



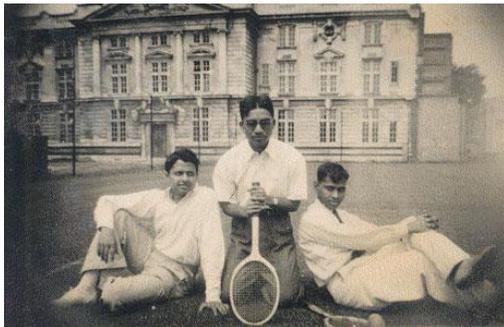
Professor M.V.Rama Sarma

Life History

- Posted by padmanir

Movva Venkata Rama Sarma , a scholar, humanist, man of letters and an educationist was born on September 6, 1920 at 8.47 P.M at Movva Village, Movva Mandal, Krishna District. He entered into a family deriving its lineage from the poet-saint-composer, kshetrappa, whose life and tryst with eternity was fictionalised in "The Bliss of Life"- a novel. His father, Movva Rajgopala Rao was a landlord and a freedom fighter. His mother was Movva Subbamma.

M.V. Rama Sarma's father taught him alphabets. But he took more interest in running around the fields and spending time with the household servants and swimming in the village pools. This concerned his father much, though he was a source of delight to his mother, who sided with him on all occasions. Seeing his antics people around him often compared him to his paternal grand father and called him 'Banda Ramaiah' meaning rough Ramaiah. He attended Elementary School in a nearby village, Challapally, with great difficulty often bunking the classes. As a result, his classmates used to tease him saying 'Inspector has come'. Meanwhile he had sight problems and started wearing glasses with high



power. He regretted that he could not check his eyes earlier. Slowly he moved on to Machilipatnam for SSC and Intermediate. Then he started concentrating on studies. He liked lawn tennis and played with his friend Sri NarasimHAM. He won several prizes and cups in college and inter college competitions. He passed Intermediate in 1938.

His father wanted him to get married and his mother suggested a relative on her side. But as he was not interested, his father wanted him to see his friend, Inampudi Gurunadha Rao's eldest daughter Venkata Lakshmi. He saw her and liked her since she was beautiful and had fair complexion. She was also relieved since she was supposed to marry her relative, much to her distaste. The only hitch was that neither her father could give dowry nor did Rama Sarma wanted dowry. So his parents took some time to get convinced and the marriage was performed in the year 1938.

All through he pursued his studies. He tried for a seat in B.A at Masulipatnam and at Vishakapatnam as his closest friend Sri Ramanatham was studying there, but could not succeed. Finally he got admission at P R College, Kakinada. A debater and an orator to the core, he participated in several competitions and won laurels to the college. He was popular and liked by his Principal, Sri Pedada Ramaswami He completed his BA in 1940 and secured second rank in his group. In the 1941 he got a job as tutor at Hindu College, Machilipatnam, as the Principal immediately recognised him as the old student who got prizes in the competitions.

Meanwhile his eldest son M. Shyam Sundar Rao (later named as Shyam Babu by his Delhi friends) was born in the year 1941. He set up family at Machilipatnam. He appeared privately for M.A in English Literature at Nagpur University. He was about to get his result in 1943, when he lost his father. Within 13 days of his father's death his second son M. Raja Gopal was born.

He was popular as a teacher and his life in a way was settled. But his urge to excel drove him to pursue Phd. He gathered finances through loans and help from his village elders. He left for England in December 1945 when his daughter, Sundari, was only 5 days old. It was a tough decision for the family, especially for his wife, who stood by him as a solid anchor and brushed aside all the fears put forth by her relatives that her husband would marry some English Lady and leave her.

In England he had a trying time with Prof Wren of University of Oxford putting him again to M.A. He wanted to work on Benard Shaw, but his Professor refused to allow him since Shaw at that time was considered as a journalist and a pamphleteer. He was almost forcibly asked to work on John Milton. During this hour of trial, his friend Sri Nageswar Rao, suggested that he should try at University of Cardiff, Wales. Luckily he got admission for Phd in this University and he worked under Prof Bethell. At Cardiff he enjoyed the company of his two friends, Sri Nageswar Rao, who later died quite young and Ms Gloria, who lost touch with him after some years. Here he participated in weekly debates. He was lucky to get a fine landlady, though he lost his stepbrother and mother during this period.



Armed with a foreign Phd in 1949, he returned to India in 1950 and sought job offers at Pune, Hyderabad, Baroda and some other places. Finally he joined in 1951 as lecturer at Nirmala Collegel, New Delhi. The hour of tribulation was over for his family and they settled at Delhi. Here he also got a job in Ministry of

Education. But as he was essentially a teacher he refused to be lured by the administrative job. His stay at U.K also polished his sensibilities and thought processes. His wife always quipped that he " became a human being only after he returned from London". His family enjoyed the cosmopolitan culture and settled for a highly social life.

But he felt that his home State, Andhra Pradesh beckoned him. At that time Sri Venkateswara University at Tirupati was started and the administration was looking for young and promising talents. He had some gut feeling that whenever he applies from Delhi, he will not get the desired result. He applied for a job in English Department in this university, when he came to his native place during holidays.

He was first appointed as Lecturer in the year 1955. Once he went to Lord Venkateswara's temple at Tirumala on Asthanam Day (special occasion). He spent some time in the temple and had Lord's darshan. He felt some mystifying force and he realised that this place marks the end of his journey. Initially his family stayed in Tirupati Devasthanam Chowltry and later moved to a hired house near the temple pond of Sri Govindaraja swamy Temple. His two children were put into schools and his eldest son appeared for Matriculation. His wife also continued her studies. The life at the little village like Tirupati (at that time) came in as a rude shock to his family. Their mannerisms, language, everything, in short were looked on with curiosity. He was also denied his professorship in 1959. So he seriously wanted to go to the University of Kurukshetra, in Harayana. During this wavering period, he had his own misgivings about divine dispensations and refused to apply again for the post of Professor.

On April 30, 1960 his fourth child, Padma, a daughter, was born in the early hours of Saturday and his wife urged him to apply since that was the last day for applying. He applied and became Professor. He used to say that if one daughter sent him to U.K, another made him the Professor. The family moved to University Quarters. Peace and prosperity filled in. He wanted to make his eldest son, Shyam, an engineer since he always got cent percent in Maths. But Shyam- calm going, very polite and serious- choose to do Bsc and later Msc in Mathematics. Though Shyam was offered tutorship immediately after his MSc, Professor wanted him to be an administrator, if not an engineer. He sent him for writing IAS exam. But Shyam could not succeed and finally joined as research scholar in Mathematics Dept*. Professor's second son, Gopi (as he was popularly called), who was lively, mother's pet and quite outgoing (his opinion carried weight and his presence was sought in all important works), decided to become an engineer**.His eldest daughter did MA in Hindi***.

In the year 1964 his second son insisted on buying a plot at the Kapila Teertham Road as his friend's father was converting his land into a residential plots. With much reluctance he agreed though he was not sure of the finances.

The local town cooperative housing society promised to help with the loan and the work started under the supervision of his second son. The house came upto foundation level; still he was not comfortable with building a house as he felt that the house would bind him. He always had a dream of going abroad as visiting Professor and settling there. But one evening when he saw the half built house against the backdrop of mountains he fell in love with the house and there was no seeing back.

In 1966 Professor performed the marriage of his eldest son with Palani, daughter of Late L.N.Rao, an officer in the department of Tribal welfare. Palani studied MA in English Literature and became his student****. His second son was married in the year 1969 with Rukmini, daughter of Vadlamudi GOpala Krishna Murthy, a leading Criminal Lawyer at Guntur. Rukmini did her B.A, Bed and opted to be a housewife, though she worked as teacher for sometime. Then Professor concentrated on getting his eldest daughter married. But either he did not like the alliance or the grooms did not like the girl, all alliances fizzled out.

His second daughter was growing up and like him hated the idea of going to a school. She was first put into the Campus School and after going for 3 days; she ran to her father's office room with the help of a servant and refused to go to that school. His wife was worried and prayed vehemently for both the daughters. Then he put his second daughter in a nearby Kendriya Vidyalaya and though she often preferred to stay at home, she continued her studies*****.

He became Principal in 1971 and continued till 1977.The entire student community liked and respected him as an administrator as he listened to their problems and solved them amicably. Even the Vice Chancellor, Sri Jagannatha Reddy, relied on him as a source of strength. But he never gave up his first love – teaching. Though there were rumours that he would become Vice Chancellor in 1977, it did not materialise. After seven hectic years there was lull. He opted to spend these moments by visiting important places in India. He, along with his wife and two daughters went to Varanasi, Allahabad in the North. Later he was keen to visit the temples in the South as he was planning to depict the story of Kshetrayya and he thought that unless he sees these places he will not be able to do full justice to this novel. So he went to Kanchi, Rameswaram, Sri Rangam,Tiruchinapally, Madurai, Tiruchandur, Knaya Kumari and Suchindram.In 1979 he had eye problem. He underwent eye operation, but could not retain his right eye.

He prepared himself to retire on September 30, 1980.But his wife had other visions of seeing him as the head of the university. This was her dream of sitting on the front row in the convocation, when her husband sits on the dais. On October 1,1980 he assumed charge as the Vice Chancellor of S.V. University. This was the first time that an internal Professor was selected as the Vice Chancellor. His horizons widened and he was awarded the Distinguished Miltonist of the year

in 1981. Still he did not leave teaching. He taught for the first hour and attended to his duties later. His last daughter also became his student by this time and was astonished to find a teacher of such a capacity. His lectures got imprinted in the mind and there was practically no need to study for the exams. His commanding voice would ring in his ears and the lines would effortlessly tumble down

Professor attained his peak in career, though his eldest daughter's marriage still remained a distant possibility. On advice of his well wishers he performed Kalyanaothshavam (a religious ceremony wherein Lord Venkateswara's marriage is performed with Sri Devi and Bhoodevi, his consorts) at Tirumala in his eldest daughter's name. Then he went abroad for attending a seminar deciding to put her in a job. His second son, who always took active part in bringing the alliances, went out of town on some work. At this moment an alliance was proposed through a common friend Mukkaram, his student, and his wife decided to arrange the bridegroom to see the bride. His eldest son brought the family of the bridegroom and as he was not well trained in these affairs, he told his sister in confusion that only the family has come and bridegroom would come later. So the whole atmosphere was easy going. The bridegroom, N. Sreenivas Rao, an engineer in Irrigation Dept., did come and the moment he arrived in the house his inner voice told him to accept the match. His acceptance was informed the very next day.

So on his return Professor had a pleasant surprise in form of marriage being almost settled. He agreed and since it was at a short notice all the marriage halls at Tirupati were booked. So it was decided to perform at Tirumala. The marriage took place in 1982 exactly one month later on the very day Kalyanaothsavam was performed. Soon the marriage of his second daughter was fixed with V.V.R.Prasad, working as scientist in ECIL, the brother-in-law of his second son. Even this marriage was performed in May 1983 at Tirumala as Professor felt that it was Lord's wish.

By then his wife was ill and the cause was not correctly diagnosed initially. She was taken to Madras and Puttaparthi. During her illness, he had to go abroad for a seminar and he thought of avoiding it. But she gave him the courage to go. Finally she was admitted in the Vellore hospital. His children attended to her and he visited her once in 2 days. This was September 1983. On the fateful day he conducted interviews and wanted to go to Vellore the next day. But his second son suddenly appeared at night, leaving his eldest sister at Vellore, saying that his mother was serious. Professor wanted to go early in the morning. But around 4 AM, phone began to ring and his eldest daughter told amidst tears that every thing was over. He has reached the nadir of life, since his light of life has gone out. Even his term as Vice Chancellor was coming to a close by the month end. He did not want to continue as he felt that he is bereft of divine benevolence. Still he was continued for another 6 months and the end of his

tenure came abruptly. After prayers he was about to start for the office, when he got a message saying that the office received a telegram saying that his term as Vice Chancellor has ended. He did not bother to check the veracity of the telegram and returned all the official paraphernalia.

He spent retired life by writing books, attending seminars, giving guest lectures and advising the research students. His one source of joy was his grand son, V.V.M.Niranjana Kumar*****, son of his second daughter. He believed that his wife has returned to him in this form. Every month he visited Hyderabad and spent ten days with his grand son. He refused to stay at Hyderabad even for a day more, since he felt at home in his favourite room (Professor's den as his wife named it) and easy chair. He used to sit in the verandah to have a view of the road and being reminiscent of his grandson, watch, with affection, the children going to school.

He wanted his second daughter to take up teaching profession and often was unhappy with her for not accepting the Lectureship at Mahila University, Tirupati. But his daughter was already married and did not want to leave her family, since her husband worked at Hyderabad and there was no possibility of transfer to Tirupati. Professor was against her joining administration and dissuaded her from writing Civil Services exam. He put her for Phd. But she could not get the job of a lecturer in either the Osmania University or University of Hyderabad. Quite frustrated at the way life has shaped her, she wrote the Group I exams in 1990 and was, by God's grace, selected as Deputy Collector in 1993. Professor was astonished to find that every thing was happening contrary to his wishes in the case of both his eldest son and his last daughter. He stayed with his daughter in her divisional level postings and took pride in being addressed as the father of Revenue Divisional Officer.

In 1996 he fell down and had to undergo operation. From then onwards he felt restricted in his movements. From 1998 onwards he also developed symptoms of epilepsy. Whenever he saw one of his neighbours, who lost his eldest son, he used to feel sad and prayed to God that he should not be punished in such a manner. But what will be...will be. April 1999 was the saddest month for him, when his eldest son lost his battle against pancreas infection and was no more. He felt that one of his limbs was torn off and this death shocked the family. By the time they were coming to terms with this tragedy, his second son's wife died of cancer. This was too much for even a strong willed Professor to take. The very thought that his son will also face the same agony as felt after retirement, broke his back. He went into depression though he put up a brave front before the world.

In October he went to Hyderabad for general check up and refused to stay even for a day more. He even did not go to his sister's house (He never missed her during his visits). In November just before his second son and daughter were

entering his house at Tirupati, in his anxiety to receive them he fell down. The doctors advised to shift him to hospital though the possibility of operation at such an age was ruled out. He refused to move out of his bed. Every morning he anxiously woke up and looked around to ensure that he was still in his room. His health deteriorated and he died on December 31, 2001. Thus ended the saga of a Professor, who rose from a humble beginning to heights of glory. He led a life interspersed with joys and sorrows, expectations and disappointments – a life lived to its fullest.

“Professors are lovable”. Aren’t they? As quoted from his novel, The Farewell Party

*Shyam Babu, Professor’s eldest son later became Professor of Mathematics. He died of Pancreas infection in 1999 and was survived by his wife and children. He had 2 sons, Siva Kumar and Satish Kimar who are working in software industry and are married to Padma and Sirisha respectively.

**Raj Gopal, Professor’s second son later became Chief Engineer in Public Health and retired in 2001. He had to face the misfortune of losing his wife to Cancer, just before his retirement (like his father). He had 2 daughters. Eldest daughter is a house wife, married to Srinivas Kumar, a bank manager. She is having a daughter, Harshita. The second daughter is in software profession and she has a son, Druv. She is married to Phani Chandrasekhar, also a software professional.

***Sundari later did MA in Telugu and MEd, though she had not opted for any job. She is contented being a house wife and her husband has retired as Engineer from Irrigation Dept.

****Later Palani did her Med and had opted for career as Head mistress of a Local school.

***** Padma was always among first four ranks during her studies. She did her MA in English with a gold medal. She got Phd and joined Government Of Andhra Pradesh as Deputy Collector (Group I Services).

*****Niranjan joined IIIT, Gachibowli, Hyderabad for ECD-dual degree course (B tech+ MS) in 2004.