.B.Sc degree. Whereas, late Sri Challa Nageswara Rao could not, send any one of his children to the college studies. Late Sri Kandula Subba Rao did his B.A degree but could not send his children beyond the high school studies. Late Sri Katta Sambaiah did his B.A degree and also joined the government service and worked till he retired as a **BDO** (Block Development Officer). He succeeded in educating two of his children to become doctors. There were many others who went to the college but never completed the degree courses. That was the first generation of education in our village. The next generation before me produced a crop of graduates and post graduates who became good examples for the generation to follow to go to the college higher studies. Like that there was a candidate who did his B.Com degree and became a sales tax officer. He was the brother of one of my classmates at our school by name

Mr.Kothamasu Krishnamurthi. One person who completed his M.Com degree by name Mr.Madhusudana Rao popularly known as Madhu became the State Bank Manager and yet another person got his M.A degree but remained unemployed. One Mr.Phani Bhushana Rao also became a State Bank Officer at later date. One of my own cousins became a civil engineer after getting a B.E degree to become the first engineer from our village. One Mr.Popuri Subba Rao did his B.A and M.A (Hon) degree and decided to go to the teaching profession and settled down at New Delhi permanently. One Mr.Kotapati.Satya Narayana the son of our village Munciff did his post graduation in biological sciences and worked as a lecturer in the Chirala College. Unlike those few examples there were many people who dropped out of the college halfway through as the education or the degree was not their priority over the agriculture. Recently when I visited our village Varagani I recollected two more persons who did their degrees, one Mr.Issac who got his B.A degree and worked as the postmaster at Peda Nandi Padu. The other one was my cousin by name Mr. Boddu Subba Rao who worked in the employment office at Guntur after his degree.

As I was growing as a child I realized that there were very few people who could read and write in our village. We used to get one or two Telugu daily news papers and those papers were read to a group of village people who flocked together at the residence of the village Karanam every day in the morning hours for him to read the news

paper aloud and to explain the contents of the news paper. It was a daily ritual for the villagers. The village Karanam and the Munciff were the only two people who could interpret the government rules and regulations and were the authorities to record and give date of birth and death certificates, collect the land revenue cess, write the documents regarding the property transactions and also the promissory notes for the money lending transactions. There was the business community who ran the Kirana and provisional's shops who could maintain their accounts on their own. There was a rice mill where late Sri. Addepalli Basava Punnayya regularly maintained the daily accounts of the sales and his business. We also had a coffee hotel run by my classmate's father by name late Sri Lingamallu Venkataratnam. We had a sub post office close to the bus stand and the village center, when we received the post cards mostly and occasionally envelope letters, people used to go round the village to find out who could read and explain the contents of the letter. Those good Samaritans helped the illiterate people to write and post the reply also. Till their death even my parents depended on the next generation family members to get my own letters read by them and also replied by them as I stayed away from my house during my studies and also during my job and practice.

Coming back to the Pre University Course which was commonly and popularly known to the people as **PUC**, the name itself was not permanent. The name and the meaning was changed a number of

times for reasons best known to the authorities. Before, I joined the **PUC** in the year 1965; the same course was called the Intermediate course. Even before I knew about the **PUC** or the Intermediate there used to be a degree course called F.A before the candidates went for a B.A degree. F.A means the Fellow of Arts, who would graduate to B.A which means the Bachelor of Arts. Very few people reached the stage of F.A and even much less number could go to the B.A degree. In those days getting an F.A or B.A degree was a great achievement and an instant recognition in the society. The illiterate village people treated the degree holders in a great esteem. When I said F.A, I remember a sad story of a F.A student from our village studying either at Chirala or Bapatla who met with a tragic end of his life. In those days, people used to travel by horse buggy, as the only alternative transport to walking by foot. When the horse buggy was crossing the railway track the F.A student by name Mr.Subba Rao dropped his books from his hands, he jumped out of the buggy to collect his books and was instantly run over by a moving train. That was an unfortunate event I was told during my childhood days. In an identical fatal accident another F.A student died when he slipped out of a transport bus while it was crossing a river stream close to our village and he was crushed under the wheels of the bus. Those two F.A students could have made some mark in our village educated population. To go back to the title the Intermediate course, it was replaced by the name Pre University Course which was again

modified as Intermediate course, for some fancy reasons taken by the educational department of the state government. Parallel to the Pre University Course some other colleges started what was called as a twelfth standard which was a continuation of one year education after the usual **SSLC** which was also called the eleventh standard. With all the whims and fancies of the educational policy makers, the **SSLC** was curtailed to the tenth class and the Intermediate was named as junior and senior intermediate courses of one year duration as it stood today. What further changes would take place we should leave it to the great minds that manage the educational system in our state. So far what I wrote is from the hind sight but I was not aware of all those facts in those days as clearly as I could see today.

I should come back to the real part of the story of my own admission and study in a college for the first time in my life and I should dwell in detail as close to the truth as possible as I remembered nearly fifty years after my **PUC** studies. As the Telugu saying goes by **“uttiki yekkaleni vaadu swarganiki ela yekkutaadu”** here utti should mean the school studies and swargam should mean college studies. So it is my imminent duty to detail a few aspects of my school studies before I could really think of the college studies. As mentioned before, I was very late and the last person to be admitted in to the elementary school in our village where my contemporary students were already ahead of me in learning a few



Telugu alphabets and I had difficulty in catching up with all of them at the same time getting the least amount of punishment from the sadist teacher. Whatever my efforts were I could manage to complete my fourth standard while most of my classmates dropped out of the class for various reasons. In those days there were no examinations or marks at the end of the academic year and only automatic promotion to the next class depending on the class attendance was done. I was regular to school so my teacher promoted me to the fifth standard without any difficulty. During the summer holidays I found interest in reading some books, as my elder sister was appearing for the entrance exam test to join the sixth standard at the Zilla Parishat High School at PedaNandi Padu. I also fancied my chances to take the examination along with my sister. I was not really eligible to take the examination as I did not complete my fifth class studies and also I was not eligible to join the high school because of the under age. My father purchased a book to prepare for the examination which contained multiple choice and single line answer bits. The name of the book was Vijayasarithi or Vijayasadhani was new and easy to read and I could grasp the subject quickly. When I really appeared for the examination I was short listed in the successful students of one hundred and twenty in number but there was class room accommodation available only for the first sixty students. My sister was selected in the first list as she scored more marks than me and I was put in the second list of the waiting

students. As I was selected for the sixth standard in the high school I was given the **TC** from the elementary school to join the high school. Hence I could not continue my fifth class studies in the elementary school in our village. Hoping to get admission in to the high school sixth standard I was going along with my father almost every day to the high school to meet some of the teachers there, for a solution for my problem. When I went to the school I saw my name in the list of the students pasted on the black board outside the head masters room. My serial number was sixty nine out of the hundred and twenty students. I missed my selection in the first list very narrowly. There was some disagreement about the number sixty nine expressed by some of my seniors from my village who contested that whether I was the sixty ninth in the order of the merit or I got sixty nine percent of marks. Irrespective of the remarks from my seniors, our endeavor to get admission in to sixth standard continued relentlessly for days together. On a very fortunate day one of my beloved teachers came with a bright idea to solve the problem. He sympathized with my father's continuous efforts and my keen interest in getting admission into the school. At that point of time I should mention there were not many government's recognized high schools in and around our village. Our own village had two elementary schools of which one was a social welfare elementary school which had facilities to teach up to the seventh standard for some time. There was a similar school with identical standards at

the nearby village called Annaparthi. The students after completing their studies in the eighth standard at Annaparthi joined in the Z.P.H.School at PedaNandi Padu to study from the ninth class to eleventh class. There was a school at Abbineni Guntapalem my grandmother's village where there was a high school catering up to the **SSLC**. As it was more than five kilometers away from our village not many people preferred to go in that direction except a stray candidate like, Mr.Addepalli Lakshmi Narayana. Students from Gogulamudi, Katrapadu, Pusuluru, Kommuru, Nagulapadu, China Nandipadu, Adusumalli, Palaparthi and some other nearby villages including our village Varagani students preferred to join the school at Peda Nandi Padu as it was nearer to those villages, it had a high standard of education, sports and related activities. All those villages had the elementary school educational facilities only. Our school used to admit nearly three hundred and fifty students. So there was a genuine scarcity of the class rooms to accommodate the increasing demands of the students every year. Late Sri.Kola Koteswera Rao master came out with a brilliant idea to accommodate students like me without losing one year of education. He advised my father to supply the required wood and the leaves of the palm grove trees (Thati Chettu Doolalu, Akulu) to build a temporary thatched shed to accommodate the waiting students for which my father agreed immediately and procured the necessary material and also the men required to build an instant shed in the vacant place available

within the school premises. So the history was made in the Z.P.High School Peda Nandi Padu to start a second section of sixth class in the year 1959 for the first time. I was fortunate enough to get in to the high school at the age of nine years and again my beloved teacher changed my date of birth to suit the admission criteria. Hence my real date of birth which was written by my father with his own hand writing in a note book carefully preserved even after his death was sixteenth of March 1950, which was wrongly recorded in the village Munciff's official records as seventeenth of March, 1950 as the village aaya (Mantrasani) reported all the births to the village Munciff on the next day of the birth of any child in the village. So the birth certificate given by our village Munciff showed my date of birth officially as seventeenth of March, 1950. That fact was known only at the time of high school admission. As I did not complete ten years of age my beloved teacher changed my date of birth to the fourth of January, 1949 which is being continued in all the records as my real date of birth. Even after knowing the truth, I did not contest my date of birth and accepted it for all the purposes of official documentation. Thus I started my high schools studies at Z.P.H.School at Peda Nandi Padu.

Joining in the high school itself was such a big drama in my life. Catching up with the students who were already admitted in to the class and learning the lessons was the next step, I missed the classes for a period of one month or more. I started getting the

bashing from the mercilessly sadistic teachers, especially the Hindi master that made a painful beginning for my studies. At the age of nine years I did not have any concept of the education as a whole, never looked beyond the classroom and the school premises. At the most, the idea was to complete the studies in the high school without failing in any examination and forcing myself to discontinue my studies to help my father in the farming. Many people who joined with me in my class either in the first or second section dropped out of the school without completing their education up to **SSLC**. When we joined the school our class strength was one hundred and twenty members which gradually dwindled into a single section and ultimately when we reached the eleventh class we were hardly thirty to forty in number. Of those thirty to forty, only two girl students continued to complete the **SSLC** and one of those two was my own sister Ms.Adilakshmi and the other was Ms.Usha Rani.

In our school we had a very huge play ground and many state level and national level badminton, volleyball and kabadi players brought laurels to our school. Our school had vast agricultural lands of an extent of twenty acres which was used to train the students in the study of the agriculture farming, sericulture and cultivation of vegetables etc. Our school had the optional bifurcated course to study the agricultural sciences as a separate subject from ninth class onwards. Actually there was a qualified agricultural demonstrator who taught the subject of the agricultural sciences

and also made practical use of the available land to cultivate paddy, vegetables, honey and mulberry silk in our school campus. That made some foundation for some of the students to take up agricultural sciences as an optional subject and also to go to the agricultural B.Sc course which was available at the nearby town Bapatla. In fact taking the general mathematics and the bifurcated agricultural sciences in place of composite of mathematics and the regular science subject was an easy way of passing the **SSLC** for most of the students in our school. I was not an exception and I preferred general mathematics and also the agricultural sciences to the supposed to be difficult composite mathematic and general sciences. To complete the picture there was one more school in our district or state which offered the same bifurcated agricultural sciences course at place called Duggirala. One freshly qualified Ag.B.Sc graduate by name Sri Ayyappa Reddy inspired the students to learn the agricultural sciences seriously. Earlier to him there used to be one more gentleman by name Mr.Sastri who started the bifurcated course in our school. That was all the insight in our school days about the future studies after the completion of the **SSLC**. Even though there were one or two candidates who went to the professional courses like medicine and engineering it was a **“Sour Grape or Andani Draksha for many students like me”**. Unlike the present students we did not have any concept the world outside our school and village.

Even in the high school, in the lower forms, that was sixth to eighth standard the final annual examinations were conducted and the students were promoted to the next class as per the list of the names exhibited in the notice board during the summer vacation, the individual marks were not displayed at all. There was no question of the grades or the classes; just passing the examination was the only goal for the student, the parents and the teachers. Even though monthly, quarterly and half yearly examinations were conducted regularly in all the subjects and the marks were awarded, for some strange reason in the final annual examination the marks were not either allotted or displayed. To tell the truth getting the marks was not the criteria in those days over passing the examination. In the tenth class suddenly we were asked to sign on a paper in a small note book which was going to be the future **SSLC** certificate. We were also asked to get our parent's signature in that notebook. For the first time I went through that book casually and noticed the different columns showing the name of the subject we were studying and also the marks obtained in the previous examination. Then only I realized that there was a system of awarding marks and also the grading of the students depending on the percentage of marks as **A, B, C, D** etc. I also noticed a few personal features showing the height, weight and the identification marks of the students, the caste certificate, and the income certificate were also pasted on the reverse of the first and the last

page. Some of the results of the sports activities were also entered in to the note book. That was how the mind was triggered towards the numbers in the examination looking beyond simply passing the examination. Actually the year before the final **SSLC** examination that was the tenth standard which was the real turning point in the school student studies. Gradually some sort of a maturity started at that age of fifteen years for all the other students and fourteen for me. There was a conscious effort to prepare for the examination in all the subjects seriously towards scoring more marks. To achieve such goals the environment in the villages and the individual houses was not congenial for a concentrated effort on studies only. In the house there were so many distractions and disturbances as there were so many house hold activities and chores that were taking place simultaneously. The bubbling agriculture activity was a continuous process for all the farmers. In those days, we had to give a helping hand in the domestic needs like fetching water from the tanks, feeding the cattle and also occasionally going to the fields. To study at home at nights there was no electricity in our villages and we solely depended on the kerosene lamps, even under those kerosene lamps we could not read for long hours as the rest of the family members went to sleep very early after their full day's physical hard work. Keeping the light on beyond, ten 'o' clock was not possible and discouraged. Hence some students in our class decided to find out alternate ways of studying. Two of our village



students, both were my friends and classmates, late Mr.Nune Ankamma and late Mr.Avvari Krishna Murthi started staying back in the school premises, took the keys of one class room and started having a combined study without wasting time at home. That was more useful on holidays, weekends and quarterly vacations. They started staying back at night time also. They asked me for my company and hence I joined them for the group study. That was the first step taken by me consciously with a purpose in mind. It had its own good effects and small bad effects also but the main goal was to focus on the books and the studies. That worked for me to face the final examination in the tenth class boldly. In our school days some students took private tuition from our school teachers. To the best of my knowledge none of those students who took the private tuition performed any better than those who could not take the tuition for financial or other reasons. Once I realized that a conscious effort towards studies without any distractions would reap good results I took the bold step of concentrating on the studies only. I could also watch students slipping off the main track and going down the hill. Once the downhill course started there was no hope of coming up. Even otherwise the normal ascent itself needed more effort and to stay there itself needed much more resolve and energy. I found the right path for the studies in the tenth class itself. But the clarity of the path I could see only during my **SSLC** or the eleventh standard. I found my two good friends in the tenth class; one was a naturally

gifted genius with academic and extracurricular activities with a tendency to stray away from the main goal of studies. He had the knowledge and interest in the atoms and the atom bombs. He used to draw the chemical equation for the imaginary atom bombs. He was a science prodigy. One day he stealthily opened the science laboratory and sneaked into the laboratory to steal some chemicals and was later caught by the science teacher. Such was his interest in scientific innovations. No doubt he joined later in the defense services after his **PUC** at the Hindu College. The other one was purely hard working and relied on his natural instincts. In addition to the studies both of them had small vices like smoking which was infectious in that tender age and there was no exception for me and could not but give company for them. They introduced to me the sweet smelling and tasting Marco polo cigarettes first and later to all other brands slowly. The popular brand like the Capstan, Scissors, Berkeley, Cool, the cheap Charminar and finally even the Bouta and the Tajmahal beedies. As soon as, I entered the **SSLC** class, I decided to disown my two friends and decided there were other better students in my class to have company and to improve my own study standards. I started sitting in the first seat of the first bench in the class room in the company of two bright students who came to the school by bicycle from a village called Adusumalli situated at a distance of eight kilometers from the school, every day. They used to carry their lunch boxes and stayed back in the school till late in the

evening and returned to their village at night. It was a total waste of time for commuting from such a long distance every day losing valuable time on the road itself. Hence one of my bench mates Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao wanted to save his time by staying back in Peda Nandi Padu village itself and put all his efforts and concentration on studies only. So, he found a single room residential accommodation close to our school and took it for rent. He invited me to join as his roommate as we had become good friends already by sharing the seats in the first bench of the class room. However we always fought for the first seat in the front bench which I always succeeded in occupying. The other occupant in our bench was Mr.Ch.Nageswara Sastri who also hailed from the same village Adusumalli, later turned out to be the top scorer of marks in our class after completing the **SSLC** examination. He was very shy and unassuming but came from a very poor family and could not continue his studies after passing the **SSLC** examination. Coming back to my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao, he had a very good foresight and planning for his future academic career. He had an elder brother Mr.Hanumantha Rao, in his family who was also our school student, decided to study his engineering degree at **BHU** (Banaras Hindu University) and his main subject was on metallurgy. So, Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao decided to study medicine as an alternative to his brother's engineering studies. Mr.Mamidipaka

Seshagiri Rao had the progressive ideas and he was instrumental in motivating me about what do after passing the **SSLC** examinations.

Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao, who became a very intimate friend over a period of time, inspired me to plan ahead about what to do after passing the **SSLC** examination. What that meant was that we took it for granted; at least Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao for sure was very confident of completing the **SSLC** successfully and going forward to fulfill his ambition of joining the medicine course. His idea was that I should also follow him towards the same goal as I was keen on my studies and almost competing with him to get good marks in all the subjects. But my problem was that I decided to opt for the easier subjects like general mathematics and the bifurcated agricultural sciences to pass the examinations without any difficulty and also at that point of time the maximum imagination for my future was to go towards the Ag.B.Sc course that was available at the nearby town Bapatla. The motivation for that were, already two of my village students and seniors, Mr.Durisala Subba Rao and Mr.Addepalli Lakshmi Narayana were studying at Benaras. Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao on the contrary was a bright and hardworking student; he took composite mathematics at which he was very good and also the general sciences subject which I thought was difficult for me. Even though I was not as sure as Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao, the thought of joining the medical college was ignited by him which became a driving force for me to

put in more hard work along with Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao. Noting my interest he offered me to join his rented room to put in extra effort and to read together at nights. Earlier in my tenth class I already made a beginning to study at nights in the school class room itself for some days along with my good friends late Mr.Nune Ankamma and late Mr.Avvari Krishna Murthi, whom I decided to stay away from for their minor vices. The offer from Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao gave me confidence that I was going in the right direction hand in hand with Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao. In fact, there was no other person in our class who took such a bold decision to take a rented room just for studies, away from our own houses and villages except Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao. He was paying a monthly rent of rupees twenty to the house owners who spared one room in their house exclusively for our studies. I immediately took the offer and joined him in the room sharing the rent and the studies. I could convince my parents to spend that extra money towards my studies. Rupees ten was not easy money to earn in those days, it had its own value when somebody compared that the daily wage for an agricultural physical labor was hardly one rupee for day. I started going up and down to my village after the school studies and stayed overnight in the rented room along with Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao. He used to get his meals carrier from his native place and I used to have my dinner at my own place and returned at night by bicycle. We used to sleep on the floor on a mat.

We had the kerosene lamps for light at night. As days passed by we became inseparables as friends and classmates, shared all our studies and happiness. That was the real second step towards the unknown goal I had in my mind. It so happened, that the rented house where we stayed was located just in front of another rented house where my beloved teachers late Sri.Kamma Kotaiah Choudary B.A and his wife Mrs.Naga Bhushanamma B.A, B.Ed stayed with their family. Every day I used pass by their house a number of times. I was attracted by my teachers as they were giving private tuition for some students in the morning hours before the school started. As I was seriously thinking about scoring better marks in the final **SSLC** examination, as the late Sri.Kamma Kotaiah Choudary teacher was good at teaching English and Mathematics, I wanted to take special coaching in those two subjects from him. He readily accepted for my request and gave me tuition in both the subjects. The monthly tuition fees was rupees ten, again an additional burden on my parents who were working round the clock in raising the tobacco and chilly crops with all the associated troubles and vagaries of the weather and the nature. Still my parents stood strong and backed me to go ahead with all my plans and preparations. I would only quote one comparative figure of the annual school fees in those days if I remembered correctly was only rupees two, for one year! That decision to take the private tuition made me feel more close to my teachers and secure, both of them

liked me for the sincere and hard work I was prepared to undertake. Not only that, but also I became more confident and faced all the other subjects in the school boldly. I was also scoring good marks in my class tests. In fact, when late Sri.Kamma Kotaiah Choudary teacher conducted a preparatory examination before the final examination in **SSLC**, in the English test a funny situation arose. After the examination, late Sri.Kamma Kotaiah Choudary awarded the marks, hundred percent to Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao and ninety nine and half percent for me. I was a little unhappy for scoring half a mark less than my friend sitting next to me in the front bench. I compared my answer sheet with my friend's answer sheet and did not find any mistake that I made to get half a mark less than my friend. After a little bit of hesitation I went to my teacher in the class room and requested him to show the mistake I made in the answer sheet, not to find fault with the teacher or to satisfy my ego to get equal marks as my friend but only to learn to correct my mistake in case I made one. He felt a little bit embarrassed, without any hesitation and without any verification he altered my marks from the ninety nine and half percent to one hundred percent and hence equal to Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao's marks. That was the spirit and the healthy competition we were having both as students and friends as well as roommates. It may not be out of place that during my tenth class, a surprise class test was conducted by Mrs.Naga Bhushanamma in the social studies

subject; she gave me one hundred percent marks on her own. That was the first time in my student life that I got the hundred percent marks even if it was a class test that made me feel that I was not a bad student, that I had the potential to get the top marks and if only I put in my heart and soul on the studies. That happened one year before I started taking private tuition from my beloved teachers at their house which proved that I was not given any bias in awarding those marks. The second time hundred out of hundred was literally forced upon by me on my teacher late Sri.Kamma Kotaiah Choudary who liked me as one of his best students. For my indirect way of getting the marks corrected, my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao did not mind, in fact he himself pushed me to meet my teacher to get that extra half mark. Since he got hundred percent marks for himself and I was not getting more marks than him by the correction, he was equally happy to see that I was awarded the same marks. It only showed his character, love for the friendship and also the maturity of mind even at that tender age. That was his ambition that I should do well in all my subjects. He was actually planning that both of us should go to the same college for studying **PUC** and also to the same medical college for studying **MBBS**. At that time I did not know which college to choose for **PUC**, leave alone the medical college. That was the difference in maturity between both of us. He was a good thinker and long term planner; no doubt that he had an elder brother who laid the pathway for his future studies. I



was more than fortunate to have him as my classmate, bench mate and most of all as the roommate. My plans were to look for the immediate future and get the short term results and not to think too far ahead as I was too self conscious to assimilate my own progress and achievements in the studies.

First of all, to go to **PUC** one should pass the **SSLC** as a prelude, as there were some who could not pass the **SSLC** examination in the first attempt like my good friend Mr.Challa Punna Rao from my own village. The next step was to get the maximum percentage of marks to get entry into a good college and also to get the Bi.P.C seat in **PUC**. We worked hard and prepared well for the examinations. The results were announced; we both passed and received the **SSLC** certificate along with marks at a later date. Immediately after the examinations were over my beloved teacher late Sri.Kamma Kotaiah Choudary master asked me how I answered my general mathematics question paper. He was out of the station during the examinations as he was posted as an invigilator at a nearby village school where he stayed back till the examinations were completed. I confessed to him that I spoiled one long question on the calculation of the interest. Actually it was an easy sum which I repeatedly and correctly answered both in the school and in the tuition classes. While answering that question I was over confident and spoiled the sum, I knew the end of the answer but spoiled the way I arrived at it. I knew that during the examination itself and also knew that my teacher would be very

unhappy and angry for spoiling that question. He had very high expectations about me. As I expected, late Sri.Kamma Kotaiah Choudary was terribly upset when I told him the truth. I could see his face with annoyance. He thought all his efforts to make me one of the best students were lost. I was ashamed that I could not live up to his expectations. I could not stand before him any longer and left him with a feeling of disgust. Then only I realized that how much he had loved me and wanted me to do well in my examinations all the more so in the subjects he had given me extra coaching in English and general mathematics. As I was about to forget in the examinations and my poor performance, the marks list in the **SSLC** certificate came as a boost up for my morale. All those who passed the examinations were happy, the first, second and the third places were indentified. My classmate and friend Mr.Ch.Nageswara Sastri who also shared the first bench in the class along with me and my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao, got the first mark in the class scoring around four hundred out of six hundred marks, my best friend and roommate Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao got the second mark in our class scoring three hundred and eighty five marks out of six hundred and my village mate and the prodigal scientist late Mr.Avvari Krishna Murthi stood third in our class with a score of three hundred and seventy two or so. All the three were brilliant on their own and never took any additional coaching. All the three of them took the difficult way of the composite mathematics and the

general sciences as their main subjects. I had the consolation of the fourth place with three hundred and sixty two marks out of the six hundred with just sixty percent which was by itself was a very good performance for me. But I took the easier subjects of general mathematics and the agricultural sciences as an optional course and also extra coaching. My marks were better than many of the other classmates who scored less than sixty percent. My own sister, who unfortunately suffered with severe jaundice, a few months before the final examination and could not fare well in the examination but successfully passed, she got the bare minimum pass marks of two hundred and seventy two and was eligible to get a seat in the Bi.P.C course at the government women's college at Guntur. Coming back to my marks list, I got the maximum marks in the general mathematics subject scoring seventy five percent, the highest by any other student in our class. That was in spite of spoiling one long question for which my beloved teacher was very much upset and hurt. Looking back if only I did not spoil that question my percentage of marks could have been a little different as that was a fifteen marks question I did spoil. Even though my teacher was happy with my overall performance his expectations were high about me on that score. I must have disappointed him terribly, but the end result was just a consolation.

The next step was to join the pre university course. My friend and roommate Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao was very clear about

the next step. He wanted to take the Bi.P.C course and also wanted to join at the Andhra Loyola College at Vijayawada. He was very sure that with his marks he would certainly get the admission in that college. He also encouraged me to apply in the same college as he had been asking me even before the examinations and the results were announced. But I was not very sure whether I would get the admission in that college with my marks. All those of my classmates who passed with lesser percentage of marks than me applied for admission in to the AC College at Guntur mainly in the Arts group, some of those like late Mr.Avvari Krishna Murthi and Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao applied for admission into the Bi.P.C group at the Hindu College Guntur and my sister Ms.Adilakshmi applied for the Bi.P.C seat at the Government Women's College, Guntur. Only late Mr.Nune Ankamma applied for his seat in **PUC** at Bapatla. All those students from my village applied for the Bi.P.C group and all of them were selected and started attending to their classes. As decided by my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao we both got the application forms from the Andhra Loyola College and duly applied for the Bi.P.C seats. We did not think of applying to any other college as we were assured that getting a first class mark in the **SSLC** was good enough to fetch a seat in the Andhra Loyola College. Actually I had never seen Vijayawada or the Andhra Loyola College. I did not see any other town except Guntur and did not have any idea of even going beyond Guntur even if I got a seat in the Andhra Loyola

College. There was some waiting period before the admissions were announced. Some of my village friends and other school mates started getting the admission letters into various colleges where they applied for. Even my sister got her admission ahead of me. I was eagerly and expectantly waiting for my admission letter.

Before I dwell into the admission debacle I should mention a few situations and persons that triggered my constant perseverance in my studies. To recollect, I was the last student to get admitted the first class in my village elementary school, I joined the sixth standard in the high school without completing the fifth class studies in the elementary school. I joined the sixth standard also very late in the academic year only after the sanctioning of the second section in the high school. Even after passing the sixth class there was a waiting period to start my seventh standard classes for want of a school room accommodation for the second section the seventh standard also. The delay in starting the second section of the seventh class was so much that people thought that I really failed in my examination in the sixth standard itself. At that stage even my father was going round the people asking them whether I was going to get proper education or not and also I remembered one day that he was enquiring with the proprietor of a log wood sales man Mr. Peter whether I could become at least a school teacher. That was the state of frustration in my father's mind. With that background when I really started attending the classes of the seventh

standard one elderly person in my village, a distant relative, a maternal uncle by name late Mr. Medida Veeraswami asked me a funny question. I used to call him as an uncle. He used to smoke tobacco chutta. He had some facial deformity; I was told that he underwent some brain surgery at the General Hospital Madras, there was constant watering from his right eye and I did not verify whether Professor B. Ramamurthi operated upon him. Because I was not aware of the great person till I became a house surgeon in my life. That uncle, late Mr. Medida Veeraswami asked me which class I was studying. I answered him that I was studying seventh class thinking that he would appreciate my progress. On the contrary he laughed at me and told me in a sarcastic way that I was lagging behind in my studies and how I was studying only the seventh class at my age. He did not know that I was ahead of my age group students by a year or two. He also did not realize that most of my elementary school classmates did not come up to the high school studies. How could he know that I was competing in my high school studies with students who were elder to me by more than one year and also fighting for a place in the school room accommodation? Even in that tender age of eleven years, studying in the seventh class I could realize the burden of expectations from the elders even if they were illiterate villagers.

The second event that stirred me was when I was studying, my eighth class. As usual, all the school students played some games or

other after the evening classes were over. I used to play the base ball and the ball badminton games on and off. My school was well known in producing the state level players in the volley ball, the ball badminton and the Kabaddi games. On one particular day I did not feel like playing any games in the school and started walking back to my village around 4:30 PM by which time the Sun started setting. As school children with no other avagations and only playful actions, me and many other students walked down to the school and back home absent mindedly. We used to walk in the company of one or two other students and sometimes alone. While walking along the road that was less than one mile in distance we did certain silly and childish activities. One was to throw stones and get the ripe tamarind fruit and the other was to throw stones into the adjoining canals and watch the fun in the water. If there was no other activity we used to kick the stones on the road and watch the distance it travelled till we injure our toes or the feet and regret for such acts. In the early days we walked on the bare foot and slowly graduated into the village made leather cheppals. Having injured the toes we stopped that activity till the nails were removed or fell off and restarted the same without learning the lessons. On that day I saw one gentle man coming from our village walking opposite to me. He was a vagabond, he used to recite some verses from the manuscripts and he used to live in his own world unmindful of the surroundings, often singing some songs on the road. He also used to

play some mythological roles in the street plays performed in our village once in awhile. He was called by the name Mr. Bramham and he also remained as a bachelor synonymous with his name that he was a Bramhachari. On that day as he approached me, he suddenly stopped at me and commented that he had seen a bright glow in my face which was an indication that I was going to become a very good intellectual, in his own words **“Nee Mukhamulo Goppa Velugu Prakasistundi Nuvvu Goppa Medhavi Avutavu”** those words came out of his mouth spontaneously, he did not ask me anything and did not utter any other words and walked away speaking into himself floating in his own world. I did not expect such a remark from an unknown person like him who came across accidentally on the road and spoke like an angel as if some divine blessings have come through him to me. I had seen him from a distance on a number of occasions but never had a chance to talk to him face to face. It was my turn to stand alone and ponder over what was uttered by him. It took a few minutes for me to settle down and grasp the meaning of what he was telling. I tried to reenact the situation and the scene on a number of times as I walked on the same road to the school from my village and back. The connecting road between the two villages was a tar road with large tamarind trees on either side of the road giving good shelter, good food for the goats and sheep and also the seasonal tamarind fruit. On either side of the road, small rivulets were there with water for the nearby fields. In the evening hours,



when the Sun was setting, the Sun rays were reflected on to the face giving a yellow hue. While coming back from the school, the face used to be greasy with sweat and oil dripping from the head on to the face making it more shining with the reflected Sun rays it might appear as a hallow around the face. That might have been the good reason for Mr.Bramham to make such an uninvited comment spontaneously. Whatever was the reason or the explanation for his utterance that made me aware of myself to be constantly focused and stayed on my feet and not to be carried away by the comments and expectations of the elder's or the strangers?

The third event even though it may not be in the chronological order, I was recollecting some other situations that got imprinted in my mind for decades together. I remember the astrological forecast given by one of our village vagabond astrologer, late Sri. Sanjeevaiah. I had given a detailed account of his astrological forecast and the palmistry told by him during my childhood elsewhere. Most of the forecast findings turned out to be true a great extent and still getting subjective proof even after he passed away. His forecast on the number of moles on my body especially the one on my right shoulder, which he said was symbolic of **“Savyasaachi”** meaning using both hands for throwing the arrows which was the main virtue of the mythological great warrior in Mahabharatham, the Arujuna. Even though I cannot compare with any such great figures but becoming a surgeon and using both hands for surgery

was somewhere nearer to the term Savyasaachi. His description of some more moles on my body proved to be correctly located. He had seen my palm and said that I was going to have two children's which was correct; I was going to have two wives, which was not correct anyhow. His forecast on my possible cause of death due to drowning was proving to be nearer to the truth as I had already a number of attacks of near fatal pulmonary edema. He also mentioned that I was indirectly responsible for disturbing and separating two cobra snakes when they were in copulation in the fields for which they cursed me to have a separated life from my spouse. Even without asking he forecast my life span as a whopping eighty five years which nobody believed including me. In fact it was not a relevant revelation for that time. In those days the life expectancy was an average of fifty years only. Moreover I was hardly ten year old boy and to think of the marriage, the children, the education and the life span were too farfetched, imaginary and ridiculous. In that connection I would fast forward my life for a few decades and tell the forecast about my life for myself. At the age of fifty eight years (58), I had a severe cardiac rest and I was almost declared dead at Visakhapatnam. After escaping the certain death I had similar problem at Hyderabad and also my life was saved in time by Dr.B.Soma Raju and his team. At that time I jokingly said to my close friend Dr.M.A.Saleem that the astrologist at my village must have got confused with the numbers and told my age as eighty five (85) instead of fifty eight (58)

just by mistakenly reversing the numbers. That I escaped the fifty eight years events and hope and pray God that eighty five is a possibility even though it is too far off and too greedy to expect to live up to eighty five years of age. Most of them were nearer to the truth, but the one about the mole on the right shoulder, in fact I had two moles and their significance as a Savyasaachi constantly inspired me and surfaced in to my mind whenever I took my examinations in the medical college at a later date. The astrological aspect I had described more on detail in my Telugu article titled Jalagandam. I also looked into a number of weekly astrological forecasts that came in the Telugu weekly magazines and also the weekly Sunday feature that came in the Indian Express news paper and read with keen enthusiasm the item ***"This Week for you"*** written by the famous Peter Vidal. Even though I never depended seriously on the astrological aspect of life but read it as a matter of routine for my satisfaction, sometimes for the sake of confidence and self assurance. That habit has still continued subconsciously even today. The high frequency of the coincidences is too tempting to discontinue.

The last but not the least occasion which inspired me to do better than what I already achieved up to **SSLC**. That was when I was coming back from Guntur in an **RTC** bus; I met one gentle man in that bus. He was wearing the uniform of a central excise department officer and I recognized him as a familiar person looking

from a distance as he was working at the Peda Nandi Padu station. He enquired about my studies and also asked me to show my **SSLC** certificate. He went through my marks list and complemented and congratulated me spontaneously for securing more than sixty percent marks in my **SSLC**. For the first time in my life I heard somebody telling me that I was a First Class student. His statement made me feel more bloated and blustered and also gave me enough inspiration and courage to go ahead in my future studies. It got imprinted in my mind that people with first class marks are recognized in the society and also they have responsibility to keep that standard and expectations from the public, safe and intact. All those aforesaid direct or indirect observations of people on my education and future were really good stimulants for me to cross the educational hurdles one after the other.

The waiting period for the admission in to the **PUC** at the Andhra Loyola College was becoming more painful as the days passed by. The news came like a bolt from the blue that the selected candidates list was displayed at the Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada. The good news was my trusted best friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao was selected in the first list. The bad and shocking news for me was that I was not selected. The selection was made on the percentage of marks secured in the **SSLC** examination. The selected candidates list just stopped one name ahead of my name. I was first in the waiting list. They promised to

select me in the second list if any student failed to turn up for the admission. There was some hope, but the demand for admission in to the most prestigious Andhra Loyola College was so much that it would be foolish to imagine that some student would not turn up for the admission after the selection. More than me, my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao was crest fallen. He had very high expectations about both of us joining in the same college and to continue our association that started at Peda Nandi Padu. He was still hoping for the unknown magical event to take place. As per the date given by the college administration, he joined in the college and started attending to his classes. Slowly and steadily the gloom had descended on me and my well-wishers that there was no second list and I did not stand any chance of joining the Andhra Loyola College for that year. Andhra Loyola College was known for its high educational standards, strict discipline and assured rank and seat in any professional college, either engineering or medicine. I realized that I lost a golden opportunity to get admission in to the most prestigious and highly sought after college in our state. Ironically, I never visited the great college which produced a large number of engineers and doctors, either during my application for a seat or after I was told that I just missed the seat by whisker or by a fraction of a mark literally and metaphorically. My parent's hopes were shattered as they were banking on my admission in to the Andhra Loyola College as so many of my well-wishers boosted their

hopes by praising my achievements in my **SSLC** and the good marks I scored as one of the best in our village. It was also a disturbing fact for them that many students from our village and high school got admissions into the other colleges with less percentage of marks than me, including my own sister. My parents could not understand what I had to do if I did not get the seat in the Bi.P.C group in any other college, which was the main goal and aim. I was also wondering what was in store for my future. I was discussing and consulting with known and unknown people about what to do next. Some people found fault with me for not taking the help of the **RCM** Fathers who stayed in large numbers at our nearby village Katrapadu. Actually there was a big congregation of the Roman Catholics at Katrapadu for ages together. There was a big catholic church; the entire village population became Catholics for generations together irrespective of their caste or creed. There was the permanent British influence on that village; all the Hindus took to the Christianity. There was an **ILTD**, Indian Leaf Tobacco Development Company located in that village where all most all the Virginia Tobacco produced in our village and the nearby villages were taken to that company for the seasonal sales. So the village, the villagers, the **RCM** Fathers and the **ILTD** Company with the British Buyer were all too familiar to my father. I also visited that village and the company, on a number of occasions when I accompanied my father when he took the tobacco produce, for the

sale. It did not occur either to me or to my parents that we should I have taken the help of the **RCM** Fathers for admission in to the Andhra Loyola College. In fact almost all the **RCM** Fathers went by walk from our village to Katrapadu passing across our house and our tobacco barrens and the cattle shed. Not only that, the idea did not occur to our mind but also we did not want to get a seat out of the way by using influence. It was not in our mind about using the recommendations for admissions in to the college. I did not want the first step to go the college a false step to begin with. First of all there was no doubt about my getting an admission in to the Andhra Loyola College. Retrospectively I also thought if I did not get enough marks to get an admission into the Andhra Loyola College, I should not force to get a seat undeservingly. Looking back even today if I got a seat by recommendation I was only going to spoil the chance of some other student who scored more marks than me. In those days the term of recommendation or reservation did not surface into our minds. I was convinced that the road to the success was only through the hard work, as it was said in a Telugu saying "**Kaste Phali**". I believed in that saying even before I reached the stage of college admissions. That was what grilled into our minds constantly by our school teachers at each stage of our education. There was no alternative for the hard work. In a way I was relieved that I did not have to go to Vijayawada which was a strange place for me anyhow and also for my father to make the number of trips to Vijayawada to

see me as and when he wished. As I was the only precious male child in our family, my parents were equally reluctant to send me too far away from our native place.

Not getting the seat in the Andhra Loyola College was accepted with equanimity with the entire unhappiness associate with it. But what was in store for me was a big disaster. On one hand I was going to miss my good hearted friend who wanted me to grow along with him in our future education, including joining in the medical college. On the other hand, with all the high expectations of getting an assured seat in the Andhra Loyola College, I and my friend did not think of even applying into any other college where we could have got admissions without blinking. We could have been in the first list and in the first section in any other college except the coveted Andhra Loyola College. I realized the magnitude of the problem when I approached the next best colleges in Guntur. The age old premier arts college at Guntur was the well known Andhra Christian College popularly known as the AC College. When I went to the AC College they told me that the admissions were over for that year, 1965-66. Most of my high school friends got admission into the AC College in the first list itself and they chose the arts subject instead of Bi.P.C. I could have easily got an admission in to the Bi.P.C group if only I applied in time. The next choice was to go to the Hindu College where some of my friends were already admitted into the Bi.P.C group, like late Mr.Avvari Krishna Murthi,



Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao who were my original school classmates and Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao who was one year senior to us in the high school but joined with the above two candidates at the Hindu College, all in the same Bi.P.C group and also all of them hailed from my village. When I approached the Hindu College principal's office they told me that the admissions were closed for that year and refused to give me even the application form. I returned home as the gloom descended on me and I started realizing that my chance of getting a seat into any other college with Bi.P.C group was more than impossible. For the first time I realized what a big mistake that I made in not thinking of an alternative college to the Andhra Loyola College. After a few days of hesitation somebody told me and my father, as the last attempt for me was to go to the arts college at Bapatla where my other classmate late Mr.Nune Ankamma and my one senior in the school Mr.Yerram Ramamohan Rao were already admitted into the Bi.P.C group. I don't have to repeat that all of them scored less marks than me in the **SSLC** examination and still got the choice of their Bi.P.C group at the college they wanted to study. There also the admissions were closed long before we reached there for the application. There was no hope of getting a seat even at a less popular place and college like Bapatla. We returned home empty handed, sadness and despair looming large on our faces. My father was the most depressed person as all his efforts were coming to a naught, for no fault of him.

He was not responsible for my failure to apply for the other colleges in time and choosing only to apply to one college that was the Andhra Loyola College. He did his best by giving me all the facilities and freedom during my school studies till then. He did not mind the extra expenditure during my studies or during my futile attempts in going round the rest of the colleges, after all the admissions were over. I readily remembered a few Telugu sayings **“Uttiki Ekkaleni Vaadu Swarganiki Ela Ekkutaadu”**; the other one **“Denikaina Adrushtam Undali or Petti Puttali”**; **“Saneeswarudu Nettina Kurchante”**; **“Kaalam Kalisi Rakunte Taadu Paamai Karustundi”**; and somebody even said that there was a curse of some evil forces. In our school days there was a wild rumor that people can do witch craft and cause hurt and harm to their enemies, the innocent and the gullible people. There was a girl student in our senior class who was branded to have been a victim of such a witch craft. There were stories making rounds in our villages about the methods of the witch craft performed by the unscrupulous persons. The art was called in Telugu as chethabadi, with which the girl student from our school became very serious, stopped eating and started losing weight and ultimately died mysteriously. Even though nobody thought or attributed such evil forces acting against my getting a seat in the **PUC** in any of the colleges even after getting the first class marks was a real tragedy. There was no light at the end of the tunnel. Most of the people gave their judgment that I had to stop my studies, get married and start assisting my father in the agricultural

work. That was what exactly the fate of a number of my contemporary school students who dropped out from the classes at regular intervals and took to the fields to assist their families.

When the hope leads to despair, the future became gloomy and uncertain and I was hoping for an unknown miracle to take place, suddenly somebody told us that there was an unknown arts college situated at Chirala town where I could try my luck. I never thought that one day I would go to a place like Chirala for my **PUC** studies. But that was the last straw to save that academic year. Added to that I was told that one person by name Mr.Kotapati Satyanarayana was working at the same college and was a lecturer in biology. He was the eldest son of our village Munciff, late Sri.Kotapati Dasayya. The existence of the arts college at Chirala or the existence of the biology lecturer from our village was not known to any one of us in our village till that time. There was no demand for admission into that college in those days. Till date none of our village people preferred to join in that college. Even the low profile biology lecturer could never inspire any student to get admission into the Chirala arts college from our village. In that sense, Bapatla Arts College was better off. With a heavy heart, as there was no other alternative, my father took me to the Chirala arts college on one day; we met the biology lecturer Mr.Kotapati Satyanarayana and submitted the application for the admission into the **PUC**, Bi.P.C group. To our surprise there was a big ocean of biology seats in **PUC** that were

available at Chirala, as much as the water available in the nearby sea. There was no demand for admissions into that college and except for a few people like me there were only a few stray students who were admitted there especially into the Bi.P.C group. Nobody with my percentage of marks was admitted into the Chirala arts college. I was readily given the admission slip and was asked to pay the college fees instantly. The management did not want to lose a chance to admit one more student into their college. Even though there was no direct help needed from Sri.Kotapati Satyanarayana, he was there personally guiding my father and me in the filling up of the application form and attaching the true copies of the necessary certificates, so that I did not lose that last and the best chance to get into the college, even if it was a remote college with meager chances of any quality education leave alone the first class marks required to get into a professional course after the **PUC**. As the proverb goes something is better than nothing my father agreed for the admission without second thoughts and paid the admission fees of one hundred and twenty rupees on the spot. The application, the admission and the payment of the fees were all made in a matter of few hours time as if, if we missed that golden opportunity there was no other place on the earth for my future studies. Neither my father nor the biology lecturer Mr.Kotapati Satyanarayana took me into confidence before paying the fees, because there was no other choice left for them. They did not ask me whether I was interested or not, I

did not say either yes or no but things happened at such a rapid pace and everything was done mechanically without giving much thought into the reality of the situation. Nobody thought of the intricacies involved in studying at an unknown place like Chirala with no infrastructure, name or popularity. There were no known people or relatives for me; there was no hostel for food and accommodation and there was no other student from our village in that college. So it was going to be a hell of a task for me if I agreed to study there at that Chirala College. It was a desperate last ditch attempt to save the academic year. It was an anti climax for me where I was looking at the most prestigious Andhra Loyola College and ultimately landed at the unknown arts college at Chirala. For somebody else with lesser motivation and will power it could have been a total disaster in their life. Not that I was strong and bold but I knew that I did not make any intentional mistake to suffer like that. If the fate had destined and ordained there was nothing that I could go against. Not knowing what to do next, I and my father went to the house of the Good Samaritan Mr.Kotapati Satyanarayana by walk. As we reached his house situated in the nearby locality we crossed a number of vacant places, sand dunes and many water pools. I was told on the way that many criminal activities took place in the surrounding areas where people were killed and thrown into the water pools or buried under the sand dunes. People used to call those places as **“Garuvulu”**. That was very common and also a

regular distraction for the local people. There were also long rows and stretches of huge and tall palm trees all along the place. The description and the visual picture made me feel that it was not the right place for the studies. Subconsciously then and there itself I decided that it was a wrong place for me, I would be better off anywhere else except at Chirala. I was prepared to lose one academic year and wait for the next year admissions than submit myself to face the day to day horror and terror. That was not the place for studies, especially for people like me with sensitive mind and brighter goals. I did not hide my feelings to my father and to the gentleman lecturer Mr.Kotapati Satyanarayana and told both of them in no uncertain terms that I was not coming back to Chirala again and hence I did not submit my original certificates at the college office. They did not say anything harsh, agreed to some extent with my decision and wanted me to take a leisurely and balanced decision in my own interest and choose what was right for me. I and my father returned home with a blank mind and almost came to the conclusion that we reached a point of no return.

As I was making a number of trips to the other colleges at Guntur, Bapatla and Chirala, I came across some of our classmates and village mates who were already admitted in to the **PUC**. There were also people in our village who were our well-wishers and also gave uninvited and spontaneous counseling. Some people encouraged me to face the situation boldly and courageously. Some

other people gave me some insight in how to utilize the forced vacation period. When I talked to my colleagues in the colleges, I gathered the information about the subjects they were studying, the books available and also the teachers in various subjects in those colleges. On my own I decided that whether I got the admission into the college or not I should keep reading the books to keep me abreast of the knowledge. As a first step I started going to the same high school where I studied up to **SSLC** and found out that there was a good library with books on various subjects. I was not aware of such a library existing in our school till I completed the **SSLC** examinations. During the summer vacations after the examinations I still attended the school for some time every day. As there were very few students in the school, the headmaster Mr.Lavu Nagaiah, popularly known as Chutta Nagaiah spent all his time in his office correcting the answer papers from other schools as a part of the annual valuation. Sometimes he was alone in the office and needed some help which I willingly and happily agreed to do. One day he needed some money very urgently and he wanted somebody to go to his house and get the money from his wife. Unfortunately he did not have any children. He called me and asked me whether I could go to his house to collect the money; I readily agreed to do what he wanted me to do. When I was about to go to his house he called me back and asked me how his wife would indentify me as his student. He himself came forward, removed his gold ring and asked me to

show it as, an identification to his wife. He trusted me so much that I brought the money as well as the ring back to the school and handed over to him honestly and faithfully. On another occasion, when the school day annual celebrations were arranged, my idol teacher late Sri.Kola Koteswara Rao, who was instrumental admitting me into the high school entrusted with me the work of taking the invitations to the nearby village teachers at Annaparthi. On a hot summer day afternoon I went all the way to Annaparthi by bicycle and handover the invitations to the teachers working there. During the prize distribution ceremony of that function I was called on to the dais by my teacher and he presented me a book on Othello in Telugu and he also wrote a complement on the book stating that I was one of the best outgoing students of the school for that year. That was a great surprise and pleasant blessing from a very kind hearted teacher. There were no bounds for my happiness on the day. It was a complement in contrast to what was written in my progress report of the **SSLC** certificate that was kept in as a secret till the certificates were issued after getting the results and marks of the **SSLC** examination. In that certificate the same headmaster Sri.Lavu Nagaiah wrote a confidential one line remark in my progress report as his comments ***“The student with average abilities”*** That was not to my expectation as many other students were given a much better report than my single line certificate. Even though it did not have any value or weight for the future academic studies I thought I



deserved a better complement from the headmaster who trusted me so much to go to his wife and bring the money.

With that familiarity with my teachers, my interest in keeping in touch with the books and studies generated some curiosity to go through the library books and papers available at our library. I was given the freedom of sitting in the library along with the other staff members, who were very few in utilizing the library facilities, while using the library in the working hours. I was very much excited to read some articles in, what was an unknown entity till that time "***The Picwickian Papers***" and many other books. Those books and papers were looking so fresh and un-trampled as they were never touched by anybody else before me. It was surprising that the concept of the using library was not inculcated into our mind, it was not drilled into the day to day teaching program and not even the existence of the library was brought to the notice of students, leave apart the usefulness and utility part of it. I was amazed at the wealth of knowledge and books that were available in our small library in those days. Better late than never that I could reach the library room and the books available there even after completing the **SSLC** examination. But for the forced vacation caused by the non availability of the **PUC** seat in any of the colleges I would not have had the chance or opportunity to go to the library. Somewhere later in my life, during my **MBBS** study days at the Guntur Medical College there was a write up on the wall that not going to the library

was equal to not going to the sea at all. If don't go to the library how could one read the books available in the library. After starting going to the library and reading the books and papers at random, without the fear and compulsion of the teachers and the examination it was more a pleasure than a punishment. I was attracted to visit the library a number of times in a day and many more number of days during that vacation with positive intent and drive to learn more even if the subjects were unconnected with the class subjects. In fact that habit of going to the library regularly, somehow driven away the depression associated with my failed attempts in securing the admission into the colleges along with my other colleagues. Not only that, I realized that I could read some science text books also that were prescribed for the **PUC** students in the colleges. Somehow I got hold of a text book on physics that interested me so much and started reading regularly and I was almost going parallel to my friends in the college as far as the physics subject was concerned. In the heart of the heart, psychologically I was under the impression and also feeling rightly so, that I was in fact in the college campus along with my friends and colleagues but for the truth that I did not get a seat in time. At no point of time did I lose my heart for not getting that **PUC** admission which was the turning point in any student's life and a bridge between the school and the professional college life. It was a make or break situation. Fortunately for me I did not face any adverse comment or discouraging words from any

quarters, the family members, friends, the relatives, the school teachers, the colleagues or the village elders. That was my great strength and support from all corners. But still there was no light at the end of the tunnel. I did not lose my sleep for that. Every night sleeping under the neem tree in front of my tiled house I was counting the stars and staring at them hoping that on some fine day a star would descend on me and enliven my future which was close to bloom. I also noticed clusters of stars falling down constantly from the skies and wondered whom they were benefiting. Who was the more fortunate guy than me? I observed the changes in the moon more closely during that phase of my stay at my home. I was reminding myself that the moon changes were more fascinating and enchanting as was described in our science books and also some Telugu stories about the moon. The names Chandrodayam meaning the rise of the moon, the daily gradual shrinkage of the size of the moon described as the Skheena Paksham and the end of that phase as Amavasya or no moon day with pitch darkness. Then started the Nelapodupu or the Nelabaludu or Nelavanka or the new moon day which was a more auspicious scene to watch on the skies and was supposed to fetch good luck for those fortunate people who saw the Nelavanka in its brief presence on the first day. Many people in the world and me anxiously awaited and watched for that blissful moment and felt happy only after visualizing the monthly event occurring in the sky at a farther distance and also at a particular

time and place in the sky. Those who could see the new moon felt fortunate and also kissed the God's and prayed for his blessings to fulfill their desires and wanting. I knew for year's together people watching at the skies at the right time to see the Nelavanka. From that stage to the full moon day was a treat to watch and observe the gradual increase in the size of the moon along with the progressive brightness of light in the night. Children in the villages played hide and seek (Dongata) during the darker phase of the moon and it was a delight to walk in the bright moon light chasing your own shadow. I was very young and not fully appreciative of the so many romantic scenes and songs produced in the Telugu cinema's highlighting the important role of the moon and the moon light especially for the newly married couple. I had enjoyed all those celestial developmental phenomena every night. Hence my hope never faded away. I read one line in my school days about the great American President Mr. Abraham Lincoln when he was young, learning his lessons even during his sleep under the neem tree with its cool and gentle breeze. Such memories gave me hope than the despair. The lack of light at the end of the tunnel did not mean there was no light at all in the world. That was my understanding and conclusion even though I did not know that much of a philosophy at a tender age of fifteen.

The dark nights always ended with a bright sunshine in the day time. It dawned on my father one day, out of instinct and not by any

intelligence to try again for getting an admission at the Hindu College, Guntur. Without my knowledge he took my **SSLC** register and walked directly into the principal's chamber pushing everybody away whoever tried to prevent him from entering the principal's chamber. I was told much later that my father was very furious and used all sorts of unprintable foul and filthy words, which was consistent with the village slang. He was in fit of rage and anger and unstoppable. Something must have driven him forcibly to directly approach the principal of the Hindu College. The then principal of the Hindu College, Mr.Y.S.R.Chandran was a highly educated and enlightened professor and head of the department of the English subject. He was an Udipi Kannadiga Brahmin who could speak only in English and did not know the Telugu language. But he was intelligent enough to understand the emotions and feelings of the other man. My father spoke something that the principal did not understand straight away. My father, I was told threw my certificates on the table in front of the principal and questioned him why and how his son could not be admitted and accommodated in his college even after scoring sixty percent marks in the **SSLC**. Taken aback for a while, the principal understood the problem and was very sympathetic my father and agreed to give the Bi.P.C seat for me in his college.

At last the prayers were answered. The night bright stars shined brilliantly on me. The fortunes favored fully. The persistence

and perseverance of my parents, especially my father yielded the unexpected positive result. The news that I was admitted into the Hindu College brought so much of joy and happiness for me, for my parents and for all those who had been keenly following my day to day endeavors. Whether it is appropriate or not the Telugu saying that “**Kastae Phali**” or the English saying that the “**Success comes to the valor**”. I was not too much elated or over joyed but kept my emotions under control. I had to hurry up to catch with the rest of the students who were already in the college for more than a month. I not only missed the classes but also missed out on the time taken for the fresh candidates to get adjusted into the new environment. Unless I make up quick and fast for the time and subjects matter I already lost, I was going to pay heavy penalty at the end of the year. The change from the village to the town, the change from Telugu medium to English medium, the change from agricultural science to the biological science and ultimately from the mother’s homemade food to the hotel and the hostel food were going to take the heavy toll on me. I was partially aware of all those things even before I ultimately got admitted into the Hindu College. I had already written in detail about that transition in a different context. But still a passing word or two would suffice here. The transition from the village to the town was already bridged and reduced to a great extent by my frequent visits to the nearby towns like Guntur, Bapatla and Chirala along with my father on those earlier futile attempts. The

transition from Telugu to English was partially reduced by my regular reading of the English news papers like the Indian Express and the Hindu paper. I was introduced to read the Hindu paper immediately after I completed the **SSLC** examination by one English lecturer who stayed in our village for a long time for his personnel reasons. As per the transition from the agricultural science subject to the biological sciences, I was already browsing through some text books like physics. Chemistry, Botany and Zoology were strange to all other students also. But still I missed out on some initial introductory classes. The last but not the least was the tasty and delicious food made by my mother and served through her affectionate hands had no replacement on the surface of the earth much less the hotel and hostel food. I was not going to complain for food because my aim was to get acclimatized as early as possible to the new place, the new situations and fall in line with the other students. I did not waste much time in rushing to the college.

I was very keen on learning everything and anything and not just the **PUC** subjects proper. My responsibility started the moment I boarded the **RTC** bus to go to Guntur along with my father. As I was travelling in the bus I was recollecting some of the earlier trips I made to Guntur other than the trips I made for joining the AC or the Hindu College for the admission in to the **PUC**. Long back, when a new cinema by name **Gundamma Katha** was released in the Naaz Theater my father took me along with him to the picture which was

my first and the best memory of visiting Guntur. In the year 1964 an **AICC** plenary session was held at Guntur, late Sri.Lal Bahadur Sastry was the prime minister of India; late Smt. Indira Gandhi was the newly inducted minister for broadcasting and late Sri.Kasu Bramhananda Reddy was the chief minister of the state of Andhra Pradesh. That was a very big event in those days which had given so many good things for the sleepy and dusty town like Guntur. I have the memories of the changes that took place and also some of the events that occurred at Guntur during that plenary session. The most important development was shifting of the roadside crowded **RTC** bus stand to a vast expanse of the land adjacent to the Guntur-Vijayawada national high way with modern design for the bus shelters and also a huge bus depot complex. The neglected Gunta ground was reclaimed and developed as Sri.Bramhananda Reddy stadium as a huge sports complex first of its kind in Guntur where temporary tents and sheds were erected to host the **AICC** plenary. All the routes and the roads leading to the Guntur town were repaired and decorated attractively giving a festive look for the town. I and my class representative Mr.Ch.Pandu Ranga Rao went together to visit Guntur town and the plenary session half way through our **SSLC** studies as that was the only one big and best occasion we could ever witness. There was a great publicity for the first and glamorous visit of the young and beautiful lady, late Smt.Indira Gandhi after the sad demise of her father the late Sri. Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru our first



prime minister. As both of us went round all the streets and the roads leading to Guntur, the rows of the trees on either side of the road were painted in the tricolor as if the earth surrounding Guntur town just then delivered, **“Nela Eenindi”** a big tri colored baby called the National Congress Party which was called as All India Congress. The town Guntur probably derived its name for the number of areas with big pools and lakes of water with their names as Gunta ground, Sangadi Gunta and so on. The **AICC** brought a chance for all the Gunta’s to be filled and leveled. During the plenary session a number of speeches were made that were relayed all over the town with the loud speakers. Late Sri.Lal Bahadur Sastry’s speech was the best and the highlight of the plenary meeting. Late Sri.Kasu Brahamnanda Reddy’s speech was also very impressive. But the most glamorous part of the meeting was the public address made by late Smt. Indira Gandhi at the police parade grounds and that evening was given great publicity in all the news papers than any other speech. In her maiden appearance at Guntur as the Broadcasting minister she made a very pleasant and positive stamp on the hearts of the Telugu speaking people when she broke the silence and got the big applause by addressing the gathering with opening words in Telugu by saying **“Telugu Vaariki Namaskaramulu”** then continued her speech in English. Her voice was very fresh and clear. Her expressions were easy to understand, and over all the speech was a land mark speech made by late Smt. Indira Gandhi.

The next day morning all the news papers carried the headlines item of that speech made by late Smt. Indira Gandhi. The papers did not miss the punch word spoken by her and described it as the parrot speech "**Chiluka Palukulu**". That day ended very late for us, exhausted and tired, did not find a proper place to sleep or rest as all the lodges were fully preoccupied. Both of us found a place to sleep on a folding cot in a dormitory lodge close to the Seshamahal cinema theater, by paying half a rupee each. That was the end of the trip to Guntur which was both a pleasure and adventure. I should end that topic by stating, one more good fallout of the **AICC** plenary meeting which I noted when I joined the Men's hostel of the Guntur Medical College. Both men and women's hostels were allotted for the accommodation of the Members of Parliament during their stay in the town. All the hostels were remodel and painted. Each of the hostel rooms were provided with two iron cots and a ceiling fan. Wash rooms and toilets were improved. All that made the hostel ground look more beautiful and attractive. My next visit to Guntur before applying for the **PUC** seat was a few months ahead of the final **SSLC** examination. I and my friend Mr.Ch.Pandu Ranga Rao came to the Guntur to take the passport size photo graph, for the first time again in my life which was required for fixing in the hall ticket. Both of us went to the Neptune's studio. The photo was unique in the sense that showed me in my real frame with high flowing curly hair, greasy black face with bright white teeth and the innocent and

eagerly looking sparkling eyes. It also showed me with the ears and nose golden rings decorated on my face during my very early childhood at the sacred Nagula Gudi at Nagula Padu a nearby village. That was a ritual of ear and nose boring that was routinely followed by almost all the families in our villages as a respect to the Naga Demudu to get his blessings and also there was an element of fear and superstition in such rituals. I still remembered the day as a two year old toddler going along with my parents in our bullock cart on one fine morning to the village called Nagula Padu bordering close to Peda Nandi Padu. I remember my mother telling me a number of times that they raised money by begging (Thiripam) the donations to buy the gold to make the three rings, one for the nose and one each for the ears. That part of the begging from the good natured people was also a part of the ritual to get contribution of life and strength from the elderly and enabled healthy people. The ear ring strings were sharp on one end and had the insignia of the hood of the serpent Naga Demudu at the other end. The sharp ends were heated red hot and pierced through the nose and ear lobules amidst the cries of so many other children going through the same ritual simultaneously. The boring rituals ended with boiling of milk on the spot and a feast of tasty meal (Payasam) made then and there itself and it was served to the close relatives and well-wishers. I remembered to have cried inconsolably, I also remembered that the nose and ears were painful for a few more days after the boring

ceremony and my mother applied coconut oil at the site of the borings for soothing the pain and for probably protecting the dust falling directly on the bleeding spots. The same passport size photo which was pasted in my **SSLC** hall ticket was also submitted in the Guntur Medical College during my admission and the same picture was printed in the college magazine during our first year of studies. The photo was unique for that showed me in my real frame; it was not the best of the photos to be printed in the college magazine which made me feel a little bit embarrassed compared to the some of the best photos and faces of our other classmates.

Even though my thoughts were going round, digging into the past to reinforce my future stay and studies at Guntur, my father was thinking a little differently than me. I could watch his face and his anxiety in taking me safely and comfortably to the campus of the Hindu College. The moment we started from our house at Varagani he was very skeptical and superstitious and wanted to complete our journey to Guntur uninterrupted. I could watch his usual daily routine rituals like asking my elder sister or my mother to walk in the opposite direction to us as the first good person with lovely face as a mark of the first superstition, Subha Suchikam or Manchi Yeduru or good omen. My father always postponed his walking out of the house, even temporarily when somebody crossed his path that he did not like to come across him. He also postponed his trip if a widow with white sari and tonsured head or a cat came across his

path as they were supposed to bring bad luck and bad fortune. He also postponed his journey if somebody sneezed at the time of the departure from the house. He waited for a few minutes for all the ill effects of the bad omens to pass off. He was also meticulous in planning his journey after reading the good and bad timings in the calendar, ***“Manchi Muhurtham and Varjam”***. If he was very particular he even went to the village Brahmin Pundit to look into the Panchangam to fix the perfect Muhurtham for venturing into a new work or journey. I knew pretty well that they were not the scientific ways or the best things in life but I reluctantly accepted them as a respect to my father’s wishes and feelings. Anyhow those rituals were harmless and priceless. Having followed my father on a number of times I also got the fixed ideas in my mind about those superstitious rituals and observations. As I grew old, became more educated in the later part of my life, came to know about more science and medicine I knew it was very unscientific and irrational to think of the good or bad omens. But on the spot my father was the deciding and guiding factor and whatever he did was only with the hope that I should get the best out of the situation. When it was done in my own interest and it was done without any malice and the end result was going to be favorable to me I just followed the instincts of my father with a slight but camouflaged and disguised reluctance.

Those were the thoughts and flash backs as we boarded the bus to Guntur and got down at the new **RTC** bus depot, we realized that there was a big confusion in the bus stand. The under construction bus stand was not properly maintained and there was a rash driving of incoming and outgoing buses at a mad rush. The road was uneven and bumpy. If somebody was not careful there was a chance of getting knocked down by some of the incoming or outgoing buses. I had to hold my father's hand to protect myself from the erratic buses and bus drivers. We walked out of the bus stand and tried to get into the cycle rickshaw to reach the Hindu College. My father was very careful in bargaining with the rickshaw puller to get the ride at a very cheaper price. I could realize for the first time that my father was very careful in spending the money out of his pocket. He was not a miser but wanted to save as much money as possible for my expenses and studies and spend as less as possible on unnecessary things. I could understand his rationale. Even though I did not immediately understand the total significance of it, I appreciated my father's money sense and realized my responsibility to be careful in spending the money given by my father which he earned by doing hard physical work. Suddenly a shiver went down my spine when I sat in the rickshaw along with my father, then I realized how difficult it was for the rickshaw puller also to earn enough money to meet the both ends to get the money for the daily bread and butter for himself and to his family. It was a real physical

toil for him. It dawned on me in that; the hard work put in by my father was only one grade above the rickshaw pullers hard work. My father earned money in his early days by fetching the provisions to our village merchants from the Guntur town by driving his bullock carts. Sometimes when the roads were bad or there were breaches in the road my father used to pull the cart by himself physically to reach our place. All those days of hard work reeled off as a flashback in those few minutes of our travel from the bus stand to the Hindu College.

The speed, at which the rickshaw puller was going with two of us sitting inside the uncovered rickshaw in the hot summer days, was just a pace faster than walking by foot. It was slow and laborious, the puller was dripping and drenching in sweat and the cycle chain was crackling to break down at any time. I thought it would be better for me to get down and walk than to trouble the rickshaw puller in any further, but I did not do so as my father had already made a hard bargain with the rickshaw puller and arrived at the fair price for the ride. I sympathized with him but I was helpless in that tricky situation. As the rickshaw passed through the main road from the **RTC** bus stand to the Hindu College I tried to look at the land mark places on the way so that I could travel on the same route in case I had to go alone at later date. I noticed en-route to the college the Leela Mahal junction road, the Kusuma Haranath temple, the Jinnah tower, the municipal office, the Gandhi Park, the

municipal market, the old bus stand, the Hindu High School and finally the destination the Hindu College. To complete the scenario I found a Reynar pen sales and repair shop close to the college compound wall and some road side carts selling the small eats like the peanuts and the groundnuts like what I found at my high school at Peda Nandi Padu during my school days. Of all those places, the Gandhi Park was the first and the best place I had seen coming out of the village environment where there were no parks. I should come back to the college as such a little later. After submitting the application form along with the original certificates and the payment of the college fees the principal accepted my application and allotted me the Bi.P.C seat. I was the last candidate in the ninth section of the **PUC** and my roll number was eight hundred and seventy five (875). May be there were one hundred students in each section. The candidate who joined just before me with the roll number eight hundred and seventy four (874) was none other than my erstwhile friend and roommate for years together, Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao simply Dr.V.V.N.Rao. Even though I did not immediately connect my thought process, but looking back today he was very close and identical replacement for my real good friend at our high school Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao with whom I could not continue my association at the Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada. What I missed at Vijayawada was going to be a gain at



the Hindu College, Guntur in many ways that were going to unfold at later date.

To complete the story of the journey from the Hindu College I had to find a place to stay. Already some of my friends from my village and school were staying in a rented room at Broadiepet. It was my father's wish that he should take me to the rented room shared by my friends, Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao, son of the late Sri.Lingamallu Venkata Ratnam who used to run a coffee hotel in our village with the best and the tasty snacks and the coffee from morning till evening; the other person was Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao who was one year senior to me in the high school but joined our batch for **PUC** and third person sharing that room was Mr.Samba Siva Rao who hailed from a nearby village. All the three of them were studying at the same Hindu College and were in the same Bi.P.C group which was a very positive coincidence. It so happened, that another school and classmate of mine, late Mr.Avvari Krishna Murthi was also studying in the same Hindu College and the same Bi.P.C group but he was staying at different place. So much so all of us from our school and our village got together into the same college and chose the same Bi.P.C group was an incredible feature. Just to compare some of my school and classmates from Peda Nandi Padu who joined at the AC College, Guntur and all of them preferred only the Arts group and not the Bi.P.C or M.P.C. Even though I never thought of such things during our school days but occasionally

surfaced without any serious implications, like the caste, creed and financial matters. Just to mention whether it was relevant or not that my best friend during the school days from my village was Mr. Challa Punna Rao son of late Sri.Challa Nageswara Rao was a caste Hindu and Brahmin. Late Sri.Avvari Krishna Murthi was also a Brahmin. Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao, Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao, Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao and Mr.Addepalli Lakshmi Narayana belonged to the Vysya community. Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao, Mr.Yerra Ramamohan Rao and Mr.Samba Siva Rao belonged to the Choudary community (Kamma). Late Sri.Nune Ankamma, Mr.Dirisala Subba Rao and Dr.L.Seshadri Rao belonged to the Naidu backward community (Telaga). And hence there was a mixture of multiple castes, communities and families during my school and college education days. In spite of the diverse communities we all got together well as good friends respecting each other especially for our academic interest and achievements. The rest of the three members of the room invited me to join them as a fourth person as all of us had the same college and group to study together. I and my father headed towards the rented accommodation at the sixth line, thirteenth cross road at Brodiepet Guntur.

As it was my habit and also currently going through my mind at that point of time, I exercised my senses of observation of the surroundings and the land marks as I was going from the college to the room. The important land marks that we went through from the

college were the AC College ladies hostel, the government women college where my sister was already studying, the famous AC College and the Lutheran High School on one side and the equally famous **LVR** son's club opposite to the AC College gate, the St. Joseph's Hospital which was popularly known as the Kanyala Hospital with its vast expanse, the Government General Hospital compound wall with the mortuary gate open to the main road, the railway over bridge, the railway track and the railway station at distance, the Brodiepet and the Arundalpet on either side of the road, the famous Seshamahal and the Neptune's photo studio where I had my first passport size photo taken, the highly sought after Shankar Villas hotel and the junction, further down, the Tahasildhar's Office where I used to get my income certificate and caste certificates, as we walked through the Tahasildhar's Office campus there was a shortcut route through a breach in the compound wall to enter into the Guruvayya High School area. In the Tahasildhar's Office campus there was a huge district library. After passing through the Guruvayya High School reaching the rented house address was very easy. The location was the sixth line, thirteenth cross road of Brodiepet. The house belonged to a teacher couple working in the Lutheran High School located in the AC College Campus. The teachers by name Mr. and Mrs. Mark had a separate house for their family in the back yard and gave a single room accommodation facing the road for us. Between the two portions there was a water

well where we had to lift the water for our daily needs. There was no bathroom and we had to take open bath near the well. Unfortunately there were no sanitary toilets also and we were forced to use the open toilets with manual scavengers cleaning the toilets every day. That was not to our liking but that was the age old practice in the towns in those days. At the villages we had no choice except using the open lands and fields as toilet places. Coming back to the house owner's family they had some of their children who were studying at the AC College itself. After putting me into the room my father had a sigh of relief and breathed heavily for a few minutes. I could see his face full of happiness and joy for coming to that stage after all the troubles and tribulations he went through. For a man with no education, to plan and fight for securing a seat in a college like the Hindu College was a real great achievement for him. That was the end of his successful effort and the beginning of my college education. My roommates were very good and friendly, they showed me the place where I had to buy the meals tickets in a mess on monthly basis, the daily program to attend the classes at the college and they also helped me to purchase the text books and records in all the subjects. They also updated me with the topics covered already in all the subjects. It was my turn and responsibility to speed up the learning process and to catch up with the lost time and clear the backlog.

I realized long back that the pre university course was a strong link and bridge between the high school studies and graduate studies especially in the professional courses like medicine, engineering, agricultural sciences and the veterinary sciences in that order of the priority. I had already dealt in more detail than necessary as I could not hold my thoughts back about the events that took place even before the admission into the pre university course. The truth was if I did not get the admission into the pre university course and the Bi.P.C group there was no question of aspiring for a medical college seat. I was aware of the need of the hour, I learnt in my **SSLC** classes that the time was more valuable, waste not and want not, take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves. My first and immediate concern was to get acclimatized to the college environment, the class rooms, the teachers and the subjects. For some good reason I developed an analytical attitude for every situation and the events. First of all I would spare a few thoughts on the college itself. The Hindu College was not the college of first choice for many students as the nearby AC College was more famous and attracted many students. Hindu college admitted only the male students where as the AC College had co-education and was available to all the sections of the people. Even though I did not know the real history behind the foundation of the Hindu College, probably it was started as a competitor to the AC College and possibly with a clash of religious interest. Even

though the AC College and the Hindu College were located very close to each other and the AC College hostels were within the stone's throw from the Hindu College, there were no rivalries between the two colleges or the students. The Hindu College mainly offered the educational facilities for the pre university course and the degree classes which included the botany, zoology, chemistry and physics and the languages in Telugu and English. The college and the school were located alongside the road opposite to the Gandhi Park. The Hindu College had a big and separate building and also a science laboratory located behind the class rooms. There was also a canteen room in a shed behind the class rooms. In the entrance itself, there was a good play ground for basket ball, volley ball and badminton courts. There were good players representing the Andhra University in hockey and other sports, but they used the police parade ground for practice. The principal's chamber and the college office were located to the left of the building complex. The botany and zoology galleries along with their laboratories were located exactly opposite to the entrance gate. To the left of the campus a row of class rooms along with the offices for the professors working there were located. Over all, the college atmosphere was quiet and peaceful and congenial for studies. Quickly I tried to recognize and recollect the names of the professors and the lecturers who worked there. The English department was headed by Mr.Y.S.R.Chandran and he had a junior lecturer by name Mr.Subba Rao who also worked as the

warden for the Hindu College Hostel. The department of Telugu had Sri.Upendra Sharma as the Professor and head of the department and he was later joined by a lecturer by name Dr.Pandu Ranga Rao. He did his M.A and PhD in Telugu subject at the Andhra University immediately before joining the staff of the Hindu College. Both of them were good teachers in Telugu and they had their own idiosyncrasies that did not affect their teaching. The language subjects were not the first priority for the pre-university students, who just wanted to get the bare minimum pass marks to clear the **PUC**. The main subjects of interest were the science groups. The percentage of marks obtained in the sciences, were taken into consideration during the selection for the professional courses. Hence the students focused all their attention towards the science subjects only. The zoology department was headed by Dr.Narayana Rao who was the professor and he also wrote a text book of zoology for the **PUC** students. One Mr.Anjineyulu was the lecturer in zoology, he was a good teacher and also was interested doing research. In fact he was doing his PhD thesis work on the respiration of the fish and he worked out of the teaching hours in his laboratory. The department of botany was not fully staffed but some stop gap arrangements were made for taking classes. We followed the text book written by Dr.T.S.Rama Rao for botany. In fact the zoology and botany were commonly taught by the staff. In the department of physics there was a very dynamic teacher by name Mr.Ranga Rao.

He was only a B.Sc graduate but a very successful and hardworking teacher. He had a very good command on the subject and his classes were attended fully. The chemistry department was not very well staffed but there were some skeletal teaching staff that fulfilled the requirement for teaching the **PUC** candidates. About the text books all were the standard text book followed in most of the colleges and the best books in demand were the text book of zoology written by Mr.Ambrose, the text book of zoology written by Narayana Rao, the text book of botany written by T.S.Rama Rao were popular. But most of the students followed the class lecturer's notes which was examination oriented. A few days after I joined the college the Physics lecturer Mr.Rangarao conducted a class test for the topics already covered by him. He was particular that all of us should write the examination and face the test boldly. He already covered the basic topics in Physics and most of the classes I could not attend because of my late admission. Still I appeared for the examination and when the marks were allotted, I was pleasantly surprised that I scored 80% marks in the Physics in the first appearance itself. That was almost a quarterly examination. What fetched me that 80% marks was my persistent studying the Physics subject even before I got admission into the college?

In a way that was a good beginning for me. I was missing my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao to do the combined study and also to get the benefit of exchange of ideas. I also missed his good



friendship and inputs with his way of thinking ahead of the rest of the classmates. That way when I compared my marks in the first test with the others students from my village who were already attending in the classes from the beginning I got the comfort of 80% of marks more than all other colleagues. That only made me to work hard, even harder than what I was doing already to stay put at that level of achievement with which I had the chance to reach the goal of joining the medical college along with my bosom friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao. I was not too selfish or over ambitious but tried to be realistic in facing the situation squarely. Towards that goal the first realization was that all of us staying in the private rented house were wasting some of our time going up and down for food to the private mess situated in the second and third lines of the Brodiepet. There used to be big demand for the mess food from so many people within a limited time frame in a day and we literally fought for our turn and seats in the crowded mess rooms. We wanted to save that time somehow. I had been in constant touch with my next best friend in the class room whose serial number was just one number before my number. He had been staying in the Hindu College Hostel from the time of his admission itself. I was not aware of the existence of the hostel at the time of my admission into the college, even if I was given the option of joining the hostel I would have preferred only to stay with my friends from my village who were already put up in the private rented room

accommodation. It was easy for me to follow them for my day to day activities than to stay in a strange place with unknown people. I was also apprehensive of the hostel atmosphere as I never stayed or visited a hostel beforehand. If I were to get a seat at the Andhra Loyola College I should have stayed only in the hostel where there was no other option and the day scholars were not permitted in that college. Also I would have had the comfort and confidence of staying with my friend and roommate at Peda Nandi Padu. But that was not to be.

Now all the roommates were seriously thinking of shifting to the Hindu College Hostel where there was the mess facility for the borders. The Hindu College Hostel was situated far off from the college on the Amaravathi road close to the Guntur Medical College Men's Hostel. It was an L-shaped two story building, a fair distance away from the main road and the traffic. The hostel had a very good open space in front of the building with well maintained garden. The mess building was located behind the hostel building where lunch, evening snack and the night dinner were freshly prepared and served. There was a big open well behind the hostel building located between the mess building and the septic and sanitary lavatories. There were about twenty five rooms in the hostel with roughly fifty inmates. All of us had to take bath in the open space near the well and the presence of the sanitary lavatories was a big relief. The hostel office was located in one of the ground floor rooms which were

managed by a clerk and the warden Mr. Subba Rao the lecturer in the English department made his rounds usually in the evening hours. We all vacated the Brodiepet accommodation and shifted to the hostel. One person Mr. Samba Siva Rao stayed at a different private accommodation. Mr. Lingamallu Subba Rao got the ground floor room allotted to him and his roommate was Mr. Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao. His room number was five. Mr. Lavu Ramachandra Rao also got his ground floor room accommodation in the corner of the same wing where Mr. Lingamallu Subba Rao also stayed. I was allotted the last room in the second floor, room number fifty; my roommate was a gentleman Mr. Arthur from Nandyala. He was a very senior chronic referred man doing his B.A degree for the last several years. He was a nice person, very good in English and he was the captain of the Andhra University Hockey player's team. He was proud of wearing the university blue jersey and also to represent the Hindu College in sports. The college and the hostel authorities gave him free food and accommodation just to retain him in the college rolls as a matter of college prestige. He was not allowed to appear for the final examinations and was detained intentionally for years together. His job was only to go to the police parade ground everyday and practice the team game along with the other players. He was not alone like that but had some other players sailing in the same boat. The hostel was quiet and calm. The food was fresh and good. There were electric bulbs in the rooms to study

at the nights. There was no furniture in the rooms, we had to buy our own mats and procure bed sheets for ourselves. We had only one trunk box for keeping the books and the clothes. We had to wash our clothes on weekly basis. We had bicycles to go to the college every day after an early lunch before 10 AM and return to the hostel in the evening after 4 PM. There was no play ground in the hostel but some of the degree students used the vacant land next to the hostel campus for some practice of cricket. My roommate even though he was not very keen on his studies did not interfere with my studies; in fact he encouraged me to put in more hard work. When he had some friends and guests he used to politely ask me to go out of the room for my studies. In the evening hours I and Mr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao used to go to the terrace of the hostel and read as long as the day light was there. On Sundays and holidays, especially when the examinations were approaching fast, I used to leave the hostel premises and go into the agricultural fields behind the hostel campus and sit in the shade of the trees to concentrate on my studies. I was the only one who preferred to go to the fields for the studies. I was accustomed to read like that even during my school days when I went to our agricultural fields along with the buffalos to feed them. I used to carry the class books, sat under the tamarind trees as the cattle grazed. Sometimes I used to sit on the back of the cattle while going and coming back from the fields and had a free ride and used that time for reading some class books.

That past experience gave me immediate solution to save my time in the hostel rooms whenever there was any disturbance. With all the advantages of staying in a hostel there was a certain risk of waste of time as there was a chance for friends to walk in at any time on some pretext or other that would spoil the concentration on studies. Hence going out into the agricultural fields for a few hours was always refreshing in the studies. Somehow I thought spending time with reading books in the open fields with no disturbance and distractions gave me a pointed concentration on the subject alone. Such subject's topics remained in my memory permanently without the need for the repetition. The idea of shifting to the hostel from the town was only to save the time specially wasted for taking food at a private mess twice in a day with the added loss of time on the road and at the mess and also to improve the quality of the studies. There were also many other students to interact and take inspiration from and advice in the hostel. The presence of some of the senior degree course students motivated us to prepare well for the examination. Especially the science students appearing for the B.Sc degree were constantly reminding us how to prepare for the examination. Some of them were waiting to complete their B.Sc degree and compete to get a seat in the medical college under the graduate's quota. Some of them guided us in record maintenance in botany and zoology. There was some other stories making round in the hostel that some people tried very hard to get a medical seat and failed in their attempts a

number of times. There were at least one or two students who became depressed for not getting the medical seat and committed suicide out of frustration. There was a story that one student went to the general hospital everyday especially at the evening time to watch the doctors medical students and the nurses very closely. He thought that was a very glamorous life. He was imagining himself to be one of them one day or other. That day did not come and forced him the unnatural death on himself. There were also the stories of very good performance by some of the B.Sc students who later went for further university studies like M.Sc and PhD. So there was a vast scope for learning not only the subjects but also many aspects of life and its future. So there was a great opportunity to learn and get the positive inputs from the inmates both the classmates and the seniors and ignore the negative of the aspects life and learning.

There was a much bigger scope and canvas that was open to us after joining the Hindu College Hostel. That aspect was not known to us before hand. The Guntur Medical College Men's Hostel was situated next to the Hindu College Hostel where we stayed. Slowly and steadily we started realizing the impact of such a big hostel next to our hostel. There was a big buzz of activity in the campus next to us. The inmates of that hostel played various games in the evenings in the vast play ground available there. The cricket which was unknown to us earlier in our school days, the hockey, the foot ball, the volley ball, the basket ball, the ball badminton, the tennikoit, the

tennis and almost all the competitive games were there. There was also a running track for people to practice. There was a very big pavilion for people to sit and watch on one side and an open air theater at the other end for the cultural activities. The spacious play ground was fenced with beautiful huge trees with flowers, the forest flare flowers that gave a very enchanting picture for the cynosures. On the working days there was the moment of the beautiful hostel buses making number of trips from morning 7:30 AM onwards till late in the night to bring back the students from the library. That must raise some aspirations in the minds of the students in our Hindu College Hostel to think in terms of hopping from our hostel to the next hostel just across the compound wall. Not only that there were some personally interactions between the Hindu College Hostel **PUC** students with the first year medical college students staying in the medical college men's hostel. There used to be a course called **PPC**, the pre professional course as the first year of **MBBS** course of five and half years. The biology subjects were almost common for the **PUC** and the **PPC**. Some of the first year medical students after getting into the medical college became relaxed and lazy, started enjoying their college life and neglected their studies and record work. They became much lazier to complete their record work in time before the examinations. Hence some of them approached the **PUC** students in the Hindu College Hostel for completing their record work, especially the botany and zoology subjects. It was a big

opportunity for some **PUC** students in the Hindu College Hostel to complete the **PPC** biology records even before entering the medical college. That experience of completing the **PPC** records gave some hope and insight for people like me and Mr.V.V.Narasimha Rao to accept the challenge and live up to the expectations of the medical students. That also gave a chance for making friends with the medical students.

Our Hindu College Hostel was good in its own way. It was relatively new, located far away from the town and disturbances, well designed with open spaces, good garden, good mess with good water and sanitary facilities. It was definitely a better place than the AC College hostels I visited on a few occasions when I went to meet some of my school mates staying there like Mr.Katta Ratnam, Kolagani Koteswara Rao, Dasari Mastan Rao, Medida Subba Rao and some more. Those hostels buildings by name Hyer Hall were old, narrow and congested if not over crowded because of the great demand for accommodation. Compared to the AC College hostels the Hindu College Hostel was far superior in terms of the congenial atmosphere for studies because of the limited number of fifty inmates. But, it was nowhere nearer to the nearby hostel the Guntur Medical College Men Student's Hostel. The medical college hostel was located in a vast area; there were two hostels building with symmetrical plan, two level floors in each building; accommodating nearly five hundred students two separate messes for dining; both



vegetarian and non vegetarian food was served; daily breakfast and evening snacks with coffee were served and finally the food was unlimited. There was scope for changing from one hostel building to the other hostel building, scope for changing the rooms and the roommates, scope to change from vegetarian to non vegetarian and the vice versa and finally to entertained some guests. There was a frequent transport facility from the hostel to the hospital and the medical college by well maintained buses called Apsara and Aswini. There was the facility for transport of the food for lunch to the Medical College Campus on working days where there was a separate building for dining and also an old bus called Annapurna to transport the food. Whereas in the Hindu College Hostel it was a single wing L-shaped hostel building with limited accommodation for only fifty students, there was no play ground in the campus, the mess served only the vegetarian food with no breakfast and no provision for the guests. There were no buses from the hostel except our own bicycles for transport. The Hindu College Hostel premises were less than one tenth of the medical college men's hostel premises area. There were some other good facilities in the men's hostel like a library, indoor games like table tennis and weight lifting, a hair cutting salon, dhobi services and finally the rooms were well furnished thanks to the **AICC** plenary session that was held at Guntur in the year 1964 when the MP's were accommodated in the hostels. The rooms were provided with tube lights and ceiling

fans. Hence there was no comparison between the two hostels. Again who was going to be the lucky person to jump the wall between the two hostels at the end of the **PUC** was a big question mark.

Coming to the Hindu College Hostel mess charges it was about rupees fifty per month for two meals and one snack. There were no special meals and dinners but the food was unlimited and only vegetarian food was served. Compared to the monthly mess coupons purchased in the town when we stayed in the rented room the hostel mess charges were a little high. We used to get prepaid monthly mess meals tokens or the punch cards for a price of thirty rupees per month in the town. What that meant was a little more financial burden for my father. From twenty rupees for monthly expenditure during my **SSLC** studies with the room rent and the tuitions fees put together; thirty rupees for food and additional room rent in the town I preferred the hostels stay even if it was costing more than fifty rupees per month for food and accommodation. That was a big money for a low middle class family like me but it was inevitable. As a rule I was eligible for getting a social welfare scholarship in any college without any difficulty. It was automatically sanctioned in the AC College where some of my friends were studying. But in the Hindu College nobody applied for the social welfare scholarship before I joined in that college. It was strange for the office people to get an application form and also to process the application for the

sanction of the scholarship. That was a big issue in the Hindu College where all the other students got their own financial support from their families. Still I applied for the scholarship; my father took it as a challenge to get the sanction by going round the social welfare department at Guntur and Hyderabad. With the help of an electrical engineer who was the son-in-law of one of our village land lords, who stayed at Hyderabad, my father succeeded in getting the scholarship for me almost at the far end of the academic year. That was a big relief and consolation for my father as he was bearing all the monthly expenditure for me either from his earnings or from his borrowings for a huge interest. Yet again my father came out with successful and flying colors both for my admission and probably for the first time in the history of the Hindu College for getting a sanction of social welfare scholarship exclusively for me. There also my father's common sense prevailed over many educated people in the Hindu College office and also the people in the social welfare department. Sanction of a total of seven hundred and fifty rupees for one year of **PUC** studies which included the college fees, books, the mess bill and the pocket money was a huge sum with which my father could have purchased five acres of agricultural land at one hundred and fifty rupees per acre in those days. But he could not do that because he had to repay the borrowings. It was the first time that such a big amount was sanctioned for me. If, I compared the scholarship given during the high school days, eighteen rupees and

twenty five paisa for my studies from the sixth class to the eighth class and rupees thirty two per year from ninth standard to the eleventh standard which was very meager, the seven hundred and fifty rupees was a big boon. That way the scholarship amount during my **PUC** was a big boost for our financial position at home.

Coming back to the teaching and the study atmosphere at the college campus was interesting and absorbing. Even though the languages were not given as much importance as the science subjects, for getting the high percentage of marks to be eligible for admission into the professional colleges, the teachers in English and Telugu took the classes on those subjects very seriously and encouraged us to learn more about the languages also. The head of the department of the English Mr.Y.S.R.Chandran M.A, PhD was well dressed in pant, suite, tie and boot; with a fair skin complex he resembled more like an English man than an Indian on the first look. He could speak only in English and he hailed from Udipi of Karnataka in those days called Mysore state. Even though he did not take any classes for the **PUC** students he was well known for his teaching the subject of English to the degree students. He spoke the Shakespeare accent and had a very good command on English prose and poetry. My direct interaction with him was only during the time of my admission into the college. Ironically speaking my father had more time to talk to Mr.Y.S.R.Chandran than me even though both of them did not understand the other man's language. That was

funny. But the classes for the **PUC** students in English were mainly covered by our English lecturer Mr. Subba Rao who was also our warden at the hostel. Honestly speaking, I did not concentrate much on learning English than what was the bare minimum required to get through the examination. Even though I tried hard to learn more English at my high school and also during the vacation period the aim of learning the English was only to grasp the science subjects and not to master the English language as we studied all the subjects in Telugu medium only. At that stage I should confess that I did not know how to speak in English or to construct and right a single correct sentence in English. My fundamentals in English were poor. To highlight one incidence when I was applying for the college admissions I used to send the applications forms by the registered post and did not write the spelling of the college correctly. Till it was pointed out by our post man I was writing the spelling of the college **“as collage”** like the village. I only realized my mistake after a little bit of argument with the post man and ultimately corrected my mistake with humiliation and embarrassment. Even though I was not good at English subconsciously I was prepared to learn the correct English but not at the expense of learning the science subjects. The lacuna in my English language was exposed immediately after joining the medical college. It was not just me alone we had the problem in English language many of my classmates had difficulty in communicating in English with others

which was jocularly called by our seniors in medical college that we had the **LT** which meant the language trouble. Coming to the Telugu language which was much more neglected by the **PUC** students because there was no need for them to learn Telugu after completing the **PUC** as the rest of the curriculum in any form of the professional courses was going to be only in English. People taking the languages as their main subjects were interested in seriously learning the languages in both English and Telugu. But for the students going to take up the professional courses the English language was required as a vehicle to learn the science subjects in the rest of their lives and Telugu language was given a step motherly attention and interest. Still the teachers in Telugu taught the **PUC** science students the Telugu language subject with all the seriousness as if they were grooming the students to take up the Telugu language as their main subject. Here again, there was a hidden secret that was not fully appreciated and probably never thought off by the budding students, that not all the **PUC** Bi.P.C science group students were going to become the medical students. If there were five hundred Bi.P.C group students in that year on the Hindu College rolls, nobody knew how many students were going to get the eligibility for admission into the **MBBS** course. May be a hand full! Hence the teachers knew very well that at some point of time even the science students would be forced to change their mind and think of studying the languages also even though it was a remote possibility. Without

breaking our mind any further, the teachers continued their teachings in Telugu and completed the syllabus with all the seriousness. The head of the department and the professor, Sri.Upendra Sharma was a typical Telugu Brahmin teacher. In contrast with the professor and head of the department of English Mr.Y.S.R.Chandran who looked and dressed like a typical English man, Sri.Upendra Sharma was really down to earth typical Indian National with his dress and mannerisms. He dressed in Chokka, Pancha and Kanduva (shirt, dhoti and the towel), he always carried a text book in his hand for a ready reference and he had a mouth full of pan (Tamalapakulu) and his mouth was bright red with its stain. He also put a big red Safran Bindi (Kumkuma Bottu). He always walked on Indian made cheppals (foot wear). He always spoke in chaste Telugu and sometimes used to openly criticize people whom he did not like very much. He was a very good Telugu teacher. He was assisted by a newly qualified Telugu teacher from the Andhra University by name Dr.Pandu Ranga Rao M.A, PhD in Telugu literature. Even though he was a dedicated Telugu teacher he was totally opposite of the head of the department in his dress and expressions. He dressed like an English teacher and had similarities with Mr.Y.S.R.Chandarn as far as the dress was concerned but he had the rest of the similarities with his head of the department in his habit of having a pan in his mouth all the time. He was also a dedicated teacher in Telugu. Both the Telugu teachers

had a sarcastic way of criticizing others with an indirect slang on communities. I remembered to have had over heard them saying **“Reddy Iyananu Kavalenu, Nrupaluni Muddi Iyananu Kavalenu”** a comment made against the Reddy community people occupying the seat of the Chief Minister most often. At that time in the year 1965 late Sri.Kasu Bramhananda Reddy was the incumbent Chief Minister. Earlier to him late Sri.Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy was the Chief Minister. They proved right when so many other Reddy community people became the Chief Ministers of our state like late Sri.Marri Chenna Reddy, late Sri.Kotla Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, Sri.Nedurimalli Janardhan Reddy late Y.S.Raja Sekhar Reddy and the present Chief Minister Sri.Nallari Kiran Kumar Reddy. The Telugu pundits not only commented on the contemporary issues but also made a correct forecast. The other comment made against the appointment of the Vice Chancellor of the Andhra University was **“Kanakapu Simhasanamuna Sunakamuna Koorchundabettinatuluga”** on the occasion of the appointment of late Sri.N.Bullaih who belonged to the lower caste community. No doubt that was the atmosphere prevailing in the college campus amongst all the other staff members also but only two Telugu pundits could come out openly. Anyhow that was not going to have any bearing in my education or performance in the **PUC** at the Hindu College.

My main goal was to prepare well for the real subjects of Bi.P.C group, pass the examination and score good marks. Hence my



concentration like any other Bi.P.C student was only on the science subjects. In those days the students were given the impression that the subjects of physics and chemistry were easy to master and score more marks than the zoology and the botany subjects. For me the chemistry subject was totally new because I preferred to bypass the chemistry and physics subjects during my high school studies and took the agricultural sciences bifurcated course as an easy way out to complete the high school studies and also probably to go and join the Ag.B.Sc course at Bapatla. There were some other reasons for choosing the agricultural sciences as a priority. One that most of our daily activity was agriculture related. There was the availability of the bifurcated course in our school. There were two other senior students from our village who were already studying the Ag.B.Sc. The third reason was that a recently qualified Ag.B.Sc graduate from the Bapatla Agricultural University joined our school to teach us the theory and practical's in agricultural sciences and motivated us to seek Ag.B.Sc as a next best option for medicine and engineering. In fact to choose the Ag.B.Sc as an alternative professional course even during the school days was appreciated as a bold and good decision towards specialization as getting into medicine and engineering were a remote possibility. Only one or two could go to the engineering from our school and none towards medicine thus far. Hence I had an inherent fear in learning the chemistry subject. Added to that there was no proper teaching staff in the subject of chemistry at the

Hindu College. Some stop gap arrangement was made by the college administration for completing the chemistry syllabus for the **PUC** students. Still, the text books were available for learning even though it was a little bit difficult than the physics subject. I was more interested in the subject of physics. The reasons were manifold. The first and the foremost was that accidentally I laid my hands on a text book of physics during the waiting period before I got the admission at the Hindu College. With the input gained from my friends and colleagues who were already admitted into the **PUC** I realized that the physics subject was easy to understand, was like a simple mathematics and interesting to read compared to the chemical equations in the chemistry subject. Hence even before joining the college I browsed through some of the initial chapters in the text book of the physics. The second most important factor was that the teacher of the physics subject was very impressive and imposing. Mr.D.Ranga Rao B.Sc was a tall and towering personality in the entire teaching staff of the Hindu College in those days. He was fair looking and dynamic with good command on the subject of physics. He attracted many students who attended to his classes. His notes were perfect and better than the text book subjects. His language was very impressive and very clear. He made it a point that every student understood what he was telling. He encouraged the students to stand up and ask questions if they did not understand at any point of time and also for any doubts. He covered the entire

syllabus of physics on his own all along the year. He also conducted the monthly and quarterly examinations in physics. There was no professor of physics at that time. He compensated for the lacuna very well and nobody felt the need for the professor of physics. That was a great stimulus for me when I took the first examination in the class text in the physics subject only a few days after I joined the college and scored eighty percent marks much against all odds. I realized my potential then and there itself and I also believed like many other students that to score more marks the physics was the subject to learn and master. Hence there was an automatic preference to attend the classes in physics and take the notes carefully. Even though he was only a B.Sc graduate, Sri.D.Ranga Rao was respected for his teaching abilities better than the professors in the other subjects with higher qualifications like M.Sc and PhD. No doubt that he was a successful teacher even in the private tuitions in the later part of his career. In those days the physics teachers were good at chemistry also and the vice versa; the zoology teachers were good at botany and the vice versa. That was because during their graduate studies they took one subject as the main and the second subject became optional automatically. So the physics and chemistry were equally known as the botany and zoology together for most of the lecturers. Coming back to my interest in physics subject was the vernier calipers, the scale, the force, the heat, the light, the motion, the electricity, the osmosis and

the surface tension; the atom, proton and neutron and the atomic energy etc. The highlight of the physics subject was the Newton's Laws of Gravity and so on; the subject on the atoms, protons and neutrons were exciting. In the subject of chemistry I remembered to have learnt on the acids, the alkalis, the metals like iron, copper, zinc, magnesium, manganese, gold, silver, platinum and titanium and rare earth metals, like that.

The subjects of zoology and botany were more interesting as they were new to all the other students in the class; especially when the zoology classes were taken by a dedicated teacher like Mr. Anjaneyulu M.Sc. The topics on the cell, Amoeba, Hydra to begin with and followed by the bigger insects and animals were interesting. The basic knowledge about their growth, digestion and their moment was interesting and fascinating. Mr. Anjaneyulu taught us the entire zoology subject even though the professor and head of the department Dr. Narayana Rao was available in the department. He also wrote a text book on zoology which was followed by most of the students. Some students followed the text book of zoology written by Mr. Ambrose which was a standard text book for both the **PUC** and the B.Sc students. The subject of botany was taught to us by the lecturers in the department as there was no head of the department at that time. We followed the text book of botany written by T.S. Rama Rao from a different college at Vijayawada. The taxonomy, learning the transverse cut sections of the trees and the

plants was really interesting and absorbing. In addition to the theory classes in all the subjects, there were the laboratory practical experiments in all the subjects. In those days the theory subjects were corrected by the different college lecturers after the final examinations and the awarding of the marks was not in the hands of the internal teachers. But the practical examinations and the awarding of the marks was totally in the hands of the same college lecturers. They were liberal in awarding the internal examination marks for their students which ranged from anywhere between fifteen to twenty five marks which compensated for any deficiency in the theory examination marks. There was a peculiar situation in the examination, awarding marks, passing the examination and finally getting the first, second or the third class if one did not fail in any of the subjects. In the professional courses where the students concentrated on the main subjects and neglected the languages, most of the people passed in third class even after getting eighty percent marks in the group subjects because they just scored only pass marks in the languages. The other way round some very few students who got higher marks in the languages passed in the first class with less percentage of marks in the science groups. So the irony was that many third class students got admission into the medical college because of the high percentage of marks in the groups, whereas some first class students with good marks in all the

subjects could not make it to the medical college because of the relatively low score in the main group subjects in Bi.P.C.

In addition to the academic activities there was a compulsory **NCC** training for all the students in the college. The students were given the **NCC** uniform which consisted of a pant, shirt, belt, boots and a cap. There were fixed hours in a week in the afternoon time for the **NCC** training. We were supposed to keep the dress washed and pressed clean and neat, black polish the boots and metal polish the belt. We had to trek down to the police parade ground opposite to the collector's office and participate in the rigorous drill with discipline. We had instructors for supervising the parade; we had some of our class representatives as sergeants who obtained the "**C certificates**" for their excellent skills and leadership qualities. The instructors were very strict and committed. They taught us the drill and marching as if they were training the future police or army sepoy. One of my **PUC** classmates was physically and mentally very strong and well built; he became a leader of the class in **NCC** and ultimately joined the police department. He retired as the superintendent of police (**SP**) at Visakhapatnam. His name was Mr.T.S.R.Prasad. There was a very strict instructor in the **NCC** department at our college. One day after the **NCC** parade was over, there was the National Anthem sung by all the students as a mark of respect for the National Flag. It was the routine throughout the year. It was my habit to stand in the front row in all the drill classes

as also my habit to sit in the front bench of the class room to concentrate on the subject proper. On that unfortunate day in the **NCC** drill class, when the National Anthem was being sung seriously, there was a mischievous student standing behind me in the second row who started uttering foul words instead of the singing the National Anthem. It was a grave mistake by him deliberately done to disturb the other good student's concentration. I was standing in the front row close to the **NCC** instructor and I lost my concentration, which was noticed by the instructor who thought that I was smiling while singing the National Anthem which was an unpardonable offense. After the song was completed, the instructor walked straight to me and without asking any question, just slapped on my face and went away. I knew the truth what had happened and who was responsible for the entire mischief. He was Mr. Prasad who became a B.Sc graduate and later joined the Central Leather Research Institute at Madras. I wrote in more detail on that topic elsewhere under the title "***Muchataga Moodosari Chempa Chellumandi***" that was a lesson I learnt without directly doing any mistake and I paid dearly the penalty for somebody else's mistake.

Other than those two classmates, Mr. T.S.R. Prasad **IPS** and Mr. Prasad B.Sc Central Leather Research Institute, Madras there were a few more candidates from my class whom I still remember for good or bad. First and foremost amongst them were my own village and school students, Mr. Lingamallu Subba Rao, Mr. Lavu

Ramachandra Rao and late Mr. Avvari Krishna Murthi. The first two candidates stayed with me in the private rented house as roommates and also as hostel mates in the Hindu College Hostel even though we all shared our rooms with three different students where as late Mr. Avvari Krishna Murthi studied as a day scholar independently. The most important person and friend from the time I joined in the Hindu College till date has been Dr. Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao a leading gastroenterologist who has been practicing at Dallas, Texas state. I had written in great detail about this wonderful friend elsewhere in a book with title **“DESERVING OR NOT DESERVING”**. There were a few more names of the students I still remember for good or bad. My roll number in the college was eight hundred and seventy five (875) as I joined very late in the college I was the last candidate for that year in **PUC** at the Hindu College. The candidate just before my admission was Dr. Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao. It was a strange coincidence that we studied together at the Hindu College and the Hindu College Hostel, studied **MBBS** at the Guntur Medical College even though in two successive years, stayed together as the hostel roommates in the Guntur Medical College Men’s Hostel from the year 1967 to the year 1970. We have been in regular contact and sharing our thoughts that only speaks the real good bonding between us. As I was mentioning the serial numbers in our class, if my number was the last in the college I remember the roll number one candidate’s name as Mr. Ashok Kumar. He was popular because



he was the class general secretary for the entire **PUC** class students. I remember him as a tall and fair skinned person who had the leadership qualities. He was also a Bi.P.C student aspiring for getting a seat in the medical college. He was also known as a chain smoker, he was a good friend and talked to me on a number of times even though we had very little chance to meet in the class rooms as he was in the first section and I was in the ninth and the last section. Later I came to know that he missed out in getting the selection into **MBBS** course and continued his futile efforts to join in the Medical College by completing his B.Sc degree in the Hindu College itself. The number two in our class was late Mr.Aswini Kumar who was very fair skinned person, always smiling and was the darling of the class. He was very short and quiet opposite of Mr.Ashok Kumar the class leader. Unfortunately Mr.Aswini Kumar was a victim of a crime that took place in the college campus a few days before our annual theory examinations in **PUC**. I shall come to that unfortunate story a little later. Not to forget the Villon of the crime was another classmate of ours by name Mr.Prasad. All the above three candidates were day scholars and hence I did not have many details about their personnel or family background.

On the brighter and academic aspect of our college studies was a prodigal student in our **PUC** class whom I do not remember to have met him personally. But somebody told me about his mathematical achievements. He was the son of a lecturer in the chemistry

department at the Hindu College, Guntur. His name was Mr.Yessesvi, meaning a person with great intellectual knowledge or capabilities whose name and fame could spread over the entire world and universe. As a **PUC** student, true to his name he discovered a theorem which was recognized and accepted by the American Mathematics Association and was included in the text books of mathematics. Even though I was curious to know more about that person and also his invention, two obvious factors came in the way. One was that he belonged to the M.P.C group of students in our college with whom we hardly come across or interact in the college campus and the other reason was he was a day scholar, stayed somewhere either in the Brodiepet or the Arundalpet. Hence as a Hindu College Hostel resident and the Bi.P.C group student I never had a chance to meet him personally. That was the very brighter aspect of one of our class mates. As I was staying in the hostel there used to be a frequent guest and visitor to Mr.Arthur, my roommate. His name was Mr.Chandra Ray; he was a student of B.Sc at the Hindu College. He was a day scholar and I never met him in the college premises. He used to come to our room especially on Sunday and holidays, preferably in the evening hours. He was a nice person to talk to; he was a very serious student of science and had the vision to reach the moon some time in his life. He was a voracious reader of the space science and was very confident of succeeding in his mission. Mind you that was in years 1965-66!

That was a real stimulus for me to do better in my own studies. That was an indirect benefit for me for staying in the hostel room with a senior gentle man as a roommate. I found the difference in the level of discussions and the mature thought process when I compared my friends like Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao and Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao who stayed as the roommates, Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao who had a strange person as a roommate and me having Mr.Arthur as my roommate. The roommates certainly made a difference in the outlook of the juniors and gave a positive impact in the day to day studies.

There were a few more characters in our hostel other than my friends and class mates like Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao, Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao and Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao. My own roommate in the Hindu College Hostel was Mr.Arthur. He was very senior to me; he was a chronic referred candidate in B.A. He was compulsorily and voluntarily retained in the college as he was a very good sports person, a hockey player and the captain of the Andhra University Hockey Team for years together. For occupying that prestigious post to get recognition and glory to the Hindu College, the college management had an understanding with Mr.Arthur who was willing to be detained in the same class and retained in the sports category as long as there was the mutual agreement. He was also given free boarding and lodging in the hostel. I learnt through him that it was the practice of most of the arts colleges to possess

good sports persons and retain them on their college rolls to glorify their colleges. It was a paradox that Mr.Arthur who was a native of Nandyala town, born Christian could find a permanent place in the Hindu College, Guntur. As a person he was very friendly and cooperative. He was very considerate as a roommate. He encouraged me in my studies. He used to have a number of visitors, some were his relatives and some were his University Hockey player friends but none of them interfered with my serious studies. They were all arts subject students, chronic referred students and their main interest was in sports only. Mr.Arthur was a well dressed a soft spoken, God loving and gentleman to the core. He used to read Bible and go to the church regularly. He was respected by one and all for his good behavior and manners. He did not have any bad habits or vices like smoking or drinking. He did not indulge in any college or hostel politics or any gossip. He had a fiancée working at Vijayawada as a lecturer and he was waiting for his marriage with her which was getting postponed for different unknown reasons. His fiancée visited our hostel on a few occasions but that was not a big distraction for me. I lost contact with him totally after I completed my **PUC**.

If I am not going from back and forth, I should mention a few more characters in our hostel that gave some color and happiness to the hostel mates. The first person who made the hostel life happy and merry was a B.Sc student whose name I am not able to immediately recollect. He was very clever, intelligent and jovial. He

used to make the day to day life in the hostel a little lively with his jokes and antics. He used to dress and behave like a lady to everybody's delight and amusement. That was a small source of happiness in the dry and drab hostel premises located far away from the bubbling activity in the town like an oasis in a desert. That gentleman was also interested in playing cricket. We did not have the ground facilities in our hostel to play any game, leave alone the cricket. As far as I was concerned I never saw a cricket game before I entered the Hindu College. Even the cricket bat I saw it for the first time when our B.Sc friend took it out of his room on Sundays and holidays. He used to take one or two people with him to the adjacent open grounds next to the Hindu College Hostel and enjoyed playing the solo cricket game. It was a different matter all together that our neighboring Guntur Medical College Men's Hostel was having a vast play ground with a full pledged cricket pitch where the medical college hostel students regularly practiced their game which was a cynosure and eye sore for many of the Hindu College Hostel inmates. Just to complete the story, the Hindu College students played their cricket game in the police parade grounds and the team also participated in the inter collegiate competitions and tournaments.

There was one other character who was the very much involved in the fine arts. His name was Mr.Satya Narayana he was a degree student in B.A and was very much interested in the cinema field.

Halfway through his studies he went to Madras to learn the skills of cinema direction. He also worked as an assistant director for some of the cinemas, spent a fortune and returned to the college halfway through. He stayed in the hostel and tried to demonstrate his acting skills, his singing skills and also the dialogue delivery. He was very mad after getting into the cinema field and to make it as his permanent career. He even conducted a stage show during the hostel day anniversary celebrations; he wrote the story, acted as the lead role and also directed the drama exhibiting all his talent. Even though it would be unfair on my part to comment any further on that person I could not but suppress my memory and the rest of the thoughts about that gentle man. He was senior to me; he was very friendly with me, invited me to his room on some occasions and also shared his experiences in the cinema field at Madras. I was really impressed with his seriousness and deep involvement in the field of acting. Honestly speaking he did not have a really impressive face or figure to fit into a cinema actor. Who does not have the inner feeling or the inherent desire to become a popular cinema hero like the late Sri.N.T.Rama Rao or Sri.Akkineni Nageswara Rao who were the two leading heroes in those days? But I pitied Mr.Satya Narayana, the dormant actor because he had the mind and heart fixed in the cinema field, he had a good and sweet voice and could speak or sing the songs for hours together unmindful of the feelings of the audience or a sole listener like me. My ultimate feeling about him

was that he would one day make it to the cinema field and end up like Mr.Nagesh in the film "***Servor Sundaram***".

I go on narrating all other details, other than the subject proper, which was primarily aimed at preparing for my ultimate final examination in the ***PUC***. But as I ruminate more and more about my memories I could not suppress even the trivial things with the fear that if I cannot document my memories and feelings at least now there would never be another chance or opportunity to put them on paper. One may ask who would read such minor details which have no consequences or impact in the present day scenario. I would like to justify myself stating that my attempt was only to have self satisfaction and not to please anybody. The other reason was to test my own memory and also to give a try to improve my writing skills. As a last of the trivia I can't but document the additional benefit of my hostel stay and also my close association with Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao. As I briefly mentioned earlier, Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao was a freak replacement of my close friend at school Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao who joined at the Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada. Both of them had many similarities. They belonged to the same community even though I feel ashamed to bring that fact to the surface which is not relevant today and even in those days. Both of them had the common desire to study the medicine professional course and hence joined in the Bi.P.C group. Both of them had very good habits, to put it rightly they did not have

any bad habits of that adolescent age and transition from school to the college life. Both of them were very hard working and had their vision and goal set on getting admission in to the medical college by their virtue in the open category. In those days there was a lot of competition to get a seat in the Government Medical Colleges and there were not many donation colleges in our state, in fact there was only at Kakinada, the Rangaraya Medical College. Some students went to the Mysore state and studied medicine by paying huge amount of donation in the private colleges there, like Gulbarga, Bellary and Davanagore. The capitation fee was so high that many people could not join those colleges. Hence only hard work and good percentage of marks in the **PUC** group subjects was the only way of getting admission into the medical colleges in the state of Andhra Pradesh. In a way I was very lucky to have joined at the Hindu College even though it was very late and fortunately had the good company and friendship with Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao, after all the disappointment of missing out the admission at the Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada and really good friend and human being who sparked the light in me towards going into the medical profession. Even though I cannot equate both of them but the truth was that what I missed in Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao I gained out and continued in the friendship with Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao. Looking back today I feel sorry and ashamed that Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao and I could not sustain our



friendship beyond a point of time after our **PUC**. But I feel proud for my association with Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao which has been continuing from our **PUC** days till date. Both of them were a great source of inspiration and motivation in my future studies. In that context I would be failing to acknowledge the out of the way personal touch and preference given to me by both of them at different times. I would come back to Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao a little later in a different context. About Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao during my hostel stay he looked after me like his own family member or as a younger brother. He was very honest in his friendship in sharing his thoughts as well as his belongings. In those days even though our hostel food was very good compared to the hotel and mess food in the town that we ate in the first few months of our stay in a rented room, Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao always preferred a homemade preparation to compliment the hostel food. His father, who used to run a cloth business at Repalle, was a frequent visitor to our hostel to meet his son to encourage him in his studies. With his each visit he used to bring some homemade snacks and pickles. The best was the Avakaya Pachadi which was very tasty. Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao always wanted some company either for dinning or for studying. He always preferred my presence during the lunch and dinner time and also had the happiness of sharing his homemade Avakaya Pachadi daily. Why and how he chose me to be with him was known to him only. I really

enjoyed everything in his company not just the food and the studies. The one more benefit I only got through him was the new cloths from his father's shop during every vacation. Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao convinced his father, selected the color and the type of the dress I should wear, the special terry cot shirts and pants of his choice and also brought them on credit. It was very kind of his father to have shown me the same love and affection as he showed on his own son. He did not mind my intimacy with Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao; on the contrary he encouraged both of us to work hard in ours studies. It was rare to find such parents in that generation with liberal mind and attitude and I should say that he was totally unselfish in encouraging me also along with his son. As a token of memory of our hostel stay Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao had took a few photographs of me sitting on the parapet wall on the terrace of our hostel building which I kept with me for decades together as a memento. In fact that photo was so funny because it was exposed twice in the same frame at two different angles giving a creative angle to the photograph.

If I joined in **PUC** at the Hindu College only for the sake of my studies, what I had been drafting might look a little astray because so far I did not write in detail anything about my day to day classes, the studies, the examinations and the marks at each stage. I thought there was no need to specifically mention what was a routine for all the students studying in the same class, the same

college and also staying in the same hostel except that there were a few deviations for me from the rest of the students which helped me to focus on my studies. The best thing was staying next to the Guntur Medical College Men's Hostel compound and also doing the record work of the **PPC** students of the medical college. The next best was my combined study with close friends like Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao, Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao and Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao in the hostel. My own decision to go on to the hostel terrace to study in loneliness without any disturbances from other students in my room, either by the classmate's, roommate or his visitors. The next most personal decision to reinforce my concentration on studies as the examinations approached fast was to take my text books and go out of the hostel premises into the adjoining vacant barren agricultural fields, to choose a shade under a tree and study there for hours together. That habit which I cultivated even during my school studies helped me very much in single point concentration and the same thing helped me even after my **PUC** studies in the medical college. Hence the concentration and main focus on the subjects proper was always there without any special mention. Going into the fields for studies was a natural habit for a student with village background. The habitat had given a serene and tranquil atmosphere congenial for studies. That also enhanced my confidence in approaching the examinations boldly. In a way that was an additional advantage for me alone in our batch.

The rest of the hostel mates preferred to stay back in the hostel room itself for their studies. The highlight of the accessory factors was that controlled and molded me to become not just a book worm but a comprehensive and complete student and helped me in developing my all round personality. The period of the **PUC** career bridging the school and the professional college education was also a transition in the thought process to know the world around and also to overcome the teenage and adolescent distractions and digressions.

The studies towards the goal of the **PUC** final examinations was taken for granted and taken care of as the **D** day was approaching fast and rapidly. Ten months time just melted away like butter on a hot pan in no time and everybody was tensed up to face the real test of time. As the theory examination dates were announced some of the students started panicky. Hardly one day before the first examination in the subject of languages, my village mate and friend Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao, became nervous to face the examination as he was afraid that he was not going to pass the test and also his parents would scold him for not studying properly in the college. He developed suicidal tendency. That day he called me to his room after our dinner and confessed to me that he purchased a bottle of pesticide, Endrine to commit suicide without appearing for the examination. He asked me to go to our village on that night itself to inform his parents about his decision to commit the suicide. He

wanted to get a promise from his parents that they would not scold him if he failed in the examination out of fear and tension. He agreed to write the examination only if they understood his problem in advance. Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao a good friend of mine put me into the most difficult situation of rushing to our village in the middle of the night by catching a late night bus, waking up his parents, to convince them about the problem and make them understand the predicament in which their son was in. There was no choice for me as the time was very short and I had to catch the early morning bus to get back to Guntur and appear for my examination also. I could have refused to take that responsibility but it was the life and death situation for a close friend who was in a desperate situation. There was nobody else in the hostel from whom we could take in the elderly advice and counseling. Hence I took the responsibility on my shoulders, reached my village before it was too late, informed and convinced his innocent parents who were very much shaken and flabbergasted and agreed not to utter any word against him even if he failed in all the subjects. I still wondered how I managed that situation successfully and efficiently just at the age of sixteen years. I wondered even more how on earth Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao thought of me as the right person to convince his parents about his inability to face the examinations. Even equally more important thing was that his parents trusted and reposed faith in my words. They were very nice and kind parents always looked at

me as a dedicated and hard working student and also as the son of a middle class farmer working in the fields along side with them for years together. I still wondered how on earth I took the responsibilities and still did not have the answer for what would have happened if I decided against going to our native place just one day before the university examinations, what would Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao have done if I refused to go to our village and finally what would have happened if his parents became angry and shouted at me or their son for not studying well. What all happened ended happily, I reached back in time, made Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao happy and bold to face the examination and ultimately everything ended without any problem to repent later. It was a different story all together Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao could not get through his examination, discontinued his further studies and settled down in our village. I would be dishonest if I did not mention the fact that Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao did pay me one rupee as a two and fro bus fare for which I did not have a choice to refuse, because in those days each rupee was so valuable and only very few people could afford spending additional money for out of the way expenses. I was no exception. There was always the fear of the Domiciles sword hanging constantly on the head for all the village students that if they could not get through an examination in the first attempt itself their study career ended then and there. I was no exception for that formula also which haunted me all the time

because I was studying out of the earnings of the sweat and blood of my parents who depended on the agricultural work throughout their life. It was a fact that all those who appeared for the examination in that year from our village and who could not clear the hurdle were forced to stop their studies at that stage itself, there were more than half a dozen such unfortunate students from our village.

That was the first and difficult hurdle I was forced to cross. After the first hiccup I thought that was the end and there would not be anymore hurdles before the examinations were completed. Thanks to the Almighty that all of us have completed the theory examinations in all the subjects without any difficulty. There was a great sense of relief and satisfaction as we answered the theory questions to the best of our ability. After all, that was what we worked hard all those months. There was no need to particularly mention any specific situation or the subject of interest as all the subjects were taken with the seriousness required for the final examination. After the theory examinations were completed, for some strange reason there was a gap of a few days before the practical examinations were conducted. During that gap our **NCC** class teachers arranged some drill classes at the police parade ground. On one day after the drill was over we all left to our residing places not knowing what was in store for the next day.

All the hostel mates on that unfortunate morning woke up with a very bad and horror news which I would prefer to forget, but it still

lingered in my mind long enough and hence became a permanent inhabitant in my brain. However much I wanted to erase that memory it was not possible and kept on resurfacing into the recollecting mode of my mind. It was so terrible that the entire town of Guntur ran on to the streets to know more details and to get the first hand information. One of our classmates, whom I described at an earlier occasion as the shortest, fair looking, innocent and darling of the college late master Aswini Kumar son of a Marvadi business couple was found murdered in one of the class rooms at our Hindu College premises. The deceased boy attended the **NCC** parade along with all of us on the previous evening and returned to the college premises for change of the dress. What happened next was not known immediately. His dead body was found in one of the biology lecture galleries situated just opposite to the principal's chamber and office. Some night duty watchman who opened the classroom on the next day morning found the dead body and informed the college authorities. With some behind the scenes discussions and deliberations the authorities decided to shift the dead body of the student out of the class room into the canteen shed located just behind the lecture gallery on the farther side of the college premises. The boy was dragged on the floor from the gallery to the canteen and the track marks of the dead body were clearly found on the floor of the class room and could be traced till the canteen room where the body was found by the police. Once the



police entered the campus the entire area was cordoned off and the college gates were closed. Nobody was allowed to enter into the campus. There were so many rumors making the rounds in the entire town and also the other colleges and hostels. To put it in the right perspective, the entire town and the student community woke up to a shock which was not heard off in the recent past at Guntur. The Hindu College at Guntur was a highly respected educational institution with great intellectuals as teachers. The college had a good culture and reputation for being very calm and sober in its activities. The student community was well behaved without any disturbances in the hostel or the campus unlike other colleges where there were some incidences of student unrest. Nobody had a clue of the murder plot and everybody was guessing about the possibilities. The police department took it as the challenge to solve the problem and acted earnestly. All the Hindu College students, both the hostel mates and the day scholars were summoned to report at the college gate by the police. They wanted to check all the students individually. The students were asked to stand in queue lines starting from the Hindu College gate and ending at the railway over bridge in two opposite lines on either side of the road. The sniffing dog squads were pressed into action. The parade started at about 10 AM on that day and went beyond 12 noon. There was an unknown fear in everybody's mind as it was the first time in life that we were forced to submit ourselves for a police investigation and the

dog squad sniffing. All of us had our own fears of unknown and unexpected troubles. The main fear was what if the dog suspected or caught hold of an innocent person like me that would mean the end of my student career and also I would land up in the jail for the rest of my life. What was the guarantee that the dogs would not make any mistake and wrong suspicion? As the dog squad parade started, the mighty and aggressively looking Labrador dogs sniffed each student as if he was the culprit. The farther the dog was the safer we were. As the dog approached close to me my heart beat started rising and the body and the hands started sweating profusely. As the dog stood before me for a few seconds I must have last a few heart beats. I was praying all the Gods to come and help and rescue me from that tricky position. I knew I was innocent but what if the dog pounced on me by mistake. Luckily I escaped the suspicion from the dog and the police. There must have been somebody in our class who had a clue or a hand in the murder of that innocent classmate and hence there was a definite possibility for the culprit to be caught. There was every chance for the close friends of the victim to be involved. The victim reached the college after the **NCC** parade and at least somebody might have noticed the accompanying person in the evening at the college campus. The police should have zeroed down on his friends circle first than submitting all the college students into that laborious task of the roadside open parade. The parade was completed and luckily for the relief of everybody who

stood in that hot Sun, nobody was caught in that parade. The police attention was shifted to the students who did not participate in the parade and started searching at the residences of the absent students. The town was tense and the wild rumors were making rounds. There was a curiosity to know the truth and also an unknown fear that it might fall on some innocent person unconnected with the crime. Whatever the police investigation outcome was going to be, the entire student community was dazed and disturbed. Luckily for us the theory examinations were over which was the main part of the subject with seventy five to eighty percent of the total marks. That was a great relief but still the suspense about the reopening of the college, conduct of the practical examination and the ultimate results was a big question mark. The Hindu College was closed temporarily and the holidays were announced. The hostel was also closed pending the investigation. We were told that the dates for the practical examinations would be announced at a later date. For all other colleges in the town and the state the practical examinations were conducted as per the original schedule. The Hindu College hostel students went home at their respective native places hoping that the practical examinations would be conducted as early as possible so that our results would be announced along with all other **PUC** candidates all over the state. For some time, after the murder that took place in the college, the loss of a precious life of the classmate student and the frightening police

investigation of open parade in the streets was temporarily put behind in the memory and I for once had a sigh of relief and slept in the comfort of the family members, under the neem tree with open sky's, stars and the moon which I had been missing for nearly one year after joining in the Hindu College. Even though there were quarterly and half yearly holidays, I decided to spend most of the time at Guntur town itself to keep the continuity in my studies. Even if I had come for a short holiday to our village I spent most of the time discussing with my classmates and colleagues mostly about our studies and performances. I used to rush back to Guntur as early as possible not to lose the track of my studies. Even if the hostel mess was closed for a short while I preferred to buy the outside mess tickets for food and stayed back in the hostel. Each day was precious in terms of the final examination and the essential marks. I was always conscious of my own self and responsibility towards my parents and my studies. I learnt the value of the time in my **SSLC** class itself where ***"Waste not and want not"***; ***"Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves"***; ***"Time is Money"***; ***"Time is more valuable than money"***; ***"Once wasted will never be regained"***. Even though I learnt one more phrase on the time sense during my studies at the Madras Medical College I would add the phrase here itself to complete the picture on the value of the time ***"The work expands to fill the time"*** which was displayed in the notice board of the administrative block in the third floor of the Institute of Neurology emphasizing the fact that one could turned

over more work in less time and less work if given more time. Coming back to the forced holidays announced pending the police investigation, I brought home some of the books and the records but I could not concentrate very much in preparing for the impending final practical examinations. Still I had to do some home work to satisfy myself and also not to lose my focus totally out of the subject. It was the same story for all of my classmates who were sailing in the same boat of uncertainty. At last the culprit in the crime was caught by the police. He happened to be our own classmate, a close friend of the victim and his name was Mr.Prasad. Both the victim and Mr.Prasad stayed back in the college campus after returning from the **NCC** training class from the police parade grounds. The police have reconstructed the story on the confession of the criminal and arrested him. He was sent to the juvenile prison after the confirmation of the crime. When I studied the forensic medicine subject in the medical college I came to know the name of the juvenile prison as the Boston School for childhood criminals. As the reconstructed unfortunate story was told in Toto by our friends and seniors it was understood that Mr.Prasad forced the victim Aswini Kumar to an unnatural sexual assault in the botany classroom which was not locked by mistake on the day by the college watchman. The innocent, tender, small built Aswini Kumar died in shock on the same night itself in the classroom. We all felt the shock and the shame over the entire episode. The event also

disturbed our examination schedule leaving our future in a great suspense. All our carefully planned and executed efforts in preparing for the examination appeared to have come to a standstill.

The curtain of suspense was raised ultimately, the date for the practical examination was announced and at last the examinations were conducted and we breathed safe and secure. During the course of the practical examination we saw the sight of the offence and also the track formed by the dragging of the dead body on the floor from the classroom to the canteen. The outline of the dead body which was drawn by the police on the floor of the canteen remained as a permanent mark of the ghastly and the ghostly crime. Our examinations were conducted and completed peacefully and all the **PUC** students went home for good, vacating the hostel rooms and awaiting the final results. In those days, the theory papers were sent to an unknown college for correction and evaluation which was not in the control of the parent college, whereas the practical examinations and the awarding of the marks were in the hands of the internal examiners of the same college. The fifteen to twenty percentages of the marks allotted for the practical examinations were awarded by the internal examiners at their discretion. Hence the students were at the mercy of the internal examiners. In our college as the practical examinations were delayed and the schedule was disrupted for extraneous reasons beyond the control of the students. I and all my friends wished and hoped that the internal

examiners would be more considerate in awarding the marks for the practical and the record work. The marks awarded in the practical examinations would certainly make a difference in getting the first class or the second class, the seat in a professional college or not and for some people even a failure or a pass in the examinations. So the examiners had the liberty and the option of awarding marks anywhere between zero to twenty five depending on their whims and fancies and not just by the performance of the candidate alone. But they were certainly considerate on the good and hard working students. But still, till the results were announced and the marks lists were given it was a mystery for all of us good, bad and indifferent students.

As the preparations for the theory and the practical was going on seriously on one side there was the other side of the coin, the financial aspect or the economical aspect or precisely the monetary aspect of the studies and the education. There was a set pattern of receiving money from the parents every month and spending the same judiciously without ever feeling the lack of money or having the exuberance of it at any time. People with middle class background and economy naturally struggled to beat the deadline every month to meet the essential expenditures like the monthly mess bill which should be paid before the deadline date put in the notice board, failing which your name would automatically go in to the defaulters list. If there was any further delay in the payment the

next month mess service would be closed for that candidate till the dues were cleared. Anyhow there was a cushion of deposit money in the hostel as a buffer for the defaulters. Hence nobody failed to pay the mess bill as per the schedule to prevent any discontinuity in our hostel stay and also it was a big shame to be noticed by all other inmates as a defaulter. Other than the mess bill there were other day to day expenditures which required some constant pocket money. The amount of the pocket money available with each individual was an index of his financial back ground and the affluence of his family. Some good friends came to the rescue of those who were short of the pocket money temporarily. The total amount of such borrowings over a period of one month ranged between one to two rupees! As far as possible my father lived up to the monthly requirements of money for myself. I should remain here that my elder sister and I were studying in **PUC** at Guntur in the same year and my father had the burden of meeting the financial requirements for both of us simultaneously. My sister was studying in the Government Women's College just across the road opposite to the Hindu College. One consolation for my father was that in the Government Women's College and the Hostel the mess bill was not collected on monthly basis from the candidates eligible for the sanction of the annual social welfare scholarship. Usually the scholarship was sanctioned and paid only at the end of the academic year. The amount was just sufficient for the total dues for



the mess bill accrued over the entire one year period. That was a big relief for my father but still he had to meet the monthly pocket money for my sister also for her day to day needs and occasional extra requirements. It was not so in my case where I was forced to pay every month the mess charges and also the college fees as per the schedule. It was a strange situation for me compared to my sister and some other contemporary colleagues in other colleges like the AC College where the candidates whoever were eligible for the same were, assured of the sanction of the social welfare scholarship. The candidates usually submitted their application for the scholarship in the respective college offices at the time of admission in to the college itself. The college provided the free education and the mess facilities and adjusted the scholarship amount at the end of the year without much of the burden on the candidate's parents for meeting the monthly mess charges. It was probably unknown in the annals of the Hindu College, Guntur that a student eligible for the social welfare scholarship could be admitted in to that college as so many other colleges were available especially the AC College at Guntur for such candidates. It was truly unknown to the staff of the office at the Hindu College how to apply and process the application form for the sanction of the social welfare scholarship for which I was eligible. In the initial days there was the expected reluctance in the college office to provide me with the application form itself. As my father was aware of the existence of the facility, he went round

the people and the places and gathered information that even though I was studying at the Hindu College where almost all the students studied there with their own funds, I was eligible for applying for the same scholarship even if I were to be the first candidate from that college. My father successfully procured a blank application form for the sanction of the social welfare scholarship either from the social welfare department at Guntur or from some other colleges. Ultimately my father and myself submitted the filled in application form in the college office and requested the staff to process it after getting the recommendation from the principal, Mr.Y.S.R.Chandran. Still there was some resistance in getting the signature of the principal and dispatching the application form to the social welfare department at Hyderabad. For the second time, for a different purpose, my father had to approach the principal Mr.Y.S.R.Chandran directly and confront him to do the favor. Mr.Y.S.R.Chandran, a highly educated and worldly wise man understood my predicament and also my father's innocent and earnest efforts, he exceeded to our request to sign and process the application for my scholarship. Having crossed the first hurdle at the Hindu College principal's office my father started going round the social welfare department offices both at Guntur and Hyderabad for the sanction of the scholarship. The social welfare department people were totally against the sanction of the scholarship as I was studying in an elite and affluent college whose students did not

depend on the social welfare scholarships at any time. They were also not willing to process my application form thinking that I might have been a fake student or producing the fake certificates to claim the scholarship. They did not come across an earlier occasion where a student from the Hindu College applied for the social welfares scholarship and also got it sanctioned. As there was no positive sign of sanctioning by the local social welfare department office at Guntur my father made a number of trips meeting all the concerned people at Guntur. Every time he came to Guntur from our village he used to replenish me with some amount of money so that I never felt any deficiency in meeting my day to day needs. Even though my father never expressed openly how and where he was able to get the money from, I was conscious of his untiring efforts in meeting the challenge. He had that undercurrent feeling that he could not go to school leave alone to the college education. There was that fire in him that constantly forced him to meet the demands of the college education of myself and my sister. Even with the assistance and buffering of the social welfare scholarship to educate one person in the college itself was a big task and to bear the burden of two children from the same family in the same year for a low middle class agricultural family who solely depended on the cultivation and the mercy of the Gods who controlled the vagarious of the weather was unimaginable. Still unmindful of the financial burden my father did not stop his efforts in going round the officers and their offices.

Fortunately one day my father stumbled upon the information that one gentle man from our village, to be precisely the son-in-law of one of our village land lords late Sri.Kandula Lashmayya, an electrical engineer whose name was Mr.Ankala Rao working at Hyderabad in the State Electricity Department. That information gave my father some extra energy to approach him at Hyderabad. That gentleman agreed to help my father in getting the social welfare scholarship sanctioned for me. But the problem was, that nobody could trace where my application form was pending. After discussing with the officers at the social welfare department at Hyderabad, the electrical engineer advised my father to get a fresh application form from the Hindu College office signed and recommended by the principal which my father took directly to Hyderabad. With the helping hand given by the engineer the application was directly handed over at the social welfare department. The electrical engineer took all the pains, used all his contacts and influence to get the application form moved from one chair to the other till the logical end. The waiting period in getting the scholarship in time during my study period at the Hindu College made my father a little unhappy and nervous which was understandable. Ultimately when the sanction letter had come to the Hindu College office my father's happiness knew no bounds. A huge amount of rupees seven hundred was sanctioned and disbursed on one day for the satisfaction and joy of everybody who helped in that marathon and untiring efforts of my father. In

the heart of the heart we thanked the staff of the office of the principal at the Hindu College Guntur, the principal Mr.Y.S.R.Chandran himself and the social welfare department who went out of the way in helping an unknown person with no political or powerful connections. It was the sheer innocence, hard work and common sense of my father which made the other people to give him a helping hand. But for that onetime payment my father would have landed himself in huge debts. The ultimate thanks should go to the electrical engineer who took the interest and sympathized on my father's untiring efforts. But for him there was no chance for my father to overcome the red tapes of the government departments. Even though I am not able to recollect his name immediately I am ever grateful to him for all the sincere efforts he made in successfully getting the sanction of the scholarship. For the second time in one year span, my father was triumphant in securing my seat in the Hindu College and also getting the scholarship for me. Just to recollect the importance of the amount of the scholarship I would go a few years back in my memory lane. During my elementary school studies there was no provision of scholarship but to encourage the poor students to go to school and also as a measure of stopping the drop outs the government introduced the mid day meal scheme which was the first effort to make the primary education compulsory. Whether I liked it or not I also lined up in the mid day meal scheme even though my home made food was far

superior in quality and quantity in addition to my mother's affectionate and tasty cooking. When I joined at the Z.P.H.School at Peda Nandi Padu for the lower form classes i.e. from sixth class to the eighth class an amount of rupees eighteen and paisa twenty five was given at the end of every academic year. That was a big bonanza when all the parents of the students lined up to receive the amount with their thumbs painted black to put their thumb impressions on the stamp papers. That was a really big good amount when one compared rupees two as the admission fees for each class every year. After going to the higher forms i.e. ninth to the eleventh class the scholarship amount was enhanced to rupees thirty two per year. So from the mid day meal to eighteen rupees to thirty two rupees to seven hundred rupees as a single payment was a great boon. They arrived at the seven hundred rupees figure at the rate of fifty rupees per month for the hostel mess charges and rupees twenty per month as the pocket money for a total of ten months of our academic schedule. I do not remember whether there was any reimbursement of the college fees and the cost of the books and the records.

As I was going through my daily academic rig mors I was also subconsciously aware of a mind game and misconception my father was harboring even before I joined at the Hindu College. He was aware of some of the village people talking that the children get spoiled after joining the college education because of the place, the campus, the money and the new friends brought certain changes in

the mentality and the outlook of the adolescent children. That was the transition period when the children become good and better from their school days or get spoiled and ruined themselves and their families by acquiring bad habits and bad friends. My father was aware of that predicament and was consciously watching me whether and when I would make a wrong or a false step. Out worldly he was very bold and protected my image and character in front of other and strange people. He was very happy when some people praised my hard work, good manners and when I achieved good marks in the class subjects. But he never allowed his emotions to surface in front of me and always enquired and cautioned me about my food, health and expenditure. There was one more melodrama going as an undercurrent water, reinforced by his village friends and also some of the characters depicted in our Telugu cinemas. He was aware that some students after joining in the college developed an ego problem and always tried to compare themselves with the other students in the college about their status in the society both socially and financially. Some students faked and behaved as if they were not inferior or in any way less than the other students who were well to do and affluent than themselves. Such students to overcome their inferiority complex could not even identify themselves with their poor and village parents who dressed shabbily and talked with the village slang. So that was very much hurting to the poor and innocent parents when their own kith and kin disowned them in the

presence of the other students. Not only that, some breed of the student brats introduced their parents as their village servants to their friends. That was more hurting and insulting to the innocent parents. Such scenes were there in plenty both in the real life and the reel life. I was also fully aware of such instances, as much as my father was. There was a little difficulty in the initial days to know the real atmosphere in the college campus and I did not lose much time in introducing my father to my close friends as the first and the foremost responsibility on my behalf. I never tried to hide my parents and gain any additional respect or benefit from my friends or colleagues by doing so. I never tried to pretend in any way either to suppress my original self and background or to exaggerate anything out of the way either materialistically or emotionally. I earnestly tried to wipe out the doubts in my father's mind and to remove the veil of suspense from his heart. Why should I hurt him or his feelings when he was helping me so much, undergoing physical and financial strain and stress? I always lived up to his expectations in focusing my father as the sole responsible and respectable person behind my success in education. So much so, my friends and colleagues started identifying my father even before I could reach him in the campus or outside. They honored and respected him in spite of his innate drawbacks in his communications and language. My father was no way nearer to the educated and enlightened parents of the rest of the students. My



father was in no way comparable to the rich, affluent and highly placed parents of other students. My father always talked and addressed the other students or their parents and even the college staff and the principal with no exception, only in the singular tense. It was a little bit embarrassing for me when my father addressed other people like the way he addressed the village people at our village. There was not only the singular tense but also the village slang with occasional unpalatable words blurring from his mouth as naturally as he talked to the people at home. Even though I was feeling delicate, but I could not protest or defend my father in that delicate situation. My father did not know what he was doing in the first place and did not know that was wrong with him at all. He was talking and behaving in the same tone and manner as he had been doing all over his life ever since he started mixing with the other people in the village. I was not uncomfortable at all but started feeling for the other people who faced my father intentionally or unintentionally. At this point of time I would add that even today some of my good friends educated, enlightened and affluent doctors talking in a much worse slang language in a closed circle friends. That was openly accepted as a friendly discussion between intimate individuals. But my father and the rest of the people he encountered were strangers and he could easily be misunderstood and shunned away. That did not happen luckily. Some times when our class lectures were going on, if my father came to the campus in search of

me and if there was some delay in meeting him, he did not lose time in talking to the other people either the students or their parents and made friends with them. I always rushed out to meet him at the earliest to avoid any long discussion of the strangers with my father. I always felt guilty and had an unknown fear that my father might hurt with his poor language anybody else's feelings. On the contrary I was surprised at some times that my father not only did not hurt anybody but made good friends with others who loved and enjoyed talking to my father with his innocent and uninhibited expressions and discussions. People living in the towns and also those who were more educated than my father realized his one point mission to educate me at any cost and suffering. They also felt happy in his rare company as it was difficult for them to come across such an uneducated and yet innocent and intelligent person. His intelligence was innate, instinctive and with a lot of common sense which attracted other's attention towards him. Once they get into a dialogue with my father, people never wanted go away from him or discontinue the discussion and also to distance from him. But I was to self conscious because of my own immaturity, behaved childishly and tried to protect my father from any unforeseen tricky situations. Slowly and steadily I started realizing that my father did not require any protection from me but he himself longed to meet anybody and everybody available at that point of time. I was a little bit amused to ultimately know that my father made more friends in the campus

than myself. When they met him next time they welcomed him and greeted him. That made my life more comfortable and I never had an occasion to disown my father in the presence of the educated and elite high society people. My educational performance gave full credit to my father's untiring efforts which was a positive talking point and my father got the instant recognition for everything I achieved, more than myself. Even though all those feelings were continuously going through my mind neither me nor my father had to sort out or explain how to drive away the doubts and suspicions between us, which were imaginary and really the creation of the outside world. I was aware that we both answered each other without being questioned. Coming back to my father's visits to the college to meet me as often as possible, was only possible because I got admission at the Hindu College at Guntur itself. If I were to join at the Loyola College Vijayawada, Bapatla or Chirala Colleges my father would have been put into more physical strain commuting from my village to Guntur to visit my sister and me at a different college elsewhere. Since my sister and I were studying at Guntur he did not have to make separate trips to visit both of us. Not only that, as a farmer he had a few requirements for the cultivation and even before our college education he used to make frequent visits to Guntur for procuring seeds, fertilizers and pesticides on one side and also to sell away his agricultural produce in the market. Looking from all angles it was a big advantage for my father to make less number of

visits to Guntur and also save some amount on the transport charges. Coming back to his visit my college which was more frequently done by him than my sister where there were fixed timings for the visitors including the parents. For him waiting for me near the entrance gate had become an accepted routine. If there was some delay to meet me he spent his time usefully sitting under the shade of a nearby tree, to get his cheppals repaired at the roadside cobbler's shop and still if he found time he visited the Reynar pen shop which was his favorite place located at the corner of the road near the Hindu College to purchase or repair the fountain pens. With all those minor uncertainties which were not in our control my father patiently waited for me to come out of the class. Even if he had waited for hours together for me, our meeting lasted for only a couple of minutes exchanging a few information from home and from my side and the rest of that brief interaction was spent on taking money from my father whatever he brought for me without questioning and also putting forward my requirement as next installment during his next visit. I never demanded more money than what he could give me within his limited resources. Whatever was given I happily accepted. There was no other choice also. I was also feeling my responsibility in spending the money given by them, with a lot of hard work put in from behind the scenes and I always respected my parent's feelings and lived as honestly as possible. As a final word there was no way in the world that I could have cheated

my parents even if they had their own inherent fears and feelings. After all, I was the son of my father and I always felt proud to announce myself as son of so and so than as by my own name. To drive away all his fears, misconceptions, misunderstandings and unfounded suspicions I took the earliest remedy measures like allowing my father to mix with my friends and their parents as quickly as possible, as frequently as possible and talk to them as long as possible so that all his inhibitions were removed straight away. I also did not interfere with his interactions with the staff or the students at the college. I also made sure that my father took lunch along with me in the company of my friends knowing full well that his way of eating habits at home were totally different from our hostel or mess surroundings. They were not the major issues for discussion but had a bearing on the overall outlook of the student parent relations. The separation was for the first time in the family. But the primary aim of coming to the college education for studies was not lost sight off. That psychological conflict and contradictions was not solely my father's or mine. It was the same story and the same problem for almost all the middle class, low middle class and poor families. After all that was a phase of transition in the education and civilization. Hence I had a given full liberty for my father to be free and frank in his own world of existence as much as he had given me the total freedom for my education and character development which were taken place simultaneously hand in hand. I

neither tried to contain or contradict his innocent mannerisms and expressions. It was a really funny situation that he was educating me, with his hard earned money and at the same time, trying to educate himself to match the college atmosphere. The impact was so good and long lasting that was perceived even decades after I left the Hindu College when some of my friends and classmates remembered and recollected my father more than me. It may be out of place here but worth mentioning now itself when the same innocence of my father brought him the great acclaim and admiration when the person of the stature Professor B.Ramamurthi went out of the way and praised my father for his dare devil decision to make me a neurosurgeon without having even the basic primary education.

At last the tenure of pre university course study at the Hindu College came to the logical end at the completion of the practical examinations. The time had come to pack off to the village where it all started, to say, back to square one. It was a different and new experience to spend the time at our village after staying in a town for a year. I could see the glaring glances of the surrounding people in the community and the village. People were watching critically about the day to day behavior of the college budding students and wanted to prove a point or two about how the college education had affected the molding of the students. If they found anybody doing anything differently, they wanted score a point or two by stating that they had already predicted such a change even before the students went to

the college. They enjoyed and admired their own skills in forecasting and even enjoyed sometimes at the expense of the defenseless and shy students. Not all the villagers were the same. There were some very good people who sincerely enquired about my health and my education. A few senior students started giving free unsolicited advice regarding the future course of action in my studies, how to go to the higher professional courses and also the possibilities of a brighter academic and financial opportunities and benefits.

But, for my mother who was very fond of me, it was a different experience to take care of my special needs as a college returned student compared to my earlier stay at home as a high school student. She was keen on making a homemade coffee for me for the first time, with our own household buffalo or cow's milk early in the morning. She started learning to make the coffee at home regularly for the first time for my sake only. Drinking morning coffee had become an addiction for my father even before I was born. He had his coffee at the coffee hotel of our village along with his village friends and he introduced me for the same addiction when I was four years old. At home, along with me all our family members also shared the filter coffee with full of sugar and milk. Earlier during my school days I used to have a cup of coffee on some holidays at the famous village coffee hotel run by late Sri.Lingamallu Venkata Ratnam Garu, father of my good friend and classmate Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao. Not only the morning coffee, my mother

started preparing some breakfast items for me, which was within her knowledge and experience like the Upma, the Omlet and some fancy preparations she was good at doing. Occasionally my father used to go to the village hotel and bring home a parcel of Idlies which my mother was not able to prepare at home. When I wanted to have a Dosa for my breakfast, I walked up to the coffee hotel where I ordered and ate the fresh Dosa with garlic chutney. For lunch and dinner my mother took extra care in making fresh dishes with country chicken (Kodi Charu), egg curry and occasionally the goat meat preparations. Fish curry was an especially mouth watering preparation, the recipe was a real patent for my mother which I enjoyed not only for its taste but also for the love and affection my mother showered on me. My mother also made a tasty curry with fresh prons, dry prons, dry fish (Nettalu) with gongura. She occasionally made curries with fresh mushrooms from our agricultural fields, snails and crafts which were rare delicacies. There was one more favorite item my mother took very great care and pride in making the Ghee Palau (Agni Palau) with full of spices and flavors. Special white rice was procured as long as I stayed at home. In addition to those extra preparations my mother was very good at the regular meal making with occasional special items like Sagu Rice Payasam, Palathalikalu, Aresalu, Vadalalu, Pakodi, Chekkiralu, Pelapindi, Sunnundalu and many more. She was a self made cook and devised her own technique in making tasty items



ever since she entered our house at the age of fourteen years. She was untiring in taking care of the household day to day requirements of not only of the family members but also the guests and visitors. We had sufficient vegetables grown in our fields and also more than sufficient milk from our cattle. She was very liberal in sharing and distributing whatever we had with the neighbors and some other villagers. As far my father was concerned he always had some work at Guntur and visited almost regularly on some pretext or the other every day. When he returned home even in the late hours he made it a point to bring home some eatables without forgetting. His favorite items were the ripe, large and tasty bananas of the special quality called the Chekkara Keli variety and other sweet items like the freshly made jilebi with dripping sugar juice (Panchadara Pakam). It was my parent's way of showing their love, affection and happiness towards me and they wanted to keep me happy and healthy by eating the best homemade food possible and also the best sweets they could procure. Their idea was the food at the town either in the hostel or in the mess was stale and stereotyped without any good taste and strength. Their concept of showering their love on me was by making me eat the homely food as much as possible before I leave the house for further studies. The rest of the comforts at home were that my clothes were washed clean and dried by somebody else which I was doing myself at the hostel. I had grown in age to wear the long pants and lungies from the school

day attire of shorts. My mother also had the special care for my hair where she was particular that I should have a proper head both with the homemade juice (Kunkudukaya Rasam) and steaming hot water. As a grownup it was embarrassing to take open air both in the presence of so many other family members and passer by onlookers. But still my mother insisted in having a thorough head both and body scrub with the same Kunkudukaya peel till my skin last the black coating specially on my fore head and the nape of the neck. So much so, the entire grease and the dirty were washed off. At that point I could not but remember and recollect what I used to as a child along with so many other village children when I went to the fields with the domestic cattle for grazing we used to give a bath to the cattle when they completed their grazing and relaxed in the water pond. While giving the bath in the water pond or channel we used to take a hand full of dry hay and gave a thorough and decent bath to the cattle. On that pretext some people learnt swimming in the water ponds and the rivers. Even though I entered the pond to give a scrub to the cattle I did not learn the actual swimming because I was frightened to death even in the very childhood by the palmist and village astrologist. I always recollected the cattle bath whenever I got the rough and tough skin scrub at home. After the head bath and the water scrub my mother never failed to give me the fumigation to the head with the smoke emanating from the earthen pot containing the burning embers over which **“Sambrani”**

crystals were sprinkled. That process went for a few minutes till the air locks were cleared and dried. Sometimes my mother did not stop short of doing anything that she felt was good for me. Sometimes she went crazy to drive away the evil or the Satan throwing their evil spirits and veils on me. She used to take a broken part of an earthen pot and put the burning embers, the red chills, the salt crystals and a lemon fruit that produced pungent and irritable fumes which were supposed to drive away the evils spirits from me. At the end of the process of removing the veil of the evil spirits by taking the pot around my head three times and throwing the remnants in the middle of the street or in the backyard of our house. She was satisfied that no evil force or the Satan would influence and afflict my health or my study career. She did not stop there when she found out that I was carrying some cold or throat infection. When she boiled the milk from our domestic cattle both in the morning and evening times, in a big earthen pot she used to make me inhale the hot steam directly emanating from the pot and also covered my head with towel so that the steam was not wasted. That was a big ritual I hated but accepted unwillingly. How I spent my time at home was not very clear but a few small details if I mention may not make the issue silly and absurd. I was little fortunate that my mother did not resort to other rituals she was good at doing regularly during my childhood days till I went to the college. She used to boiled castor oil periodically to clear the

constipation whether it was there or not. I always cursed such practices but in a small family there was no way of escaping from my mother's instructions for which she meticulously managed they ground preparation and also the mental preparation for accepting such things. The other ritual which she did not insist after a few years of my school studies was to clear the nose block, now I knew it as the chronic sinusitis, by pouring the boiled juice extracted from the roadside medicinal plant called the Nagamalli. My goodness! It was a torture that I would rather forget as early as possible. But the procedure did produce the expected result of inducing nasal irritation and liquefaction of the infected and solidified mucous secretions in the sinuses. Mind you that my mother was a totally illiterate but gained more knowledge and experience than many educated people in taking care of the family and her children needs. Just as an afterthought, after I became Doctor I would relate the significance of the head bath and body scrub with the Kunkudukaya, the boiled castor oil used as a purgative and the extract of the Nagamalli leaves used for clearing the sinuses was having some scientific and medicinal background. Looking back we have not achieved much progress in the medical field to overcome those three common issues completely.

The daily rituals at home was to wake up to the busy buzzing activity of the family members and the surrounding people who usually sleep early and wake up early to catch up with their daily

chores. The first person to wake up in our house was my father himself who slept at the cattle shed situated close to our house by about two to three hundred yards. He woke up early in the morning at about 4 AM and disturbed everybody else's sleep as a matter of habit and routine. Many people in the village did the same thing. There was a group of people along with my father, all his contemporary age group farmers who woke up early and assembled at the coffee hotel of late Sri. Lingamallu Nagarathnam. They enjoyed the first hot cup of steaming and freshly brewed homemade filter coffee at the hotel. Then they dispersed to their respective work places to engage the labor for their daily chores. Simultaneously the woman folk woke up and straight away took to their daily routine. The first thing my mother did was to churn the overnight curds to make the cheese and butter milk with the domestic device "**Kavvam**" and the process was called Chilakatam. That was a half an hour to forty five minutes job that made some musical noise which was the best way to wake up the sleeping children. Listening to all those noises I still continued to sleep. There was another important wake up real music sound in our village that was the sound of the drums made by the maestro of Mrindagam by late Sri.Narayana (Kummari Narayana) who was a renowned **AIR** artist who started his practice and training of his disciples at 4 AM in the morning almost at the same time when my father and his friends for having their first cup of coffee. Depending on the season there were some early morning

visitors to our village singing the religious songs at the middle of the night by the Peer Sahib's of the Muslim religion and the Haridasu during the Sankranti festival and not to forget the Sanhai songs and the music rendered by the village artists who entertained the villagers along with their "**Gangireddulu**". But I was staying at our home on a long summer break after my **PUC** examinations were over and it was a peak summer time. So the daily chores depended on the season. Even though there was an electrical power supply to our village even before I went for my college studies, thanks to the young and energetic village president Sri.Kalluri Nageswara Rao, we did not have the electrical appliances except the electrical bulbs for the light. We did not have the luxury of the fans. The tiled houses did not have the enough height to fix the ceiling fans and we never heard of the stand fans. So the question of having a fan in the house was ruled out. We did not have the ceiling fans even at our Hindu College Hostel. The best place to sleep was under the neem tree in front of our house and the best breeze came from the eastern winds that carried the sweet fragrance of the only "**Ponnaga Puvvula Chettu**" located a few hundred yards away from our house across the barren lands in front of our house and situated in the agricultural fields of our Village Karanam late Sri.Krishna Rao. Not only that, there was a seasonal sale of the Jasmine flowers by the village vendors who went round the houses and sold the flowers to the women folk. The dry summer heat made many men to sleep under the trees half naked.

The prickly heat required the help of a stick or a child with big nails to scratch the back of the elders in the house. Almost all of us slept in the open spaces, some people under the trees and our cots were woven with the traditional village **“Gogu Nara fabric”** (Nulaka Mancham). Very few people could afford a cot woven with cotton thread belt woven cots (Navaaru Mancham), which was the fort of the rich people. When I slept under the neem tree ruminating, my experiences and stay at the Hindu College and the hostel I always looked into the skies counting the stars, watching the clouds move around sometimes blocking the beautiful moon and its light. I was the last person to get into sleep and the last person wake up when all other family members were already into their daily work. Sometimes there was the menace of the lice (Nallulu) hiding in the creases of the tiny little ropes that made the mattress of the wooden cot, sucking the blood out disturbing the sleep half way through. The lice were not solo but in multiples of tens and hundreds. During some nights a considerable time was spent on killing the lice itself. The dirty odor after killing the lice was bad and nauseating and lasted long enough to erode into sleep further. It would be a frightening sight the next day morning to see the number of blood stains on the edges of the cot and also on the bed sheets. Some people poured steaming hot water on the cots in the day time to kill the lice and dried their cots in the Sun light and saved their night sleep from the blood sucking lice. Some people who did not have any

other were spent a lot of their day time also in killing the lice as if that was the only work they had for that day. As far as, I was concerned none of those distractions eroded into my deep slumber since I slept late and woke up late. When I woke up in the morning may be after a number of attempts by mother calling me to wake up short of scolding me, I found my cot full of the ripe neem tree seeds, the leaves and a coat of the neem tree flowers on my bed sheet. By the time, I decided to get out of the cot; lot of work was already completed or underway in our house. After churning the curds, my mother brought some left of cream and fondly applied to my hands and legs to make them more shining and supple. She completed the milking of the buffalo, feeding the cattle with overnight leftover food and the dish watching's mixed in water and the rice husk (Kuduti). Meanwhile somebody it cleaned the front yard of the house and also the place around the neem tree where the buffalos were safely secured to a staff of wood with rope. My elder sister or my aunt helped my mother in cleaning and washing the overnight cooking utensils and the used plates, kept ready for the next session of the morning cooking. Most of the cooking vessels were made of the earthen pots and the milk was boiled and curdled in the earthen pots only. My mother, my sister and anybody in the house always remembered my fascination to eat the bottom layer of the earthen pot (the Godaari), which they preserved for me to wake up and eat. I enjoyed eating the Godaari with a glee in my face which tasted so



good. Immediately after I woke up, folded my bed sheets and rearranged my cot at a different place, somebody took up the job of sweeping the place in front of the house and cleared all the neem leaves, fruits and flowers. Somebody sprinkled the cow or the cattle dung water (Kallapi) and somebody else decorated with designs (Muggulu) the sprinkled area with the lime powder and sometimes even placed some marigold flowers to look beautiful. As usual I was the last person to wake up in spite of all the halla bulleh of the people around me. The last but not the least factor that facilitated and forced me to wake up was the variety of the noises made by the birds nesting and resting on the neem tree and also the Guava tree in front of our house. The kuku birds sang their early morning wake up songs. The sparrows, the parrots and the crows made different noises at different times making the waking up process a gradual and pleasant phenomenon. Sometimes there was an occasional unpleasant way of waking up from the sleep when the crows started droppings on me and my cot. There was some other painful way of getting out when the crows or the more mischievous eagles tried to lift off our home grown small little kittens from our house premises.

The village community was itself a small knit like a combined family where most of the first and second cousins lived together in different houses located within the same area and people could speak to each other across the street from their houses. The people in the nearby houses were also curious, clearly and closely watching

the new comers from the college. They were eager to notice the changes the college life had made on me. Fortunately or unfortunately that their attempts for were proved to be wrong and unfounded as I tried to mix freely with all of them as normally as possible without any barriers. I kept myself open for them to visit me and talk to me freely as they were doing it earlier, before I went to the college. The first thing the people watched in the village was our habits for the toilet, brushing teeth and taking bath etc. Those were the small but definite criteria by which they tried to asses others. Here I am going to make some village habits public, unmindful of the shame and privacy added to such personal habits. Since my childhood till I became a doctor and neurosurgeon with the government job there were no personal toilets for anybody in our village, even at Guntur there were open lavatories with manual scavengers except in the Hindu College Hostel. In our village people used the open spaces along the banks of the small rivers, on either side of the road and also the drinking water tank bunds. I was ashamed to use such places for myself even from my childhood but sometimes there was no choice. Some sensitive people went into the agricultural fields far away from the residential houses especially the womenfolk. Some people carried their own tumbler of water and many people used the water available in the roadside rivers for ablution purposes. The typical example everybody noticed and aware of in our village was how our village Karanam performed the ritual

every day. He used go deep into the fields with a burning tobacco chutta in his mouth and a domestic servant always carried a pot of water walking a few yards behind the village Karanam. The rest of the people ranged between carrying their own pot of water, to using the naturally available flowing or stagnant river water. Even though the people used the privacy of the drinking water tank bund, the water itself was not contaminated or polluted. Thanks to God the villagers did not suffer the water born infections or diseases. As per myself I was too self conscious in using the open spaces for the toilet purposes and preferred far off places in the fields, far away from the public gaze suppressing all my inhibitions and emotions. That was the one main reason that I stopped visiting my native place frequently for years together once I got used to the hostel life during my studies. It was surprising that even a young and enthusiastic village president Mr.Kalluri Nageswara Rao, who was very dynamic in laying the proper decent motorable gravel roads and drains for the entire village, supplying piped water to all the houses and also the electrical connectivity to our village bypassing many other villages nearby could not think of providing the public toilets for our villagers. Not that the other villages were having such facilities but our village could have shown the example. Unfortunately it was the same even in our high school in the village Peda Nandi Padu where even the students used the roadside open spaces for toilet purposes and the hygiene was not taught or implemented even during the

school days. I remembered one of our Telugu teachers was very self conscious to use the open spaces for the toilet purposes. At our school there was only one septic lavatory within the school campus premises a little far away from the class rooms with brick walls and a door which was exclusively used by our only lady teacher in the school. Why I was particular in mentioning such an unconnected problem was that I was pained even from my childhood at the plight of the ladies in our village and at the school to use the open spaces, the roadside slopes, under the cover of trees and bushes which was a pathetic situation. Added to that, they had to face the shame when male folk walked across the same roads forcing the ladies to stand up in a queue short of humiliation. Most often, the villagers either the men or the women preferred the morning hours for their toilet purposes as a conditioned reflex. I insisted that my father should construct a septic tank lavatory and a closed door bath room as the essential requirements before I got married. Even very recently I was happy to read a news item that, the would-be daughter-in-law insisted on having a lavatory at her in-law's place as a precondition for her marriage. Thanks to the change in the attitude and the improvement of the civic facilities even in the villages, our village can boast off having slab houses and attached toilets in all the houses. At this point of time in my life as on today, at the age of sixty three years I am wondering what was the right or wrong about the toilets. Having open lavatories in the outskirts of the village and the

agricultural fields which I am sure is not the most hygienic or civilized way of life or having the lavatories within the house close to the living rooms and dining halls as a mark of modernity and civilization.

The next point of discussion and observation was on the way of brushing the teeth which everybody did from the time of eruption of the teeth. Going back in my memory lane I remembered to have used a number of items to brush the teeth and clean the mouth. In the early days of my childhood all the members in our family used the ash from the kitchen as a tooth power followed by the half burnt out pieces of the ember of the fire wood which painted the fingers and the mouth with a black coat of the ashes and added bad taste. Later in my childhood the Tata Company started manufacturing and selling packets of brick ash mixed with a peppermint flavor and a red color chemical to counter the black color of the kitchen ash in the villages. That tooth power made by the Tata Company was a big success as almost all the poor and rich families in the villages accepted that tooth powder as a better option to the kitchen ash. In a way the change had brought in a little bit of sophistication in the lives of the villagers. But what the tooth powder made was a red color spread over most of the open spaces, the hands and the fingers of the user and also their mouths. The sweet peppermint flavor was accepted even by the children who started consuming it in large quantities as a sweet eatable. The Tata tooth powder lasted for

decades together and was in use even in the towns and the hostels. The Tata tooth powder was not only a business success but also brought in a scientific outlook as the powder was available in neatly sealed paper covers. Later on many brands and modifications for the tooth powder were available with changes like white powder, more peppermint and the addition of menthol taste. For the men folk in the villages, who grew and spent most of their time in the fields working for long hours, looking for the kitchen ash or the Tata tooth powder was not the priority. They picked and plucked some branches of a tree and used it as a tooth brush. The most frequently used and easily available tree branch was the neem tree which was universally present. Using the neem tree branch as a tooth brush was the most popular one in villages, in towns and even in cities. In our village we had our own neem tree in front of our house and there was one more neem tree across the street both of them almost grew together and competed in providing the shade, the shelter and the tooth brushes. In our village there were a number of neem trees almost at the alternate houses. A few grown up adults used to climb the trees and pluck the young and new branches on a daily basis to use them as the tooth brushes. People savored the initial bitter taste in grinding one end of the young branch of the tree as the brush and continued to brush their teeth to no end with the aim of making the teeth to shine bright white. People used the brush for hours together doing simultaneously some other work as if the brush would do its

job automatically on its own. At the end of the brushing, the branch was split into two halves and used them as tongue cleaners. That was a new innovation by the locals who, earlier to using the neem stem brush used their own fingers as tongue cleaners making a hell of noise which was disgusting and nauseating. By the by as an afterthought I would mention a point of medical scientific interest when my best friend Dr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao told me a fact when I visited him at his residence in Dallas, Texas, **USA**. He told me that the use of the tongue cleaner to remove the overnight coating on the surface of the tongue was to remove the bacteria from the mouth, especially the E.Coli. I was a little bit amused that our villagers were using the natural tongue cleaners for ages not knowing the scientific medical background, which the Americans proved it as a good habit of mouth cleaning and as an Indian and as a doctor I had to go to **USA** to learn the scientific background of using the tongue cleaners. Some people especially my neighbor late Sri.Boddu Raghuvulu always helped me by plucking an extra stump of the neem branch from their neem tree. Sometimes additional branches were cut and preserved for the future use. My father also used to bring additional branches and saved it for me so that I did not waste much time looking for somebody to climb up the neem tree every day. Anyhow I was not allowed to climb the trees for fear of falling down and hurting myself. They thought I was too delicate to climb the trees and it was the job of strong and stubborn people

to climb the trees and pluck the branches. It was a very scientific and healthy habit to brushing the teeth with the neem tree branches which had its medicinal importance also. As I grew old and before I shifted to the tooth paste, I had seen vendors selling the neem tree branches in bundles of fifty and hundred at the bus depots and the railway stations as a popular natural tooth brush. I also noticed such bundles at the roadside coffee hotels on the long distance routes and the sticks were offered as an incentive to the customer passengers to have their breakfast and coffee in their hotels after brushing their teeth. In my village some people used some other tree branches as a trial and for a change. The next preferred branch to the neem tree was the most easily available tree in the fields and also on the roadside was the Tumma Chettu (Acacia). The difference between both of them was that the neem tree was available just in front of every house and one need not go in search of the tooth brush, whereas the Tumma Chettu was available at distance either on the roadside or in the fields as a part of a fencing. The neem tree did not have the thorns and hence there was no chance of the thorn pricks unlike the Tumma Chettu. The advantage of the Tumma Chettu branch was that it did not have the initial bitter taste of the neem tree. But for those differences, the purpose of using both the branches and the result was almost the same. I found the neem tree branch as a better brush in spite of the initial bitter taste as the Telugu saying goes ***“Tinaga Tinaga Vemu Tiyyanagudu”*** which was an



already established fact and known to even the illiterate. Just to complete the list of the other tree branches that were occasionally used as tooth brushes and tongue cleaners were the roadside tamarind trees that were available plenty in number and Ganuga trees occasionally present along the highway passing through our village. Some people claimed the potential medicinal value for the Ganuga trees also but nothing special about the tamarind tree branches except its easy availability. I knew that and also some people advised me to use the roots of certain trees which had a definite medicinal value. Coming back to my daily use of the neem tree branches I just followed the rest of the community and identified myself along with them and there was not much of a difference I could make out from my college days stay period and habits to my village atmosphere in regard to the brushing of the teeth. I am sure in the year 1966, the modern plastic tooth brushes and the tooth paste were not available even in the towns and cities, or even if they were available the habits did not percolate to the village levels.

The other personal habit that was constantly under the scrutiny was, to take open air bath in the house premises, which was a little bit embarrassing in the presence of the family members and the onlookers. Luckily for me my father made a make shift fencing around the Guava tree and close to the water storage cement tank in front of our house. Most of the villagers including myself had the

habit of taking bath only in the evening after the dusk or in the night in the darkness. The reason for that was, the mainly agricultural dependent village population went to the fields in the morning and only returned home after completing their day time work. They needed a bath on returning home and not before going to the work in the fields. There was also the constraint of the availability of water for taking bath twice a day when even for the drinking water there was a big scarcity. Especially in the summer time when all the water tanks in and around our village got dried up people walked or trekked long distances for fetching water. When the village main water tanks got dried up people dug up deep open wells within the tank itself and tried to extract or harvest the water from the minute streams. When that water was not sufficient for the entire village our people trooped in groups to locate the water wells located in and around. We located two good wells with plenty of water round the clock at the out skirts of the Peda Nandi Padu village and one more deep well faraway from our village across the Nallamada river or the Nakkavagu. That well gave us the sweet water for the drinking purposes and the well near Peda Nandi Padu village gave us water for the use of the daily domestic needs and also for the cattle to drink. That was a big ritual for all the village members to fetch the required water for the house against all the odds and hardship. Water was the first priority especially during the summer time and the scarcity was a recurrent problem every year.

The entire village, the entire family members took to the task of fetching the water going by walk in the middle of the night for long distances. Each person carried one pot or other to carry the water to home. The men, the women and the children all went to the wells and sometimes more than one trip was made to get the required amount of water for each family. I was not an exception, my sisters were not exempted one was too young, the elder sister was physically handicapped and even my mother took part in that must and should requirement. I carried a small single pot on my head when I was a child, I carried a bigger pot earthen or brass or even an aluminum pot as I grew old and finally the carried the water by a Kavadi on my shoulders with two big brass vessels fixed one on either side of it. Even after my college stay for one year I had to help my family to meet the needs of the daily water requirement. Work was the priority over the personal hygiene and the villagers woke up from their sleep very early, ate or packed the leftover last night food (Saddi Annam) and rushed to the work. The same thing was true with me and my contemporary school or college students who took bath only in the evenings or nights depending on their family situation. Some people took to swimming in the canals (Kaaluvulu) and the drinking water tanks (Cheruvulu) as an occasional deviation from the bath at home. The men folk who worked in the morning hours in the fields always had their bath in the day time in the open places and enjoyed their bath with a glee. The problem came with

the women folk who deserved a decent privacy which was not available or provided by the family members. They waited for the night to become darker, they took the shades of the trees or some make shift cover. That was the plight of the ladies who did not have even the fencing for privacy.

The next factor keenly observed by the onlookers was the change in the dress pattern that the college life brought in the individual students. From the days of half pants in the school days, the college studies brought in the full pants with big bottom of twenty four inches, the Bush shirts, the full sleeve shirts, the silk lungies and the Corona factory rubber slippers or sandals. The cotton shirts and shorts were replaced by the terlen and terricot fabric wear. The hostel life made us self sufficient in washing and cleaning our clothes on weekends. At home somebody helped us in washing the clothes. There was some type of inhibition to give the clothes for washing by our family members as there was some privacy required in handling the male member's clothes by our parents or siblings as the hormonal changes associated with the puberty and adolescents had set in. That was too delicate an issue to mention but it was a fact.

During the spare time all the friends and the classmates in the village gathered together at some point of time and place and shared their experiences. The usual routine was to have a cup of coffee at our village coffee hotel, buy a Gold flak cigarette and walk to the out

skirts of the village, complete the cigarette smoking, sit on the concrete road cum slipway and spend some time sharing the best of our experiences during our college studies. The common group consisted of Mr.Durisala.Venkata Subba Rao and Mr.Addepalli Lakshmi Narayana both of them studying the Ag.B.Sc course at Banaras; Mr.Yerram Ramamohan Rao, Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao, Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao, Mr.Challa Punna Rao, myself and some other friends with like mind. In those brief meetings the main discussion went round sharing the experiences of seeing the latest movies, especially the Hindi movies which were very popular in those days. Mr.Durisala.Venkata Subba Rao had a very good voice and he had a passion for singing the Hindi songs. He was a favorite of the great in the singer late Sri.Mohammed Raffi and the best song making rounds and ringing in everybody's ears was the famous song "***Gatharahe Mera Dil***". Mr.Durisala.Venkata Subba Rao used to sing that song on a number of times to entertain us. He used to sing so many other Raffi hit songs. During the day time I used to read the English newspaper to improve my knowledge in English language and also to get some general knowledge. Accidentally I came across one gentle man who was a M.A graduate who spared his copy of the Hindu News Paper for me to gain more knowledge in English. In addition to the newspapers I was regularly borrowing and reading some of the Telugu weeklies and read the Telugu serial stories as and when I could get a copy of the latest issue. I was also reading

some detective novels specially those of Mr.Bhagavan. I also developed the habit of going to our village panchayat library to read and borrow some novels that were available there. The best novel I borrowed from the village library was the Telugu translation of a Malayalam novel which was a big success when the novel story was taken and produced as a cinema picture. The name of the Malayalam novel and the cinema was "**Chemeen**" and the title of the Telugu novel was "**Royyalu**". Luckily for me I read the Telugu version of the Chemeen novel after the **PUC** and had the chance to watch the Chemeen cinema when I was a first year medical student at the Guntur Medical College. The Chemeen cinema was a great success both in India and abroad. The picture was nominated for the Oskar awards. Even in the later days in my life, I saw that picture on a number of occasions because of the sheer quality and the content of the story and the picture. Just for the photography itself it is worth seeing the picture any number of times.

Coming back to the rest of the time spent at time usefully was by taking part in the day to day activities and requirements of the family and domestic chores. The first thing was to talk to everybody in the house and make them feel more comfortable with me and not to allow them to create an atmosphere that I needed special attention after returning from the college studies. I never allowed them to feel strange to each other. I rarely spoke to my father even on normal days for more than a few minutes. I spent most of the

time talking into my mother, my sisters, my relatives, my neighbors and also the people who worked in our house and fields. There were so many visitors who wanted to have a glance at me just to know my well being. As a part of participation in the family chores I did not fail on my part in taking the initiative myself. In the morning hours depending on the requirement I used to compliment my mother's work and gave her a helping hand in feeding the cattle, cleaning the surroundings and I attended to my own work in taking care of my personal things like folding the bed sheets and replacing the cots at a corner of place without taking the help from others. As I was doing in the school days I also fetched water from the water tanks to give relief to other domestic helpers who had more work to do in the agricultural fields. Every day I used to carry the water from our village main tank (Pedda Cheruvu) at least six rounds of Kavadi and filled the small cement tank in front of our house. I also used to go to our cattle shed and take the cow, its calf and sometimes the bulls, for drinking water to our main water tank. If I had a time I used to feed the cattle with hay and enjoyed doing everything on my own. The special movements were those times, I spent with the progressively growing calf that was the first born to our domestic cow. My father wanted to have a cow in our premises as a good sign and respect to the Gods as the cow was respected and adored as a Holy Animal by our Hindu society. The sprinkling of the cow's urine in the premises was supposed to bring good health and fortunes.

The urine was believed to have some medicinal miracles and also the cow dung was used for decorating during festival seasons, especially during the Sankranti time. When the cow gave birth to the calf my father decided not to milk the cow and wanted the calf to take the entire feed for itself. As the calf was growing fast I enjoyed playing with it regularly. It's started running fast over taking my abilities to catch it and control. As the days went by the calf became big and strong and was more aggressive. It submitted to me easily but only after it enjoyed its playful needs. It used to run away from my hands when I tried to take it to the water tank for drinking water. It became strong and beautiful adult bull. I have all the memories of watching it from its time of birth till it left our home, but the cow continued to be with our family position.

During the waiting period for the results to come I made a number of visits to Guntur on some pretext or other and also went to the Hindu College to gather further information about our results. As our examinations were not conducted along with other college students, I had my own doubts about the announcement of the results in time along with the other colleges. The best memory of my visit to Guntur was when I met one of my lecturers at the Hindu College on the roadside footpath near the Sankar Villas Hotel. By the by, for all the college students for an occasional deviation from the routine, the Sankar Villas Hotel was a great attraction for food and coffee. Whoever tasted the coffee, Tiffin's or the meals there was



always tempted to visit the hotel again and again. The Sankar Villas Hotel was a big place of attraction for both the students and the public. It was a status symbol and a source of satisfaction to have visited that place. My father never failed to visit that hotel and or he failed to take me also along with him once in a while. On one particular visit after a cup of coffee at the Sankar Villas Hotel I met my teacher, a lecturer in Zoology by name Mr. Anjineyulu Garu, who was walking on the foot path after having his cup of coffee at the Sankar Villas Hotel. He was having a cigarette in his hand, he was a chain smoker, and was walking back to the Hindu College thinking something absent mindedly and looking somewhere else. I noticed him accidentally and wished him on my own. He recognized me as his student in the **PUC** class, he enquired me about my performance in the **PUC** examinations, he told me that he was going to the college on his personnel work and asked me to follow him if I was free. I happily accompanied him to the Hindu College on that evening when almost all the departments were closed for the summer vacation. He opened the zoology department and took me to the zoology laboratory. On the way to the college when we walked together he told many things especially about the zoology subjects and also his interest in doing research in the subject of zoology. He was in fact preparing for his PhD in zoology and doing research on the functioning of the respiratory system in the fish. He told me a number of points about his research and also the usefulness of the

research. For the first time I had an insight into the future of the zoology subject, the biology as a whole and also on the life. That was a great accidental encounter with my teacher which left a lasting memory on my mind. Even after joining in the medical college at Guntur, I bumped against him on a number of times and wished him whole heartedly and thanked him for his committed teachings and encouragement given to me and his indirect contribution for my joining in the Guntur Medical College.

When I was reading the English news papers or the Telugu weekly magazines I not only read the news and the stories but I was keen on reading the astrological forecast for every week. The Indian express carried the weekly column by Mr.Peter Vidal titled **“This week for you”**. I carefully read that column as a first priority on every Sunday. He used to give correct forecast for each week which proved to be correct most often. I did not know to which Raasi I belonged to, to begin with and read all the twelve Raasi forecasts and tried to apply everything that was good for me. Slowly I realized that the forecast was made depending on the date of birth. On that basis my Raasi was the Peaces meaning the fish (Meena Raasi) which was also a sign for peace and love. I was not interested in anything written in that column except about the education and the results. As the time for the publication of the examination results was fast approaching the focus on reading the **“This week for you”** became more interesting. I focused more on the results as the date was

announced for the publication of the **PUC** results in the news papers. Till then the time was spent without the worry about the results because there were so many matters that deflected my attention. I was subconsciously feeling the tension and the fearing about the outcome of the **PUC** examinations that ended in a turbulent way at the Hindu College. As the results of the other examinations like the degree classes started coming regularly in the news papers and the probable date of the **PUC** results was fast approaching the curiosity to know the results and the fear of the unknown results started gripping everybody. The meeting between the friends became more frequent to share the latest up to date available information. I was concentrating more on the weekly astrological forecasts especially the column written by Mr.Peter Vidal in the Indian express. At some point of time I was reading the Indian express, the Sunday issue only for the sake of the weekly forecast. I read carefully the Sunday news paper when the examination results were supposed to be published in the ensuing week. The forecast was good and favorable for me as ***“Mr.Peter Vidal wrote that the examination results for the students would come positive and favorable”***. That gave me happiness and confidence but still the actual results have to come in the paper and I should get the confirmation of the positive result. In the heart of the heart I knew pretty well that the forecast for the results was not for individualized or for specific names or numbers. It was a generalization and there must have been hundreds and thousands

of students who fell in the same group of Raasi which was decided on the date of birth. Actually my Raasi Meenam was as per my actual date of birth which was sixteenth of March, 1950 as per my father's hand written paper in a book preserved in our house, which was wrongly entered in to the village Munciff's records as seventieth of March, 1950 for which date also the same Raasi would apply. But still in my school register it was entered as fourth of January, 1949 as at the time of admission into the school, I was found to have been under aged for the school admission. Hence when I looked at the weekly forecast there was no guarantee that I was looking at the correct forecast. Whatever was the controversy about the real date of birth I looked at the Peace sign only as it gave me the positive and encouraging forecast? In fact I wanted always a positive forecast only in the back of my mind. Just in case my real date of birth turned out to be unfavorable, I cross checked my forecast for the star applicable for my recorded date of birth i.e. 4-1-1949..... Raasi. I not only checked in the Indian Express newspaper but cross checked in all the other Telugu daily newspapers and the weekly magazines just to reconfirm and get reassurance that I was going to pass the examination definitely. Fortunately for me the forecast for both the stars applicable for my real date of birth and the recorded date of birth in the school were almost similar and favorable. That gave me enough of confidence and happiness to get the comfortable sleep at nights. It might look absurd to look back that I solely and

madly depended on the Raasi Phalalu only to know the examination results in advance. If it was childish in those days, I still do it even today just as a matter of routine to get into the comfort zone of the day to day activities. Amazingly even today I found there were some forecasts that could be directly and positively related to the day to day happenings and developments in the matters of health, wealth and personal relationships. Sometimes even the negative information was also useful to take preventive steps especially in terms of the travel and the investments. Even though it was not the final judgment or indictment the awareness of the possibilities out of the innumerable worldly events made me feel amused to follow the stars. I strongly feel that there is nothing wrong in following the stars as long as it has a good and positive impact on individual's life. Coming back to my **PUC** examination results I kept my fingers cross and slept overnight under the neem tree counting the stars, watching the clouds and locating the Moon in the skies. The neem tree gave me the cool breeze and the distant Ponnangi tree brought me the usual summer scent. I slept dreaming the positive forecast in the Raasi Phalalu that said the students would get through the examinations successfully, to say the same in Telugu that the **"Vidyarthulu Pareekshalalo Utteernulavutaru"** and I wanted the dreams to come true when I woke up in the next day morning.

The **"D"** Day had come. I woke up as usual. Our family members went in to their routine day to day activities. The day

seemed to be as normal as before except that I was subconsciously feeling the nervousness about the results. Somewhere in the back of my mind in a remote corner, I was having a feeling of happiness that I did not want to exhibit in advance or consciously tried to suppress all my emotions and maintained a blank mind and blank face. I maintained a stoic silence as if I was meditating and sleeping while I was doing the normal routine rigmarole. My first job was to fetch water from our village water tank to help my mother to do the cooking and the rest of the household work. Silently I went about the job without talking or interacting with the so many onlookers, who wanted to read my face and predict my results even before the newspapers were delivered at our village. Many people knew that our results would come in the newspapers on that day and hence there was that anxiousness and the urgency in waiting for the newspapers. As usual I made six trips of carrying water by Kavadi from the tank to the house and filled all the vacant vessels and went into a sort of hiding. I had that sentiment lurking in my mind that I should not see the newspaper and the results for myself and wanted somebody else to reveal the news about the results to me. My hall ticket number was known to all my friends in the village who were waiting at the **“center”** for the arrival of the daily newspaper. I knew something was going to happen. Whatever happened I wanted to keep my mind calm and steady. I did not want to be emotional irrespective of the type of the result. In fact there was no fear of

failing in the examination. I did not fail in any examination in the school before. I attended all the classes in my **PUC** without failure. I did my examinations reasonably well. But something was nagging in the back of my mind. It was not one factor but a culmination of a number of factors and ideas. The first one was that I really missed the good company of Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao, when I missed to get the admission at the Andhra Loyola College by a whisker; I joined at the Hindu College very late and almost as a last candidate, my classmates and colleagues from our village were finding hard to get the pass marks in the class tests. Whereas my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao thought we should study together and set our goals in getting the medical college seats by obtaining the eligibility marks and the first class. Even though Mr.Vemula Venkata Narasimha Rao was also working hard to get into the medical college and became a good friend, our association was too short in time unlike that of Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao, I got more than first class marks in all the subjects during the quarterly and half yearly examinations during the **PUC** studies. But the two turbulent events that disturbed my focus just at the nick of the time before the university examinations, one by Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao with his suicidal tendencies and the actual gruesome murder of the darling of the class late Master Aswini Kumar. The last unfortunate event not only disturbed our studies but also dislocated the examinations schedule postponing the practical to a different

date after the theory. All those above factors put together became a big burden for me to bear with the burning problem of waiting for the results even for a few minutes in spite of the favorable forecast.

There was an air of silence all over the village. The newspapers had arrived. Some people grabbed the first copies in a hurry and went through the pages with the **PUC** results displayed in the columns. There were more than one page and people tried to read the small print of the hall ticket numbers in piecemeal and tried to come to the conclusion even very fast. Some people who were not the actual students, made their judgment on the number of people who passed or failed. I myself went into hiding at my house hoping that somebody would carry the results to me and I wanted to touch the newspaper only after receiving the positive information through a friend or a third person for confirmation of the news. The pattern of the results that were published in the newspaper was, first the numbers of the candidates passed in the first class, followed by the numbers of the candidates who passed in the second class and finally the candidates who passed in the third class also in that order of priority. Even the numbers of the candidates who failed in the examination were also published as per the subjects they passed through successfully. If the hall ticket number was not found anywhere in the list of the candidates that meant that the candidate had failed in all the subjects. So there were about eight candidates in our village who appeared for the examination in that year in **PUC**.



Just to recollect some of those names as it was very essential for each candidate in deciding his future. Late Mr.Nune Ankamma, late Mr.Avvari Krishna Murthi, Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao, Mr.Yerram Ramamohan Rao, Mr.Lingamallu Subba Rao, my sister Ms.Boddu.Adilakshmi and myself. The wise people in the village center went through all the newspapers eagerly and declared with authority that nobody from our village passed the **PUC** examination even in the third class. They checked and rechecked and assured themselves that there was no mistake in their scanning of the newspapers as the hall ticket numbers were known to them by heart. They even summoned some of the real candidates to come and look into the newspapers by themselves. The Pupils and the Pundits went through the papers again and again and concluded that there was no chance of missing any number in the newspaper in the passed out candidates list. Leisurely they went through the results by subject wise and matched the hall ticket numbers in each of the subjects. There was no good news that even in the subjects, not even one candidate passed from our village. That was a big tragedy. People started passing on the information by the word of the mouth across all the streets, short of trumpeting and drumbeating. The news was bad for the candidates who appeared for the examination and was a sort of an entertainment and amusement for a few who derived the vicarious pleasure in seeing the other people's suffering. The news percolated to my house

situated at one end of the village and some people started gathering at our house to pour their sympathies. There were two types of people who really wanted to share their concern for me by putting out some soothing words to console me and also to comfort me. There was the other group who really wanted to see physically how I suffered after receiving the bad news of my failure in the examination. They were the real people who wanted me to fail in the examination and also to get the support for their views that their predictions about my college life were correct. They talked as if they knew the result beforehand itself. They enumerated the number of the candidates like me who could not pass the **PUC** examinations in the earlier years and what happened to their fate. They also put across a few sympathetic words and declared how difficult it was to study in the college and also to pass the examination. As if they knew my thoughts even without talking to me, that if one could not pass the **PUC** examination how to get into the degree classes or the professional courses. They solicited uninvited advice that there was nothing wrong in failing in the **PUC** examination as it was the first experience as a college student. They tried to give me the moral support that failure was a stepping stone for the success and there was always a second chance if not a third chance to get through. They went to the extent of stating that even clearing the examination subject by subject in piecemeal was also a possibility. They also cited a number of occasions when some people, who made a big

mark in the life even if they could not pass the hurdle of the **SSLC** at the high school. They consoled me by stating that I was too young and the age was in my favor to reach the bigger heights. Hence, they told me not to lose my heart and get depressed. There was no end for the number of people and for their numerous options and advices. Mind you that they did not complete even their primary school education, called as the elementary school education in those days. Luckily for me they did not cross the line of the decency and did not blame my personal habits, life and friends for my bad result. Some curious elements in our village were watching from a distance, the group of our friends getting together in the evenings during the vacation. That was an eyesore and heart burn for some people who wished all bad things and bad luck for all of us. There was an air of suspicion, jealousy and intolerance against some of the college students in the village. That was the group which could not get into the college studies even. At my home the scene was not so bright and my mother who usually maintained a calm and composed face tried to protect me from the onslaught of the good and bad comments from the friends and the foes. My mother did not make any comments or entertain any of those visitors with their unsolicited advice. Actually there was more number of well-wishers for me than the critics. But there was a sudden gloom in the home and the life went on normally for everybody else. Some of the well-wishers stayed back in my house with my mother without making

any comments just to give her the physical and moral support. My mother was not used to face such situations earlier as I and my sister have been successfully passing all the examinations every year up to the **PUC**. After passing each of the examinations my mother used to call for an impromptu prayer meeting with whoever was available at that point of time. My father used to break a few coconuts at the nearby Sri Rama temple usually five coconuts in number, if there was no time to go to the temple he had a photo frame of the Sita, Rama and Lakshmanalu in our house and he used to break the coconuts in the house itself. A sort of a small celebration by distributing the coconut pieces mixed with jaggery or sugar and daal or rice preparation. That sort of happiness was robbed off for my parents on that day unfortunately.

For me there was no way except to accept the result in the paper and the verdict given by my well-wishers and critics. I swallowed my pride with a bit of bitterness. I wanted to be left alone for which my mother took care of it, so that the visitors did not disturb me too much. The previous night scene was reenacted. In the broad day light at about 10 AM, under the scorching Sun, I laid down on a jute fiber cot (Nulaka Mancham) without any bed sheets. The face was burning in the broad direct day light under the neem tree which was already depleted of all its leaves and looked like a totally devastated tree reflecting my own inner feelings. There was no cool breeze like the previous night, the stars and the moon went into

hiding behind the mighty Sunlight and the sweet fragrance of the Ponnaga tree got vanished. What a turnaround from the previous night's cool, smooth and happy scene to the hot, dry and windy mirages blowing fast and furious. I was trying to keep my cool in spite of the provocative harsh words from the critics and the equally hot weather which started becoming more intense as the time passed by. It was becoming intolerable, each minute was getting prolonged as if it was an hour and each hour looked like a full day. My mother dare not disturbed me to shift cot into the house, or to have a cup of coffee, a glass of water or even offer a bed sheet to protect me from the Sunlight and the heat. She understood my mind and plight. It was the first and the biggest setback in our house to face a situation like that. Many people did not believe that I would fail in the examinations as they had been watching me throughout my student days how hard I was working to succeed in my studies. If I did not work hard enough I would not have gone to the college studies and should have joined all my peers who started working in the fields dropping out from the school at regular intervals. That did not happen in spite of so many of my short comings. In fact I was on the upswing and my graph of studies showed the gradual ascent in my studies and in my marks. Subconsciously, closing my eyes under the neem tree I was wondering what and how things went wrong to get the negative result for which I was not totally prepared. I was also planning to what to do next. Am I going to repeat the

examination the next time or am I going to discontinue in my studies abruptly at that stage? Am I going to take the secondary grade teacher training with the **SSLC** certificate and join the main stream of teachers as was done by some of my seniors like Ms.Katta.Pushpanjali and Mr.Boddu.Dharma Rao? There was no shame to become a school teacher. In fact that was what my father dreamt of his son to become at least the school teacher to survive. As the Telugu saying goes, **“Batakatanaki Badi Pantulu”** would certainly apply to me also. I was prepared for everything. There was no example of a candidate in our village who took the repeat examination after failing in the **PUC** examination for the first time. I was going to set an example on that score in our village. Even after 12 noon I did not venture to get out of the cot under the tree and I was blank about the bleak future. I did not ask anybody about the result of other students in our village. Even without asking, the eager critics and the doubting Thomas’s tried to pour in the information that I did not seek. They told me not once or twice but on a number of times that nobody in our village passed the examination, nobody cleared even one biology subject. That information was repeated and reinforced ad-nauseam without even looking into my face and for my reactions knowing full well that I was not interested in listening to any one of them or their narrations. The situation and atmosphere in the house reached a fear full silence and people realized and talking about the results

and the examinations was going to hurt me further and make me further unhappy. I was happy that the well-wishers and critics realized what I wanted, that I should be left alone and to my fate. I knew by that time at the end of sixteen years I was mature enough to analyze the situation to the best of my ability. One thing I was very sure and certain was that I was not going to do anything wrong or take a serious decision to ruin my future or life. I realized there was only a thread bear difference between behaving normally to face even the adverse situation and to behave totally abnormally to take a drastic decision like committing suicide. In fact I knew that a few people took away their lives when they could not get a seat in the medical college and some people committing suicide when they failed in the examinations. The one glaring example in our own village was that of Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao, who threatened his parents that he would commit suicide if his parents scolded him in case he failed in the **PUC** examination. Fortunately for me I never entertained any such negative thoughts even in the face of adversity. In the back of my mind it had never occurred to me that I was going to fail in the examination and face the ultimate consequences. I knew I was not a weak minded person like my friend Mr.Lavu Ramachandra Rao. Even after knowing the news that I failed in the examination miserably and in all the subjects I did not lose my heart and the idea of ending the life never crossed my mind. After all failing in one examination was not the end of the road. But it was

certainly a new situation and experience to face. There were people who were watching eagerly about how I was going to react to the situation and face it. There were various degrees of depression and derangement of the careers. It was more so if the parents of the candidate were over bearing and also having the punishing attitude on their children. The selfish parents always wanted their children to do well in the examinations at any cost which had put extra pressure and tension on the candidates. Especially the **PUC** examination result was very critical in the career of the candidates as it was a turning point to go into the professional courses. Fortunately for me, my parents never put any pressure on me either to study or to pass the examination at any time. That they were illiterate, that they were ignorant of the impact of the education and the results was their only asset. They were ready to accept both the success and the failures with equanimity. Those parents who had very high expectations their children were the worst sufferers when their children did not live up to their dreams. In those days there was a big price on the head of the male students if they got admission into the professional colleges like the medicine and engineering. Again on that count my parents were oblivious of any possibilities beyond the **PUC** examinations.

Even though I got all the information about all our village students and colleagues from various colleges, I was anxiously waiting to hear the news about my bosom friend Mr.Mamidipaka



Seshagiri Rao, who studied at the prestigious Andhra Loyola College at Vijayawada. He stayed at Adusumalli, his native place which was about five to six miles from our village and there was no direct communication between the two villages. In those days there were no telephones in either of our villages, in any of the villages nearby including Peda Nandi Padu. The only way of communication was by wireless message, telegram and the post card. The availability of the telephones in each village, in the individual houses, the availability of the cell phones, the messages and the internet in the present days was a distant dream. It was never in the mind of anybody in those days. Somebody has to go from my village Varagani to his Village Adusumalli to convey my result to him. It was not the good news that I should send somebody immediately to his village and make him unhappy. But still he knew my hall ticket number and I also knew his number as we were consciously making efforts stay together even after completing the **PUC** studies. During the vacation we met on a few occasions to share our experiences and also to discuss our future plans. He was the one friend who had the great plans and vision for himself, his future along with that about my career also. Since he knew my hall ticket number he might have seen my result also in the newspaper and probably decided to not to approach me immediately to console or to sympathize with my bad result. He was not such a foolish guy or a selfish guy not to know what was the best to do under those circumstances. Since I knew

my result, confirmed by scores of people from my village I did not show any interest in securing the copy of the newspaper for myself to recheck my result or even to know the fate of my good friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao. Those who visited at my house, the friends and the foes never thought of bringing a copy of the newspaper for me to see the result for myself. Hence I did not have the direct access or interest to read the newspaper or the results. The Sun was becoming hot and hotter, the wind was blowing fast and furious and the few leftover partially dried up neem tree leaves and the bunches of the ripe neem tree fruits started falling all over my body and my cot making my life more miserable to continue to stay there itself. Added to that misery, the parched crows started coming in groups in search of water and started making loud unbearable noise. It was more of a distraction and disturbance to my thought process. Added to that, the angry crows started putting their droppings on me, so that I would notice them and curse them for spoiling my composer and forcing me to leave the cot and go in to the shade of my tiled house.

As, I was planning to wind up and going to the house, something happened all of a sudden which surprised me and everybody in my family. I never expected that, for me to get out of the cot I needed some extreme force or pressure that would come in the most unexpected form as I was in a state of mind with no emotions and no interest in the surroundings. The weather was dry,

the roads were dusty, the wind was inclement and people were afraid of venturing outside from their houses leave alone going to the neighboring villages. What happened was not only a surprise but it was a sort of an adventure. I saw my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao along with his cuisine brother Mr.Mamidipaka Ranga Rao coming to our house by riding their cycle all the way from Adusumalli to our village Varagani. It was a very daring venture to come all the way in such hot summer weather by cycle and covering a distance of six miles. He was very anxious to meet me, very happy to have come all the way when I myself did not have any interest from getting up from the cot and move into my own house. He had all the energy and the enthusiasm to come and meet me personally whereas I was totally drained of my energy and enthusiasm. We were in a contrasting mood. It never occurred to me that I was going to meet him in that state of blank mind. I did not know the reason for his rushing to me in such a hurry and at that time in the hot weather. If his initiative to meet me gave me great strength and happiness the news he carried exclusively for me made everybody in the house, friends and family members happier by many folds. It was news like a God sent message came like a thunder bolt. My friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao did not waste or lose much time in announcing our results. He asked me to pack up immediately to follow him to go to his house. I did not immediately get the real significance and importance about what he was telling. I

thought he was joking or pulling my leg. I knew for good that he was a very serious and studious student never to make fun of anybody more so, a close friends like me. The news was still unbelievable. He anxiously announced that both of us passed in the examination, he passed in the first class and I passed in the second class. I could not believe it when he told me in the first attempt. He repeated the same to convince me and my family members and friends. Still as we were having our own doubts about the result that was certified and stamped by our village Pundits, he produced the relevant newspaper cutting showing the results of the first class and the second class students. Not only that, he underlined his hall ticket number in the first class list and my hall ticket number in the second class list of the candidates. Underlining was the only way of highlighting in those days even in the subject matters of the text books. He was intelligent enough to think ahead of me to underline our numbers so that I could straight away see my number only, without searching the entire list of the numbers and get confused in the first attempt of scanning the numbers. He not only showed his number and my number and confirmed beyond any doubt about the result. That was a great relief to one and all. Till that time there was the gloom in the house with a heavy weather, people trying to pass a few consoling or soothing words. My happiness and my parent's happiness knew no bounds. The usual rituals suddenly spurted out and the impromptu celebrations with prayers, coconuts and sweets all done in a few

minutes time. My friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao was very keen that I should immediately start and go with him to his house at his village. At that time and moment it was all the happiness unlimited that engulfed the entire house. Probably that was the best day our family members and I experienced till that day. Slowly and steadily the news of my passing the examination in the second class percolated to the nooks and corners of our village. The Pundits who read the newspaper and announced the results as the official announcers of our village started finding the ways and the means and also the excuses and their explanations for not finding out my number not only in the first instance but on a number of repeated readings and superficial scanning. Ultimately the confirmed reason and the conclusion reached by all the Pundits was that they never expected that I would pass the examination, that too in the second class! They searched the results from the third class down words including the individual subjects. When they did not find our village students numbers in the third class they came to the conclusion that none of us passed in the examination and hence searched only the individual subjects, where also they did not find any of our numbers. It did not occur to them that any one of us had a chance to pass either in the first class or in the second class. They all together kept a blind eye to the first class and the second class results columns. It was not their fault at all as there were no recorded instances of anybody passing the examination in the first

attempt either in the first class or in the second class in **PUC** in our village. But I knew there were a few names in our village that got the first class in B.Com degree and also the M.Com degree. One was Mr.Madhusudan Rao who became a State Bank Officer later in his career and the other candidate was Mr.Palaparthi Madhu who also did get his first class in M.Com. One Mr.Popuri Subba Rao passed his B.A (Hons) in first class from the University of Nagpur. Probably our village Pundits thought that their result was a fluke. Whatever was the debate that all was well that ended well? My agony for a few hours in the morning that robbed my happiness had come to the peak of happy ending. If only I searched the newspaper on my own for my result I could have avoided the suffering and also the suffering for my parents and friends. If only the village Pundits who read the newspaper regularly as the first thing in their life in the morning searched the results columns from the first class onwards probably they could not have missed my number in the second class candidates. But at the end everybody felt happy, breathed heavily for a few minutes and reached to a state of accepting the reality. Some people started pouring some accolades with all their good intentions.

My good friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao impressed me not only as a friend, as a classmate, bench mate, as a roommate but also as a mature human being even at the tender teenage of sixteen years. He was the one who sowed the seeds of higher education and

to go to the professional course like medicine as we shared the front bench in the classroom during our **SSLC**. He was the one that took the initiative that we both should study at the same college in **PUC**, at the Andhra Loyola College. Even though I could not secure a seat in the Andhra Loyola College along with him, he was a constant source of encouragement and inspiration for me to work hard and also to give him company in the medical college at later date. He did not forget me after joining at the Andhra Loyola College. He was the one who predicted that I was sure to get into the medical college along with him. Even though I had my own limitations and inhibitions about my future I trusted my friend and did not lose my heart when I could not get a seat in the Andhra Loyola College, why only Andhra Loyola College even in the **AC** College and the Bapatla College. Even after getting a delayed admission at the Hindu College I quickly realized my educational goal was to match my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao and coolly ignored my immediate surroundings and village mates and friends who did not have higher aspirations after the **PUC**. Even after getting the results, knowing the judgment of the village Pundits I would have been in darkness and gloom for a few more hours or days without looking into the newspaper as I reconciled to the fact that there was no use in rechecking the paper after so many villagers scanned through it. Probably a student with a weak mind or having over bearing parents would have taken an extreme and drastic step but for the timely

arrival of my good friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao with that great positive news. In fact there was no need for Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao to rush to me in that hot summer morning knowing full well that he passed the examination in the first class. There was no need to either for him to rush even if he had seen my result also in the second class passed candidates list. He must have that I was good enough and intelligent enough to read the newspaper properly and find my number in the second class list and also recognize his number in the list of the first class candidates. He did not know that I did not see the newspaper till he brought the paper cutting along with him. He was totally oblivious of what was going on in our village in the past three to four hours of time. At that juncture I just realized that he was not an ordinary student, he was different from other students in his intelligence and greatness as a boy. I just surrendered him and followed whatever he said. He was riding on the crest of the wave of happiness after passing through the **PUC** examination in the first class, the only one **PUC** candidate from our high school to pass the examination in the first class in the first attempt itself. He was also confident of getting admission into the Government Medical College with the background knowledge of his performance in the class tests at the Andhra Loyola College. On a number of occasions he told me the study schedule at the Andhra Loyola College and their hostel. The teachers were very strict in the day to day study hours, the dining hours and the sleeping hours. If



a candidate who studied at the Andhra Loyola College and passed the **PUC** examination in the first class he was damn assured of a seat in the professional college, the medical college precisely for my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao. He was also assuring me that in spite of passing in the second class I had also a good chance if not at definite chance of getting admission into the medical college if my percentage of marks in the group subject was good and competitive. He actually went through my marks list scored in the quarterly and half yearly examinations at the Hindu College Guntur and assured me that I was scoring really good marks comparable with his marks at the Andhra Loyola College. For him there was no doubt about both of us getting into the medical college. For his maturity he was already planning about how to get the marks list, the provisional passed certificate, the Xerox copying, to get the applications forms from the professional colleges, the medical, the veterinary and the agricultural colleges as was done routinely by most of the students. If I am not exaggerating probably there were only two of us to get the eligibility to apply for the professional college admissions? That was a different story all together. The first job on hand was that I should take my bag and clothes to go to his house at Adusumalli about six miles far away from my village in that hot summer weather to stay for a few days at his own so that we could work together in getting all those papers and application forms. I did not mind the heat of travelling in the afternoon along with him by my own bicycle, the

heat did not bother me or him as both of us were over joy with the dramatic happenings in that morning. Looking back staying with him, in his company in his house at his village was a better option for me for that joyful occasion. He was the right company for me for planning the future. As there were no communications except by personal visits it worked to my advantage to be with my good friend to save the time and energy commuting between our two villages for any daily interactions. We did that during our school days was a different story, but to do the same after passing the **PUC** was probably was a retrograde step and probably was avoidable. There again the foresight of my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao was glaringly forthcoming. If he did not offer to take me to his house along with him, I would have been left alone wading, my path in the unknown waters searching for some help from the elders and unknown. It also saved me from meeting and interacting with the rest of our village students who could not pass the examination. That could have been a delicate and embarrassing situation to face immediately. Not that I wanted to disown or ignore my friends and classmates available next door in our village, whom I had been meeting everyday on a regular basis as there was no other way of spending time usefully or fruitfully. In other words that was the only way to kill the time during the vacation without indulging in any type of village activities like playing cards, taking liquor or to smoking and even getting into some village politics for which there

were so many other people deeply drowned already in those activities with no hope of returning to normal life. In a way I had been very lucky that I was not dragged into such distractions readily available in the village. For that my parents disciplined life was one main factor that protected me from indulging in anything that was not good in the elder's mind.

Coming back to my trip to the village Adusumalli, it was my first venture, a sort of an adventure to go and stay in a strange place, an unknown village for the first time in my life thus far. Earlier I stayed overnight at a few villages where my relatives were there. The first place to go was to my grandparent's house at Abbineni Guntapalem about three miles away from my village towards Guntur, where they lived by doing agricultural farming belonging to the village land lords. The next village was Pedda Gotti Padu a few miles away from the Abbineni Guntapalem in a different direction where my maternal aunt, my mother's eldest sister stayed with her family. They were doing weaving as a profession and for their livelihood. I also stayed overnight at another village of another maternal aunt, by name Kondepadu a farther down village to Pratti Padu. Those were the villages accessible by roads towards Guntur from my village and the bus service was available to a certain distance and the rest of the journey was by walk. From my father's side there were at least two surviving sisters during my childhood, one was at Nandur and another was at Moola Padu both were

situated on either side of Ponnur and both the families were agricultural dependent and did not have living children of their own. Beyond staying for a day or two I did not have much experience of spending time leisurely at any of those villages. The one more deterring factor for my limited stay period was that they did not have any children of my age group to play with and spend more time and more number of days in those villages. Even though all my relatives liked me for the little strides that I was making during my school and college education I could not spend more time with them at their native places because they were all dependent on the agricultural farming of either their own land or their land lord's. I could not go to the fields with them nor could I stop them from going to the work for more than a couple of days. Hence my exposure and adoptability to stay at a strange place or even a relatives place was very much short lived. For some strange reason at that period of transition in my life, both age wise and educational wise, I started segregating from my own people and pals as I was not able to look back and get stagnated in studies as there was always a force and pressure of what to do next than what was done already. To recollect my Telugu teacher's words in the high school I did not have the time or the intention to look back what my teacher called "***The Simhavalokanam***". Now at this point of time in my life I have plenty of leisure time to look back, to ruminate, retrospect and to reflect about so many things that happened in the past. With that

background I started happily to go to Adusumalli with my trusted friend and his younger cousin Mr.Mamidipaka Ranga Rao.

In those days it was strange for one student from one village going to another village and spending time with him and his family. Probably I did not come across such a situation when the friends spent time at other villages as there were so many barriers, in the form of the social, financial and cultural issues. In fact there was no need for such interactions or exchanges. It was very great and magnanimous on the part of my friend and his family to invite me to stay in their house, sharing their food and accommodation like their own family member. Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao's parents and family members were probably the first generation of mature people who were enlightened, entertained and full filled the wishes of their children without any inhibitions and social barriers. Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao belonged to the business community who practiced certain norms in their day to day business activities even while selling their merchandise. They did not handover the goods directly to the customers and did not receive the cash directly by hand under the guise of "*myla and madi*". But the situation in Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao's house was totally different to my great surprise if not astonishment. They whole heartedly welcomed me into their family rooms; they cooked and served food for me along with their son and my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao, they did not allow me to wash my plates and glasses, they gave me a

cot to sleep with the bed sheets and I did not feel any inconvenience, discomfort or discriminations for the few days I spent in their house. If I say that they were more mature and enlightened people and family, would be saying much less than what they deserved. Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao, his parents, his elder brother and other members of the family were so kind and considerate to make me comfortable in their company. They did not mind crossing the community barriers, they ignored the comments and the glaring looks of the other families in the same community in their vicinity and also they went about diligently and nonchalantly as far as it was required to protect my self-respect and in security. My stay with their family was more memorable even for today. I did not come across a similar situation where such incidences did occur during my student days. My stay at my friend's house was mainly to facilitate easy correspondence in securing the certificates and the application forms to apply together for the higher studies, especially the medical college admission. There were two main reasons for my comfortable stay in the house of my friend, Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao. It was probably the first time that I visited their village and their house. They had a candidate in their house Mr.Mamidipaka Hanumanthu Rao already studying in the engineering course in a Northern University, **BHU**, in the metallurgy group and hence the entire family members were adapted to a liberal and liberated life style. The second reason was even without seeing

me personally the family members of Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao were familiar with my name and my educational progress in the high school. I cannot pinpoint the exact time, day and the class where we came together in our studies but a few memories make our association very strong and deep rooted. During our school days, during the summer sessions our classes were held in the morning time because of the severe heat conditions in our place. Even otherwise the students coming from the far off places to the school came with their lunch boxes and had their lunch during the lunch interval and stayed till the evening every day. We use to spent time together in the evening hours by playing some games like the ball badminton in our school campus. During the summer time, the classes were started at 8 AM instead of 10 AM and closed at 12 noon, hence even the students from our village which was at a walking distance carried their lunch boxes to the school. In those days and times I too carried my lunch box to the school and had my lunch along with some of my classmates. Those classmates whom I remembered to have had the company during the lunch time were the group of friends who came from another nearby village called Annaparti. I still remember some of the names of those friends like Mr.Kolla Hanumantha Rao, Mr.Hanumantha Rao, Mr.Kolasani Venkateswarulu and Mr.Laxmi Narayana who always gave company to me during the lunch time. At some point of time I was having my lunch in the company of Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao especially

during the 10<sup>th</sup> class and **SSLC** studies. We did not have any place to have lunch in the school campus; the school campus itself had a vast area with playground and agricultural fields. We had a water pond located at the farther end of our school playground which was the source of drinking water in that area. In fact the pond belonged to some other land lord having fields adjacent to our school playground. As students we used go to the bank of the pond, sit under the shade of the fencing trees which were mainly the thorny acacia and we drank the water from the pond itself. Somewhere there our bonding started, we were sitting together in the front bench in our class close to the teachers table and chair and were sharing our day to day studies and homework. Ultimately we ended up becoming in the first ever roommates to stay together in a rented room close to the school at Peda Nandi Padu to save time during our **SSLC**. Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao's parents were probably aware of our association and intention to study together to get more marks in the **SSLC** examination for which they extended their wholehearted support. Hence they knew more about me than what I knew about them. They also knew that we wanted to go together to the Andhra Loyola College which unfortunately did not happen. They also knew that their son was very keen on studying medicine in contrast with his elder brother Mr.Mamidipaka Hanumantha Rao. When Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao announced to his family members at his village that both of us succeeded in the **PUC** examination in first



and second class respectively, his parents were over helmed with joy and accepted to his request to bring me along with him to their house.

My visit to Adusumalli had two more aspects that were partially good and bad. Coming to the good or the best part of it was meeting my other classmates at their houses. The first one was Mr.Nageswara Sastry our classmate up to the **SSLC**. He was the first ranker in the class in the **SSLC** examination scoring above four hundred marks out of a total of six hundred marks. In fact I, Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao and Mr.Nageswara Sastry shared the first bench in our class, competed for the first seat and all of us succeeded in holding on to the front bench during the entire **SSLC** class tenure. Mr.Nageswara Sastry took the first seat close to the entrance door which was the real first seat but a little away from the teacher's chair and table. I took the seat close to the teacher and thought I was occupying the number one seat which was not really correct. Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao always occupied the center seat between both of us and never demanded or craved for the first or the third seat. He had the contentment even in those days. As a natural justice, Mr.Nageswara Sastry got the school first with four hundred and above marks, Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao got the second mark just missing the four hundred barrier and I got the fourth mark even though sitting in the third seat in the front bench. Our marks also justified the priority in the seating order. Just to

complete that part of the story late Mr. Avvari Krishna Murthi hailing from our village Varagani, got the third rank indicating his natural ability and intelligence even though he was occupying the second bench just behind the three of us. Because of his poor financial status Mr. Nageswara Sastry could not continue his studies and did not join the college education. Unfortunately he could not go to the college studies even though he had the most brilliant brain and could have got admission into any of the professional colleges. He was physically short and lived a simple life. When I visited his house which was located in the orthodox Brahmin community locality, I found him having an open air bath in front of his house lifting water from a well. The index of his poverty was known when I was told that he had only one towel and one pair of shirt and half pant which he used to wash himself and dry to use them on the next day. That was what he used to do even during the school days. Then and there itself I realized that the higher strata in the society need not always be rich and in fact there were more poor people in the upper caste than the real poor people in the lower strata in the society. But for his poverty he could have made a great impact in his educational achievements. I lost track of his career subsequently. I hope to trace his where about in the course of time. I also met some other classmates like Mr. Addagada Subba Rao, who was a nice boy and mingled with me whole heartedly. Unfortunately he could not continue into his higher studies for reasons not known to me. He

belonged to the Choudary community, the land lords, only indicating that having enough financial resources was not the only license and the way to go to the higher studies.

## **24-10-2013**

It was an example of how the student career comes to an end in different forms. One had the knowledge and the talent but had no money to study and the other one had enough money for further studies but was short of the talent and the hard work. There was one more classmate of us who took to Hindi learning and became a school teacher in Hindi at our high school itself, his name was Mr.Rahamthulla. Hence there was a mixture of different castes, creeds and religions in a small village like Adusumalli where I had good friends. That was the brighter side of my visit to the village Adusumalli.

Like the two sides of the coin, there was the other side which was a real blemish that I immediately wiped out from my mind but just surfaced in time for documentation. When I was deeply immersed in sending the post cards to different colleges for getting the application forms and also for getting the **PUC** marks and the provisional pass certificates I had to go to the post office to fetch the post cards. Luckily for me the post office was located just opposite to the house of Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao. I approached the post master as I was routinely doing at our village Varagani. I was aghast

and taken aback when the post master wanted me to declare my caste before he could issue the post cards. Even at that tender age I was really shocked why the post master brought the caste factor for issuing the post cards which was his duty and he was an employee of the central government. I could read his face and find out his motive and intention behind enquiring about my caste and community. Having stayed with my friends for so long where we never discussed caste or the community factors I was really ashamed that a man sitting behind the window bars had the audacity to go into the social status of the vendees. That only proved that the social stigma persisted in some people's mind like a chronic disease. I was bold enough to face the situation and I was not afraid of declaring my social status to him, much less I was not ashamed to announce my caste. I was strong enough with my will power to face the situation. I knew pretty well that he wanted to insult me as he had been watching me staying in my friend's family and spending a few days with them without any barriers and living normally and happily mixing with everybody in their family. Probably the gentleman behind the window selling the cards and the stamps was jealous of my happy stay in my friend's house. He must have thought that I did not deserve to be in that locality and in my friend's house. He could not express his views to my friend or to my friend's family members and wanted to show me his feelings so that I realized that what I was doing was wrong. If at any time I were to

have any such doubts or suspicions I would not have dared to venture into an uncomfortable situation or place. My friend and his family members were far above the rest of the members in that locality and in their community. It was a great feeling of relief that my friend's family adopted and practiced some of the best principles of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. I had the confidence in the company and the comfort given to me in their house and by the family members. Coming back to the post master, who was very keen and curious, probably had a prior knowledge and information about my social status, just wanted to show his displeasure about my stay in my friend's house. When I really announced my caste, creed and my social status his immediate response was to keep away from the window where he was selling the post cards, he asked me to stand at a distance so that I would not touch him or the window close to him. He wanted me to collect the post cards outside the window standing at a distance which I did without any inhibitions or fear. That was a small little distraction for an otherwise happy outing at Adusumalli. I had to bring in the unpleasant incidence just to be honest and truthful to the events that occurred during my study career. This aspect I never discussed with anybody even as a matter of routine general interactions. I would like to forget the matter and burry it then and there itself or now and here itself.

(There were some peculiar methods adopted by me to continue to study my books and also to keep in touch with the subject proper even during the holidays and vacations. A few of such exercises I adopted made me motivated to the subjects of interest. When I went to the agricultural fields, I used to carry at least one text book along with me, especially a Telugu text book which I could read without any difficulty. Sometimes when I went to the fields along with the cattle for grazing I used to read the book while walking behind the cattle. My job of going to the fields along with the cattle for grazing helped our family and me in many ways during my vacation time. One was that I could relieve one of our family members or the servants from taking care of the cattle and that person went to do some other more important and demanding work. It gave me a chance to see the agricultural work that was taking place in our fields as I was also studying the agricultural bifurcated course in our high school which was going to be my goal to study the Ag.B.Sc in future. Not only that, going to the fields helped me to spend my time usefully without whiling away and wasting the valuable time by staying at home or going round the streets in the village without any aim like a vagabond. As it was usually done by the other children of my age group I also used to ride on the back of the buffalos that carried my weight unmindfully, to the fields and back home to the house. As I was having that joy ride on the buffalo's back I tried to read some of the poems in the Telugu text book. Whether it had

entered into my mind or not, I should confess that I did it routinely as the ritual throughout my holidays. When we reached the fields, especially the knee deep grass grown in the Narasayya Cheruvu, a big fresh water pond in our agricultural fields and also the tamarind tree grove just opposite to that water tank, the cattle had a big feast of live green grass to feed on. When the cattle were fully immersed in grazing, I used to sit under the shade of the huge tamarind trees that were very old and spread over a few acres of land which produced the fodder for the cattle, the ripe tamarind fruit which was an household day to day requirement and also a place for rest and relaxation for the labor with shade and shelter especially during their lunch break. I tried to read some more poems and topics under the shade of the tamarind trees. When I was reading under the tamarind trees I used to deal with a lot of large black ants (Gandu Cheemalu) that used to bite me quite often disturbing and distracting my studies. Almost all the tamarind trees had a huge ant hill at its bottom and there was the fear of the poisonous snakes entering into the ant hills for food. Fortunately for me I escaped only with the ant bites and never encountered the snakes or their wrath. But there was always that fear lurking in the back of my mind. Of course there were some more people in the fields working at different places who were ready to reach me in case of any need. That need indeed never arose. In between I used to relax a little bit and collected the ripe sweet tamarind fruit for eating then and there

itself. When the ripe fruit was not available I used to throw stones to bring down the large unripe tamarind fruits that were very sour and still tasty. Some people harvested the tender leaves and also the buds and used them in their cooking. Even though I tasted every bit of the tamarind tree which was very sour never did I realize that I was loading my body with plenty of the Vitamin-C.? Sometimes after my lunch, when the cattle finished their grazing and started relaxing in the nearby water canal to get relief from the hot Sun, I also used to enter into the water canal and gave a thorough wash to the cattle with the help of a fist full of dry paddy hay. Somehow the dry paddy hay was a routine cattle fodder and I could never understand why large hay stocks were stacked in all the villages as a ritual. I still do not understand the nutritional value of the dry hay. Only the cattle were given hay as a fodder round the clock. I could understand the green grass and the green maze and jute were the rich fodder for the cattle.

During the tobacco season there was a buzz of activity both at my house and also at the cattle shed where my father constructed tobacco barrens to cure the Virginia tobacco leaves. At different stages of his progress in cultivation he reached a stage of possessing six tobacco barrens. Most often there was a hectic schedule in the tobacco curing from harvesting the ripe leaves till they were processed and sold in the market. Usually the tobacco season and the activity lasted for three to four months in a year. During that



season I used to go to the tobacco barrens, carry my books and read as much as possible, simultaneously watching the work that was going on round the clock at that place. There were a few advantages by staying at our tobacco barrens at night as there was ample light to read the books as there were a number of kerosene lanterns and also the petro max lights that were required for the routine work at night. In the villages, when I was going to the school there was no chance of studying the books at night because of the lack of proper light at home. Most of the studies were either in the class room or during the day light at home. The only light source at home at nights was the kerosene lamp or the lantern. Those lights could not be burnt for long hours at home because, the rest of the family members would go into sleep very early after their daily hard work and it would be a disturbance for them to keep the lights burning till very late in the night. At the maximum I could keep the lights only till 10 PM at night. At home the household people woke up early to catch with their daily chores and they had their early dinner and went to sleep after a hard day's physical work. At the work place even if I did not read enough, I always carried the books and kept them under my head as a sort of a pillow that constantly reminded me about my responsibility as a student. There was also another advantage when some seniors and elders interacted with me and guided me about the studies. When there were school examinations I used to take the corresponding text book for the examination on

that day and I had the habit of reading the books on the road to the school as I walked to the school for about ten to fifteen minutes. Even if there was some time, before I entered the examination hall I still read the books till the last minute like a compulsive obsession. Even when there were no examinations I had the habit of reading the books on the road on the way to the school and also back home. While doing so I used to hick the stones on the road as if I was playing the foot ball on the road. In that process I hurt my toes on a number of occasions to the extent the great toes of both the feet were bleeding, got infected and sometimes required the removal of the toe nails. That was a painful experience out of a foolish and childish activity. As a byproduct during the walk I used to count the number of steps I made while I was walking, especially between the two furlong stones that were planted on the side of the road to measure the distance. In fact there were nearly seven stones and side of the road to the school covering a distance of six furlongs and I used to travel twice a day in the morning and afternoon making a total of four trips to and fro. That was an exercise that I did subconsciously every day. While I was walking on the road sometimes, I accidentally came across one or two of my teachers at the school who stayed at our village. I used to silently follow them from behind without disturbing or overtaking them. That made me to observe the teachers, especially Sri.Satyanarayana Murthi Garu and Sri.Ramaiah Garu about their mannerisms and habits.

Coming back to the stay at our cattle shed, sometimes I had free time in the evenings to watch the bulls that were purchased by my father for the purpose of cultivation and also for carrying the cart loads of agricultural produce on bullock carts. He used to exchange the bulls which were old and slow in work with the new young and ferocious bulls that did the heavy and fast work. I had seen some of our villagers doing the castration for the young and ferocious bulls in the most disastrous and horrendous way of forcibly crashing the young bull's testicles by tying the bulls legs and forcing it to lye-down on the floor. I watched such dangerous procedures on a couple of occasions and never liked the cruel way of dealing with the domestic animals. The idea behind their in human and unscientific procedure was to remove the hormonal drive and make them more docile. Otherwise the young bull's with their abundant power and force would be unmanageable by the farmers. In addition to that the bulls were prevented from random impregnation of the domestic cows. In fact there were certain bulls year marked for the natural insemination in each village and such bulls were branded as the **"Ambothu"** which was allowed to freely move around in village, respected as a God incarnation by some people and it was allow having a free feed anywhere in the village. The entire village belonged to the Ambothu; it was in the custody of one of the village temple or the priest. Each village had its own Ambothu. As a matter of curiosity I used to check the physical

qualities of the bulls that were purchased recently by my father. I was curious to watch the face of the bull, the ears, the eyes, the nostrils and their horns. I watched all the bulls having a rope pierced through their nostrils mercilessly to hold the stirrups to control their moment especially when the bulls were dragging the cart dangerously fast. The stirrups were also used to indicate the direction and the turns the cart had to travel. The bulls become trained to follow the cart driver's instructions by trial and error and also by the conditioned reflex. Fortunately the stirrups were not used for the milk giving buffalos or the cows. I was fascinated by their looks and the way they ate their food and fodder, the way they longed for the water and also the happiness and the contentment after the feeding. I was really happy to touch and caress their large ears, the forehead and the skin hanging from the neck which in Telugu is called as Gangadolu and I realized the anatomical word after I joined in the medical college as the Platysma. I also used to touch the hump on the back of the bulls which was called the oopurum which acted as a restraint between the neck and the trunk of the bull when they were carrying the "**Kaadi**" of the cart or the agricultural plough implements. While I was closely inspecting the newly bought bulls I used to check some of their other characters as was done by the experts in the bull trade. They used to check the type and number of whirls of hair (Sudulu) by which they could assess the quality of the breed of the bull. I enjoyed at reading such

physical characters of the bulls. In doing so I was so much immersed in my observations sometimes the unfamiliar new bulls used to give a sudden strong kick on my thighs almost breaking my limbs. After a few kicks I became wise in standing behind the legs of the bulls, more precisely their hind legs. Sometimes the bulls, new or old used to accidentally stamp on my feet specially the great toes and create a crush injury almost similar to the self inflicted injuries on the road while going to the school. As the Telugu saying goes **“Pundu Meeda Karam Challinatluga”** sometimes I was already carrying a toe injury that was bleeding and infected and on that injured toes the bull used to stamp its feet to make me suffer more pain and bleeding. Such injuries were routine for many villagers because of the hard field work and the reasons might be different in each individual case. When I think of the toe injuries sustained because of different reasons the local illiterate farmers devised their own methods of the treatment. The first reaction for such injuries was to soak the wound with their own urine which was hot and sterile, to soak with the urine of the bulls or the cow urine if it were to be available, to cover the wound with the cow dung which was supposed to be the holy material and finally take a piece of cloth old or new, clean or dirty. Some people plucked some nearby green leaves preferably that of a questionable medicinal value plant, by name Ummetta Aku or the Nagamalli leaf as an additional dressing cushion. The medical facilities available at that time in our village

were very meager, rendered by the only **RMP** doctor by name Mr.Nandipati.Venkatapayya, who used to clean the wounds with spirit and dress the wounds with the Benjoin seals. He also used to wash the wounds with the yellow staining antiseptic lotion called the Acriflavine. He used to apply the Furaxine ointment for some wounds. For closed injuries without the bleeding used to apply the Malampatti, a perforated sticking plaster with some locally pain killing ointment anointed on its inner surface. At least he had the clean bandage cloth, sterile or unsterile it was immaterial. He used to give a few shots of injection procaine penicillin as an antibiotic. In those days the tetanus toxoid was not available and luckily the people survived without any such prophylaxes. I was no exception to go through such routine and the rigmarole. Those injuries took their own time to heal by natural process, sometimes it took very long as there used to be repeated and recurrent injuries at the same spot before the complete healing of the initial wound. There was also the chance of roadside dust accumulating on the wound because almost all the people including the school going children walked on bare foot or the locally made lather cheppals that did not give any cover or protection to the exposed wounds.

During my **SSLC** studies I was staying with my friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao in the rented room at Peda Nandi Padu close to the high school. The aim was to save time and also to study together to score more marks in the final examination. In that

process I used to have early dinner at my house, collect my text books and note books and go to the rented room at night all alone. I used to take my father's bicycle to go to the room at night. There was no need of a bicycle for my father during the night hours. Sometimes when I was going to the room, when there was no other person walking on the road during the pitch darkness, crossing the cement slip way (Sapata) constructed for the free drainage of the rain water and the flood water, the village people created a scare that there were demons (Dayyalu) near that slip way. To add weight to their fears and apprehensions there was an isolated place where a dead body was buried and a stone tomb (Samadhi) was erected. The details of the dead person or the relatives of the deceased person were not known immediately but the rumors made their rounds that probably a young lady met with an unnatural death and she was buried in the fields of her relatives or her family members. Some people spread the stories that the ghost of the dead lady got out of the Samadhi and walked around that area at nights. People have vouched for sighting such ghosts. Some people even described the ghost as having a dark face, wearing a white sari, her dark hair spread all around her face up to the waist; she was having long protruding teeth and walking with her feet facing backwards. When somebody described the existence of such a ghost in the pitch darkness of the night it was really terrifying especially for the children and the young people. It needed great courage and

determination to walk on that strip of the road alone at night; especially in the middle of the night. In fact we always remembered the existence of such a ghost whenever we passed across that tomb especially during the day time. When we walked in groups either during the day time or at nights when we returned to our village after watching a night show cinema at Peda Nandi Padu, the thought of the ghost always went through the minds of everybody. Some people were very brave and pretended as if they were not afraid of any ghosts or demons. Some people were very weak hearted and walked in a huddle with fear and shivering, holding others hands or the shoulders. Passing by that tomb at night was a test for the nerves of the individuals however bold or coward one might be. I myself never gave any credence or importance to such gossips. I never stared or looked in the direction of that tomb either at day or at night only to cover up my fears or to pretend that I was not a coward. But some mischievous people tried to drill the idea of the ghost in to the vulnerable minds of young children and the weaklings. On one particular night when I was hurrying myself by riding my bicycle, as I was already late to reach the room I was going so fast on my bicycle to catch up with the time, lost at my house for some domestic reasons. I crossed the tar road under the crisscrossing shadows of the rows of the tamarind trees on either side of the road, which was more than hundreds of years old I did not find anybody on the road coming or going from our village. The



shadows of the trees alternating with light and darkness made a frightening scene to begin with. There was a frightening silence all round. The darkness, the silence and the loneliness made me shiver within me for a few seconds. Suddenly from nowhere, I started looking at the tomb for the ghost that did not exist. I recollected the description of the ghost as I came close to the tomb. I was riding my bicycle very fast to run away from the ghost. Unknowingly I started sweating profusely, my head became heavy and my mind became blank as if I was caught and possessed by the evil and cruel ghost. Suddenly a thought went through my mind that the ghost usually waited for the right person at the right time to attack, possess and kill to fulfill its desires that were not fulfilled during the life time. It was amply shown in the cinema pictures how the ghosts took their revenge on the people that were responsible for their unnatural death. It took a few minutes for me to cross the cement sapata and reach the other side of the tar road. I was still sweating, my heart beating at a faster rate and I was riding the bicycle at a mad speed unmindful of the ditches and the stones on the road. My mind was still heavy and blank and I was not able to see anything ahead of me. Luckily for me as I approached the residential area of Peda Nandi Padu, some lights in the village and some movement of the villagers, my mind became clear and the sweating started disappearing and my clothes became dry before I could reach the room. I narrated the horror story to my roommate who was very bold

and mature than me and consoled for whatever that had happened. In fact even today there were rumors about the existence and the moment of the ghosts of the dead body possessing some weak people and harassing them to no end. The existence of a ghost or the demon as I know today is a psychological aberration and creation of the people who want the people to believe in the God as an all pervasive protective force and phenomenon as against the evil spirit and demons of destructions. I don't believe in the existence of the ghost but suffered for a short while imagining the unknown and unseen ghost.

In the same line of thought about the demons and the evil spirits, there was one more story that made rounds during our school days. Our area was a fertile agricultural land with plenty of cereal seasonal crops. Sometimes the jowar was grown in vast areas of the land simultaneously by all the farmers in a season. The crop used to grow to such a great height that if some people wanted to walk across the fields even during day time they were lost in the vast expanse of the jowar fields. Sometimes it was even difficult to go forward or to trace back the steps. Going alone even for a short distance would make the heart skip a few beats. As children going to and coming back from the school, we had to pass through the narrow road already narrowed by the rows of the tamarind trees on an either side and the water canals that were flanked by the six feet and above tall jowar crop. That was a good picture to watch in the

company of other students but it was frightening to go alone even at the day time. There were wild rumors that made rounds during the season of the crop that two young sisters were murdered in the fields nearer to the road on the opposite side of the tomb already existing for several decades. The where about of the two young sisters was not known? But people went on spreading the rumors and the fears that there were two criminals in that area hiding in the fields for the innocent prey to pass by alone. So in that season when the crop was ripe the students walked in groups or in the company of elders to cover that distance. The rumor mongers also named the two criminals as Ray chukka and Pagati chukka meaning they could attack either at the night time or at the day time at their will. Nobody had physically seen or verified the existence of such people, but the fear complex was repeatedly drilled into the younger minds and was narrated ad-nauseam. There was a police station at Peda Nandi Padu and the police constables frequently moved by foot on that road but they never could catch any such criminal. Those childhood unconfirmed fears, made the gullible people susceptible for even minor fears and issues in life. To add more spice to the false news in those days a cinema picture was released with a title “**Ray chukka Pagati chukka**” that hit the nail hard on the head.

There was one more real time experience for me on the road to the school on one afternoon. I was coming back to the school, after the lunch at my home all alone. Usually I waited at the village center

for some other school students to give company for me whenever I went to the school either in the morning or in the afternoon. For some strange reason I did not get any company on that fateful day. As I walked alone, I was thinking of either the class or the games that I should play after the class was over and did not notice what was happening around me. In those days there were not many buses or vehicles moving on the roads. The one or two buses running from the Guntur town to Purchur always made a big noise on the road, the horn was very loud which could be heard across one or two villages and the trips were so infrequent. Hence there was no traffic hazard while walking on the road, at the maximum there were a few bullock carts or an occasional horse buggy and a few bicycles. Since it was the afternoon time even those occasional vehicles were not seen on the road even from a distance. As I approached the road that was a diversion to go to the nearby village called Annaparthi there was a sudden change in the weather picture on the road. There was a fast moving whirlwind (Vaayu Gundam) in the center of the road in front of me with dust, sand and the roadside paper waste making the whirlwind look like a giant cumulonimbus clouds. For a second I did not realize what was happening around me. It was just the opposite of the whirlpool (Sudi Gundam) in the gushing flood waters. As I was walking towards the school I walked straight into the whirlwind. Before I knew what was happening I was lifted off the road by a few feet vertically in the direction of the whirlwind towards

the skies. I could not see around because of the dust falling into my eyes, I could not breathe because of the rubble and sand going into my mouth and nostrils and finally I could not even shout because of the fear and also blackout of the mind. For a second I did not know what was happening around me? I knew I was floating in the air and I could not reach the ground on my own. I was not even falling down by the gravity. I did not know what was going to happen to me, would the winds take me into the skies or drop me down halfway through the flight. I knew a few stories in our village circle that people get drowned and killed in the whirlpool of waters during the floods. I did not here till such time about the whirlwinds also taking away the people and their lives. I also heard and saw the big thunders and the lightening in the afternoon skies at the same time. I thought the skies were going to open up and there would be a big down pour of rain. All that happened in few seconds and I was soon on my feet on the road. I wanted to know what went wrong and what happened around me. I did not have any other person nearby to discuss with. I could see the dusty clouds moving far away from me to my great relief. I was only eleven years only by that time and was hardly weighing forty kilo grams at that time so it was easy for the whirlwind to lift me off the road by a few feet. For once I did not know why I walked into the fast approaching whirlwind instead of running away backwards or side wards. Whatever happened, I was frightened to begin with and after recovering on my own went to the

school and narrated to the story to a few classmates and friends. Straightaway they did not believe my story and also rubbished as a cock and bull story. I felt uneasy to share my frightening experience with anybody else as there was nobody willing to listen or to buy the story. After going home I slept peacefully and forgot what had happened in the afternoon as a bad dream. The next day when I was going to the school then I almost forgot and ignored my own previous day's experience, I saw people reading from the newspaper that there was indeed a small earth quake in our area passing across so many villages nearby, After reading the newspaper people started believing that there was an earth quake and also located the break or the breach in the soil that ran very deep and also went a few miles on either side of our school and village. The furrow in the earth was very glaring and was located very close to the road where I was engulfed in the whirlwind. I personally went and inspected the crack in the soil close to the road and got convinced myself that I was really lifted off from the road for a few seconds because of the powerful whirlwind. After that, what all had happened I never tried to convince anybody by narrating my story of the previous day for which they did not give any credence earlier. That was my experience and I kept it to myself till today and ruminated, a number of times as it happened during my school days and precisely on my way to the school and class. I need not have to create fake stories and gossips for others to believe. On the contrary the stories

about the demons and the criminals were easily believed and the people were constantly worried with fear about such unreal and imaginary issues and did not give the due credit to the real experience and story told by me, as the English saying goes that ***“give the devil its due respect”***.

As I was digging deep into the memory lane, many more major or minor issues started surfacing like water in the deep well. As it was my experience there were good and bad wells in and around our villages that were the source of drinking water for many villages including our village. The good well water was more in demand while the sour water wells were abandoned. Like the wells and the water I too have good and bad memories which I tried filter out at different points of time. But still some memories are kicking at the back of my mind constantly begging for documentation. Irrespective of the story value I should narrate a few such things in these pages itself, lest I should forget or totally discard my own memories as a crape. One such memory was that when I was running away from my house eluding my mother’s energetic and sincere attempts to join me into the elementary school in our village. On the first day when she was about to hold my hand and take me to the school, I showed my little finger which she trusted and let me off the hook. The next day she was prepared for my cunning ways to runaway on the streets, she was ready to chase me till she caught hold of me. I could not run fast as on the first day because of something like a thorn pricked

into my right foot which made me slow down a bit, so that my mother could catch hold of my right hand and dragged me forcibly to the school. The children were afraid of joining the school because of the bad reputation of the teacher who was known to be notorious in mercilessly beating the children with a wooden stick. Even though I joined with reluctance and fear, after joining the school I did not look back in my education. That the turning point was the thorn prick did not dawn in my mind till today. But for the thorn prick my mother would have given up her fervent chase to catch me and to take me to the school. Since I joined the school and got immersed in the studies, from the elementary school to the high school, from the high school to the Hindu College studies, from the Hindu College to the Guntur Medical College, from the Guntur Medical College to the Madras Medical College, from there to the Andhra Medical College at Visakhapatnam city as a government doctor, as a consultant private doctor and till now I had been carrying the after effects of the thorn prick, the Adavithumma Mulla, without knowing its real contribution for my education. For some reason and for some time, I forgot that there was a thorn in my right foot, right under the ball of the second toe that constantly troubled me from my childhood. In the villages most of the people walked on bare foot, from the childhood to the old age. The thorns were scattered all over the areas in the village more so on the roads and the walker's foot path. There were two varieties of the thorns that were frequently



encountered in our area. The first one was relatively thin and less harmful called the Nallathumma Chettu (Acacia) which was grown in vast areas of the agricultural fields in clusters, with multiple utilities. First of all it gave very healthy food for the goats which were grown in large herds in the form its unripe fruit. It also gave a lot of firewood to the villages. I came to know at later day in my life that the sticking gum was made out of the Nallathumma Chettu which was called the gum acacia. It also had a lot of thorns that gave trouble to many people. Part of the tree was also used as fencing in the fields or at the cattle shed. When such thorn pricks were encountered, quite often the thorns were left alone unnoticed unless it caused very severe pain. The village barber or the household ladies were very good at extracting the more painful thorns by using the safety pins or the nail cutting tools. The other variety of the wild thorns was from the Adavithumma Chettu that grew in any place, wanted or unwanted. It grew in the form of large bushes, gave a little bit of shelter for cattle and also acted as fencing for the valuable property or the crop. It was also used as firewood; the gum was not very popular for sticking purposes and the most dangerous thing was its thorn which was stout, strong and long. I really did not know which thorn was responsible and got into my right foot while I was running away. Whenever there was pain while walking many people in our house and village tried to explore and extract the invisible thorn tip. As the days and years went by the thorn could not be

traced out but its ghost remained constantly reminding me that once upon a time there was a thorn prick in my foot. Even during my school days I noticed a large thorn in my foot that troubled me while I was walking. Sometimes it became so big and obvious and became more painful whenever I stepped on a small little stone while walking especially during my early school hood when I did not have any foot wear. Whenever it was painful I used to go to the village barber, even as a routine for my hair cut, I used to request him to remove the thorn as much as possible to give me temporary relief. He used to remove the corn as much as possible, go as deep as possible till the sensitive part of the sole of the foot was reach. In fact the entire corn was only an exuberant hard fibrous tissue which grew around the buried foreign body, the tip of the thorn that could not be found and removed. That it was a foreign body reaction came to my knowledge only during my medical college studies. Because it was a dead fibrous tissue it was painless as long as the normal tissue was not touched either at the periphery or at the depth during the intervention. Sometimes there was a small tinge of blood when the knife reached the deeper most part. The barber used a sharp blade with a long handle which was called the Gorugillu which was really meant for removing the excessively grown nails both in the fingers and the toes. It was used for everybody as a universal instrument, for removing nails, the thorns and the corns; it was never sterilized and was used for the entire male population of the

village or the community. Thank God there was no awareness of the sterilization, the antiseptics, the cross infections or the tetanus. Even the spirit was not available with the barber. People survived in spite of all those things. Luckily, the tissues that were cut were only the dead and unwanted parts of the skin.

Coming to the story behind the thorn prick in my right foot, the earlier attempts to explore and remove the thorn, the innumerable times of removing the corn unsuccessfully either by the barber or me was still etched in my mind as if everything had happened just the day before. When I started removing the corn myself without the help of the village barber I used a shaving blade available at our house, later, a sterile surgical blade whenever I went to the operation theater during my scheduled operations. The removal of the ever growing corn had become a perpetual procedure and a part of a ritual for decades together. When I started removing the corn for myself I could go to the deepest extent till it was painful or there was bleeding at the depth. I was amazed to what extent that I could cut deep into the sole of the foot without any local anesthesia. Luckily it was done under sterile operation theater condition and hence there was no secondary infection at any time. For years together I certainly believed that there was a small fragment of the thorn, at least the tiny tip of the thorn buried deep inside. But I never chased it as the surgeons would do the sasurisation procedure under general anesthesia. During my studies in the medical college at a

later date in my life I realized that there could be numerous causes for the development of the corns in the feet in addition to the thorn pricks. In my case whatever the medical knowledge shows the cause for the corn was only the thorn prick which I had been chasing and following from my childhood. For reasons best known to the God, the medical science and certainly not known to me even today is that the corn stopped growing on its own any further, for the last few years and I was relieved of the trouble with pain and also the necessity to frequently chop off the growing corn. It was some consolation for me because there were much bigger medical issues that I should attend to even if the corn was to trouble me. As a sort of a ghost there was a small scar left at the site of the corn in sole of the foot to occasionally remind me about what resided there for decades together.

As if one thorn was not enough, there was another thorn in my left foot about which I totally forgot for years together till it was confirmed to be the real thorn. In our childhood I used to accompany my mother wherever she went, as there was no other work for me being a child and also out of curiosity to watch everything and anything done my mother. As part of the domestic chores in our village the elders used to pound the raw jowar which was overnight soaked in the water for easy pounding and peeling of the skin. There was no need to stress that the jowar was the main staple food for almost all the villagers in those days. In our area it

was a dry agricultural land and the commonly cultivated food items were jowar, metta vary (rice) and varigalu, a sort of a cereal. The jowar food was very rich in vitamins and minerals that were consumed by all the sections of the society, three times a day. The first priority for all our village women folk was to pound enough of jowar required for the family early in the morning. It needed two or three people to pound the jowar in a household implement called rolu-rokali and also required a lot of stamina to pound the jowar to make it ready for easy cooking. The washing's of the pounded jowar which contained the husk was mixed with the cattle feed. In fact the husk contained the most important vitamins especially the thiamin and the other B-complex. Not knowing all those things, I held on to my mother's chengu, the corner of one end of her sari and went around her and stood there watching how the jowar was pounded. In those days I was curious to learn everything that was new to me. On one of those days, even before I joined in the elementary school, it was raining heavily and still the process of pounding continued in the outdoor rolu (A big stone with a pond like a opening in the center to contain the jowar from spilling out). I was standing close to my mother on bare foot and close to the rolu not knowing what I was stamping on. I knew that some thorn had pricked me and did not immediately bother about it in the excitement of watching the pounding process. Because of the wet weather and also the soft skin of the sole of the foot the thorn could easily pierce through my foot,

for some reason it did not hurt me very badly to call for immediate attention of my mother. In the confusion of that rainy weather I totally forgot about the thorn prick for a few days, for a few months, for a few years and may be for more than a decade. I had the memory of the thorn prick to begin with, but totally ignored it since it did not trouble me any further. As years passed by I was doing my household chores as far as possible, giving a helping hand to my mother without any pain or disability in my feet. I was lifting water from our water tanks by Kavidu and making a few trips every day, six trips to be precise to meet the water requirements in house every day. At some point of time during that small little work I was getting pain in my left foot, exactly around the left great (big) toe. It was bearable to begin with but started troubling as the days passed by. There was no cause for alarm but there was no solution also for the relief of the pain. Our neighbor by name late Sri.Boddu.Raghavulu a distant cousin who worked in the roads and buildings maintenance department, developed a fancy for doing massage and manipulation techniques for pains and sprains as a spare time vocation. People in and around our house approached him, used to get his service, free of cost whenever they had some requirement. My mother after noticing my problem forced me to seek the service of my elder cousin for oil massaging my foot where I was getting constant pain. The great toe on the left side showed some swelling, as I knew today after becoming the doctor, at the metatarso-pharyngeal joint that means

at the junction of the bones of the foot and the toe. In spite of the daily and repeated oil massaging the swelling did not subside. Still I managed with my daily routine work at home, going to the school and also playing games at the school. Slowly and steadily a small bean sized prominence surfaced between the great toe and the second toe of the left foot. On its own it was not painful but it hurt me more while I was bringing water by Kavidi every day. Still my cousin brother persisted with his unending massaging process not knowing what the trouble was. During my **SSLC** studies, I could not bear with the pain anymore and the swelling started becoming more prominent. I approached the **RMP** doctor's clinic at our village, the only medical facility available in our village. There was a young assistant under trainee of the senior **RMP** doctor by name late Mr.Venkatappayya. The young man's name was Mr.Narasimha Rao who was fondly called Mr.Narsu. When I told him about my problem of the pain and the swelling that was becoming more and more as the days went by, he gave me some local dressings at the site of the swelling. He did not know what the swelling was and hence what to do about it. There was no fault from his side since he had tried sincerely to solve my problem with his limited knowledge and experience. After a few days of trial and error he suggested to me that the only alternative was to make a cut in the swelling to know what the exact problem was. As I respected him for the little bit of experience he had already gained after working with his brother in-

law, the senior **RMP** doctor. Without consulting anybody, either my parents or the senior **RMP** doctor we both mutually agreed for the cutting procedure. I did not know whether the area was cleaned with the antiseptic spirit or not and I did not know whether the blade used for the cutting was sterilized or not. I agreed for the cut and he did the cutting. That was the first ever surgical procedure performed on me; I did not know whether it was called a surgery at all in those days. There was some blood, there was some pain but nothing else came out of the swelling after the cutting. My young doctor friend made an Acriflavine dressing and asked me to carry on my daily chores. I was going to him for change of the bandage on alternate days. But still the swelling persisted. I did not know what to do next. I was hoping that some miracle would happen. As usual of my morning scheduled household work of carrying the water from the water tank, I noticed more pain while bringing the water, stopped my attempt to walk any further, sat at a place and opened the bandage as the pain was unbearable. To my pleasant surprise when I was halfway through open in the bandage I saw a long brown sharp thorn coming out of the wound with its tip protruding upwards. It could come half the distance out and I was initially scared to touch it but pooled up my courage, held the thorn between my fingers and tried to pull it out as forcibly as possible as if that was the only and the last chance for me to get rid of my chronic problem and pain. I thought I should not let the thorn to slip back



into the wound again. I was careful enough to remove the rest of the bandage and gathered my courage as a first time operating surgeon and pooled the thorn forcibly out. It came so easily and fooled me as it was already out of its bed and could have extruded on its own without anybody's help. I laughed at myself for the irony in using unnecessary extra force where it was not required. In the initial few seconds I was a little bit elated. The fear behind the force I used was only an index of the mental trauma and tension I experienced over a period of time. I felt a sigh of relief, collected the thorn into the bandage cloth, carefully preserved it, went home and the left the water pots at home and rushed to the junior **RMP** doctor at the clinic cum house. He also felt happy that the culprit was caught following the cut, and ultimately the cat came out of the bag. The wound healed automatically in the course of the time and left a depressed scar in the skin close to the great toe of the left foot as a stark reminder of the original problem. Looking back I really wondered how I managed to live with a thorn in my flesh literally and metaphorically. With the hindsight and the little bit of anatomical knowledge I still wondered how the thorn could negotiate its way from the sole through and through to the skin outside sparing the bones, joint, vessels and the nerves. How it survived in my body for more than ten years without causing any major infection or complication. It was not a small tip of the thorn but a full length of it. I felt it was miracle worth recording in the medical books.

The truth was it was not one thorn but really there were two thorns of the same tree, one was the tip and the other was a full length of it that existed in my feet simultaneously, giving me some sort of a trouble at some time or other. All is well that ended well.

If my getting admission into the schools and colleges imparted me with the bookish knowledge that made me wise about the listening, reading, writing and learning skills the outside world taught me many more aspects of life by watching the nature and by the natural instinct. There were many people like my father and my forefathers who had their natural learning skills out of necessity for their survival and existence without having the help of the books or the schools. As I look back, the nature has provided us with so many avenues of learning if only we keep our senses open and keen on observations. If I did not go to school I could have learned the same old skills and beliefs as my parents and other villagers which had been going on for generations together. I was fortunate to have born in the period of the first generation of people with education in our family after our Independence and when our society was in the process of transition from illiteracy to education. I was able to watch closely some of the events taking place in and around our family and within the village to begin with. I did not mind putting probing questions and also to repeatedly put the same question till I got the right answer that I understood correctly and satisfactorily. I was able to grasp a few points by closely observing what all was

happening around me. Some very routine and interesting events took place that still persisted in my mind which I feel compelled to document whether they had any relevance to the present topic or of any information value. For those who never lived in the villages it would be some amusement and also hard to swallow information and material. I should narrate a few events that lingered in my mind for years together. From my childhood I lived with some of the domestic animals and birds. Some of them I closely watched and became friends with them. The first and the foremost animal I handled and fondled were the baby cats. There was always a domestic cat in our house watching for its prey, the rats that were plenty in our house. As our parents stored our food grains in gunny bags, the rats made a number of holes in the mud floor of our house and consumed a lot of the grain harvested by my parents. I had seen some small new born rats till they became big and very big and they were called the Pandikokkulu or the bandicoots that became a real fatty meal for our domestic cats who were waiting at the corners of the house or on the attic. The rat menace was so great that the cats were welcome in the house and in fact they were allowed to breed and grow in our house itself. As the cats could not catch all the rats, people used a domestic device called the rat traps which were readily available in the local market and also easily manufactured by our local carpenters. The rat traps had one way opening door and the body was covered with wood or aluminum and steel wires. The

rat trap was provided with a hook inside which the bait was put up, like the onion or the meat that attracted the rats at nights. We used to catch hold of a large number of fatty rats in the morning and took them to the nearby fields to let them escape or kill them mercilessly when they were running for helter and shelter. The crows and the eagles were ready in the fields to lift the carcasses. That feat was done regularly by all most all the villagers who had some grain to store in their house. Not only that the rat menace caused the loss of the food grains but also the rats made huge holes in the mud floors of the house which acted as their abode at day time. The holes needed frequent mending and it was an additional job for my mother to fill the holes with some stones and rubble, pack them so that the rats could not enter the same hole and the surface of the hole was sealed with the usual cow dung paste. But the rats were intelligent enough to make alternate holes and make their abode more comfortable till they were caught and killed. Unable to bear the rat menace year after the year and also to prevent the enormous loss of the food grain and the ground nuts and many other cereals grown in our agricultural lands, braving all the vagaries of the nature my father decided to go for the cement plastering of all the inside walls of our house and subsequently replaced the mud floor with the cheap granite, called naparallu. That solved the problem to a great extent but as per the natural evaluation and the environmental changes our food grain crops were slowly replaced by the most

lucrative commercial crops like the chilies and later by the Virginia Tobacco. As the food was denied for the rats, their menace in the house also was wiped out completely.

Coming to the cats, I was fascinated by their coolness and cunning nature. They used to hide in the corners of our house or on the attic without making their presence felt or noticed. They slept at day time and kept a vigil at nights. Even during the day time they tried to hide somewhere in the house or pretend as if they were sleeping unmindful of the surroundings only to pounce on the rats and catch them in no time. The scent of the rats itself makes the cat to leap at the rats. I had seen the cats becoming pregnant and deliver the small little cats in our house. The cats used to produce a hand full of baby cats that were cute and beautiful to watch from the day one after their birth. The mother cat was very ferocious immediately after the delivery and suckled all its babies unmindful of the surroundings. In the initial days after the delivery the mother cat did not allow us to fondle the babies. As the little baby cats started crawling and exploring the house and the surroundings the mother cat jealously protected them from being hurt or killed by the eagerly waiting crows and the eagles on the neem tree in our front yard. I felt very bad, sad and sick when some of the little cats were lifted off by the vultures however much the mother cat tried to protect them and save them. After the delivery the cat had the habit of shifting its children from one house to another as frequently as

possible so that the children were not caught by the hungry crows and eagles. In spite of the mother cat taking the safety measures some little cats could not escape the vultures. I had seen the mother cat literally holding the baby cats in its mouth without hurting the baby and going to a safe and secure place almost on alternate days. There was saying in a Telugu literature that the cat shifts its family to at least nine different places before the small little cats could move around independently escaping the potential killer birds. There was also another saying in English that the ***“The cat has nine lives”***. Coming back to the domestic cat, it was a good and harmless animal to befriend with, especially by the children. They were like the small puppy dogs that moved freely in the house. During my early childhood I used to handle and fondle the small little cats in our house without any fear. They had very soft and cozy hair and skin and allowed me to stroke them on the forehead and back. Whenever I had my lunch or dinner the cat was there always next to me to give company. It made small little moments with its tongue and tail giving signals that it was hungry but waited patiently till I mixed my meal either with the non vegetarian curry or with the curd rice. When there was some delay in serving the food the cat made some funny interesting gestures and squeal noises to attract my attention and to get fast service of its food. Sometimes when I started having my own lunch or dinner and the cat was not readily available, I used to make a few invitation sounds like pse-pse like a code language

which brought the cat immediately to the scene. In the initial days I used to serve the food for the cat on the mud floor, which the cat did not mind at all but ate the food fully without any complaint. It used to a good job by completely swiping the food from the floor which did not require further cleaning. As I grew old, became more concerned for the innocent animal I started serving the food to the cat in a small bowl. As I was growing physically and mentally, as I was going to the school regularly our fortunes in the house also improved proportionately. Our eating plate quality also improved alongside from aluminum to enamel to stainless steel over a period of time and my serving the cat in a plate also changed from floor to earthen plate to aluminum plate and so on. Unfortunately when I reached stage of eating my food in a silver plate there were no cats to give company and they have deserted me totally wiping out the early childhood happiness of feeding and keeping the cats in close proximity. Probably the cats don't like the company of the rich and affluent. The other way round was that the rich people had servants and subordinates in that drove away the cats from the houses cursing their presence in the house. The other reason was probably that there were no cats in the concrete jungle houses which attracted the cats.

It was a regular ritual for me to feed the cat and also the dog in our house whenever I took my meal. I enjoyed feeding the friendly animals, which always waited for me to come for my lunch and

dinner. Even before I took my first scoop of food I always gave the priority to my cat. The cat was known to steal and drink the milk at nights, when all of us were asleep. To prevent the cat from taking the milk directly from the pots, my mother used to keep the milk pots in a hanging mesh, the jute fiber domestic device called the utti. There were a number of such devices in our house for keeping the milk, curds, the butter milk and the ghee from out of the reach for the cats. Still the intelligent and hungry cat found its way to the utti and had its food as many times as possible. Sometimes the cat menace was so disturbing that one of our elders woke up in the middle of the night to drive away the cats. Occasionally the entire family members woke up from sleep because of the loud frightening shrieking noise made by the angry and unhappy cat. So we had to find some alternative methods of protecting the pots with milk and other things from the cats by tightly closing the neck of the hanging utti. There were one or two inconveniences with the cats at home. One was they pissed and passed motion anywhere and everywhere in the house causing nuisance in the house forcing somebody to clean them all the time. Sometimes the cats were adamant and did not heed the instructions to keep away when we were busy with work or studies. The cat needed admonishing like a school child. When still it refused to obey the master's instructions it needed a stick to drive it away. Even when the stick was wielded at it the cat did not budge and went to a corner of the house from where it made



its angry faces. If the master persisted with the stick wielding the cat jumped at him to cause hurt and scratches. That is why people said that even the soft docile cat could pounce and hurt when it was forcibly cornered and threatened. Very rarely the cat would cause any hurt without any provocation. The last but not the least was sometimes the cat used to sleep on my cot under the cover of the warm bed sheets without interfering with my sleep. I had seen the cat's picture on the gramophone records with the caption "**His master's voice**" whose meaning I did not infer. In contrast to the small, mild and domestic cat that was docile there was a big, frightening and ferocious cat occasionally found in our houses that were called the Gandupilli which was trapped and cot by the tribal people in the village and it was supposed to be the rich meal for them. Unfortunately the cats have a bad reputation as they were supposed to bring bad luck and bad omen to the people who ventured on to go out of their houses on some important assignments. The cat coming in the opposite direction or the cat crossing the path of the individual was frowned upon as a bad sign and omen, some people postponed their work for that day if they encountered the cat in their path. That was the good and bad about the cats and the rats.

Even though I was tempted to go into more details about my observations and associations with our domestic birds like the chicken, the domestic animals like the cattle that included the she

buffalos, the he-buffalos, the cows and the bullocks; I might differ, the subject for a while and broach the same at an appropriate time and occasion. I had the great memories about the cultivation of different crops in our agricultural lands, the cultivation and curing of the tobacco and its trade. I have the fascination to watch the flying birds, their nesting and hatching. But I would like to mention only one aspect of my association with the dog and the buffalo that stayed in our house for a few years that brought me close to them and to understand them. First of all there used to be a docile black dog that was a stray street dog to begin with but became friendly with me and preferred to stay with me all the time like the cat. It used to give me company wherever I went and also shared my lunch and dinner along with the cat. When I was reading my school books she used to stay quiet and calm and watched me purposefully for hours together without disturbing me. Unfortunately on one day I found that one of her eyeballs got damaged following an accidental piercing of the branch of a tree in her eye what I learnt in my medical college education as a penetrating injury. The water was coming out of the eyeball constantly and the dog suffered not only with the blindness but also the troubling constant fluid leak. There were no qualified doctors in our village even for the human beings except the **RMP** doctor and to think of a veterinary doctor to treat the dog was unimaginable. I was just a school student but was watching closely with keen interest many things that happened around me

and I was very curious to learn about anything that was new. In those days there used to be a dhobi (washer man) in our village who gave his advice and treatment for certain injuries and wounds bypassing the **RMP** doctor. He used to do the job in secrecy. He used to go to the place of cremation of the villagers and collected the ashes. By the by our village had two different places for cremation and also a burial ground. People close to the eastern part of the village had an open air crematorium and also a burial ground located on the northern side of the village situated between the Vattivagu River and the agricultural fields. People living in the opposite western half of the village had the cremation ground located at the south west part of the village and situated between the Nakkavagu and the adjacent agricultural fields. The washer man collected the ashes of the dead bodies from the south west cremation ground, put them into small pieces of the paper as packets and freely distributed for the needy people. I saw the distribution on a few occasions even though the washer man's house was located far away from my own house. I thought I should give the benefit of the ashes powder treatment to my trusted dog. I dared one day to go to the washer man's house and pleaded him to spare the ashes powder packets for my dog. He was good enough to spare a few packets. I started putting the powder into the damaged eye of our dog. The dog quickly accepted the treatment, did not have any pain because of the powder and did not run away from me with fear.

Instead, it liked the treatment and came regularly in the evening hours and put a pleading face for the powder. I applied the powder regularly, replenished the packets from the washer man who did not hesitate to give me the required number of the packets and ultimately the dog started feeling the benefits of the powder treatment. The watering of the eye stopped within a short time, the wound in the eyeball started healing leaving a white scar in the eye and the dog became very happy even with one eye. It's stayed faithful and truthful till the end and I really do not remember as and when we took leave of each other.

I was delighted and excited after seeing the positive result with the ash powder treatment for the dog. Almost at the same time when I was tending the injured eyeball of my friend dog, whom I did not call by any name, one of our buffalos developed problem which I thought I should attend to. During my early childhood my parents purchased a buffalo to meet the needs of our house for milk, butter milk, curds butter and ghee. It was a very docile and faithful animal it used to give birth to a number of young buffalos and it was a treat for me to watch the buffalo from the time of natural insemination and impregnation, the growth of the baby buffalo in the tummy and finally the process of delivery. On the day of the delivery there was a sort of a festive mode in the house expecting the new arrival. In fact practically there was no baby born in our house after me and my younger sister for several years. All the new arrivals in our house

were either from the buffalos, the cow, the dog and the cat. Hence each new arrival was look at with interest, inquisitiveness and deep involvement. We protected and looked after all the new arrivals as the precious children of our family. Coming back to the new arrival from our buffalo, my father was always there on the spot to take care of the new born baby buffalo. He had the insight into the mechanism of the delivery and also what was needed to be done to attend to the baby buffalo. I saw him removing the rudimentary nails on the feet of the baby buffalo; wipe out the greasy material layer on the body of the baby which was probably the amniotic fluid membranes which he quickly removed with his hands and ultimately cut the umbilical cord with a crud cutting device called the sickle and tied the end of the cord with another household thread or a rope. He was quick to keep the baby on its feet and also feed it for the first time. As the baby buffalo was taking its first feed his mother also started licking the surface of the baby fondly. Sometimes the baby passed the first stool called the meconium and started moving around. As usual the mother and child were mercilessly separated and tied to two different poles as a ritual close to each other preventing the baby from taking frequent feeds. There the selfishness of all our family members surfaced. We were eager to extract the first milk pot from the mother buffalo for making the tasty junnu. The milk itself was called the junnu paalu which had high content of baby nutrition and fats which was called in medical

parlance as the cholustraum. People made the junnu out of the initial milk produced by the animal which was a tasty preparation liked by one and all and sometimes the cholustraum was distributed to the friends and neighbours and even taken to the nearby relatives places to announce the arrival of the new member in the house. It was a pity that the baby buffalo did not get the full quota of the cholustraum feed which was its absolute right. I felt sorry for the baby even on the day to day basis when people stopped its feeding from the mother of its full quota as the owners of the buffalo wanted as much as milk as possible from the buffalo for themselves. I had seen at a later date people not allowing the baby to take any milk from the mother at all and even used to resort to inject hormones to extract more milk from the mother for the commercial reasons. Coming back to the baby born in our house to the mother buffalo, I had seen and tended to the baby till it grew to the stage and age of reproduction. During one of the days when I was taking the cattle from our house to the fields for grazing I noticed the young buffalo suffering with a problem that puzzled me to a great extent. Before I go into the puzzle, I should mention that our family needs and the financial balance in the house reached a stage where we could afford to have at least two buffalos in the house at a given time to keep the continuity of the milk supply round the calendar year.

The puzzle was that the young buffalo was attracting large number of crows to land on its head everyday not allowing the

buffalo to take feed or rest at home. The buffalo was suffering and struggling to drive away the crows. They found a place to land on its head and poke the junction between the horn and the head. The buffalo tried its best to use its long ears and tried to flap them to drive away the crows unsuccessfully. Not able to bear the crow menace the buffalo used to knock its head against the neem tree to which it was tethered to permanently. The wild crows feasted on the buffalos head as if there was some tasty material like honey in the horn. I tried to look into the wound with curiosity to find out what the crows were eating or at least poking. I could not find anything even after I became a medical graduate. Out of my own interest I looked at the horns of the dead buffalos that were extracted by the village cobblers. They used the horns for sharpening their tools especially the needles and the long knives. I found there was a lot of soft wax inside the horn which did not spill or got spoiled. It lasted long and worked wonders in sharpening the tools. I also saw the archers stored their arrows in the big horns and kept the sharp ends inside the horn with wax to keep the end sharp. I thought that wax attracted the crows. After becoming a medical doctor I thought about that for a while and pondered whether it was the mastoid process and the mastoid air cells that were prone for infection like in human beings which was a chronic problem, producing pus and granulation tissue that could have been a source of some food for the crows. In fact the crows not only fed on the horns but also on

the open wounds on the bony prominences that were caused by the mad masters who constantly used a hard wooden stick to hurt the animal buffalo to make it walk fast or to mend its ways from straying while going to the fields. That was the harsh side of the story. Coming back to the crows and poking at the horns I also thought whether there were some insects inside the wound like the maggots which the crows started picking for food. Whatever is the background for the cause and the crows I saw the buffalo suffering very badly? Having gained some experience and courage after treating the dog with the eye injury I thought that I could try the same treatment for the buffalo also. I politely approached the village washer man who became friendly with me by that time and he was also excited after knowing the good news about the dog's eye. But for the buffalo the wound was big and deep and I did not know how much of the human ash was required to fill the wound completely. By trial and error I managed to fill the wound with whatever the amount of the ash was available on hand. It was gratifying and pleasant to note that the crows stopped landing on the buffalos head even with the first quoting of the ash powder. I applied the ash powder on a number of times as a ritual, as a routine and as my duty to the buffalo which was giving milk in abundance. The God was great and helped the buffalo to overcome its problem in a very short time and it was amazing to know that the entire problem was totally cured. I still don't know what the problem was and also do



not know how the ash powder worked and cured the problem. Not does the washer man from our village know the secret. He tried the trick at random on many wounds but I never cross checked its value in other situations or on human beings. I did not ask how he started practicing and from whom did he get the secret. He was not educated or very intelligent. I did not know for how many years he continued to practice. Looking back I knew that the powder was harmless whether it was useful in all the conditions or not. As the ash was picked from the cremation ground, freshly after the cremation of the dead bodies the ash was probably pure and sterile and that could have been one way of dealing with open wounds with a sterile cover, in this case the sterile powder coating. I should tell the secret that I also tried the powder coating on some of the self inflicted wounds on my toes with probably good results. I am not trying to say that I wanted to become a doctor even during my childhood, it was not true and in fact I was afraid of the doctor for the injections and also the vaccinations given in the schools. In those days in our childhood there was no knowledge or the information that by going to school one can become a doctor. The medical course was not heard off. There was happiness all round me, I was obviously elated and my family members were equally enjoying the moments of joy after it was confirmed that I got through **PUC** examination and crossed the bridge. I was not hundred percent sure what I had to do next. I was closely and blindly following my

friend Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao from Adusumalli. My parents were totally ignorant of what I had to do after passing the **PUC** examination. But they were sure that I would take a correct decision and go according to my wish and will. I had to constantly be in touch with Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao who stayed far away from my village. There was only a man to man communication and there were no other means like the telephone and the cell phone was not even dreamt off. Our aim was to get the marks list and the provisional pass certificates from the university was a prerequisite before applying for the admission into the professional courses. Mr.Mamidipaka Seshagiri Rao was happy to have passed the first class and was hoping to get enough percentage of marks in the Bi.P.C group to get admission in the medical college in the open category. For me since I passed in the second class, I faced all the troubles and turbulences on the eve of the examination I was not sure about securing the required marks in the Bi.P.C group to get a direct admission into the medical college. I was hoping to join the Ag.B.Sc course at Bapatla in case I failed to get admission into the medical college. I was spending the days with my fingers cross but still hoping that I was going to have good days ahead. **25-10-13**





