

REFLECTIONS

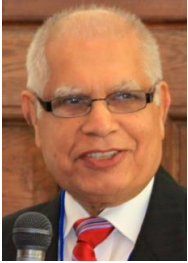


A Hindu Cultural Center of Albany Hindu Temple Society's Newsletter devoted to the Capital District's Indian-American community particularly its seniors

Editorial: Let us Welcome

2018: By Ram Chugh

Reflections wishes its readers a very Happy New Year!



New Year's Day is considered a time for reflection and planning for the upcoming year. Most countries declare New Year's Day as a public

holiday. People start celebrating the arrival of the New Year with New Year's Eve parties and fireworks.

It does not matter where one lives; the arrival of the New Year is celebrated as a new beginning. Television networks and newspapers carry special shows and articles highlighting the major happenings of the previous year and expression of hopes and aspirations for the New Year.

However, over recent years, the New Year's Day celebrations have become more somber because of the many challenges and suffering experienced by many people in the world. Some of these challenges are caused by natural forces, such as severe hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, epidemics, and massive floods; other challenges, such as

terrorism, gun violence, regional wars, refugee crises causing mass migrations, are man-made.

Such crises, whether man-made or natural, cause tremendous suffering for many in the world. For those afflicted by such misery, New Year's Day has little significance. It is like any other day, where hardship for them does not seem to end. Such tragic experiences can make people lose faith in the goodness of their fellow human beings and even in God.

Despite such suffering, there remains a flicker of optimism deep inside every person for a better tomorrow. Such hope for a brighter future keeps the world going. Human beings have tremendous resilience. We possess an innate ability to bounce back and overcome the odds. The history of humanity shows periods of extreme deprivation and periods of extreme prosperity as well.

The human race continues its search for methods to tame Mother Nature to minimize natural disasters. It also continues its quest for a world without war. These dreams for a planet of peace and prosperity are reflected in the credo of the Tehran (Iran) Peace Museum:

"Peace is more than the Absence of War. Real peace comes from our

hearts (inner peace) and leads to peaceful relations in the family and community and among nations. Let's inspire others with non-violence everyday Let's be messenger of peace in every interaction. "

Let us do what we can in 2018 and beyond to make this a better world for ourselves, our families, our communities, and all of humanity. *Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu!*

With this issue, *Reflections* enters its fourth year. We wish to thank the Hindu Temple Society for sponsoring *Reflections* and to all of the individuals who took time to write articles. Most of the writers are from our community. We thank them immensely. **Dr. Sudershan Bhatia, Richa Kaushik, Vijay Oruganti, Rasik Shah, and Sastry Sreepada**, deserve deep gratitude for their guidance in compiling this newsletter. We are always looking for ways to improve the newsletter and we welcome suggestions. Please send comments and ideas for articles to Ram Chugh at reflections.hcc@gmail.com. Thank you.

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Newsmakers in Our Community

Editor's note: We are adding a new feature to the newsletter to highlight the distinguished accomplishments and recognitions of individuals from our community. We request our community members to share with us the names of individuals who you feel have received such high recognition.

A New Non-Invasive Fertility

Test: An Interview with Dr. Sharad Joshi* conducted by Rasik Shah



Dr Joshi spent most of his research career searching for a simple non-invasive blood test to help women with their fertility issues. He was

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included in Who's Who – American Men of Science. Recently I interviewed him to understand what led him to pursue his field of research, significant results of his research, and its impact on the society. In his retirement, he took up oil painting as a hobby and has created hundreds of his paintings. We are fortunate to have Dr. Joshi. Highlights of my interview are summarized below.

Q1: What is your educational background? What led you to pursue your research focus, and the place for research?

A: I earned my PhD in Biomedical Sciences from Bombay University in 1959. While in university, I was moved by the anguish of my younger sister, Usha, who could not conceive. My sister's situation provided motivation, and I mentally resolved to focus on fertility research. My search for an international fertility expert led me to Dr. Pincus in the USA, who is known as a father of the oral contraceptive. I contacted him for a research position in his research group. He did not have an immediate opening for me, but encouraged me to come to USA nonetheless and pursue my interest. I came to USA as a fellow at Harvard Medical School and immediately established contact with Dr. Pincus. He asked me to enroll in a one year course in reproductive endocrinology.

While at Harvard, I applied to Ford Foundation to establish reproductive biology department at All India Institute of Medical Science in New Delhi. I received a grant of one million dollars to establish a fertility research department in New Delhi. I returned to New Delhi, after 3 years at Harvard. In Delhi I established Reproductive Biology Department in 1 ½ years. I was not happy there due to internal politics and bickering of the institute. From New Delhi I moved to Institute of Hormone Biology in Palo Alto in California by invitation. Since I wanted to work in animal species closer to humans, I moved to San Antonio, Texas at the Southwest Foundation as a senior scientist. There I worked on baboons whose reproductive physiology is closer to humans. There I

worked for seven years and while I was at southwest foundation, I received an invitation to join the faculty of Albany Medical College (AMC) as an Associate Professor of Endocrinology, where I conducted my pioneering research on human infertility.

Q2: When did you start your research and your research focus?

A: Inspired by Dr. Pincus, I became interested in the field of fertility control and fertility enhancement, with an ultimate goal of finding a blood test to assess endometrial function. The test in general use at the time had many drawbacks: it was invasive and hence uncomfortable, unreliable, and had to wait for a long time for test results.

I spent seventeen years at the AMC to develop a blood test for assessing endometrial status in fertile women. For the development of any new clinical test, one needs a team of scientists, who can handle the clinical side of the testing. That means building up a team of researchers. It involved recruitment of scientists from wherever they are. This I did by talking to scientists personally at the international conferences. My efforts were very successful; I enrolled prominent scientists and Physicians as team members. We developed a global team for PEP (Progesterone dependent Endometrial Protein) research.

Q3: What are your major research results?

A: My research focus was to hunt for an endometrial marker in blood. The IVF blood test we developed provided reliable results in two weeks, which offered less anxiety and greater satisfaction to the women. My team, including Dr. Henriques (fellow Professor at Albany Med) obtained US Patents. The test is repetitive, more objective and economical.

Q4: This looks like a very vast research area, requiring a team of scientific experts and patients. How did you assemble such a team?

A: My breakthrough in my efforts came around 1978 when I finally developed a working radioimino acid for

Progesterone dependent Endometrial Protein (PEP). I published all this work on test development in Journal of clinical endometrial metabolism. The same time I received Albert Taylor on behalf of international society for reproductive endocrinology.

Women with no apparent cause and labeled as women with unexplained infertility are often encountered in clinical practice and they make up about 30% of the infertile women. In our studies, a larger number of patients diagnosed as unexplained infertility are low blood PEP levels.

We developed an immunoassay using antibodies produced in goats, partially purified from human tissue. This development of radio Immunoassay turned out to be most significant advance in my research. We were now ready to the clinical research phase on PEP.

The first step was to enroll infertility patients. Dr. Henriques was dealing with sizeable infertility population. I got to know the physicians handling infertility patients. I must say with all the honesty and sincerity that my collaborator's provided all their talents for PEP research. I developed really good and invaluable collaboration. Such joint efforts included Dr. Larry Levy (Yale Medical Center), Dr. Rao (Univ of Chicago), Dr. Earl Gurpid (Cornell Medical Center), Dr. Mark (Univ of Helsinki), Dr. David Lawrence (Wadsworth Lab, Albany).

There is one more person from our own community who has been a constant participant for 14 years. He has been major supporter of my work. He is Dr. Ramdas Raikar, one of our own.

Q5: Who benefits or would continue to benefit from your research? What is next?

A: This technique of fertility blood test is now being used all over the world. It has shown that women with low PEP have a less conception rate.

After 17 years at Albany Med, Dr. Henriques and I decided to leave Albany Med to start an In Vitro Fertilization clinic at Memorial Hospital, a first clinic of its kind in our region.

Although the development of PEP was a great advance, it had a major drawback. It required the handling and disposal of radioactive PEP. In fact, very few labs have such facilities. To resolve this issue, we must develop a non-radioactive assay. Only time will tell what the future is for PEP test without use of radioactive material.

The situation has changed considerably. I have stopped working due to poor health. However, I do know that other laboratories in this country are handling PEP research. The test for the PEP is very helpful in patients undergoing IVF as well as in patients not undergoing IVF but other conventional methods of treatment of infertility. This test as compared to endometrial biopsy test is very economical, objective and repetitive and noninvasive.

This is the story of my creative life and I must thank all the subjects that participated in my research, I deeply indebted to them. My greatest reward was the joyous faces when to-be parents heard the good news of being pregnant. By the way, my sister has two grown up sons.-----

* Sharad Joshi is an internationally-acclaimed pioneering researcher. He was interviewed by Rasik Shah. He and his wife, Suman, have lived in Albany for 40 years. He is a music and art lover who coordinated several classical concerts at their home and thru India Association in the past. They have two sons, one is a scientist and professor and one is Director of music school and activist. ■

FRIENDSHIP is like a BOOK.

It takes a FEW SECONDS to BURN,
but it TAKES YEARS to WRITE

Writer of Conscience Annu Subramanian*



A writer's purpose puts on several hats—entertaining, informing, enriching—but wears only one in the long run; a cause that is most

dear to the heart. When I began to write as a child, I was exploring my little world. Childhood offered a generous canvas, and the murals varied from family to friends, grief to joy, disappointments to celebrations. Every stroke of emotion found a space in my journals, as though the omission of a momentous experience was a cardinal sin. But these measly moments and their careful recordings paved way for a future in writing.

Although writing blossoms as an inherent trait in the early stage, there is a driving force that nurtures it. Every child needs a mentor to jumpstart a talent or interest, and my father was my designated adviser. Gods, demons, and others played a tremendous part in the tales he told me—some directly from Hindu mythology and some fabricated by him. With unbounded imagination, his fictional episodes changed routes when narrated at different times. An intrinsic instinct cautioned me not to question his inconsistency as a storyteller. Perhaps he was granted license to twist his tall tales? Only years later did I realize that such a license to deviate was in itself a skill. His stories taught me more than the good, bad, and ugly facets of life. I understood how a narrator could add colors to an otherwise ordinary effigy and make it stand out among a sea of characters, both important and inconsequential. As a child, when I wanted to translate my own insignificant tales into written words, my mentor encouraged me and offered feedback for improvement. We moved from mythology to classics, at times reading together, and discussed protagonists, antagonists, and all in between. Each analysis taught me about life and the art of storytelling. My writing embraced

different topics as well, fitting the ideals of a teenager. However, my journey as a novice writer stopped abruptly because I could not cope with my mentor's permanent absence from my life.

But life uses a unique process to step on our thoughts and intentions, manipulating its way into a comfortable routine. It seizes the existing ideas of what we want and instills newer concepts, even forcing us to adopt them. Fate placed me on the lap of Union College in Schenectady, NY, when I was a mother of two, waiting to pursue my second graduate program. The courses required plentiful writing, some self-exploratory and a few analytical. I cruised through them until I had an appointment with my adviser to plan my thesis. Would I write about educational reform, or gender bias, or...? My adviser had a different topic in mind. She was no stranger to my writing samples and encouraged me to write about my cultural exploration as an Asian-Indian descendant, particularly portraying the journey of these women through generations. "You have a way with words. Use it well. Instead of writing a traditional thesis, why don't you write something different to educate and to entertain?" she asked.

A Way With Words awakened the sleeping writer in me. *Educate and Entertain* rekindled what had once almost perished. I embraced my adviser's encouragement and began my cultural exploration. I went back to my roots and parked my suitcases in India for nearly two months. I observed remarkable women of all ages and was even fortunate to speak with them—acquaintances, family members, total strangers—and felt delighted and despondent at the same time. Studying Asian-Indian women opened a new door and revealed what I wanted to see, but it also uncovered dark truths which were painful.

My mother recounted the life of her cousin, Neela, who was married at seventeen and brought back to her parents' home for good at seventeen.

Her father found her living on the terrace in her husband's home—sobbing and terrified like a wounded child—when he visited his little girl a month after her wedding. Her husband's mistress had occupied the house while dominating his heart and his principles. And there were other stories of misfortunes. A woman held no place in a world that was broadly dominated by men who established rigid rules. Marriage was a woman's salvation. A girl went from a father's hands to a husband's hands, and how she was treated as a wife was the luck of the draw. I interviewed several women during my stay in India and created my characters based on the happy and sad episodes shared by them. These characters appeared to be waiting for a new dawn, a new awakening, that might bring hope and deliverance. I finished my thesis and decided to call it *Waiting for the Perfect Dawn* which was published as my debut novel. I dedicated this novel to victims of domestic violence and raised funds for the victims with help from my family and community.

Neela and her peers taught me that it was my calling to speak for them. I was devastated by their plight but was rejuvenated by their strength. A few broken women broke the wall of tradition that kept them suppressed and tried to rebuild their lives. Neela, for example, registered in a teacher-training program once her father took her away from her pernicious husband. She taught children all her life. This father was an exception in his society, who did not tell his daughter that her duty was to tolerate and abide by her husband's wishes. Neela was empowered, independent, although no man would offer her marriage...a woman who was already married, a woman who had walked out of her husband's home. Neela, who was no longer alive, taught me to define empowerment by strengthening minds and by being the voice for the voiceless.

While discussing *Waiting for the Perfect Dawn* at book clubs and seminars, I stumbled on a global epidemic known as human trafficking. I decided to

campaign against this modern-day slavery by writing a research-based fiction titled *Another Heaven*. This novel shows how victims of human trafficking—while primarily targeted for sex trade and indentured labor—are psychologically manipulated to become missionaries of terrorist activities. Proceeds from this novel continue to benefit victims of human trafficking.

When something is meant to happen, circumstances around us collaborate to make it happen. When Megna Murali, an outstanding dancer from Dallas, Texas, expressed interest in interpreting *Another Heaven* on stage as a benefit program to help victims of human trafficking, my purpose as a writer reached an important landmark. I have always believed in bringing my community together to help the underserved. With the help of Albany Women Independent Network, this program titled "Jaagrata" celebrated its pilot performance in Albany, NY, and raised over \$6000 for victims of human trafficking.

What next? My journey as a storyteller, from a curious child to a human-rights advocate, reminds me that I am no longer a writer but a Writer of Conscience. Now I explore the big world, and I will continue to raise my voice for the voiceless.

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*Annu Subramanian is an author, speaker, and a human-rights advocate. She can be reached at: dawnheaven711@gmail.com <http://www.facebook.com/subramanian.annu>



Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines.

-Robert H. Schiuller

Message from the BOT Chair

Bereavement Support Committee Announcement



HTS has been providing Religious Services & Hindu Cultural programs to all devotees for the last half a century. Many of us arrived in USA after young age & now

are senior citizens.

We felt that HTS should provide another service to help a family in which a member is at the end of life or passes away. When death occurs, a family finds itself in agony and helpless & may enter in to legal troubles.

We thank Dr. Ram Chugh a well known Professor & prominent member in our community, for helping in writing the guidelines to form **Bereavement Support Guide & Committee**.

It is very comprehensive and easy to understand. I recommend every family must have a comprehensive planning to avoid any complications after death in the family. Dr. Ram Chugh has done a lot of research in writing this guide for the benefit of our community.

HTS has now appointed a Bereavement Support Committee with Arjun Patel and Rohit Dagli as co-chairs and MR Balakrishna as vice-chair. BSC members include Rita Ajmera, Niraja Allena, Dr. Sudershan Bhatia, Sneh Chaudhry, Shyam Dubey, Ashok Gupta, Kodi Kothandan, C.S. Rao, Dr. Gattu Rao, Guryam Singh and Dr. Voleti Venkateswararao. Three temple priests also part of this committee and Ram Chugh and Rasik Shah will act as resource persons. I thank everyone for their willingness to serve, especially Arjun who has been providing this service on his own to our community for many years.

I also wish to acknowledge Tarun Narravula for his logistical support and involvement in getting the Bereavement Guide and brochure

printed and in placing these on the Temple's webpage.

On behalf of HTS, I am very thankful to Dr. Ram Chugh in writing Bereavement Support Guide. This Guide and the brochure can be accessed by the links below.

[Bereavements Support Guide](#)

[Bereavement Support Committee Brochure](#)

Dr. Govind Rao, Chairman ■

New Year Resolution

While reflecting on the upcoming year, consider taking time to review your estate planning documents by asking questions: Does my last will and testament require any changes? Do I have a legally valid health proxy and power of attorney? Are my financial papers, passwords, and other instructions in order and accessible to my survivors? Have I taken care of pre-planning for my funeral arrangements? It is good to take a serious look at these important advance planning issues. According to some studies, 55% of people die without a will or estate plan (www.americanbar.org). Fewer than half of Americans, older than 65, have a living will (*Consumer Reports*, March 2015).

If you are serious about adopting a New Year's resolution for 2018, consider this one: making sure all your estate and financial planning papers are in order. Here are two checklists to help you out:

[Estate Planning](#)

[Survivors Checklist](#)

[Survivors Guide](#)

Chakravarti Rajgopalachari - An Assessment

Bimal K. Malaviya, Ph.D.*



Chakravarti Rajgopalachari (he once remarked to a journalist, "You foreigners have long funny names"!), affectionately and

popularly known as Rajaji or simply "C.R." occupied a unique place in the pre- and post- independence history of India. He followed Lord Mountbatten – the last Viceroy of India, to become the Governor General of Independent India – the only Indian to occupy that exalted position. At other times, he was a venerable Congressman, Governor of Bengal, home minister, education minister, Chief Minister of Madras and the leader of his own Swatantra Party in opposition – playing prominent roles in the governance hierarchy. A close confidante of Gandhi and a brilliant intellectual, he formed part of the triumvirate of Indian freedom movement – Rajaji, Nehru and Patel – who were called respectively the "head, heart and hands" of Gandhiji. In his autobiography, Nehru wrote about how Rajaji's brilliant intellect, selfless character and penetrating powers of analysis were a valuable asset to the cause of the struggle for Independence. Gandhiji called him "The keeper of my Conscience". Rajaji was deservedly one of the early recipients of India's highest civilian award – the Bharat Ratna.

C.R. came from humble, plebian beginnings- but despite the handicaps of his poor family and stern parenthood (or maybe because of it?) he worked hard in his studies and graduated from the Presidency College and law school in Madras. He became a successful lawyer with a lucrative practice. He was married at a very young age to a girl in early teens who bore him five children but died at a young age. Thus, like Nehru and Patel, Rajaji became a widower in his thirties and never remarried; law and politics became his life and passion. Early on, he was influenced by the

inspiring leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the Home Rule movement of Annie Besant. However, the real transformative change in his life came upon his meeting Gandhiji during the latter's visit to Madras in 1919. He gave up his legal practice, adopted Gandhi as "My Dearest Master" and threw himself whole hog in the freedom Satyagrah Movement. He became a staunch Gandhian in every sense of the term – embracing not only Gandhi's programmes but also his lifestyle and predilections – setting up his own Ashram and constructive work regimen – even initiating his own version of Gandhi's famous Dandi March. Gradually Gandhi's mantle of saintliness and nobility of purpose



began to devolve on him in the public mind. By a strange twist of Fate, Gandhi and Rajaji became personally bonded as

"Samdhis" when Gandhiji's youngest son Devdas married Rajaji's daughter Lakshmi.

Rajaji moved up the ranks in the Congress party becoming one of its important functionaries and leading lights – a major figure in the freedom movement. However, he gradually emerged as a maverick politician – following a zigzag political trajectory – following his own counsel and charting his independent course – quitting and rejoining the Congress as nuanced by developing issues of the moment. He even parted ways with Gandhi and Nehru often – most notably on the 1942 Quit-India Resolution, the Cripps Mission and the question of cooperating with the British in the wave effort.

Rajaji was the first political figure to accept the inevitability of partition and Pakistan. He broached the idea of the "two-nation theory" in what came to be known as the celebrated "Rajaji Formula" proposing a confederation of separate Hindu and Muslim-majority nations, the appointment of a commission after the war to

demarcate the contiguous Muslim majority areas and holding a plebiscite to determine the division into Hindu and Muslim regions. He presented the proposal to Jinnah who rejected it outright saying that it offered only "a shadow and husk, maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan". There was also widespread opposition to the Formula within the Congress-proponents of "Akhand Hindustan" like K.M.Munshi were vehemently opposed. However, Rajaji was able to convince Gandhiji and requested him to "sell" the formula to Jinnah. Gandhi – as always smugly cocky about his own powers of persuasion and conversion, agreed to approach Jinnah – leading to one of the most humiliating episodes of the freedom movement. Like Chamberlain going to Munich to meet Hitler, over a period of eighteen days in September 1944, Gandhiji trudged everyday wishfully, to see Jinnah in his palatial mansion on Malabar Hill – meekly pleading with him to accept the Rajaji Formula. The imperious Jinnah – intransigent and unyielding as always, spurned all overtures, finally concluding, "now that Pakistan has been conceded, it only remains to be decided when and how it will come into being." So there it was – the die had been cast – the idea of Pakistan was a fait accompli – with Rajaji playing a pivotal role – rightly or wrongly.

Rajaji continued to provide sage counsel and participate in the governance of the new independent India – occupying in succession the posts of Governor General, home minister, education minister and chief minister of Madras dealing in each position with a wide range of pioneering issues- combating effectively the scourges of communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguistic divisions, etc. Gradually, he became disillusioned with the economic policies of the Nehru government and decided to quit Congress (again!) and launch his own Swatantra Party. Nehru welcomed his opposition and respectfully took his criticisms seriously. Although it looked promising in the beginning, the Swatantra Party provided no viable alternative to Congress and eventually

fizzled out having been marginalized at the polls.

In the sunset years of his life, Rajaji retired from active politics and turned to spiritual and literary pursuits. Like Bertrand Russell in England, he became an ardent pacifist – crusading for world nuclear disarmament and espousing causes of peace and harmony among nations. In 1962, at the ripe old age of 84, he went abroad for the first time in his life, to lead a peace mission under the auspices of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, to meet President Kennedy to garner international support for ending nuclear weapons tests. An internationally respected elder statesman, he became the only civilian not in power, to be accorded a state reception at the White House. Although the mission, as expected, was unsuccessful, speaking after the meeting, President Kennedy remarked, "His meeting had the most civilizing influence on me. Seldom have I heard a case presented with such precision, clarity and elegance of language."

Chakravarti Rajagopalachari – freedom fighter, maverick politician, astute visionary, venerable Gandhian, repository of the highest offices and accolades – yes, he was all of these and more; yet perhaps his enduring legacy rests as a erudite scholar and prolific man of letters. His writings cover a wide diverse array of literary montage – novels, short stories, spiritual hymns, translations of Hindu scriptures such as the Ramayana and Mahabharat from Sanskrit to Tamil and later into lucid English, translation of Upanishads as well as Bhaj Govindam into English. He also translated "The Tirukkural", an ancient classic referred to as 'the flower of Tamil Nadu' into English. It is ironic, though fitting, that this illustrious son of India who wrote extensively about legends in the Hindu scriptures, himself became the stuff of legend – epitomizing in his personal life story, the supreme "Indian Dream" that took him from the precipices of poverty and penury to the pinnacles of power and prestige. One of the most powerful and moving images of the post independence era is the spectacle of Rajaji – the once

impoverished young man from a poor village, now turned elder statesman – clad in his signature homespun dhoti, shawl and chappals, walking up the steps of the majestic Viceregal Palace in Delhi to take his place in the seat that once symbolized the crown jewel of the mighty British empire!

* Bimal Malviya teaches at RPI. He is a long time resident of the Albany area. He is a very active member of the Indian community through his involvement in temple and cultural center activities. ■

Courage

To have courage, think courage. We become what we think. As you think courage, courage will fill your thoughts and displace fear. The more courageous your thinking, the greater the courage you will have. Act courageously. Practice the "as of" principle. Act as if you are courageous and you will become as you think and act. A person should pray for courage as he prays for his daily bread. And your prayer for courage will enable you to think and act with courage.

-Vincent Peale

PRAYER is not a "spare wheel" that YOU PULL OUT when IN trouble, but it is a "STEERING WHEEL" that DIRECT the RIGHT PATH THROUGHOUT LIFE

Abusive behavior of family members

Suyranarayana Chennapragada*



This is an uncomfortable topic. The goal of this article is to break the silence on the abusive

behavior of family members. I consider mentally or physically abusive behavior to be a symptom of an unhealthy mind. I am presenting a case of abuse which had tragic consequences to open the topic for discussion.

Let us examine our unscientific approach towards abusive behavior. Looking back into history, we know that devastating diseases like cholera, smallpox and polio have been brought under control worldwide, not by labeling them as bad but by scientifically investigating their causes and developing effective antidotes.

We see daily news articles on how to maintain good physical health by following healthy practices for diet, exercise, sleep and stress. We discuss physical ill health without inhibition.

But in stark contrast, we avoid talking about mental health issues. Even when we see the victim's physical and/or emotional suffering first hand, we stick to the dysfunctional attitude of "Don't talk about that person's cruel behavior".

Emotional abuse, domestic violence and other hurtful behaviors drain the self esteem, scar the minds and and may even lead to suicide of the victims. Worst of all, the children exposed to such violence are at risk of adopting the hurtful behavior as they grow up, passing on the legacy of abuse to future generations. Such behaviors do not magically disappear by our looking away and being silent.

Are we not proud of the amazing developments achieved in science, technology and healthcare by adopting a fearless, scientific and innovative approach? I wonder what blocks us from dealing with mental

health issues in a similar manner. We owe it to ourselves and our children, to break free from the current culture of silence and passivity over abusive behavior in families.

The sad story of my cousin Venkat

The names of the people in this article have been changed. These are my recollections of the events as a 12-year-old at that time. Our family and the families of my elder and younger uncles lived under one roof as a joint family. My widowed grandmother did all the actual cooking on wood fire, in a smoke filled low roof kitchen. As per the custom at that time, she cooked strictly after taking her bath with nothing but a white wet cloth wrapped around her. Her three daughter-in-laws took care of the other chores.

My elder uncle Krishna and my aunt Sarala had only one child, a son named Venkat who was six years at that time. My uncle was very kind, soft spoken and religious. He did his morning puja every day, sitting before the puja mandir and offering flowers to the deities. His favorite God was Hanumanji. He passed Visarada exam in Hindi from Banaras Hindu University. Sarala, his wife was skilled and did her chores meticulously. She took good care of her only child Venkat by feeding him timely, flawlessly dressing him up and neatly combing his hair. She was famous for her sharp tongue and short temper. Everyone carefully avoided triggering her anger.

As it happens with some children of that age, Venkat would sometimes fight with another boy and beat him up. Occasionally, the mother of the beaten up boy would visit our house and complain to my aunt. Every time a mother complained, my aunt would instantly fly into a rage and mercilessly beat up her son Venkat, in the presence of everyone.

On more than one such occasion, I heard my aunt curse her son with the unspeakable words "You are a curse for me. I wish you were dead putting an end to my misery!". It was painful to hear a mother say such words to her son. But none of the other elders in the

joint family dared to counsel or confront my aunt to discourage such hurtful words and cruel beatings.

When my father changed his job and moved to another town, I met the other two families only on special occasions like marriages. After I moved far away on employment, I came to know about my uncle's family only through my family.

Venkat did his graduation in Arts and worked as the medical assistant for a local doctor, earning a small salary. He became a drug addict and used injectable drugs. My aunt yielded to his demands for money though she knew he was using it to feed his addiction.

My uncle was a helpless spectator with no voice in this serious matter. He died in his sixties, earlier than his younger brothers. Venkat died in his forties, unmarried. My aunt, the sole survivor of the family, adopted a relative adult boy who lost his parents and lived with him in another town, making him the heir to her modest assets. She died in her seventies.

Please review this case with an open mind. Was not Venkat born as innocent as the other children in the joint family? What life experiences compelled him to seek out drugs and get addicted to them unlike the rest of the children?

Who was responsible for shaping him in the wrong manner?

In my opinion, my aunt's physical and emotional abuse got etched in the heart of her six-year-old son. Probably whenever the painful memory of his own mother humiliating him in public, even wishing for his death haunted him, he drowned it in drugs, ultimately leading to his premature death.

I think the passivity of my uncle and other adults in the joint family allowed my aunt's abusive behavior continue unchecked. Had other adults intervened with guts and skill, Venkat might have lived a normal life like the other children in the joint family.

I have known abusive people among parents, grandparents, spouses and children. I invite the readers, especially the mental health professionals to offer

their comments and suggestions for resisting and preventing abusive behavior of family members.

People distressed by past or present abusive parental behavior may look into the book "Toxic parents - Overcoming their hurtful legacy and reclaiming your life" By Susan Forward Ph.D. She authored several books on relationships.

* Suryanarayana Chennapragada (aka C.S Rao) offers coaching in Meditation, Gentle Yoga stretching and Stressful relationships. Of interest in this context is his webpage [Select list of books on Stressful Relationships.](#)

Why am I sharing my experience?

I have known competent people in teens to seventies suffer in silence due to the abusive behavior of family members. After I read some wonderful books and gained insights, I could deal with such people successfully and also helped a few sufferers. I would like to create awareness about this hush-hush problem. When we share such problems and discuss them fearlessly, we can develop healthy solutions to end our suffering. One golden rule is "We can't change others' behavior. But we have full control on HOW WE RESPOND to their behavior, internally and externally." C.S. Rao

Indians Share Culture- and- Illness-in America

Shivam Joshi, MD*



Growing up, I remember the *puri*-filled *garbas* with the neighborhood Indians and hearing the latest Bollywood hits filling the night.

The adults were separated according to gender, much as it is today, with the children milling in between. When comparing those uncles and aunties to the average American, I was surprised at how slim and healthy, at least

outwardly, our ethnic group was. There were a few exceptions, of course, but I felt we were healthier than the average American—or so I thought.

These memories serve as a reference of Indian-American health for me, and likely for many of you. It is why, for a long time, I was surprised to hear when a beloved uncle had a heart attack or so-and-so aunty developed diabetes. Fast forward twenty years later, and the stories, despite their variations in details, are as familiar as Amitabh Bachchan's acting. Worse, I thought that these diseases, like obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes, affecting us were the product of bad luck.

But it is not bad luck that's the problem, it is the slow [acculturation](#) to the American lifestyle. The same problems affecting India-Americans have also been affecting the Chinese, Pakistanis, Koreans, and Lebanese in America. The more time spent in America, the more American you become, both culturally and medically. In one [study](#), researchers found that the risk of hypertension increased as more time was spent in America by Asian Americans after immigrating, a finding that was also seen with [obesity](#).

Whether you are Indian or not, the American lifestyle—rife with calories and devoid of physical activity—affects you equally. Indian-Americans [develop](#) diabetes at a higher frequency despite having lower rates of obesity. As such, the American Diabetes Association recommends screening Asian Americans for diabetes starting at a body mass index (BMI) of 23 kg/m² or greater, which is lower than that for the general population (BMI of 25 kg/m² or greater). If you are an Indian-American, the [risk](#) of developing diabetes increases the more time you spend in American and the younger you were when you came to America. The lifetime risk of developing diabetes or pre-diabetes is so [high](#) for Indian-Americans that 1 in 2 will be affected.

Worse of all, both high blood pressure and diabetes increase your risk of heart disease, which is the [leading](#)

cause of death for Indian-American men and women. Rates of death from heart disease are actually [higher](#) than our white counterparts or even other Asian-Americans. Indian-Americans typically have their first heart attack a full [ten](#) years earlier than other populations, with one-third of first heart attacks occurring in Indian-Americans younger than the age of 45. Those affected typically have disease affecting [multiple](#) arteries of the heart, as opposed to a single artery, which is a more severe form of heart disease.

Are Indians fish out of water? Should we return to India for better health? You could, but the situation is just as bad, if not worse, in India. Although Indians in America have a higher risk of developing prediabetes than those living in India, Indians in India actually have a [higher](#) risk of developing diabetes than Indians in America. The only place an Indian has a higher risk of developing diabetes than in America is—India. So is diabetes as much of our destiny as Diwali?

It would seem that these diseases are hereditary, but the emergence of these diseases has occurred within one, or at most two, generations, which is far too quick for this to be related to our "genes." This phenomenon is almost exclusively a product of our lifestyle. Whether you are an Indian in America or in India, what you eat and how much you exercise will significantly impact your likelihood of developing any of these diseases.

If we, as Indians, are to change our destiny, we should take a note of our grandparents' diet. These diets were naturally low in fat, calories, and simple carbohydrates. With Westernization and rising incomes, Indians have gravitated toward foods that are higher in these substances, which has led to our epidemic of "lifestyle" diseases. The only way to reverse the trend is to revert back to those healthier diets.

The reason the diets of our elders one or two generations ago are so healthful is because they were largely a whole-food, plant-based diet, which has been shown over recent decades

to be one of the healthiest diets studied. Whole-food, plant based diets are rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, and lentils and *exclude* animal products (this includes meat, ghee, butter, and milk) and refined foods (like sweets, sev, and other processed foods). This type of diet is naturally high in protective phytonutrients, vitamins, minerals and fiber. A plant-based diet is so powerful that it has even been shown to **outperform** the American Diabetes Associations own diet for diabetics.

Not surprisingly, it is possible to **beat** and even **reverse** these diseases. Those making the biggest changes will reap the biggest benefits. Foregoing smoking and exercising at least 150 minutes weekly are other two important pieces of this now-not-so-mysterious health puzzle.

The biggest challenge can be how to implement these types of diets: For healthy recipes, go to the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine's webpage on healthy Indian diets (<http://www.pcrm.org/health/diets/india-program-intro>) or the webpage of Indian Plant Based Kitchen (<http://www.indianplantbasedkitchen.com/>). It would be a shame for the next generation to see us at garba injecting ourselves with insulin or checking our blood pressures. Let's hope they see us in a healthier light.

* Shivam Joshi, MD, is a first-year fellow in nephrology at the University of Pennsylvania with an interest in preventing disease through healthy diets. You can follow him on Twitter at [sjoshimd](#). ■

Swami Vivekananda and his everlasting contributions (Part 2)

By Dr. M.G.Prasad, Ph.D.*



Introduction: In the short span of 39 years of life (1863-1902), the multi-faceted contributions of Swami Vivekananda have made

everlasting impact not only in India but also around the world. In the October 2017 issue of Reflections the highlights of the life of Swami Vivekananda were presented and in this second and concluding part, the everlasting contributions of Swami Vivekananda are briefly presented.

His everlasting contributions can be broadly classified in three categories. They are (1) Contributions to Revival of Hinduism (2) Contributions to the development of India and (3) Contributions for Global Harmony.

1. Revival of Hinduism:

Swami Vivekananda showed the common bases of Hinduism and the common ground of all sects. He showed the integral nature of Hinduism. Its vision that views of all Hindu philosophers and different sects as different aspects of One Total view of Reality. He also emphasized the rich diversity of Hinduism, which has several external expressions of rituals and traditions with a solid core of philosophy and spirituality.

He emphasized the importance of Upanishads that forms the foundations of Vedanta. The goal of Vedanta is the realization of Atman in all. This is the basis of unity and equality. They are the source of strength. He also described Yoga as a spiritual practice - Yoga is not limited to postures but to achieve higher states. It is complimentary to Vedanta. Yoga emphasizes harmony. He wrote about the four approaches in Yoga namely Jnana (Knowledge), Raja (control of mind), Karma (selfless work) and Bhakti (Love of God).

He also stressed that realization of Atman everywhere brings morality, develops inner strength and brings love and service. As Sri Ramakrishna said, "Shiva Jnaane Jeeva Seva" (Service to realize Lord Shiva), Swami Vivekananda stressed that "Atmano mokshaartham Jagaddhitaaya cha" (Self-realization as well as doing good for the world). He said, "Head to think, Heart to feel and Hands to work."

Swamiji emphasized the similarity of Vedanta and Science. He stressed on the unity of existence or the oneness of

matter and energy or the oneness of God, man and nature. The Supreme Reality Brahman is the substratum of all phenomena. Swami Vivekananda and Nikola Tesla met to discuss on Vedantic concept of unity.

Another major contribution of Swami Vivekananda is rejuvenation of Hindu monasticism. New monastic ideals, followed in the Ramakrishna order, the ancient principles of renunciation and God-realization are combined with service to God in man.

2. Contributions to the development of India

Swami Vivekananda is referred as a Patriot-Saint. He traveled extensively throughout India and had first hand experience of the people and the land. He emphasized that India (Bharata) in spite of her linguistic, ethnic and regional diversities has had a sense of cultural unity. Swami Vivekananda revealed the true foundations of the culture and thus clearly defined and strengthened the sense of unity as a nation. He says, "We have yet something to teach to the world. This is the very reason *raison d'etre*, that this nation has lived on, in spite of hundreds of years of persecution, in spite of nearly a thousand of years of foreign rule and foreign oppression. This nation still lives; the *raison d'etre* is, it still holds to God, to the treasure-house of religion and spirituality."

Again Swami Vivekananda says "And I challenge anybody to show one single period of her national life when India was lacking in spiritual giants, capable of moving the world. But her work is spiritual, and that cannot be done with blasts of war trumpets or the march of cohorts. Her influence has always fallen upon the world like that of the gentle dew, unheard and scarcely marked, yet bringing into bloom the fairest flowers of the earth."

Swami Vivekananda not only identified some of the causes of downfall of India but also made efforts to rectify them. Some of the areas that he identified are: (a) neglect of masses (b) Monopoly of education (c) Laziness

and meanness (d) Lack of organization.

(e) Neglect of womenfolk. Swami Vivekananda contributed immensely to regeneration of India in various aspects. His works and words can be summarized as below.

(a) For the upliftment of masses he said, *"Keep the motto before you - Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion."*

(b) *"In religion lies the vitality of India, so long as the Hindu race do not forget the great inheritance of their forefathers, there is no power on earth to destroy them."*

(c) Education for self-reliance: *"All the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves. Our work should be mainly educational, both moral and intellectual."*

(d) *"The uplift of the women, the awakening of masses must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country for India."*

(e) Global exchange of ideas- *"..That we did not go out, that we did not compare notes with other nations...Therefore we must go out, and the secret of life is give and take."*

3. Contributions to Global Harmony

It is well known that Swami Vivekananda through his epoch making speech at the 1893 Parliament of Religions contributed to the global harmony. He emphasized that the religion as a science of consciousness. He emphasized that there is potential divinity in all beings. He stressed on spiritual humanism. Based on the all-pervading Atman, which is intrinsically pure, he stressed on the global principles of morality and ethics. He emphasized on the principle of Love all and service to all because we are all one in Brahman. Another major contribution of Swami Vivekananda is on the emphasis of mutual understanding of East and West. He was a pioneer in communication of Hindu scriptures and philosophy in the language of the west. He showed the relevance and application of western humanism to the East. He contributed

immensely through the establishment of Vedanta Societies around the world.

Concluding remarks

Swami Vivekananda accomplished all his achievements in a short span of life. On one occasion when Josephine MacLeod (in America) asked how she can help Swamiji for which Swamiji said "Love India". This answer that Swamiji gave applies to all. His life is an inspiration for all seekers of all times. His writings are vibrant and inspirational. His messages are dynamic. May we all derive inspiration from the great life and contributions of Swami Vivekananda.

Some of his messages are noted below.

"Whatever you think, do well on it. All your actions will be magnified, transformed and deified by the very power of thought."

"My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody."

In reference to organizational problems of Indian society, he said, *"The faculty of organization is entirely absent in our nature, but this has to be infused. The great secret is - Absence of Jealousy. Be always ready to concede to the opinions of your brothers, and try always to conciliate. That is the whole secret."*

Swami Vivekananda's very well known message is *"Every soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy - by one, or more, or all of these- and be free. This is the whole religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details."*

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Envy

Envy and wrath shorten the life. (Ecclesiasticus). All of us have a need to forgive, whether in large or small matters. All of us suffer little irritating pinpricks every day. It is not very effective to analyze these small wrongs and then forgive them one by one. Much more effective is not to dwell on them at all. Whenever a stray bit of wrath arises and wants to talk over some incident from the past, don't invite that thought in.

When we can withdraw our attention completely from the past, it is not possible to get resentful; it is not possible to be oppressed by mistakes in our past, no matter who made them. All our attention is in the present, which makes every moment fresh, every relationship fresh. Staleness and boredom vanish from our life.

- Eknath Easwaran

Some Impressions from My Visit to India

By Dr. Bidhan Chandra*



I have traveled to India many times in the near and far past mainly for some international consulting assignments with U.S. multinational companies working

in India, but for personal reasons as well. I come back from India every time with a mix of mostly very positive and sometimes not so heartening impressions. The purpose of my trip last November was to co-present a paper at the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) Conference held at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA). After staying in Ahmedabad for a week, I also traveled to Bengaluru for a few days. My impressions of what I observed and experienced in India this time are not drastically different from other times I visited India in the past

although I did experience a few things that defied my expectations.

Let us first talk about travel. Arriving in Ahmedabad in an Emirates flight at 3.00 AM and the subsequent immigration and customs checks were flawless. I was quite impressed. However, the outside international arrival area was just short of a nightmare – the area and the parking lots were not well lighted, had no directions for transport, much crowding as too many people receiving too few people, and no public telephone to call your hotel or contact anyone if your hotel transfer car did not arrive. In stark contrast, I discovered later that the domestic as well as the international departure areas at the same airport were much superior and almost at world class level. The Bengaluru airport was excellent both for arrivals and departures.

My flight from Ahmedabad to Bengaluru was quite inexpensive (\$60 only) and without any issue. But just before the counter check-in at the airport, a mini pandemonium happened. The very young and very western-dressed airline staff could not guide and control the passengers when a baggage security machine broke down. We had been patiently waiting in line for check-in but were instructed to leave the line and go to another baggage security check area. The result was a mini stampede and I thought I would lose my bags and miss my flight. Lesson learned – don't take anything for granted in India. Also, you must carry a local mobile phone and hire an airport porter for your baggage check in. These can be lifesaving solutions in case of unexpected problems.

The local transportation I used was impressive. I have special praise for the higher level of technology penetration in daily life in India. I was used to renting a car in my past travels. I did something quite different this time. I got an unlocked GSM smart phone for my entire stay in India and I called Uber for all my rides in Ahmedabad and Bengaluru. And I am very content to share that I never found any issues

with the Uber services. The rides arrived within 5-10 minutes of placing the order and cost very little even when compared with local taxi prices – most rides for me were within \$2-3 range. What also impressed me that the drivers were very comfortable with the use of the GPS and Google Maps. Google also deserves praise for mapping out even remote neighborhoods in small and big cities.

The roads were crowded with all types and makes of vehicles and the traffic was a systematic chaos in both cities. The air quality in November was pretty bad in both places, but more troublesome in Bangalore where I needed to use a mask at times. The Bengaluru Metro seemed to me a breath of fresh air in the over-populated city. Another element of pleasant surprise was the greater civic sense of helpfulness and courtesy of my Metro co-passengers.

Soon after our arrival in Ahmedabad, my American colleague and I visited Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram which was Gandhi's home from 1917 to 1930. My colleague and I found this ashram very serene, peaceful, and inspiring. I had visited Porbandar (Gandhi's birthplace) about 30 years ago. But the Sabarmati Ashram had a very different impact on me. As I was reading the inscriptions in different buildings and seeing names of some of the prominent freedom fighters - Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Vinoba Bhave, and Jai Prakash Narayan, among many others - who came to meet Mahatma Gandhi at this ashram, I was reminded of everything I had read in my school days about our motherland's freedom struggle. I also visited a school run at the Ashram where 150 children from nearby shantytowns and slums (these places are barely 2 kms. away from the Ashram) spend time from 11 AM to 7 PM to study as well as learn some special skills. I was quite moved to see that these 10-14 year olds were being taught computer programming by a young volunteer woman using probably 10-year old models of PCs because of lack of enough money. No wonder, every Indian child aspires to be an IT professional!

I have mixed feelings about the AHRD conference held in IIMA. I was impressed to see a cadre of both young and older Indian scholars, academics and professionals presenting at the conference. It was very nice to interact with them and mutually exchange ideas and information about state of HRD in India and the U.S. The interactions with these people enhanced my knowledge of India. On the other hand, I was somewhat dismayed by IIMA's lack of both organizational efficiency and effectiveness in holding this international conference. Clearly, the organizers could not provide evidence of any significant experience in international conference management. I observed that more emphasis was on ceremonies, but lesser focus on issues related to timely communication, conference visa paperwork overall program logistics including facilitation of concurrent sessions, meal choices, and transportation for international delegates. While such things may not be uncommon in India in general, my expectations were not matched when it came to having this conference at IIMA – an institution about which Indians proudly claim that it is relatively easier to get into Harvard or MIT than in IIMA.

While in India, I brainstormed with several professionals and learned about new ongoing changes in India. The conversations were very meaningful. In order to better understand what is going on in India after 25 years of the beginning of economic liberalization and reforms in 1991, I have been made to realize and accept that we are in fact dealing with two countries - the mostly rural or semi-urban **Bharat** which is changing for a better quality of life but more slowly, and the relatively more modern and sophisticated **India** which now comprises of the very impressive portions of urban India with gated communities, modern technology parks, very posh and plush shopping malls, and expensive luxury hotels. If you observe keenly, you will meet both Bharat and India side by side everywhere, even in highly urban and developed cities that you will visit.

One other important lesson learned was that defining India in Western terms could be a grave mistake. India as a nation has already come a long way, but the long and tedious journey to becoming a developed country will continue for quite some time to come. It has a very bright future if things continue to be done the right way.

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We are always looking for ways to improve the Newsletter and we welcome suggestions. Please send your comments and ideas to Ram Chugh at Reflections.hcc@gmail.com.

From the Teachings of Lao Tzu

The ego is a monkey catapulting through the jungle:
Totally fascinated by the realm of the senses,
It swings from one desire to the next,
One conflict to the next.
If you threaten it, it actually fears for its life.
Let this monkey go.
Let the senses go.
Let desires go.
Let conflicts go.
Let ideas go.
Let the fiction of life and death go.
Just remain in the center, watching.
And then forget that you are there.

What is Life?

Life is a challenge	Meet it.
Life is a gift.	Accept it.
Life is an adventure.	Dare it.
Life is a sorrow.	Overcome it.
Life is a tragedy.	Face it.
Life is a duty.	Perform it.
Life is a game.	Play it.
Life is a mystery.	Unfold it.
Life is a song	Sing it.
Life is an opportunity.	Take it.
Life is a journey.	Complete it
Life is a promise.	Fulfill it.
Life is a love.	Enjoy it.
Life is a beauty.	Praise it.
Life is a spirit.	Realize it
Life is a struggle.	Fight it.
Life is a puzzle.	Solve it.
Life is a goal.	Achieve it.

Inspiring thoughts from the Bhagvad Gita
By **Leonard (Ram Lev)** and **Jenness Perlmutter**, American Meditation Institute

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

**From Gitanjali
by Rabindranath Tagore**

When thou commandest me to sing
It seems that my heart would break
With pride; and I look to thy face, and
tears come to my eyes.

All that is harsh and dissonant in
My life melts into one sweet harmony
---- and my adoration spreads wings
like
a glad bird on its flight across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my
Singing. I know that only as a singer
I come before thy presence.

I touch by the edge of the far spread-
ing wing of my song thy feet which I
Could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I for-
get myself and call thee friend who
art my lord

Aspire to Inspire before we Expire

-Unknown

