CHAPTER-2

(1950-60) (Contd) ends here

There is much more to say. But I wish ~~we can~~ now ~~more~~ move ~~more~~ to our movement to Bombay.

—

The Bombay Life (beginning 1957)

I do not know why and how, the family decided to move to Bombay. One obvious reason is to have all together under one roof — from ThaTha (grandpa), ~~his~~ his children and grand-children. I am not sure whether he was involved in such decision making. I do not recall any of my interaction with ThaTha in our Palayamkottai life; I recall evening time in Kottaram.

I think he ~~had~~ starts having the beginning of Alzhiemer. In those days it would have been taken as a mature withdrawal from life of a well accomplished person and scholar. There is also a possibility that Periappa was running out of his savings and would not have been able to sustain our further education.

Purely from our study point of view that year was a critical one: both Papa and me had to enter into the final year of schooling 11th class in those days called SSLC, SSC (in Bday) Whether this was thought through or not, I do not know. Also

in those days ~~a~~ lower middle ~~cla~~ (an economically) lower middle class family like ours would have planned children's future that well. Conditioned by the past (British days), (their assumption would have been) a matriculation pass ~~atta~~ Govt. would fetch a ~~re~~reasonable job and a degree would do better. I don't think my father was aware of this because he came through clerical cadre upwards in railways, a job which he got after his marriage after terminating at his ~~Int~~ Inter-Arts (two year after 11th) without completing B.A. for which he was registered in Annamalai University.

On the whole, the move turned out to be excellent looked at from the hindsight. We studied in a English medium school. Also the anti-Brahmin activism and violence (in words and deeds) might have impacted me: my mental make-up was totally casteless; it was of "all religion (including atheism) acceptance" through Subramanya Bharati poems. Our family was not very orthodox. My Periappa had ~~friends from all castes~~ interaction with other caste/religion persons without any feeling of superiority or ~~cont~~ contempt for them.

My school life (4 years) in Palayamkottai was without

any untoward incidences involving ~~cas~~ "my caste". Except that ~~I~~ as I had pointed out earlier, I wanted to avoid any derogatory comments on Periappa who came with Poonool and a towel on (no shirts for males those days) to bring lunch for me. I stopped his coming and I took it in hand!

Definitely my life would have taken a different course had I continued in Palayamkottai for college life etc.

Bombay was a neutral ~~cos~~ ~~cosp~~ cosmopolitan society. When I went to college I had seen anti-South feeling. ~~The~~ ~~and the~~

~~For So we had English, Hindi and Tamil for SSC~~.

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I had clearly seen and heard sympathies for a raising Shiv Sena. But it was not as violent and widespread as the anti-Brahmin ~~mo~~ activities had been (as I learnt from people later); when I was in Bombay, I was ~~imm~~ mostly immune to it, except for reading a few editorials in Ananda Vikatan & Kalki (two Tamil magazines). Also when I look back, the anti-Brahmin actions in Tamil Nadu was against a small microscopic minority of people who lived there for centuries. Whereas the anti-South actions by Shiv Sena was against all South persons: all were Madraasis.

Of course there was cultural teasing of 'Madrassis' "Ayyoh ek". There was also simultaneously anti-Gujarati actions and teasing. So in general, I did not feel like an outsider to Bombay, which perhaps I might have been forced to feel in Tamil Nadu, had we continued! (I am inferring this from what many moderate Tamil Brahmins of my age, very liberal in attitude, ~~any who lived of around any age~~ any who lives in Tamil Nadu during that period, had told me during my later life at Delhi.)

~~In any case because of the compulsory three language~~

~~(268)~~ ~~(269)~~ (270)

In any ~~case~~ because of the compulsory three language formula which was in force in ~~Hafa~~ Bombay then with Marathi also compulsory, we would have had a problem. Fortunately it was exempt for some schools where most ~~Stu~~ students ~~of a~~ were from South. (I do not know the exact rule). But for the two South Indian schools - one S.I.E.S. King's circle - South Indian Education Society and South Indian Welfare Society (SIWS) in Wadala, they could get away with English medium - as then Bombay S.S.C. Board was not equipped to deal with Tamil / Malayalam medium teaching. ~~Thus any transition was easy.~~

~~(269) 26~~ 270 (271)

I had heard ~~that~~ that there were Kannada medium, Telugu medium, Sindhi medium, Urdu medium schools as well. Since medium was English, SIES was allowed to use ~~Hindi~~ Tamil as the third language (English, Hindi being compulsory otherwise) That ~~was~~ was how we were spared of ~~using~~ ~~Marathi~~ reading advanced Marathi at the final exam! ~~His~~ For me Tamil was a down-down; as I had done Sirappu Tamil (special Tamil) and Hindi was tough as Hindi classes were "down-down" at ~~St~~ Palayamkottai. I had learnt letter and some simple word constructions. It was

Ambulu who was a ~~#~~ graduate and practising Hindi teacher kindly ~~taught~~ taught me the whole of grammar (sandhi etc) and so that I could perform well. I never ~~grac~~ mastered the gender classification of Hindi (and later Russian when I learnt at Almora!)!

* *

I do not have any memory of packaging for the travel; probably I did not participate in it. That is the reason why the poems I wrote in English and Tamil etc are not traceable. Perhaps I did not care for them much! In fact I do not have any item from Kottaram or Palayamkottai. Or the guide

Nor do I remember anything about the train journey. Since my father was a railway employee we would have at least got a second class compartment reservation. Or whether we got down at Bombay Central or Dadar. I had completed 13 and running on 14th (just) as we would have most likely moved in May 1957 so as to be ready for school in June.

Let me finish the school life first, which was simpler and also enjoyable. Personal life at family level was very complex and I had lots of social learning all of which I will cover later.

For the first time Papa & I were getting into a Co-Education

Papa was 15 and I was 13. Most students in the class or 15 or more students who had ~~to~~ failed in earlier classes were also there. The class ~~was~~ teacher Rajalaxmi who will speak in Tamil & English would chide some of them as rowdies. The back bencher boys who used to trouble others (teachers & girl students) were all well disciplined in Rajalakshmi teacher's class. She was dark and no make up; a hair style looking like ~~dishevelled~~ dishevelled. But she had a special charm probably because she loved all the students as if she was her children. ~~The~~ Therefore some talks that she had a troubled family life - probably divorced.

There were sizeable number of girls in the class of about forty. Some girls used to hit back at the boys when they teased too much, but most them were with themselves but boisterous enough. Because of short size, I was a front seater. Uniform for girls were saree & white with thick and wide blue border. For boys it was either khakhi & pant and white shirt or grey colour pant & white shirt. I have a full size group photograph of the class, which has been scanned recently (2010) & Parameswara Iyer was the Headmaster. The Vice-Principal, stern looking, never smiling man short but erect / firm stature with a turban will stand well before

starting time for the school
He will catch hold of students
who will not follow the dress
code. Make them stand separately
and collect their ID cards. Another
category for those who come late
— even a few minutes! It used
to be a hell for them, especially
those who violate uniform. One
boy in our class, very charming
guy, used to violate it by using
shades of khakhi and grey. Then
he would argue that it was
grey or khakhi as prescribed!

I had a few friends
mainly those who were sitting
by my side. Nothing very close.

With all other boys I used to talk a little bit; nothing very close. ~~and~~ I don't recall any intense discussions. I did not know how to deal with girls in the class. I could guess that some of them wanted to talk to me, but I was shy or afraid (?!). ~~I~~ There was ~~no~~ attraction towards some ~~the~~ girls, but I don't recall expressing it to even Papa or Ambedkar, who was also a teacher in the same school. One big handicap for me was ~~I~~ my being two years younger to any of them and the

and therefore my height. Also I was not fluent in talking English, though my writing was excellent (due to my training at Kottaram and Palayamkottai).

~~Thus~~ Also there was no involvement by me in sports or other extracurricular activities. But in academics I was competitive. I came only second in the class first being a girl called Vasantha, always coming first. I used to lose ~~mostly~~ mostly due to Hindi. She was good in all subjects. Even to her I did not speak. She had a dark, smooth

complexion and a very attractive face and eyes. She looked intelligent. Another one girl, will take lead in prayer song ~~e.g. I think~~ very pretty Seetha Lakshmi. All boys try to tease her; she with hit back too.

There was a teacher called ~~Seetha~~ Seetharamiah; he would come in Panchakachcham, ~~shirt~~ shirt, and a coat ~~(no tie!)~~ and had a black topi. Good teacher. Always sleepy, puffy eyes; very soft spoken. ~~Api~~ Heard that he came from a long distance, Thane or ~~something like that~~ Ambarnath. Had a huge family to support and hence took many tutions. So very little sleep even during holidays. Boys used to tease him, interrupt him and even girls were supportive of such

a teasing. I used to feel pity for him but incapable of doing something to help him! No activism in me to solve such problems, also ~~age~~ ~~the~~ my age was a handicap; probably I had developed such a complex and kept quiet.

On the other side Vedgiri was a different type. Short panchakachcham, shirt & coat. Very close ~~cut~~ hair cut all over his head; no pattern. Well shaven ~~face~~ with a ~~his~~ hitlerian moustache, all grey. Taught history, geography etc. Good teacher; tough. I was not scoring very high in his class.

He ~~with~~ would not stand up and teach as Seetharamaiah did. He would sit on the chair awkwardly and teach. Sometimes when boys try to ~~teach~~ tease him, he would shout "Who is the fellow? ~~You Sat~~ Dammit, you Satan, idiot! Stand up and try to tease!" It ~~with~~ was a roaring voice. I learnt such curse words in English. He would never punish any boy.

One day I recall that the Vice-Principal wanted to enforce some discipline ~~of~~ such as ~~their~~ the students

coming out of the class room ~~to~~ to be in the verandha when there was a gap in the class timing & a teacher coming late etc. Once there was a breach in our ~~class~~ verandah perhaps from the class in which Vedgiri was the class teacher. The Vice-Principal came up and took that issue with him. He openly shouted (actually he had a loud voice all the time, even when teaching normally) "I am not a Gorkha here!"

One day in our class

(I think probably in a few other classes also) the boys had spread a thin layer of itching powder in the ~~sea~~ desks of some of the girl students and the chair of the teacher. That turned out to be Vedgiri's class for us; with his short panchakaccham and haphazard sitting much of his thighs would have been exposed to the powder. Similarly the girls who had a habit of resting their body, ~~and~~ face & hand on the

On the desk, had smeared themselves
with the itching powder. The
timing was perfect. The
targetted girls started yelling
& ~~so~~ & scratching ~~was~~ their
faces, necks, hands and
some parts of their breasts;
Vedgiri scratting all of his
~~thighs~~, thighs, ~~and~~ almost
pulling ~~it~~ his sparsely
covering pancha - kaccham.
There was a pandemonium.
Papa, Vasantha & a few girls
were spared of this torture!

(P.T.O)

I still remember Vedgis
Scratching ~~atter~~ all over,
keeping down the books and
papers he always carried
on his left hand; he
yelled "~~Into~~" Dammit,
which blasted fool had
done this? You Saturn,
idiot, etc" He rushed
out of our class... So
did the girls. The boys
were laughing. I think I was
dazed. I don't recall

recall enjoying the scene. Nothing happens later as the event was not just in our class but in other classes too! So the school authorities just dropped it!! I think that the boys who planned and executed were immensely pleased by the results and also because that they were <u>not</u> caught or punished! Seethalakshmi was one of the most affected person!

Another teacher ~~in~~ in

my memory even now is
Kamala teacher, who taught
us Hindi. Always very nicely dressed,
slim, and very beautiful. Only
disturbing factor was a thick
glass she had to wear, which
reduced her facial beauty.
I was very much attracted
towards her, though my
scores in Hindi was not
very high; what I scored
in Hindi was due to Ambuka

Finally about Rajalaxmi
teacher. All of us felt a

motherly touch from her.
We did not have to feel
about her authority as a
class teacher. She could
~~scho~~ scold anybody — a
single person or a few of them,
~~that~~ who do ~~much~~ mischief —
Or she could scold the whole
class. Even those who were
the "rowdiest" ~~that~~ would
keep quiet. "Pasangalaa, eyen
ippadi kashta paduthitirunga?"
"You kids, why ~~that~~ are
you trembling like this ~~th~~?"

It was not in her class, but in other classes! The effect of her chastising would be there at least for a week for all the boys & girls.

Her method of teaching was interactive. Even after a few minutes of teaching a point (she taught maths), she would ask questions. I would always use my hand and even blurt out the answer! E Vasantha, who is first in class,

was not doing that! May
be, I had not still ~~shed~~
shed my childhood
(now called "tweens") as
I had just completed my 13th year.
~~14th~~ Rajalaxmi teacher used
to fondly chide me: "Enna
eppothum mundiri Kottai
mathiri enakkai! Keep quiet
and give others a chance!
(Why are you like a
~~that~~ cashew-nut, popping
out?. Give others a chance!)

There was a Tamil teacher, called ~~pitch~~ Pitchai Sir; Veshti & shirt; teaching General Tamil which was about 7th standard or less compared to what was in Palayamkottai. For me it was too boring. He ~~with~~ used to tell some stories which he felt was amusing. Some boys and girls used to laugh. I did not like them. So no good vibes between us! He used to like Papa, as she was good in Tamil, better than all others in the class. May be perhaps ~~Sa~~ Subramanya Bharati "inside me" might have troubled him or our relations! Also Papa did not take

'Sirappu Tamil' (Special Tamil) in her school. So I was in a different plane. Papa & I had very little discussions about school lessons. In ~~&~~ Palayamkottai it was because our schools were different. Otherwise we had usual talks about stories in Kalki etc. At Bombay Papa had started reducing her talks, probably being affected by what was happening in our home.

During rainy season (I think it starts almost when we came and joined) we had to get used to rain shoes, raincoat, ~~wrapping~~ ~~putting~~ all the books and notebooks safely ~~into~~ in a plastic sheet and have a thick rubber band around it. ~~to and~~ Learnt all that. Also on some days there ~~will~~ would be

flooding on the roads; even
to get from King Circle railway
station to school would be tough.
Since I had a half-pant
wearing fellow, it was easy for
me. For Ambalu, Papa and
for boys who wear full pants,
it was tough to lift it almost
~~upto~~ upto above knee levels or
even some part of the thigh.
More important ~~is to~~ was to
be to know where ~~there were~~
the grilled floor holes for the rain
water were.

It is ~~sad~~ sad to see
newspaper reports that such
a situation exists in some
parts of ~~the~~ Mumbai even @ 2015.

Are they exaggerated reports? I had seen such situations in Delhi & Gurgaon even upto @ 2009, though, of course, I had the luxury of being inside an airconditioned car. It is the problem of the driver to negotiate; those in two wheelers and autorickshaws will be splashed with muddy water. Bengaluru is better in most places because of ups-and-down of the terrain which helps run-off. May be at some places it may cause flood! I had not

seen them @ 2014/15.

* * *

A few other snippets from SIES School ~~std~~ Studies period:

My father tried to teach for a limited period the (a short novel) non-detailed book which contained many spoken words of English as well. Only thing I remember now is the ~~definit~~ explanation of the word "urchin" - the phase of a boy from childhood and ~~going~~ growing towards young manhood, with facial hairs. Urchin does not yet possess "shaveable hair" (Kishori — is the word I ~~learnt~~ learnt in ~~1990~~ 2000 when

Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi
launch a programme in
Dept of Science & Technology (DST)
called Kishori Vigyan Puraskar.
Some how I did not
enjoy & my father's teaching
as I did Ambulu's Hindi
teaching for us (Papa & me)
In addition, my father bought
a few English books
like Alice in Wonderland, and
a few Shakespeare books written
as simple prose - stories! I
recall. Othello & As You Like it"
They were tough for me. Alice

in Wonderland was confusing. Nobody to clear them. They were not a part of school curriculum. I enjoyed Hans Anderson's Stories. I still remember the fine print.

* *

~~Some~~ One day was celebrated by the school for students to enjoy. What all was done, I do not remember. But there was a programme in our class in which small folded papers were taken out of a bowl. It will be opened, ~~name~~ name called and read out

Mostly ~~they~~ that was funny jokes about both boys and girls, in the class. The person names had to come and collect.

~~My~~ Papa did not have any. Probably not Vasanth. I think Seethalakshmi had. ~~For me~~ I was named. The ~~Soviet~~ slip read, Ea typer one) — I don't have it now!)

"Soviet Union sent a Sputnik around the earth on Oct 4, 1957. Who sent this tiny sputnik into

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our class?"

Big laughter as I came and collected. It was more a joke about a my small size.

~~Wast~~ Was it a premonition for those who wrote that I would have my career in Space? I did not know any thing about space programme or its potential. I just read the news, and did not think more about it. Nor was it discussed in the class!

Six- and half years later, Destiny takes me

(P.T.O)

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to me the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad which was not known then to most people in India to work with Dr. Vikram Sarabhai's team! I don't think any body in the family even remembers ~~remembered~~ this event of the class.

Another great event occurred during my school days. I did not realise it. Nor did any body in my family. It was about a competition in Tamil writing, arranged by the

the Bombay Tamil Sangam.
It was an essay writing
competition on Subramanya Bharati.
Our school encouraged the
students to participate. In
our class probably only
Papa & I participates.
Pitchai sir (Tamil teacher)
did not think much of me
and did not even say a word.
He encouraged Papa.

I wrote an ~~~~ essay
"Bharati, Oru Puratchi
Kavignar". I got the
first prize — a ~~silver~~ small
silver plate with my name
etched. Papa the second.

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"pat" from the family members. I don't recall any It passed off as an event. That was my first Tamil writing for ~~put~~ public consumption. I had the sovereign ~~after~~ with that article (lost over time). Uma my wife, was maintaining, the darkened silver plate for a long time; it was I think pilfered during our Delhi stay (1988–1996). I had tried to get the ~~article~~ essay copy from Bombay Tamil Sangam (Mahim) since

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@ 2006. No success so far! It will be in the ~~[illegible]~~ name Y. Sundara Rajan.

~~* * *~~

I did not participate in any competition in Tamil ~~writing or e~~ or even wrote any serious matter in Tamil later, except for some poems for Mani Mama's marriage 1967, to Gama 1969 etc.

* *

A last piece on the train travel from Goregaon to King Circle (with a change in

in Bandra. (from the Harbour line which went through King's Circle, just close to SIES school). The dubba wallahs, fisher-men - and-women loading their products, milk men, and of course the usual passengers which represents all the diversities of India. Trains stopping just about 20-30 seconds during which period men and women got out of the train and got in, ~~with~~ with remarkable speed. I had learnt that art (which has lots of 'Science' in it, which I ~~learnt~~ realized later and I quote in my speeches now)

(P.T.O)

control was deemed to be the way to meet the technical challenge. Scientists from various universities assembled (for the duration of the war) in these camps for a specific task. And once that task was accomplished, most of them hurried back to their natural habitat, the universities, the true homes of research. J. Robert Oppenheimer, himself, joined the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton. An astute observer could not fail to notice that if the "battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton and Harrow", the success and glory of the Manhattan Project was underwritten by the great American universities. It was the universities that bred, raised and tended the scientist.

(Continued to Nehru's Dream of Science - 2)

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One ~~most~~ enjoyable ~~too~~ part of the trand was to buy cut 'Peru' (guava in Marathi) usually one that was ~~ripe~~ ripe inside, not too ripe. It was cut normally into 4 pieces and salt-and-red-~~pepper~~ peper-powed smeared. It was 12 naya paise (to the old two anna, being replaced by the decimel system of naye paise — new Paisa). This was to be done in this about a minute — amidst

a lot of ~~chow~~ crowd of clients. Just taking it, rush back to the train! Pull each piece, ~~a~~ bite and eat! What a delicacy!! I enjoy such a combination even now!!!

* *

So ~~now~~ ~~now~~ now move on to College life which ~~was~~ started ~~in~~ during June 1958 (I had completed 14 years) at D. G. Ruparel College. For the South Indians Ruia college was a greater choice. But for ~~me~~ Papa and me, coming from

coming from Goregaon, we had to come to Western Railway Matunga Road and cross a long bridge over the railways; ~~about~~ more than ~~a kil~~ to reach Ruia. So it was decided to go D.G. Ruparel which was relatively new then (not a brand at all as it is now) Branded ~~ones~~ ones were (Royal) Institute of Science, Wilson ~~College~~ Xaviers, Ruia etc, all having logistics problems.

I don't recall any one - Appa or Ambula - coming

us for admission. Since I had a good first class, Papa I think a good higher ~~second~~ class, admission was not at all difficult, except for ~~confusing~~ long crowds. So was the beginning of First Year Science (equivalent to the current that 12th standard (@ 2015) There were 625 students in the class! I heard from other students that the ~~was~~ capacity allowed by the ~~Univ~~ Bombay University was 600 and in view of the demands was increased to 625.

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There was F.Y. Arts probably two classes. The college was full of Arts Student. I don't recall F.Y. Commerce. There was a law course after B.A.

Most of the students were from the Marathi medium ~~Stud~~ schools. A few from Convents or similar English medium schools and used to ~~congregate~~ form groups amongst themselves. I think about ~~3~~ 20% were girls. I started wearing pants though I was just reach 5 ft only.

I was not the front bencher. ~~Also~~ Mostly ~~back~~ more close to back side. I don't recall any roll call for attendance. Many boys and some girls ~~use~~ used to "bunk" classes.

Another interesting thing I learnt was that most of the students had a "surname" — totally new to me! Having now been in the Tamil Nadu (then Madras Presidency for eight years ~~when~~ when even caste names were shed, we knew men and women by their names!)

Now the formality ~~B~~ was to call by ~~Surnam~~ Surname with Mr or Miss; you were allowed to called by own given name only after you become very good friends. It was a taboo to call girls by their name (probably within themselves they called). I was called Sundararajan — now suffixes for me! It was tough to ~~endo~~ enter into application forms, as they had the ~~first~~ format of own name, middle name and surname. Much later I

learnt that the surnames almost always ~~indica~~ ~~are~~ were indicative of castes as well. Boys used to be identifying themselves as CKP, SKP etc (Chandrasena Kayastha Prabhu, Saryansena Kayashtha Prabhu etc) and also # as Ratnagiri Brahmins or similar such caste ~~forms.~~ forms.

I wonder now as to how the teachers managed to shout through the lectures to reach us all without microphones and loudspeakers.

Those who taught us were very senior professors. ~~Younger~~ The ~~only~~ younger lecturer was for Maths (Mr. Nagarkatte) and for Botany (Miss D'Souza) Prof. Mahajan Physics (with very thick glasses — may be he had a ~~Ca~~ Cataract operation). Dr. N.V. Bhide Chemistry, Zoology (Mrs Rangnekar)

Bhide used to mix Marathi in between his lecture so that ~~that~~ majority of students are brought into understanding: "sieve" manjhe "jhaari"

Nagarkatte was something special, he taught us algebra. ~~and beginni~~ What a great teacher. He had his style. & He will talk and keep writing on the ~~bra~~ blackboard, as a text book to his liking to fit the syllabus was not there. & Excellent handwriting. He was a heavy smoker as one could see from his blackened lip. He was clean shaven with bright, intelligent look in his eyes; in a way

very handsome. I was told he was from Goa region. What an energy. He met the needs of the average shidents with ~~notes~~ written down notes which they ~~can~~ could copy during the class. He also challenges the best of shidents, by giving some thing more to read ahead of the class and come prepared for the next class! I also participate in it. There was another very good shident. He used

to come in white (probably khadi) pyjama and kurtha relatively tall person. A few more did participate. I do not recall more than 5 or 6 students; all boys. We ~~with~~ would have a small short duration of our glory by answering the questions he poses in the later classes, after he mentioned ~~advanced~~ about topics ~~he~~ well beyond the pace of the class. Others might have been

wondering as to what was happening between Nagarkatti and these handfull of students. In any case, he was a popular ~~(but st~~ (though strict) teacher, as every body gained from him.

One day some boys were noisy, disturbing the flow of his lecture. He shouted "You blasted fools! Why don't you keep quiet? Or leave the class!" No body left the class. One person sitting by side asked me "~~He~~" Did he say

bastard?" ~~No~~ I replies to him" No! He said blasted which ~~is~~ meant damned.". He said "Then okay!" He was then on attentive to the class.

~~I wonder~~

I have many other wonderful direct personal interactions with Nagakatti. ~~No~~ He does not ask any personal questions. He was all the while making students better; also he loved ~~this~~ maths teaching. I wonder whether such ~~thing~~ teachers can survive (or even emerge?) in current day India,

where parents and students are obsessed only with getting marks for entrance exams.

His special challenges to best students (in principle, any body can participate) might ~~have been~~ be frowned upon as wastage of ~~other students~~ time of other students!? There may be complaints all around!

It is such teachers who made D.G. Ranpal great what it is today.

Miss D Souza was a good ~~botany~~ botony teacher. Many basic principles were well understood. We had to

the sketches of plants, inner parts etc using also colour as needed. I do not know whether they added to the overall annual exam % marks. I used to do regularly. She being a young teacher, the boys occassionally used to give her ~~to~~ trouble, catching hold of some words like fertilisation, ~~et~~ reproduction etc to derive ~~fusse~~ fun. She used to handle them effectively without getting angry. She ~~had~~ had a special charm.

So were the young biology demonstrators ~~two~~ both

young ladies pursuing their M.Sc. but earning some money by helping us in the laboratory. They would demonstrate dissection of frogs, cockroaches, plants for capillary action for their nutrition, ~~etc.~~ unicellular organisms etc. Many of the ~~spec~~ specimens were kept in formaldehyde. They were very good in teaching. I enjoyed all of it.

In the chemistry laboratory, I had a unique experience, which made other boys jealous. This was

because, the chemistry ~~labor~~ laboratory work was allotted for a pair of students — usually girls pairing; boys pairing. In the allotment it had so happened that both of us were left alone. So we were paired. Her ~~name~~ roll number was 555. Mine was ... She was good looking; ~~no~~ name Miss Kulkarni. ~~I~~ I do not know even ~~that~~ her first name. Call by surname with Miss attached, was the general instruction I had got, ~~from other~~ not from college, but as a part of

So I did not ask, except addressing when needed during the experiment as Miss Kulkarni. My name ~~was~~ full. We never talked outside the laboratory. Inside the laboratory, all ~~was~~ instructions ~~was~~ were around the experiments. She was very good with experiment; ~~as~~ I also liked all chemistry experiment as well, Starting from Brown Ring experiment. Sometimes I ~~would~~ take readings and she ~~would~~ would record and vice versa. She would have been two years ~~ye~~ elder to me

about sixteen and was taller than me. This was so for the whole of First Year Science Class. Out When she ~~came~~ came outside in the ~~hall~~ lobby, some boys used to heckle mildly "Hello Miss 555!" She would ignore and walk away. I could do nothing and would go away. Incidentally 555 ~~was~~ was famous high brand cigarettes and some ~~had~~ boys were regular smokers, (not 555, but other ~~ha~~ cheap brands like Passing Show, Charminar; even Goldflake was beyond their reach). I did not do any ~~ex~~ experiment with Smoking.

1 There used to be another ~~the~~ girl students in the class; boys used to whisper that she is a Jew. & She had a boffes hair cut. ~~I me~~ I did not know the differences of Jew, Christian etc then. Learnt about Parsis after I came to Bombay and identify them. But not so with the only Jew. Looked to me like ~~after decades~~ any other Indian. ~~Now~~ Now I could understand some & specific facial features & for a Jew from other Indians. Still it is not always easy as Jews themselves have many diverse features as I have seen in Israel during my many visits after ~~1991~~ mid-1990's.

Since pre-University was being visited by UGC then (we knew it as Govt of India), Bombay University which resisted it, had continued with the old name First Year Science; however they held an annual exam at the end of FYSC which was not the custom earlier. The exam went on well.

So we (Paper 2 I) went to Intermediate Science class in the academic year 1959-60 (June 1959 to Mar/April 1960). First heart rending decision to be made was to choose between biology and maths, physic and chemistry being compulsory for ~~Common~~ Art

"Can I have both?" "No; those who choose to go for medicine have to take biology; those for engineering to make maths"

This was so even in 1959. ~~People complain about~~ Some elite complain about 'Medical' & Engineering obsession now/ say after 1995. It was so then. But the number of students who went to colleges even for F.Y.Sc. or intermediate science were low in terms of the age cohorts them. & Even primary education was not reaching most Indians (boys or girls). & We were lucky by accidents of movements and also the faith kept by family on

education of even my sisters. M&S
But people (at least at urban locations like Bombay) have sensed that
~~to~~ better pay was around engineering
and medical profession; ~~at least at~~
I had not heard about boys
talking about IAS, (or IFS) though it was
the most powerful ~~under~~ jobs under
the ~~Nehru~~ Nehruvian rule then.
But as I ~~realised it~~ realise it
now, these elite services were partly
from families who held such similar
positions under the British as well. And
to some locations like ~~Kol~~ Bengal
and Madras Presidency which had
deeper roots of British Administration.

~~It was saw~~

It is surprising if I
look back as to how such desires

of being a doctor, engineer, IAS etc was not dominant in me. I enjoyed the study and read a lot of books outside my subject also thanks to my Attimber (Uncle — father's sister's husband) who bought ~~several~~ many books of different varieties. I think he spent

In addition I do not recall any discussion in the house ever since we came (That was 2 years ~~then~~ by the time we were to enter into intermediate class) about what we will study and what ~~even~~ career to go for. Not even

the All India services exams such as for Indian Railway Services was talked about. My father came up from the lower clerical cadre. ~~It~~ By the time were in college he had become a gazetted officer. ~~the~~ We knew about it because we got a white pass to travel by the local train; that means first class travel, any where in central railways. But even in Western Rlys when we go beyond Matunga Rd, the Ticket Examiners ~~will~~ would allow us ~~a~~ ~~on bro~~ ~~That~~

My father, Rajagopal (now Jayashree's Sambandhi, her daughter Vidya's father-in-law) and a few other Railway employees including the quiet moderate Srinivasan would all tease about the capabilities of their IRS officers who were actually ~~junior to~~ younger to them in age but are bosses because they came through IRS route.

Periappa would not know any thing at all about the emerging India and my role in it.

He only knew that a good education would lead to a secure govt job. The only person who had put a target for my career was Palavesam Pillai when we were at Kottaram; that I should be a Sessions Judge, the highest purely position he knew around 1950's!

Dr Ambulu had just begun her career as teacher, and was too young (just 15 years elder to me) to know and inexperienced about office life, job opportunities etc. Grandfather was in dimentia.

Father least interested in the family matters and was interested in another family in ~~the~~ our compound. He gave some money to auntie (Atthai) for running the family. He would go to cinema ek with his office friends and spend most of his time in that family in the ~~to ta~~ compound. When he enters the house, the house had to fall to dead silence, with Atthai getting into loud neurotic belching!

I had by this time picked up some friends with the sons of the Mali (gardner)

in front of our house. The owner of the big land, bungalows (the leaky one where we lives) and the chawl, ~~had left~~ and lots of mango trees, had left the entire management of him. ~~He~~ ~~with~~ would sweep sometime; was also the watchman against any encroachment and used to collect rents. He's elder brother (childless, probably did not marry) stayes with him. He uses to go early in the day for some work and return. Mali's (we all

knew him ~~as~~ by that title only) wife ~~went~~ 'Laxmibai' went to a factory early morning. She was a main bread winner. Mali ~~s~~ did not do any work, smokes beedis and uses to drink; some times talk several nonsense in debriated condition. ~~Their first~~ daughter But having such a good house and a whole area to move around was all due to him. ~~Dr~~

Between our bungalow and their house were two nice cement benches, one of it was his permenant abode.

There was a big well nearby; little bit salty water. But it was a great boon for the family, for bath, washing etc. Other families were not allowed to use it, even for washing.

His first daughter, widowed was also going for a factory job; good looking; but also she was very careful to have a good make up and dress; probably spent from her earnings. She had a few men friends visiting her. She was very independent within the family and would not get choked with household work which was left to Laxmibai and the only daughter-in-law of the

house, married to the first son Narayan; She was dressed in a very traditional Maharashtrian ~~was~~ way, and also had always a part of the saree on her head (part covered) and a huge kumkum tilak. Very hard working. The family had a number of chicken which can roam around the compound. and give them good source eggs. We also used to hear some screaching of the chicken occasionally; that was for the feasting of the family.

Narayan, and his brother Govinda (very handsome young

man) were supposed to going out for work. Probably they did not have any proper work; they also despised hand work or menial task. Not educated enough. May be school drop outs. But they were always well dressed very well, nearly ironed, nice the then famous cinema hero hairstyle etc. Narayan will only ~~smo~~ smoke a cigarettes, unlike his father who smoked only beedi.

They ~~used~~ (Narayan & Govind) used to have a number of visitors, travellers by cycle — commonly used between

friends
the brothers. They would fondly
tease Govind "layan maarno
ko jaatha hai? bahut milega"
Basically it meant attracting
young girls and women, impressing
them.... ~~He~~ I think mostly
they were sustained by the meagre
earnings of Laxmi Bai, some
from the elder sister (who might
have kept her savings). Narayan,
& Govind would not do any
help at home. Mali's elder
brother ~~was~~ used to wear a longot
and cut woods (for fuels) and
such handwork, in addition to
his earnings, which he gave the family.

Going to see films was a favourite activity for them. Internally they used to be ashamed of their family members: uncle, mother and even Mali, as they are primitive and they are modern. Some times they would vent their anger on their primitiveness on their mother. She would give back and shout more!

If was amongst this family was the third son Panduranga called often as Pandu. He was not like his other two brothers. He wanted to help family. He did not like the show-off by his brothers. He had small pox marks on his face and in one of his eyes. But alas, he was poor in studies. He became a good friend of me. We used to talk; walk around the compound etc. He used to show

me the leaves to be used with salt to get rid of the terrible itchy infection, which used to afflict me often (probably others as well) due to common "modern" septic tank based latrines (four for about a dozen families) with very poor water supply. He was strong; he would also help his uncle in cutting fuel wood. He was of the same age as me, may be a year older. He was happy that I was good at studies. Because him the many 'rowdy' friends of Govind & Narayan who used to come, were kept away from teasing Ambulu, Papa and Jayashree or even making any

~~as~~ remarks on the 'Madrasi' family (that was around the time late 1950's the anti-outsiders, South Indian feelings ~~is~~ had begun to be stoked by the local politicians especially on such youth).

My father used to shout at the house some time, not directly addressing me, that I was useless in everything because of my company with such low class fellows. Probably such remarks from a person who did not even have any good words for any of our family members, was tyrannical with them and at the same time going to the other family

and showering 'gifts' on the children of that family, their elder son Ranjan being a couple of years elder to me. He would take him to ~~movi~~ films!

In fact move towards "classlessness" in my thinking was further strengthened by my friendship with Pandu. I ~~will~~ would talk to other members of ~~the fa~~ the Mali family, as well. The ~~Ma~~ spoken Marathi I picked up started from this family (a proletarian ~~fa~~ one!).

There were no other boys in the compound or nearby who went to ~~coll~~ ~~scho~~ D.G. Ruparel college. It was only Papa and me, to go to college.

In the college, I did not have any ~~that~~ thick friends. Also our allowance was very small; just Rupees five for the whole month given by my father. Early morning Periamma would have gotten up and done some chappati or broken wheat ~~that~~ (kaapsi) rice. Have to eat and rush to catch the 6:25 a.m. train; that is to leave home by 6 am and walk to the railway station. Classes starts 7:15 a.m.; ~~with no~~ would reach just in time. One samosa or ~~pat~~ potatato for bonda was lunch/ about 25 paise. ~~Can~~ could not even have the

luxury of a tea which ~~was~~ was 13 paise in the canteen. That being so I used to avoid going to canteen and walk to a shop little away from college so that I ~~can~~ could eat without any body else calling me and return. Some luxury was 'Poori – usal'.

Then college attendance and classes were over by 3pm, rush home for a proper meal.

~~So my~~ I was afraid of going to canteen though many students visited often for tea, coffee or snacks.

Normally they ate or drank tea in a group of four or five persons. I ~~was a~~ had to sit alone, as otherwise I feared that some body would invite me to join. I would be forced to order like them for which I did not have money to pay! Worse still would be, if they gave me a day free and I had to ~~receive~~ reciprocate some other day!

I was talking to my younger sister Jayashree to recall her memories. Most of the period when I & Papa & I were in college Jayashree was in school. She is 2½ years younger to me. With normal entry age she would ~~attended~~

years behind me, which was so. She had entered the same Rupavel College in 1964, just for one year. Her studies were terminated by my father, to have her married off to Gopal.

§ Her simple summary was that there was not even any laughter or talk in the house. She added that we never felt that we were coming home!

It is under such circumstances, I had to make a choice in the intermediate class, for Maths, as mostly the boys did so. The ~~B~~ other Biology class was full of girls with boys being

in minority. So much so the ~~girls~~ girls used to make arrows and fly it over to boys' side!

Though I loved Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Maths, thanks to the stupid system of division which continues even now @ 2015 (Even the PCMB option available at +12 is equivalent to being upto F.Y.Sc. At least at our time PCMB was compulsory for all science students ~~at~~ in F.Y.Sc. Thank God for that. Current day most boys & girls say good bye to Biology at 10th standard & especially

when the role of life sciences is much higher now in practical life!)

Teachers were same. ~~thought~~ The class size was smaller as the biology part had gone ~~into~~ away and girls being a small minority. ~~It was~~ for me it was more or less repeat of the first year. Same timings. Study was not hard at all. Though the so called 'engineering' was taken as the stream, I had no clue as to what needs to be done, for reasons mentioned above. I remember only one item regarding IIT:

One ~~Sai~~ boy Venkataraman once told me that he was preparing for IIT Bombay. I learnt that it was a residential course and ~~the~~ perhaps decided to myself that it might be costly for me.

House front had become very suffocating and difficult. On the other hand I was growing up reaching my puberty and there ~~was~~ was a need to deal with my emerging sexuality. I could not discuss it with Pandu even. None at home; no friends either.

Also physical growth ~~hormone~~ hormone was at work. In a short period of about six months, I shot up in height from my 4'11" or 5' to the full (current) height of 5'7". Food was ~~very~~ not nutritional — very little milk or curd or dhal, though Periamma did her best to make food tasty. She had no authority nor money as she had to get it through Attai, who was scared of even asking her brother to give more!

Amidst these I had also started reading for F.Y. Sc

itself about Hindu religious books, Bhagwat Geeta etc Also Buddha. In most of these ~~the~~ 'asceticism' dominates. There were always commands to control your senses. Also at ~~their~~ that time Attimber (N.S. Iyer) used to get lots of literature from Swami Sivananda and his Divine Life Society. He had lots of followers. From the writings of Swami Vivekananda, the messages were mixed.

On one side I was struggling with the demands of the body and its hormonal evolution. On other side, probably due to the miserable family situation,

mind was attracted to the Sanyaasis, enlightenment, etc. In the magazines of Divine Life Society, simple sermons of Swami Sivananda ~~was~~ were there. I had doubts about the practicability of many ~~of~~ of them. Still I tried one food ~~fat~~ restriction: removal of sour items, spicy ones ek from my food. That means sambar, raasam ek were out. Only dhal, roti and some rice. They were supposed to be tamasic and rajasic food. I am not sure these led to any growth of sattva in me.

Since I was initiated into

'Sacred thread' wearing, I was doing the Sandhya Vandans regularly (except for the afternoon one). I had a nice copper vessel; the Vedic hymns were known to me before and I had a book too brought out by Adi Sankara Mutt. I read all of it carefully; One ~~comes to~~ the world come to the conclusion that what all we did, (now done by many persons even @ 2015)

~~it~~ was not in accordance with the ritualistic purity prescribed. ~~The~~ Celebacy of the Brahmachanya ~~the~~ phase was a big question mark for most of the boys. I think even in the past it was difficult to practice; but probably they did not talk about it or record it. Swami Sivananda's emphasis was on that; it was on the sublimation of sexual energy into a ~~spiritu~~ spiritual force. That was considered as the main discipline to obtain enlightenment. I found

that human physiology was not in accordance with those conditions, perhaps for a large number of persons. Gandhiji was perhaps a bold enough person to express such issues openly, even while he was trying to obtain his version of brahmacharya-hood. Therefore after several months I left the practice of doing ~~Sadt~~ sandhyas. I even abandoned wearing of a sacred thread; ~~as~~ because in a purely ritualistic context, it was not

possible to maintain its "sacredness", as prescribed in the ~~etc~~ texts (such as the ones issued by the Mutts or other earlier writings.) Also my Guru Bharati was there as an example. & while I was influenced by Subrahmanya Bharati a great deal, I did not realise that ~~the~~ his poems were going to impact me throughout my life. I was not going on referring to it, as another holy book or a manual!

On the whole the period ~~of~~ of my intermediate class ie ~~early~~ 1959 - ~~early~~ 1960 had posed several such challenging situations for me in my personal development (body, mind and intellect) Approximately it was ~~about~~ my age completed 15 and running on 16. Some of it might have begun during the F.Y.Sc period itself; it is difficult to decipher now, as I had not written any diary or any notes, except one.

In that diary, which ~~was~~ was not maintained as a diary, there is a short writing by me about body and soul ~~dated~~ signed and dated 21-1-60. ~~There~~ ~~there are~~ Probably a typed version of it has been placed in my website www.ysrajan.com

There are then many ~~co~~ ~~p~~ saying of persons collected from various sources, handwritten by me with their names; the period might have been from 1961 to perhaps a year, many western philosophers, Swami Vivekanand, Ching-Chow etc.

It is during this period my grandfather passed away. My recollection is that almost the entire period when he was in Bombay (it might have started earlier, as I refer in the Palayamkottai period), he was suffering from ~~diarrhoea~~ something equivalent to dimentia. He would not talk or even reply to our questions. Ambulu was his sole nurse, placing him on a sponge bed covered by ~~regsin~~ rexin (stitched), having (Covered with a cloth) a rubber sheeth as he

as he had urinary incontinence.
He developed some bed sore too,
but Ambulu was taking care of it.
Occasionally he would be made
to sit on a chair, so that
Ambulu can wash him well.
He was able to move to
bathroom, on his bottom
with help. He could sometimes
call me "Ambi! Have you
passed matriculation?". ~~I was~~
Such a question, he had
asked many times to me.
It was ~~all~~ his anxiety
about my future, which
I did not understand then.

I had explained in a chapter in my Penguin book on education titled "Way Beyond the 3 R's" — India's educational challenge for the 21st century." I would irritably reply "Tha Tha! How many times I have told you that I had passed matriculation long ago. I am in intermediate now!" He would say, "You have passed matriculation; good!"

His passing away was a great event. Old man, passed the 80's; something great there. A gr.

Another ~~thing~~ remarkable thing I had noticed about Tha Tha, was his memory of ~~Vedas~~ Vedic hymns. He was not chanting any mantras, or slokas or hymns during the day or night. He was always silent, even his eyes not focussed on any thing particular. But on occasions like death anniversary in the house (for my mother and grandmother) ~~or~~ or a few occasions when the

Vedic chanting was compulsory,
my Tha Tha was moved to
the side partition room
and would be placed
in the chair. He would
be fed according to his
~~[illegible]~~ daily routine, not
affected by the rituals,
mostly a plate of curd-rice
and pickle.

I used to stand by
him on such occasions
as I had no great role
in those items. I don't
recall my doing Sraadha for

my mother — may be ~~A~~
my father did.

The brahmins who did the rituals ~~were~~ ~~are~~ usually trained ~~as~~ mainly for such rituals, poojas etc ~~and they~~ to be as priests for the functions and usually they were not scholars, as my Tha Tha was. They would probably be making mistakes in pronunciation and more often in svaras — the ups and downs of the Vedic chants. I know how

Strict Tha Tha was with
me when he trained me
on a few items in Kottaram.
When he heard such
mistakes, he would break
out of his usual silence
and say "Chee - Chee (Tut Tut)"
and start reciting
the correct version fully
and cogently, raising his
hands up and down as
per the rythm.

I used to be
amazed by his actions.

I did not know neuro science except for the definitions of brain and some details in the biology books. How such Vedic hymns trigger him into action out of his dimension and near total silence. ~~Is it~~ Was it because he was a Ganapaati who had repeated these hymns, many times. I hope there are some modern day equivalents of my Tha Tha, who can be

~~A good~~ a great source material for neuroscientific researches.

Passing away of such a great man, who had crossed 80's (very rare in those years) was a great event. So many persons assembled and competed for carrying his pyre by walk from Goregaon to Malad. Those who carried were telling about ~~the~~ his weight! I had to carry the

pot of fire, as the grandson.
I remember the broad fair
chest of Tha Tha on which
the final ritual rites were
done by Periappa. I ~~did~~ do
not recall my crying. The
women in the house might
have done. ~~The~~

Periappa who was
well composed till then, at
one point starts breaking
down. Later ~~he~~ I asked
him why he did so. He
explained to me how
those ~~vedic~~ hymns describes
about how ~~the~~ the son

as a small child sits on father's lap and goes on to describe various events of growth: Poetic description of much of real life. That had ~~the~~ touched the chord of Periappa (as he had a good grip on Sanskrit), he might have ~~seen~~ seen some graphic descriptions of some of the events in his own life.

I recall that ~~the~~ the total function for priestly rituals, ~~the~~ Brahmana ~~da~~ daan (gifts to Brahmins) was taken as a

a single point main contract by the Periya Vaḍhiyaar (Big Priest also called Cycle Vaḍhiyaar) was about Rs. 10,000/- which was a huge sum then. Since there were many South Indians, especially the Brahmin community not only in the traditional Mantuga area but also in places like Goregaon, ~~their~~ the ritual business was emerging as a big one. Many young brahmin priests were attracted from the South. They picked up some ~~Hindi~~ Bombay Hindi as well. Most of the gift material was ~~~~ recycled and moreover.

That is, the Brahmin who gets the gift ranging from chappal, to veshti, to walking stick to rice etc did not even open it. In the end of all, the main priest ~~will~~ would pay them in Rupees and the gift material was reused for other such functions. Thus was a business innovation, not perhaps sanctioned by the ritual-purity! Religious rituals have a great adaptive capability, especially when ~~it~~ they are linked with the day-to-day economics of the consumers

and the religious representatives (vendors!)

The ugly face of such a process was seen by me when my Aththai (aunt) died after about ~~6 mths~~ six months after my Thatha's death. The ~~main~~ Periya Vaddhiyaar came ~~and~~ smiling towards my father, saying "In your house, there is a Kalyaanam (marriage literally, can be interpreted as good event) after a Kalayaanam". My father was furious and shouted at him. The death of Thatha

P.T.O

- Contact us

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after a full life beyond 80 years could be described as Kalyaanam even by the traditions of a village (I had seen people saying so) But to say that for my aunt ~~after~~ who was just about 50 years was horrible even by those days standards. The priest would have been looking for another Rs. 10,000/- I recall that my aunts' funeral etc were very low key, much less money for the priest.

In my own growing intellect and mind, the religious

rituals was getting one more ~~one~~ big blow..

One another event which was vaguely discussed by the family in hush-hush tones, ~~with probably~~ with a motive to hide it from me was regarding some involuntary movements of my limbs which I had during the night sleep. I usually slept with Periappa. I vaguely recall the family assembled around me. They all looked worried. I think it passed off without any problem.

(P.T.O)

~~I tha~~ I head heard my father telling in general terms, ~~it~~ with his usual shouting voice that all my problems ~~are~~ were due to my avoidance of tamarind (Puli) from my diet (which I had done as per the writings of Swami Sivananda for ~~diets for~~ Saatvic diets)

Periappa & Periamma pleaded with me to stop my food experiments and switch over to our normal meals with rice, chappati, sambaar, rasam etc. That was the end

of my experiments with food restrictions! In addition, I heard that the family had prayed to give away my mother's mangal sutra to Gomati Amman of the Sankaran Koil in Tamil Nadu. Periamma had her total faith on that Amman. In fact, later when I met Uma (my wife) when she came to see our family with Sasirekha ben (with an intention to look for a suitable bride groom in Ahmedabad)

Periamma had made up her mind on the marriage that Komati-Amman idras coming to our house. Such was her bhakti for Komati-Amman of Sankaran Koil. I think that vow was fulfilled very soon. I have not seen the mangal sutra or ~~the~~ thali of my mother.

One big worry which would have disturbed the family was because Ambuli's husband Ramachandran (whom we called Chinna-Attimbar

A Small - Uncle, as her father N. S. Iyer was Periya - Attimber Brg - Uncle) was ~~suffer~~ ~~ed~~ epileptic. ~~A very~~ A very nice gentlemen, thin, ~~and~~ dark, well dressed, whom I had seen ~~before~~ when we were at Mattunga before we left for Kottaaram. His death was not due to epilepsy but due to tetanus [which he infected] when he was given an injection for a fever he had when he visited his parents' place in Ooty.

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This episode, which, Thank God, did not repeat again, was ~~in~~ (is) in my mind and I ~~e~~ did (do) not attempt any ~~b~~ 'Brain' oriented exercises like meditation etc — physiological or otherwise.

There was another event when I said to the family that I was going ~~to~~ away Ramakrishna Mutt. ~~to~~ I don't recall whether it was before or after the above event. But it was

after a painful confrontation
with my father. I think I told
him that I would go away
so that he would not have
the monetary burden of
supporting me. This was
before my ~~a~~ Aunt's death,
I think. ~~Any~~ All others
for the first time joined
to oppose my father and
the truce was that I would
stay home and not go
away.

But this event
stayed in my mind all
the way till I finished my M.Sc.

My message to me was "Be mentally and physically be ready to be thrown out! Then what will you do to prepare yourselves for survival in future?"

~~A~~ I had been ~~fe~~ fine tuning this dominant constraint all through my education. It shaped my career choices as I would elaborate later.

Another very major event was, our visiting Maratha theatre. The family

father, Papa, Jayashree and me (probably with Ambulu) to see probably "Mother India". I had not seen any movie in an air-conditioned theatre; perhaps one or two in Goregaon theatre (doubtful as my father was consistently avoiding as and was going with his friends or children of the other family). We had seen no film in Kottaram or Padayamkottai

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~~Wh~~ I think I enjoyed the ~~[illegible]~~ film and the story. When we returned, I had bouts of sneezing and cold. Almost uninterrupted. It was the first asthmatic attack I had. ~~I started~~ Some medical treatment was given. Many tests ranging from ~~[illegible]~~ X rays of sinus, lungs etc were done. I was getting severe asthmatic attacks almost regularly once in 3 weeks. Those were days without Salbutamol

sprays, nor even Asthalin tablets. The patient was treated through ephedrine (tablets & injection) or adrelain injections.

& The tests did not show any specific ~~reg~~ reason. Lungs were fine; sinus was fine etc. Then they used the omnibus word Bronchial Asthma. Almost once ~~in~~ a three ~~week~~ week was ~~the~~ the period of asthmatic attack. So much so the doctors (one was Dr. Krishnan who was about one Kilometer away and Dr. Phatak who was in East Goregaon, about @ 2 km away)

The doctor had given a bottle of ephedrine 32 mg tablets, on the strict condition that I ~~do~~ should not use it except when I had ~~an~~ a very severe asthmatic attack. Invariably the attack would begain early morning ~~about~~ around 2 to 3 am. Periappa and Perianna ~~with~~ would hold me. ~~I can~~ Once the attack built up, I could not lie down in any position, even with ~~a few~~ a couple of pillows. So I had to sit up, That ~~also~~ too not straight; I would keep a pillow or two on the lap and find

a pose to have "some" ease of breath. Periappa ~~would~~ would fan me, as the choking of breath led to severe sweating; Periamma ~~would~~ would gently move her hand ~~from my~~ on my back from neck to hip; repeat several times, as it would ease the pressure. Periappa himself had suffered from asthma; but not so severe and not so frequent. He used to ~~get the datura~~ use the dried blush datura flowers as a smoke for relief. It was supposed to have some side effects. So it was

After all these attempts, when it was going to unbearable ~~that~~ stage, I would take the ephedrine bottle, split the 32 mg tablet, very small one, made by Burroughs, into a half and then place it in my mouth, sometimes under the ~~tong~~ ~~tounge~~ tongue. Then slowly the spasm would come down; I could hear the heart palpitating! So the attack would come to control in about 30 minutes. I would sweat profusely. Periamma ~~ch~~ would wipe with a towel and place me in some

comfortable position on the bed
even ~~with~~ in a slanting position
with a couple of beds. I
would ~~step~~ sleep off. Next
morning, there would be
some breathlessness. I would
slowly walk to a doctor ~~and~~ to
get examined; often
ending with injection: intra
muscular; or subcutaneous
or intravenous. Some times a
few additional tablets were
given. Normally each attack
would come under control within
2 days. Then surprisingly, I
would be back to normal
going to college etc.

That would have been a consolation for Periappa and Perumma. Sometimes when I had severe whooping cough like situation along with ~~Ash~~ asthmatic attack the usual method did not work. I recall my father giving me a Spasmindon tablet which brought the ~~Coug~~ continuous cough under control. Otherwise ~~I had~~ he did not come near ~~to~~ me to console or enquire about my state.

The asthma continued with ~~the~~ same periodicity ~~for~~ throughout my whole college

days till ~~M~~ I completed my M. Sc. ~~For Critical~~ There were periods of specialist consultations when doctors gave a three months course of Prednisolone, niacinamide, ~~A~~ Vitamin A & D tablets etc. During the period of cortisone there was no attack and returned with severity again.

I was put into severe diet control like not having vegetables like brinjal, not having curd, even taking boiled butter milk etc (these were at the insistence of Dr. Krishnan who was from Palakkad and

and hence believed in such ~~Patt~~ 'Paththiyam' (food control). None of them helped. It continued with the periodicity. I had to learn to live with my handicap! During my graduation years ~~as the~~ for the exam period one Dr. Nanavati adopted a technique of using betamethosone therapy two ~~weak~~ weeks before exams & and continued with the tapered ~~to~~ dose for a few weeks till exams were over. ~~Prob~~ Whether it was adopted for ~~intere~~ intermediate exam, I do not recall.

Asthma became a constraint for my life. One good thing was that it did not diminish my courage to learn, not to buckle down before the tyranny of my father whose aim was to put down Periappa & Perianna and wean me away from them (Papa had become practically dumb) and Also I started my external reading a lot during my B.Sc (Hons) years. More in a later chapter.

Also I saw during the late 50's 1950's, many ground

realities of India: Unions, strikes; one George Fernandes hailed as a great socialist leader, controlling many ~~trade unit~~ labour/trade unions like taxi.

At the micro-level I had seen how the ~~liquor~~ prohibition of ~~liquor~~ liquor which was there forcefully enforced in Bombay. I had heard about liquor consumption by a few Brahmin persons who were wealthy, when I was in Kottayam. I had not seen a bottle. First person

~~whom~~ I saw after consuming liquor was ~~the~~ Mali (Pandu's father). He ~~used~~ would sometime sit quiet smoking beedi; some time he would be shouting with many abusive words. After some hours he would settle down. He was never aggressive physically.

In the gate of the ~~same~~ compound in which our house was located ~~was~~ came a person with ~~nice~~ while half-pant and shirt both nicely starched and ironed. He would stand for hours. In between

he used to go deep inside the mango grove of the ~~fil~~ filmstan shidio, just in front of our compound. He went with the client, served something from a bottle or gave him the bottle. Just adjacent to the ~~#~~ the compound wall was a typical ~~Bom~~ Bombay Kiosk shop - some four fkeet by four feet width & breadht height about the same, ~~tigh~~ tightly fixed on four "legs" ~~of~~ of wood, of about 3 feet. The entry was from the bottom into the small ~~Sq~~ Square ~~into~~ in which the shop keeper ~~with~~ ~~si~~ would stand. This shop has everything for common man. Cigarettes, paan, supari, ~~small~~ small chocolates,

~~bus~~ ~~buist~~ biscuits, beedi, bread of one type (paav), Khara. ~~bu~~ biscuits; banana fruits, cooldrinks, etc. The person will be busy from day to night. ~~in~~ ~~Will~~ Would have a kerosene lamp and ~~pe~~ small petromax lamp also. Gave fee cigarette, beedi lighting service: thick coconut rope lit at one end and ~~then~~ hanging; it would burn slow; ~~will g~~ would go for 12-14 hours; more sophistated one, a battery run wire, press & burn.

This person ~~will~~ would ~~stand~~ near it. One day I saw him having a 'Kumudam' a famous Tamil weekly in hand. So I picked up some conversation with him; I am mostly reserved person. But some time I took initiative and asked a few questions. He then explained to me his work. He worked for a big liquor don from Karnataka. ~~He~~ The Don took care of them spread

in different parts of Bombay. He pays well. Occassionally they ~~get~~ uses to get caught; some of it ~~are~~ were arranged arrest, to show statistics of action by police. The Don took care of paying police — from bottom to top. When they were occassionally jailed, after a couple of months, the Don uses to get them freed. Even in jail they did not have much problem.

He said that he did not like this way of life & but was doing it to get enough money; after sending home some, he hopes to build a surplus & ~~and~~ get a place for keeping the kiosk safely. Such a kiosk also requires

payment of Rs. 10,000/- to a group (a lot of money those days); then ~~the~~ he could have an uninterrupted trading place for life. Of course, there was a weekly (hafta — means week) to be paid to police. After he could get one like that he would quit this illicit liquor business and run a kiosk.

After a few months I did not see him at all. Whatever happened to him, I do not know.

Nor did I see any replacement later. Maybe there was a problem in that area or they found a better place. But I don't think illicit

liquour business went down.

I had seen all through the year many tins of illicit brewing liquor being brought from the huge sewage lines there. Municipal worker under the guidance / direction of police bring out such tins; police would break them open. I had seen pieces of rotten oranges, chikkus, & jaggery, til seeds (sesame seeds) etc spewn over. Under the hot & humid conditions of sewage lines (also a must see visible place) the fermentation for liquor was done.

They would be taken for distillery later. People ~~who~~ ~~to~~ who just looked at them and walked away, often used to comment that this was only a show by police department; a lot more liquor was safely brewed.

Another sight still in memory ~~is~~ is about the whole army of lepers on the ~~flat~~ road side platform adjoining the Matunga ~~R.~~ Road railway station. The army of lepers used to spread a few miles, depending upon where they would

Get alms. What they do with illicit liquor. They were the last mile transporters for retail outlets. Many of them used to have black rubber tubes wound around their legs, bodies or even in the floor level steel sealed with four wheels on which one will sit and another will push. I was told that these rubber tubes were filled with finished illicit liquor. At appropriate points these would be delivered and the carrying lepers paid suitably! Normally Police would be knowing it but most of them would be afraid of touching them!

Fear of getting infected with leprosy was used by the illicit trade, for "safe" transport.

In those days most of the Bombay streets, market places would be full of leper-beggers. To navigate through that crowd without being touched by them or our ~~dress~~ clothes touching them was ~~done~~ a special skill, acquired by ~~all~~ all of us.

* * *

Thus I grew fast into the intermediate class. My studies were good. Nagarkatte was there & I did not even worry about

my final examination marks as I was not clear about preparing to pursue a specific career. In addition to the other problems of the family, asthma was also a brake. But there was always a confidence that I would well. University ranking etc was not a concern as there would be no appreciation at home, which

Venkataraman probably prepared for IIT entrance. I did not try to find out. Within Bombay getting admission to VJTI was supposed to be the best.

So the decade 1960 came to a close with lots of events in its last years. How far they affected my career, world view point etc, cannot be assessed by me even now. But it was a year of lots of changes, crises etc in my life. But I grew in height almost to the current.

Let us move on to the next decade and discuss about later results etc.