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8:15 AM

DECADES FROM -

1940 →

~~1950~~

→ 2020

Chapter - 1

1940 - 50

Each decade looks

momentous in history, when you look back calmly and deeply. More one gets enlightened, each moment of past ^{and} present may ~~too~~ be enjoyable. The microworld of experience enriches the macroworld of broadbush concepts or imageries.

Most of our spoken and written words and paintings, ^{and sculptures, ~~etc.~~} leave behind only such broadbush memories of past, ~~some~~ the experience of the present and the aspirations of

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a future. Flashes in our inner world and the tunes of music belong to another category of our understanding our existential reality and even history of the world.

Despite these fineness of texture of human reality, ~~1940 & 1950~~ the decade of 1940 - was definitely a very eventful & decade of recent human history. Most of the world was engaged in a deadly war during 1940's with the applications of science and technology

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actively deployed for war.
Professors were in the company
of generals. Airforce was born
with full bangs of ^{deadly} bombs
~~thunder~~ hurled ~~at~~ over populous
cities of Europe. Radio
communication was used

for propaganda war on an
unprecedented scale. Lies were transformed into truths albeit for a few years. Even

~~the~~ amidst these deadly
carnage, human spirit of
kindness and courage also
prevailed in many places.

On another front
the great discovery of penicillin

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the wonder drug ~~derived~~
from fungus a few years
before 1940
~~ago~~ / started getting used
on a large scale. Simple
bacteria which were killing
human beings on ~~the~~ large
scales were now killed by
penicillin injected into human
body. This antibiotic revolution
started in the 1940's was
to transform the world with
population explosion in the
later decades. But in those
years use of penicillin and
reviving back (sick persons) to life from

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deadly fevers was almost like a magic — a wonder drug!

Another not so apparently dramatic happening during that decade was the large scale use of human made fertilisers: no more dependence on the slow processes of dung, bones, leaves etc. Nitrogen and phosphorous could be given to the plants in larger quantities through ~~soil~~ fertilised soils, thus increasing the yield ~~to~~ per acre (or hectare). Large scale food production was later was to

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become a boon against periodic famines which was visiting human societies. Again a great fillip to ~~the~~ rise in human population.

Famine and diseases ~~were bei~~ starkly getting frontal attack through human ingenuity during this decade. That was taking place at a time when human beings were killing each other on a large scale through equipment and bombs born out of the same human ingenuity.

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Much worse, the atavistic tendencies of human beings (hatres between tribes of the past)

took new forms: holocaust of Jews

in Europe organised by Nazis. There were many other ~~tribes~~ ethnic, tribal ^{murders} ~~groups~~ within Europe and its Colonies. Scientific knowledge born out

of Renaissance in Europe or even the liberal ideas of equality

born from ~~Ren~~ renaissance

could ~~not~~ not stop this

hatred. Tolerance ~~not~~ did

not appear to be a natural outcome of universal outlook

of ~~human~~ Humanism or Science.

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And to cap it all
the human ingenuity also
produced during this decade
a devastating capability,
the spread of which is ~~still~~
haunting the humanity even
now: The Nuclear Weapon.

During the middle of the decade
this capability was tested
over two cities in Japan
killing millions of people and
damaging many more millions.

Was it anything less than
the holocaust of Jews by Nazis?

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Some of the best minds of the twentieth century worked on this project — Manhattan project — to produce the bomb and to deploy it. Then there was

stockpiling; competition... Now, there are enough nuclear stockpiles to kill the whole of humanity ~~to~~ more than 100 times over! More countries are acquiring

nuclear bomb capability!

The earlier invention and

deployment of rockets during this decade for the World War II

became ~~the~~ "useful" partners

to the Nuclear Bombs — to carry ~~to~~ ^{them} to long distances

over ~~to~~ the globe and to be

dropped at the place of choice.

That ~~race~~ arms race was to take place during the decades

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of 1950's onwards. Threat of attacks, ~~in~~ ^{missiles} and use of space to assist ~~war~~ war operations, ^{are} serious questions of 21st century. Governments ~~at~~ invest billions of dollars in such ~~was~~ ^{were} not merely wars, some capabilities. ~~unforeseen~~ unforeseen developments in health care and food production, and terrible weapons of war.

And also demonstration of terrible human cruelties, through the World War II.

There were also very many developments in the social and political spheres. Many countries under colonial rules got liberated: e.g. India and China being major ones. Many new liberated nations were

billions of dollars in such capabilities. Many best minds work on them!

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born in Africa; # in middle
east regions. Jews founded their
homeland. Palestine was
partitioned; the problem continues
even now. India was also
partitioned. Millions of deaths
in the name of religious
affiliations; problems continue
even now!

But looked at from
the decade of 1940's, those
liberation movements were
great events of humanity; slavery
gone; new wave of independence.

I wonder whether any

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Other decade of recent ^{times} ~~centuries~~
had ~~seen~~ so much of events
packed in different fields of
life.

An insignificant event
also took place during this
tumultuous period. Visalakshi
in her early twenties carried
a foetus ^{during} late August 1943
a ~~child~~ ~~from~~ ~~Bombay~~
~~from~~ ^{at} Bombay hoping that it
will be a son. She had about
3 years ago ^{after given birth to a daughter} ~~during June~~ June 1941
(Rajalakshmi). She had lost
her ^(first) eldest child (daughter) a
year earlier ^{after she was home and charmed every} Visalakshi was ^{body}
for ^{under a}
year!

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born in Madurai in the early 1920's, studied upto 8th standard, got married to Yagnaswami son of Sundara Ganapadigal (a great Vedic Scholar), at her tender age of ^{early} teens..

She was dark skinned while her husband was very fair.

The women used to ~~have~~ ^{make} their fun ^{of her} by describing such

a contrast of colour of the couple, to a crow ~~carrying a basket~~ ^{having a} ~~garland of lemons!~~ ^{garland of lemons!}

Sundara Ganapadigal's father Sankara Deekshitar had done 7 seven yagnas in

^{old} the Vedic style, all conducted

by his erudite son Sundaram.

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~~The son~~ S

Sundara Ganpadikal
had an elder son Sankaran
(taking his ~~great~~ grand father's
name by tradition), ~~who~~ He

had scattered education in
(because his father had to change towns in order to teach
Sanskrit, Music etc. ^{Sankaran} He also
got a bride ~~a~~ from Madurai
Subbalakshmi who had also
studied & upto 8th standard.
(~~technically~~ more than her
husband who did not have much
of formal education, though
~~the~~ well learned otherwise). The
couple did not have any
issue. They had lived in Cochin.

teach
Vedas;
that
was
the only
source of
his
income.

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for a long time as Sankara Iyer
in pursuit of some reasonable
income left the traditional Vedic
studies or teaching (or the option of being a brahmin priest)
and got
~~into~~ a job as an employee

with a large trading company
(a ^{Tamil} Brahmin owner). Later in order
to help his ageing father,
he came back to his

village & called Thirumalai-
Kozhuthupuram ^{popularly called}
Kottaram. It is near Tirunelveli
and is much closer to Palayamkottai
(about 5 kms east).

Survival of the family
was through some grains available

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from ~~the~~ the field they sowed
(less than one acre). The person
who took care of the ~~ploughing~~
ploughing and all agricultural
operations was one Karuppusamy
Thevar. He loves ^{& reveres} Sundara
Ganapaadigal and Sankara Iyer
and regularly gave them ~~the~~ a part of
rice grown. In addition Sankara
Iyer opened ~~a shop~~ a grocery
shop and did some money lending ^{too.}

Sundara Ganapaadigal
and his wife Lakshmi ~~font~~
(who always had indifferent
health) had ~~limited means~~

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three children, spaced over 8 years
each — all survived! ^(rare in those days!!) Sankara Iya
was first and issueless. Kamala
the second was married to N.S. Iyer
who lives in Bombay — she delivered
several children; only one survived
Lakshmi. ^{(born} ~~to~~ ^{30 Nov 1929)}

So the family expects Yagnaswami
and Visalakshi to deliver a
boy to keep up the lineage!

It was indeed the greatest
expectation of Sankara Bahadralal.

Deekshitar, father of Sundara Ganpadigal.

Sankara Deekshitar had
his title Deekshitar because of the

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yagnas he did (not so common even in those days ^{that is}, early part twentieth century). He was a pious man. His mother was a great Vedic scholar who picked up the knowledge of Vedas ~~too~~ ^{listening} through the discussions the men-folk. She being a woman was not allowed to study it ~~for~~ formally as her grandson Sundaram did ~~later~~ ^{later} and got his title Ganapadigal.

Sankara Deekshitar while knowledgeable was not a scholar. He was ^{the} ~~the~~ ^(householder) ideal epitome of a grihastha ^h as 'defined' for a Brahmin. Every morning he will get up around 3 A.M. Before going to bathe in the nearby river Taamapanni (or Porunai in Tamil) which was not

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commonly used), he will offer
fruit
a L Vilaampazham (

) to his mother after
doing ~~prati~~ ~~pra~~ circumambulation
around her and offering namaskaar.
She was fond of that fruit.

Sankara Deekshitar once
wanted to take Sanyas well after
the passing away of his mother
after completing ~~his~~ seven and his yagnas. The third
child of Sundaram born after
his yagnas was named Yagnaswami.
Taking Sanyas after a full
life of grihasta was a part of
the family tradition. Sankara
Deekshitar had four sons; all were

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married and ~~are~~ ^{were} ~~to~~ alive :

Sundaram, Neelakantan, Viswanathan,
and Ramasubbani. The last ~~son~~ son

known as Ramasubba Pashtigal
was a great Sanskrit Scholar and

lived in Madras. Neelakantan

in ~~Mad~~ Madurai. Sundaram and

Viswanathan at Kottaram. As per the

Tradition ^{Sankara Deekhan (his first son)} ~~he~~ consulted Sundaram.

Sundaram noted the keenness
of his father to take Sanyas
in ~~order~~ ^{order} to keep the tradition of

his forefathers all of whom
took Sanyas ^(after a full grahasthalife) never to return..

Sundaram narrated to his
father some ~~st~~ slokas which

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describe the fate of a Sanyasi
who still keeps ~~#~~ up the memories
of and attachment to his
family.

"Father, won't you worry
about your ~~&~~ sons, ~~and~~

daughters - in - law, grand
children? Won't you look
forward to sons from your
grandson? Already you are
disappointed in not having
any child through Sankaran
and Subbulaxmi. You are

so fond of Subbulaxmi. But
she could not bear a son to give you a great
grandson.
Don't you have still lurking
expectations of great grandson

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through Yagnaswami? ... & please think about all these and let us discuss tomorrow. If you still desire for a Sanyas we can plan for it."

Sankara Deekshitar was an honest and truthful man. ~~Next~~ Next day he told Sundarama "Son, you are right. Thanks for pointing out. I am attached to all you. I ~~am~~ always think of the welfare of all of you. Also I am looking for a great grandson which is a great culmination of

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the
✓ ~~the~~ life of grihasta. So let
me not pursue the idea
of Sanyas."

So ^{the} idea of ~~idea of~~
becoming Sanyasi was
~~never~~ renounced with a
break of a long tradition of the
family ^{which had continued for} ~~of~~ generations. He
continued his daily religious
and other duties. After
the marriage of Visalakshi
to Yagnaswami his desire
for ~~a great~~ a son through
~~a~~ his grandson was kindled.
The couple disappointed him
with getting first a girl.

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Incidentally it was again a break
in a long chain of chance occurrence
in that family. ~~#~~ Most children
were male till Kamala was
~~born~~ born to ~~Sank~~ ^{the} Sundaram - Laxmi
pair. Now ~~it~~ Yagnaswami - Visaa-
lakshmi ^(the first child) got ^{only} a daughter; a
wonderful child ^{to die} ~~only~~
after a year through an ~~effect~~
infection (Karappaan^{in Tamil}). Then
was born Rajalakshmi - again
a great disappointment for
Sankara Deekshitar who was
then approaching 90 years of
age, ~~with a~~ ^a hardy ~~and~~ ^{sturdy} ~~old~~

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individual who had survived a ~~cholera~~ cholera infection at his age of 66 years. He had good ~~right~~ eye sight and walks even at the age of 90.

When he heard the ~~the~~ ^{his} third pregnancy of Visalakshi during 1943 (a year not only devastated by ~~was~~ World War II ~~with~~ ~~and~~ its impact on India, but it was a year which saw the peak of Bengal famine - apparently ^{near the southern tip of India,} Koltaram was not touched too much by these ~~exte~~ disasters) through limited communications

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Through post-cards from Bombay, his expectations went up. At that time his first son Sundaram was in Bombay with Yagnaswami and Kamala ~~and~~ N.S. Iyer ~~and~~ and two granddaughters Laxmi and Rajalaxmi. Sankara Deekshitan wanted to confirm the information independently.

He wrote a letter and wanted it to be posted to Bombay and got the address written in English through his friend. This he did without informing his grandsons on his favourite granddaughter-in-law Sankara Iyer and Subbulaxmi.

When he finished his posting secretly he was returning to his home without being too

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visible. So he had chosen lanes
with which he was not very
familiar. He did not see
the yoke of a bullock cart
parked there. Fell down. No
serious injuries and he returned
home. Within a few days
he started having fever. It
went on for about a week. ~~It~~ Fever
was ^{very} much in first few days itself.
So all sons were informed to
come. ~~It~~ Sankara Deekshitan
was holding on. It was
almost clear that his first
son Sundaram ~~can~~ could
not come from Bombay. It was
not even clear whether he got

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information. The war has disrupted or delayed most communications including telegraphs. ~~So~~

So one day Sankara Deekshitar made up his mind. He was very disappointed (at least inwardly) for not being able to see a 'daubitra' (great grandson) and as an added loss his first son also may not be able to come! Accepting ~~the~~ stoically the fate, he asked his favourite Subbulakshmi to make everybody in the house to eat.

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After they completed, he called her and explained to her about the formalities for cremation.

For a person who did yagnas, the pyre is to be lighted by the friction of the wood of pipal tree & captured in cotton and small dry ^{pipal} branches are used to start the fire. He told her where he has kept them.

And a few other details. Told her to bring water in the traditional

~~tumbler~~ ^{and spoon} special tumbler used for pujas ^(panja-patra) Then he got up.

Spread his angarastra ~~at~~ north south and ~~laid~~ laid down on it, with his head southwards. Used the spoon to put water in his nasal mouth as ~~we~~ ^{he} went on repeating

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'OM, ~~THE~~ NAMO NARAYANAYA'

After about 7 or 8 times of this act,
the spoon fell from his hand.

He ascended to his heavens.....

A great ~~soul~~ ^{soul} departed.

They did all the rituals without
his 2 first son Sundaram, who
came later.

His Visalakshi, as per
her standard practice, came
to Kottaram, her in-law's place,
around the sixth month of her
pregnancy. Those were days
~~or~~ without any ultrasounds!

~~In the~~
At the beginning of the
month of Chaitra (Chittirai in
Tamil) with heat at its peak

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She delivered a male child ~~at~~
at Kottaram! Was Sankara
Deekshitar seeing it from
the heavens? 910

Her ~~child~~ son was to be
named ~~as~~ after his grandfather
Sundaram but they made
a change. Since the ~~good~~ God
at the temple was Rajamannar ^(Vishnu)
and Andal, ~~the~~ Rajan was added

Sundara ~~at done for~~ ^{follows the}
precedent for his elder sister
Raja Laxmi (prefixing Raja
to her grandmother Lakshmi's
name). This was on 17th April

1944 about forenoon ^(check).

That was the ~~the~~ birth of
Yagnaswami Sundara Rajan
~~L.V.~~ (now called V.S. Rajan).

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14/10/2013
(Vijaya Dasami)

The place where Y. S. Rajan, that is I, was born ~~B~~ was a rented house in which my grand father, Periyappa & Periamma stayed. I have seen the place in my childhood. I was told that my mother delivered me in a dark corner which had no ventilation and which was further insulated from air flow with a jute ~~cut~~ curtain. The belief was ~~is~~ that the delivering woman and the child should not be exposed to wind.

I was also told that the period in which I was born

(P.T.O)

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was called "Agni Nakshatram"

That is the whole place is under fire; it is the hottest period.

When I ~~was~~ ^{lives} in later years, in Kottaram, I had experiences that heat. We all used to get boils all over body and the treatment was a bit of sandal paste for each of the boil.

How did my mother tolerate all that in the dark corner? There was no special toilet or ~~the~~ urinal; she is not to come out. So it is ^{done} inside and the women (mostly my Periarma) will wash her

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and take away the wastes. Maybe I was immunised to live in India!

Probably after about 4 or 5 months my mother left for Bombay again, with me as an infant. The only photograph of my mother is available in a group photograph of my

From her letter to her husband appears to be well after one year

Missouri

Attimber, Ambulu (my cousin sister), my mother, and my Aunt (father's sister) holding me; I had been existing around. Attimber is aunt's husband; Ambulu is their only surviving daughter — a great lady who would have been ^{about} 16 years ~~old~~

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in that photograph — who had ⁱⁿ later years had a heroic and tragic life. She had a special role in ϕ my life.

My Attimber was responsible for my interest in books in later years, ^{which I will explain} when we come to

the corresponding decade.

Restakes 29/12/2013 Sunday

THE EARLY BOMBAY LIFE

Visaalaakshi, my mother, would have come with her son Sundararajan to Bombay around September or October of 1944. ϕ She stayed ~~with~~ at Bhoj Mahal, Matunga. It was full of 'chawls' — a special invention of Bombay. Gives an apartment

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like privacy — a reasonable size living-cum-bed room in the front, one ~~the~~ iron-safe can be put for clothes & valuable in the same room.

Go further a kitchen, cum-dining room, kitchen part identified by a slightly raised platform (about 1ft) and 'mori' by the side with tap.

Mori is used for washing ~~the~~ vessels, also serves as ^{open} bath room. When woman took ~~the~~ bath, the kitchen door was closed. There was also a common bath room for all the residents on the floor, ~~an~~ open one, mostly useful for males. There was only two ^{common} latrines for more ~~than~~ ~~to~~ about 10 families. Terribly dirty with floating faeces excreta, smelling all the while...

No wonder, ~~the~~ houses were full of cockroaches, bred in such

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labrienes... I remember still that I along with some boys, we used to catch live cockroaches. ~~about~~ and tie four or five of them with individual cotton threads and then attach them all to an empty match box.

The four cockroaches will pull the match ~~me~~ box forward.

That ^{was} ~~to~~ our imaginary Chariot!

Proba

While I remember this episode and a few others, perhaps the imagery of the Bhoj Mahal 'Chawl' ~~was never~~ was not from my early childhood memory ^{alone} I had visited ^{several times} later during my teens, when N. S. Iyer & Laxmi (Ambulu)

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~~were there~~ stayed there. That is
for a later chapter.

I remember playing
with my sisters. The younger one
Jayashree was born ~~on~~ ~~the~~
on 8 December 1946. ~~This~~ I don't
recall her as an infant baby.

My mother got tired of travelling
a long distance to South for
delivery. So decided to deliver
the third (actually fourth counting
my dead sister) child at
Bombay itself. There was a
small nursing home in the
ground floor of Bhoj Mahal.

After delivery, she decided

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to name the child in a modern way, not following the tradition of naming her in her mother's name (Jaanki).

I do not recall any of my plays or talk with my mother. ~~At~~ Only thing I was told by ~~at~~ Periamma, Athai, Ambulu ~~etc~~ is that I used to go to my mother and ask her at night before my going to sleep and ask her "Amma, have you eaten your food?" She has to say "yes!" for me to go to sleep! Other ladies

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women of the house used to tell me "You rascal! You wanted to take care of only your Amma, though all of us are taking care of you and your sisters!".

Well! that love for mother was going to be short lived. Also I am told that I did not speak at all till 3 years, except for some few words. I think later also, speech came only slowly. I remember my cute younger sister with a green patch on her cheek and hair tied upwards like ~~the~~ baby Sri Krishna; she used to ~~not~~ ^{with} have just underwear and move around. Every body admires ~~her~~ ^{her} as Sri Krishna. I was proud of it.

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One of my deep childhood memories are the scenes which my elder sister Rajalakshmi and I used to see, coming down the Bhuj Mahal. We ~~walk~~ ^{would} stand at the gate, some times opened and ~~see~~ ^{saw} the ~~trams~~ trams going in Ghodbunder road; (later named Swami Vivekanda Road ~~down~~ during the 1960's)

Often we had seen angry men with swords and knives running in ~~the~~ groups; some of them turbaned. Turbaned and with beards; many just in underwears and dhotians. We could guess that they were angry. We ~~walk~~ ^{would}

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close the gate and watch.
Sometimes ~~we~~ ^{we would run} upstairs towards
our home ~~when we were~~ ^{when we were} very scared.
They should be
the scenes of pre-partition
and post partition ~~at~~ riots.

My mother died somewhere
September 1947. Just a few
weeks after Independence. I do
not remember any of it, at all!
Probably what I saw the riotous
men running may be post-partition
when I was older than that.

I remember the day of
Gandhiji's death. All radio
songs were Raghupati Raghava.
The paper which N.S. Iyer

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regularly read had a
photograph of slain ~~Gan~~ Mahatma.
But I don't think I knew
who he was and what is
the impact of his death.
No memories from that ~~time~~
time period.

So the Bhoj Mahad
^{life}
~~time~~ from my infancy to
about 5 years of age, had
little left in my memory,
except those given above.

The family decided
to move ~~me~~ ^{my} my elder
sister and me to down south
to the Koltaram ~~in~~ village.

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The movement took place somewhere around 1949. I don't recall ~~at~~ any feelings of mine or my sister about such a movement. May be the long train journey ~~was~~ gave as a thrill.

So during the ~~next~~ ¹⁹ 49 & 1950 I started my village life and also formal school studies. I have many memories from that village life. Can I put precise dates or year? No. It could have ^{been} any where during 1949-1953, four years during which ^{period} I stayed there.

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So during the decade of 1940's, I was ~~for~~ fulfilled at Bombay, delivered at Kottaram village, spent my infant and toddler stages at Bombay and was back to Kottaram in 1949.

It was a period of immense events in India, changing its history. I was unaware of them either during my stay in Bombay or later in Kottaram. Also a major event of mother's death changed the course of my life from Bombay to Kottaram, an unelectrified village with limited facilities for good life.

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~~I~~ My sister and I
got a lot of love from Periamma
and Periappa. Kottaram was
totally different from Bhojapahal
Each house was big, with
a number of rooms. No taps
but ^a well ~~and hand pump~~
and many ~~taps~~ tanks nearby surrounding
the village and a river Tamraparani.

By the time, we moved
to Kottaram, my Periappa has
got build a new house for
the three of them - Grandfather
Santara Amapadjal (SA), Periappa
& Periamma. We went to a brand new

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house. (which is in good shape even during 2010 when I visited)

I remember ~~the~~ Periapappa's shop and Palavesam Pillai, his assistant who poured ^{lots of} love on me & Papa (my ^{elder} sister was so called by me and others).

I think both Papa and I had transitioned into the village life without any problem. All I remember are full of fun in play, learning at the school, hearing stories from my Grandpa, learning shlokas from Periapappa and eating good food from Periamma.

~~We would~~ It is better to cover it along with the 1950-60

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decade. In hindsight, the moving to Kottaram had been an excellent turning point in my life. My trust with Tamil, Subrahmanya Bharathi etc was possible would have been impossible without that move. I also got a deep understanding of life. I remember each of those

4 four years in Kottaram vividly. Also I learnt full Ramayana & Mahabharata Tols by my Grandpa - a rare opportunity. More about that beautiful part of Kottaram life in the next chapter - 2.