
N for Nobody: An Academic Autobiography

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ABSTRACT

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In this article I have discussed Professor C.D. Narasimhaiah's *N for Nobody* as an academic autobiography, in which he has recorded his gradual growth from humble beginnings to the stature of an internationally recognized scholar, teacher and critic. I have highlighted how Professor CDN combined in himself the elements of merit and good luck in rising higher and higher in his academic life and how he did a great service to Indian Universities by introducing American Literature and Commonwealth Literatures thereby extending the vista of Indian academic learning from the parochial British Literature to the international Commonwealth Literature. Likewise I have discussed how he made use of his academic contact with the famous scholars of Britain, America and Australia among others both in teaching and learning new disciplines. I have also shown how his autobiographical writing is intertwined with his critical appreciation of the modern literary giants and how he being a member of several research bodies like ASRC and others helped several young scholars to get Fulbright fellowships to study in the US, a fact which holds mirror to his enormous encouragement to the younger scholars of India. I have highlighted how his academic dream has been realized in his establishment of a research centre like *Dhvanyaloka*, which is equal to ASRC in quality, if not in quantity and which acts a source of information and inspiration to young Indian scholars to pursue their research. I have also shown how he did not care and condescend to become a Vice-Chancellor of any Indian University (unlike many empty-headed professors), which is a political appointment rather than an academic one and stayed miles away from the dirty politicians due to his pure academic pursuits. Finally I have shown the vices of his virtue in not recording the cultural details of British and American life in his autobiography, unlike other contemporaries like Dr. K. Iswaran.

Autobiographies occupy an important place in literature anywhere in the world as they happen to be part of the larger history of the nation as they reveal several intimate details not published otherwise in other forms of literature. But biography happens to be its close brother as it were, as it complements autobiography in many cases. In Britain biographies have been written about great men and women centuries after they are dead and gone. The biographers take great pains to do deep research into source materials like family documents, family memories, public documents, the oral or written opinions by others and so on. But in India biographies, especially of poets, novelists, playwrights and critics are not attempted at all for a variety of reasons, the main reason being our lethargy and lack of academic adventure. Then coming to the genre of autobiography, there have been quite a few important autobiographies written in Indian English by our celebrities like Nehru, Gandhi, M.C. Chagla, Kuldeep Nayar and so on. Nowadays, not only biographies but even autobiographies are written by the ghost writers sponsored by the opportunistic publishers for their commercial profit. Consequently, the autobiographies of cricketers, film actors and actresses and politicians have been coming out slowly. But there are very few autobiographies written by academicians in India. Hence Professor, Padmabhushana C.D. Narasimhaiah's *N for Nobody* assumes an important place in the academicians' life-narratives.

N for Nobody belongs to the galaxy of other well known Indian English autobiographies like Mulk Raj Anand's *Apology for Heroism*, Nirad Chaudhuri's *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, Dom Moraes's *My Son's Father*, Wrangler Dr. D.C. Pawate's *Memoirs of an Educationist*, and the Kannada autobiographies like K. Eswaran's

Valasehoda Kannadigana Kathe (Story of a Migrant Kannadiga), Kuvempu's *Nenapina Doniyali (In the Boat of Memory)* and Dr. R.C. Hiremath's *Uri Barali Siri Barali (Let Come Fever or Riches)*. In most of these autobiographies the authors depict their academic or educational life with all its struggles, delights, problems, challenges involving their connections with the greater society around them. Thus all the autobiographies reveal some details of the historical period to which their authors belong and provide a sort of micro-history or para-history, which is complementary to the wider socio-political-cultural history of life around them.

N for Nobody (First published in 1991) by Professor C.D.Narasimhaiah around his seventieth year provides a delightful reading for any academician worth his name as he finds parallels and contrasts between the author and himself in so many details. It is due to this common interest between the two that makes the work so interesting, absorbing and un-put-down-able. When I joined my M.A. in English course at our Karnatak University, Dharwad in 1970, our eyes were opened to the new papers like Indian English Literature and American Literature by our Professor M.K.Naik. Then Professor C.D.Narasimhaiah's *The Swan and the Eagle* had been published by the IAS, Shimla. Then we began to hear a lot about the pioneering work done by Professor CDN for almost all the Universities by removing their blinkers and opening the vistas of English Literature from the small British isle to the entire world producing vast literature in different kinds of Englishes- a delightful fact we all enjoyed for liberating us from the parochial British literature to the World Literature Written in English including the Commonwealth Literature, which were nearer to our sensibility and experience.

Writing an autobiography is a deceptively simple art, which is not practiced by anyone and everyone. It requires some knowledge of literature and the art of writing in addition to possessing a fine literary sensibility. Mere abundance of experience of life is not enough to create an autobiography, but it has to be moulded into a form of readable life-narrative. For example, many illiterate people, merchants, stage actors, labourers and politicians may have very rich experience of life, but they are simply unable to transform it into an artistic expression. That is why sometimes they hire the well-paid ghost writers to act as proxies for articulating their experiences of life.

Supposing an autobiographer is well qualified to do his job, and then there are other problems also which he has to face in the writing of it. As Jawaharlal Nehru put it long back, there are two hurdles or dangers to be overcome while writing one's autobiography: one, self-glorification and two, self denial or denigration, both of which are extremes of literary practice. The most important aspect of writing one's autobiography is the honesty or sincerity with which to portray one's life without hiding any bitter or harsh truth and without sugar-coating anything deliberately. Here again there are no strict rules to be followed while writing an autobiography. Some people may write them in a very simple, bald and colourless style whereas some others may do so in a fine and subtle manner. As Northrop Frye said, autobiographies also may be written in a fictional (i.e., artistic) style or manner. Much depends on the individual taste, temperament and educational qualification of the author.

By and large, no autobiography covers the total life of a man, but is always partial in its depiction of life. It may cover just the first quarter of one's life as in Dom Moraes's *My Son's Father*, or half of his life as in Chaudhuri's *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* or three quarters of life as in the case of Kuldip Nayar's *One Life is not Enough*. The remaining part of one's life left out by the autobiography may be covered by a biography by an able writer. All these are just possibilities.

Most of the autobiographers begin their works with the date and place of their birth directly, and then mention their parents, brothers, sisters and family background. But Professor C.D.Narasimhaiah begins his work not with the date of his birth but with a description of his village, namely Closepet, which was later renamed as Ramanagaram in order to memorialize the name of the Lord Rama who rested on a hill in this village according to the local legend (*sthala purana*). He mentions the colonial habit of the British Colonel Close in naming the mythical name of the village, Ramagiri after his own name in accordance with his megalomania.

He describes the rural landscape of rocks and cowboys wandering about, jackfruit trees etc. Then he points out how his parents were illiterate and hard working and his father was quite credulous as they belonged to the old world. The illiterate parents wanted their son to be highly educated and hence sent him to a local school, where the boy was taught English by a Brahmin village accountant. One should notice that he was not educated in an English medium or Convent school (breeding snobbery) or prestigious public school, but in a school in the medium of Kannada language. Then he went to the Middle School in Bangalore. After doing well in his S.S.L.C. examination, he joined the Maharaja College at Mysore for his B.A. (Honours) and M.A. and did quite well there also. He was proud of belonging to a prestigious college where well known scholars like S.V.Ranganna, M.Hiriyanna, Dr. Radhakrishnan and so on had taught. He could not learn Sanskrit, a fact which was his main regret in his life. It was when he was still a student of B.A.Honours, he had to marry a girl of just 14 due to the pressure of his parents.

While studying at Mysore, CDN was fascinated by the great landmarks of the classical city like the palace, the college, the Chamundi Hill, and the Kukkarahalli Lake etc., because of his poetic sensibility.

At Maharaja College he was proud of being taught by great teachers like S.V.Ranganna, Rollo and Eagleton. He was lucky enough to win two scholarships, (one, backward class scholarship and two, subject scholarship) and could continue his education in spite of the poverty of the family. He acknowledges the great help and encouragement offered to him by these three teachers. As he did well in his M.A. degree, he was immediately appointed as Assistant Professor of English in the same college thereby arousing the jealousy of the mediocrity. He confesses how he became a Professor of English by the strange quirk of his fate. One notices that luck had been very favourable to him in spite of the people's bickering against his quick rise in academic circles. He duly acknowledges the help rendered to him by his teacher Mr. Eagleton, who recommended him to be sent to Cambridge on study leave for exposure to the English life. Thus there is a turning point in his life. His luck has turned in his favour.

He gets a Damodardos Scholarship and sails in a ship to Cambridge and joins the Cambridge University as a Post-graduate student there under the tutorship of Dr. F.R.Leavis. As soon as he reaches his campus, within a few days he notices the blatant contrast between the British way of talking and the Indian. He notices that whereas the English people take delight in making understatements, keeping a low profile to conceal their brilliance and avoiding over-statements, the Indians are notorious for their sentimentalities, hyperbolic expressions and loudness of their talk, which are the objects of great amusement for the British people. Soon he comes under the deep influence of Dr. F.R.Leavis, who is known for his incisive revaluations of British poetry and fiction and for editing his famous journal entitled *Scrutiny*. He comes to

know other celebrities like I.A.Richards, Dr. E.M.W.Tillyard, Basil Wiley, F.L.Lucas, Mrs. Joan Bennette, Potts, Mrs. M.C.Bradbrook and other academicians. He notices the mutual differences among these scholars in their approaches to literature. Being an admirer of T.S.Eliot's poetry, Narasimhaiah likes F.R.Leavis who has highlighted his poetry in his critical writings and did justice to the famous novelists in his *The great Tradition*. Narasimhaiah is frank and bold enough to observe that he was not impressed by I.A.Richards's approach to poetry in his practical criticism. In his comparative assessment of the British critics, Narasimhaiah comes to like F.R.Leavis the most because of his incisive analysis and insight into literature and therefore considers him as superior to other critics resident at Cambridge. Although Leavis suggested to him to shift to the Ph.D. Programme, (because the Ph.D. glamour was just beginning in India by then) CDN refused to do so, but on the contrary decided to continue his *Tripas*, which in his erstwhile guru, Eagleton's opinion, was more important than a Ph.D. He admires Leavis's concern for his pupils. Likewise, he admires his contemporaries at Cambridge like Derek Wilkes and others. While at Cambridge he frequently compares and contrasts the British teaching and examining system and the Indian ones and finds that the British system is more informal, open and human, whereas the Indian one is more formal and impersonal and secretive. Narasimhaiah achieves moderate success in his *Tripas* from Cambridge University and returns to Mysore after two years to join his post as Assistant Lecturer at the Maharaja College and settles down. But again his luck turns and he is offered a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship to undertake some research at Harvard University of America. Again a year's study leave is sanctioned to him. But before he goes to Harvard, the venue of his research is changed by the Foundation to Princeton, where a special conference on Literary Criticism was to be held within a short while.

Now Narasimhaiah moves with his wife to Princeton by air and joins the group of University scholars there. He finds a conspicuous difference between the British atmosphere and the American. Whereas the British are known for their insularity, the Americans are known for their liberal outlook on life. He finds the American Literature to be new and very interesting in its own way and begins to admire the American writers by reading them voraciously. He finds there several journals like *Hudson review*, *Kenyan review*, *Yale review*, *Sewanee Review*, *Partisan review* and *Comparative Literature* etc., not found in the insular Britain. He meets new scholar-friends like Mr. and Mrs. McAlpin, R. P. Blackmur, Spiller, Williard Thorp, G. E. Bentley, Canby, Carlos Baker, Lionel Trilling, Raja Rao and G. V. Desani and so on. He visits Concord and other places connected with the Boston Brahmins like Thoreau and Emerson whom he admires so deeply and whose thought agrees with the Indian thought so closely. He observes the gold rush at California. He grows to admire their vast literature and liberal and experimental criticism different from the rigid British criticism.

Thus Narasimhaiah extends the frontiers of his knowledge and experience of life by staying in America and interacting with the great scholars of the vast country and returns to India again via Cambridge by having the *darsan* of his favourite guru, F.R.Leavis. While in America, he was impressed by the Institute of Advanced Study housed in Princeton and began to think of establishing a similar institute in India in the future. He returns to Mysore and joins his *alma mater* of the prestigious Maharaja College.

Then, contrary to CDN's fear of being posted to a mofussil place, he was posted to the Post Graduate Department of English at the University of Mysore, again due to his good luck. He was very honest in confessing about his good luck in becoming an Assistant professor of

English at his twenty nine year. He feels rather guilty to know that his own teacher, F.R. Leavis at Cambridge was made a Reader at the fag-end of his career at his sixty-fifth year. His relatively early elevation to the post of a full professor, of course, roused the jealousy of the mediocrity around him, but could not be helped in the circumstances.

Being oven-fresh from Cambridge University and armed with Leavisian rigour, he tried to bring that academic freshness and novelty to the Mysore University in so many details. The first thing that he did was to modernize the English syllabus and bring it up-to-date, i.e., up to T. S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and other modern poets and novelists of the twentieth century and not ending it with the nineteenth century writers. He succeeded to a great extent in this academic adventure due to the power invested in him as the Chairman of the Board of Studies. But his attempt to modernize the question papers was not allowed by the die-hard traditional and senior teachers who wielded power in such matters. Besides, such modern question paper would disconcert the writers and readers of the bazaar notes and guides (many College and University teachers were (still are) involved in such underhand business and the enemies of true learning) felt threatened about their economic security. They therefore resisted CDN's attempt to modernize the question papers by avoiding the age-old stereotypical questions. So in protest against such an orthodox practice he turned down the evaluation work for a few years. So Narasimhaiah had to wait and bide his time until he could accomplish that also in future.

As things changed slowly in the University, he boldly introduced the American Literature in the syllabus, which was a radical step in the academic life in those days thereby cutting British Literature to its size. As he gained the power of his position slowly over the years, he introduced Indian English Literature also in the syllabus, thus widening the horizon of knowledge for our students. What is admirable in CDN is that he justified his good luck by supporting it with proper merit in terms of hard work and dedication to the academic life. In fact, he led a hectic life by undertaking strenuous task of editing text books for the schools, Pre University and Graduate classes. His admiration for Jawaharlal Nehru as his boyhood days' hero made him bring out an abridged edition of Nehru's *The Discovery of India* with the permission of Prime Minister Nehru himself.

When he started the valuation of the answer scripts of his post-graduate students he was found to be very 'strict' in comparison with the other teachers who were criminally liberal in their evaluation. His strictness was resisted by some dull students and their guardians, who also happened to be nepotistic politicians and sought the help of journalists to heckle CDN, but he did not buzz an inch and hence the matter was dropped there at that point.

CDN confesses honestly that, on the whole he was lucky to have good students learning under him, but he is bold enough to mention how his extreme popularity created great professional jealousy among some of his colleagues, but it could not be helped as it was and is part of the life of a brilliant or hard working teacher. As an honest teacher deeply interested in true learning, he never encouraged his students to read the cheap bazaar guides, notes and summaries (which are enemies of learning) but advised them sincerely to read the original texts and cultivate their individual response to them and read standard criticism on them and again go back to the texts to form their own coherent response to them. Likewise, he strongly opposed the methodologies of teaching English as a Foreign Language popularized by the CIEFL established at Hyderabad then under the grants of the British Council. He rightly believed in the view that such artificial methodologies would kill the creative imagination of the students and would not help him in any solid manner. In fact he strongly advocated his views in a lecture

delivered at the Summer School of English at Mysore. The CIEFL has not done any real service to the Indian bilingual students by preparing bilingual or multilingual dictionaries, comparative grammars and translation methods and theories even after sixty years of the establishment of the Institute. All that they have done is to train the teachers and help them go abroad on fellowships and scholarships and mint money in the backward nations of Malayasia by teaching Basic English grammar to the underdeveloped students. He therefore delivered his lecture by expressing his righteous indignation at the irrelevant methods of teaching English to Indian students. He accused them of teaching the art of writing correct grammatical English but not helping them bilingually to overcome their errors and by neglecting the exercise of their creative imagination bred on Indian culture. He accused them further of teaching widespread mimicry of the West and producing anglicized heroes alienated from their immediate surroundings of India, but yet strutting with an 'up in the air' feeling, in spite of their crass ignorance of Indian culture. CDN's views on the relevance of modern methods of teaching and learning English language without any reference to the students' mother tongue would be nothing but a fiasco, which it has resulted into now.

The next phase of CDN's academic adventure may be seen in his launching upon an important journal entitled *The Literary Criterion* inspired by T.S. Eliot's *Criterion* in 1952 in spite of financial insufficiency or absence of grants from any private or government sources. In spite of its local printing on ordinary paper, the journal gathered momentum as years went by and soon attained an international status by reaching the farthest corners of the academic world and attracting the attention – both admiration and ire of scholars from across the globe. This is indeed a miraculous adventure of Professor CDN which is not excelled by anyone so far. What is more admirable is that the journal has been kept alive even after sixty years of its birth by his enthusiastic son, Dr. Srinath and daughter, Dr. Ragini. There are many literary journals started by Indian scholars and run for about a decade or so and had their pre-mature death. The only journal, which is kept alive for several decades, happens to be *Indian Literature* run by the Central Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. But one striking difference between *Indian Literature* and *The Literary Criterion* is that whereas the former is limited to Indian languages in its scope, the latter has an international scope and reach. That redounds to CDN's resourcefulness and prophetic vision. His academic adventure of keeping a journal alive for so many decades is admirable in spite of many hurdles like financial crunch, lack of secretarial help and limited number of subscriptions from individuals and Universities. It is a matter of pleasure for us to note that the journal, in spite of several hurdles, made its mark in the international world as a result of which many foreign subscriptions came forth and provided the oxygen for the journal's survival. CDN's attempt to use the journal for highlighting the Indian English Literature mainly and other non-British Literatures is highly significant and admirable. His endeavour to encourage the Indian scholars (preferably younger ones) to articulate their native point of view or response to world literature is equally admirable. His courage of conviction and honesty made him enter into controversy with some Indian scholars living abroad under the mercy of Western Universities like B.Rajan and winning his point of view are very interesting for the present Indian scholars. He answered B.Rajan boldly by showing him that the Indian English criticism is not 'nonsense' but quite authentic. The controversy cannot be summarized here for lack of space. What is appreciable is CDN's courage of conviction and readiness to rebuff the condescending approach of B.Rajan.

Then CDN became the Principal of the Maharaja College when he was hardly 35 when there were other contenders also for the same post and did many important things there.

For example he started the tutorial system by making the students in small groups to discuss their texts in an intimate manner. He arranged regular meals in the college hostel for sixteen rupees per month. He arranged to create a terraced garden in front of the college. He restricted the admission from 1600 to 1000 in order to make it manageable. He made attendance compulsory for the students to be eligible to take the examination. He was bold enough not to yield to the political pressures in the cases of irregularity in such matters. He advised his students not to be lured by the administrative (high level clerical) posts like IAS or KAS. He was misunderstood by the public to be very strict in his evaluation of answer scripts of the students and consequently some students and parents sought the help of journalists and flashed the news against him in the local newspapers. Deeply hurt and angered by such unpleasant events CDN resigned his post of Principal-ship.

Then luckily he became a member of the UGC Visiting Committee to Utkal University and boldly gave his report that the Ravenshaw College at Cuttak and Banasthali Vidyapith in Rajasthan could not be recognized by the UGC as they did not have the necessary infrastructure. His decision was accepted and upheld by the UGC. Then CDN was made a member of the Sahitya Akademi's English Advisory Committee, which he accepted rather unwillingly.

In 1963, CDN accepted an invitation by the University of Queensland of Australia for a term and chose to speak on Nehru there and distribute Nehru's autographed copies of his books to the Australian students. He tried to popularize Indian English Literature in Australia, which was really admirable.

Then the new Vice-Chancellor, Dr. K. M. Panikkar appointed CDN as the full Professor of English on the maximum salary in the University of Mysore, but he had to become the junior most in the official hierarchy. He did not mind it as he had no eye on an administrative post in the same University.

Professor CDN received a telegram from United States Educational Foundation about his being selected for a Fellowship with a Visiting Lecturer's status at Yale University. Accordingly he went to Yale by air and began to lecture on Eliot's poetry. He had the luck of seeing Eliot from close quarters but could not meet him for a talk as the latter was ill. He then became the Fellow of Silliman College of the Yale University, where he came into close contact with great New Critics like Cleanth Brooks, Wimsatt and Norman Pearson. He could meet Allen Ginsberg. He was happy to know that Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar, the Maharaja of Mysore had gone there to deliver a lecture on Indian philosophy.

By then the American Studies Research Centre had been established at Hyderabad with Mrs. Olive Reddick as its Director and William Mulder, the dedicated scholar, who expanded its activities by introducing cultural exchange programs and helping several young Indian scholars to go to America on Fulbright Fellowships. CDN was closely associated with it and helped many young scholars to get the fellowships although he has not mentioned their names because of his high sense of decency. He appreciated the well stocked ASRC Library established at Hyderabad on the Osmania University campus and boasting of 500 international journals being received there regularly. Although many Indian students began to work on American Literature for their Ph.D.s CDN rightly observed that there was no originality of approach at all in those theses as they happened to be just rehash of the American criticism. CDN has been strongly pleading for a typically Indian approach to world literature, which has yet remained a dream not fully realized.

In the next phase of his life Professor CDN went to Australia on a Fellowship at Queensland University to learn the Australian Literature as part of Commonwealth Literature and to teach Indian English Literature to the Australians. He noticed the vast stretches of desert land there and their national habit of relaxing, the aborigines, its fame as a paradise of the Working Classes and so on. Again the Maharaja of Mysore visited the same University to receive an honorary D.Litt. from them. CDN found a lot of similarity between the Americans and the Australians and a lot of dissimilarity between the insularity of the British and the liberalism of the Americans and Australians. He came to know more and more about the Australian writers like Judith Wright, A.D.Hope, Patrick White, Shaw Nielson and so on. During his visit to Queensland and Flinders Universities he acquired the friendship of well known critics like Chris and Helen Tiffin, Anna Rutherford, G.D Killam and Syd Harrex and so on who were favourably disposed towards Indian English Literature.

In the next phase of his life Professor CDN went to the University of Leeds to deliver lectures on Indian English Literature there. He came in contact with well known writers and critics like William Walsh, Arthur Ravenscraft, Jeffreys and so on. He shows how these writers contributed a great deal to the popularization of the Commonwealth Literature. He appreciated L.C.Knight's reference to the Sanskrit concept of *dhvani* and M.C.Bradbrooks's reference to Abhinavagupta's ideas of Sanskrit poetics. He was happy to notice how the British critics had been overcoming their insularity and opening themselves to world literature. While returning to India after his stay at the University of Leeds, Professor CDN went to Cambridge for a short while to meet his erstwhile guru, Dr. F.R.Leavis who was in his eighties and who had still retained his integrity, courage and stamina. CDN was happy to be treated by his guru affectionately and graciously.

Professor CDN was closely associated with the Fulbright Selection Committee and he helped a number of his students and colleagues like G.S.Amur and others by selflessly but affectionately recommending them for the Fulbright Fellowship and sending them to American Universities for advanced research.

During the last phase of his career, he edited two famous anthologies like *An Anthology of Commonwealth Poetry* and a critical anthology entitled *Comparative Indian Literature* along with Dr. Ayyappa Panikker. Both of them were published by Macmillan Company of India and are prescribed in almost all the Indian Universities either as textbooks or as reference books. But CDN has not mentioned this important academic achievement in his autobiography, perhaps due to oversight or desire for self-effacement.

After his return to Mysore, some problems were created on the University campus by some politically instigated officers, which hurt Professor CDN so deeply that he did not wish to compromise with the situation, but volunteered to retire gracefully two years before his actual date of superannuation thereby retaining his dignity and self-respect. Many of the staff of other departments, headed by Dr. Prabhushankara arranged a hearty farewell to him by presenting him with mementos as tokens of their love and respect for him. Likewise his students also arranged a separate function of farewell to him and showered him with their love and mementos, by which the Professor was deeply touched.

One thing that puzzles the reader is that Professor Narasimhaiah does not mention the names of his colleagues in the Post-Graduate Department of English working under him or comment upon their qualifications and their efficiency or otherwise. His total silence about

them seems to hide something unpleasant from the readers. Similarly another puzzling thing is that he never mentions the names of the candidates, who worked under his guidance for their Ph.D.s or their topics in which any reader is interested.

Many ambitious Indian Professors try to become Vice-Chancellors somehow or other by managing to bribe the people in power with an amount of one crore to five crores and mint money tenfold or hundredfold and acquire huge property enough for three generations of their family. But Professor CDN did not have such lucrative ambitions.

After his retirement Professor CDN accomplished another unprecedented task, i.e., of establishing a research centre by name *Dhvanyaloka*, after Anandavardhana's famous concept of Sanskrit poetics, just behind the Manasagangotri campus in spite of some hurdles created by a few jealous people including some politicians and one or two of his past students and present colleagues. The founding of a research centre by an individual Professor is not a minor miracle in the Indian context. Perhaps no University Professor in India has ever established such a research centre. Thus his entire academic life is bracketed by two great achievements: one, the starting of an internationally known journal entitled, *The Literary Criterion* (kept alive even after sixty years, which is the crown and glory of his life.) and the other, the founding of a research centre called Dhvanyaloka in spite of financial problems. But God's grace being showered on CDN's selfless service, the centre has gathered momentum and national and international visibility due to the munificent donations from foreign scholar-friends of CDN and Ford Foundation in a big way for encouraging innovative programmes in Indian academic life. Professor CDN was undoubtedly an academic yogi establishing his academic *ashram* for the seekers of knowledge and providing a taste of *kavyananda* for them. The centre has a big library, a seminar hall and an open-air theatre also on its campus. Dhvanyaloka, which contains countless books and journals, a veritable paradise for researchers of India, is rightly renamed now as Dhvanyaloka Centre for Indian Studies and kept alive by the constant efforts of Dr. C. N. Srinath and Dr. Ragini Ramachandra (his son and daughter respectively). It is a matter of pride to note that the Nobel Laureate, William Golding and the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the Governor of Karnataka and many foreign scholars like McAlpins, William Walsh, William Mulder, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand and so on visited this centre, as they were attracted by its fame. Earlier in his life he had refused to be the Director of IAS at Shimla and gently rejected the offer by the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi to stay at New Delhi for five years and write an authentic biography of Jawaharlal Nehru because of his deep love for the royal city of Mysore. Although Dhvanyaloka is not as big as IAS, of Shimla or the former ASRC of Hyderabad, it is essentially and qualitatively equal to both of them in providing valuable service to the young researchers.

His academic autobiography could have ended at this point, but he felt like adding another chapter about his second son, Dr. Sanjay (a graduate of Leeds University, a dynamic and adventurous youth a lot of gusto for life, great capacity for mimicry and irreverent towards all the sacrosanct things of life) who had an unexpected and untimely death by appendicitis at his twenty ninth year in 1985. So the fatherly heart of CDN remembers his dynamic son by paying tributes to him affectionately and accepts the tragedy in his stride religiously and sublimates his sorrow by considering Dhvanyaloka as a living embodiment of the late Dr. Sanjay. It is here that he mentions why he named his children in a particular way. He says he named his eldest son as Srinath, after the renowned Telugu poet; he named his daughter as Ragini as he had deep love for music and he named his second son as Sanjay after the great

forbear of that name in the *Mahabharata* and wanted him to be his eye in his old age. But ironically, Sanjay could not live long enough to be his father eye in the latter's old age. He mentions at this point that his foreign visits in his life amounted to 50 in addition to his inland visits to several Indian Universities either for evaluation of Ph.D. theses, or to be on the selection committees or on inspection committees. Thus he led a busy academic life all through resulting in his frequent absences from home. That is why once his father told him tearfully to stop all his visits and stay at home comfortably.

Although Professor Narasimhaiah completed his journey of life in 2005 at the age of 84, his memory is enshrined in our hearts. His spirit seems to hover around Dhvanyaloka inviting scholars to participate in the enjoyment of *rasananda* amply available there. His absent presence inspires the visiting scholars to pursue their literary goals religiously.

Thus Professor CDN's autobiography shows his steady growth from a village boy (educated in a Kannada medium school and not in an English medium or Convent school breeding snobbery and alienation from Indian culture) to the level of an international scholar loved and respected all over the world. It shows how his life was an ideal combination of good luck and merit and indefatigable hard work throughout his life. Though he calls himself as a 'Nobody', with all the humility, he was loved and revered by everybody. He wrote this autobiography at his seventieth year but lived for another fourteen years. One wishes he had updated his autobiography covering another ten years, until he was eighty. His life provides a sharp contrast to the present day professors (some and not all) who become full professors at an early age of 35 or 40 by a quirk of their luck (upstart crows), who, as soon as they become professors, stop all reading and research and divert their attention to more lucrative jobs like real estate business, LIC Policy, direction or production of films, seeking MLC, Registrar or Vice-Chancellor positions, which do not involve any teaching and research at all, but guarantee an abundance of money or bribe. We do not know how CDN would have reacted to the modern habit of some of our ineligible Ph.D. candidates (not all) get their theses ghost written by retired teachers for a substantial fee with the complicity of their own guides and external examiners abundantly bribed.

Professor C.D.Narasimhaiah's autobiography is written in a highly serious academic style in keeping with his taste and temperament. His former student, Mr. U.R. Anantamurti's opinion about his guru's style, "as Victorian and old-fashioned," is rather a prejudiced one. All through the work he has maintained a high level of decency and decorum. He exercises both the positive and negative memories in his work. In recording his positive and happy memories he offers full details of the events and people with their proper names, but in recording his negative and unhappy memories, he conceals the details of the events and proper names of the individuals by using the general terms like 'a registrar or vice chancellor belonging to a major community' or 'past student of mine' without naming them and therefore without hurting or denigrating them maliciously. But his utter sincerity and honesty, which is the hall mark of any autobiography, can never be doubted or questioned. Due to his serious temperament, there is no scope for humour in his life-narrative.

On the whole he follows a chronological method of narration, but occasionally his memory jumps from the remote past to the recent past to connect certain similarities of experiences. Sometimes his memory jumps from England and America to India and back again.

He was humble enough to know the limitations of his life. For example, he mentions how he could not learn Sanskrit or French or German deeply due to the contingencies of his life. Likewise, he has confessed in *The Literary Criterion* that his lack of extensive knowledge of Anglo-Indian Literature was a gap in his scholarship, which he could not fill up at an early age. Likewise, he does not show any evidence of having read or studied any classical Kannada writer deeply. Thus his autobiography is happily free from the two extremes of self-glorification and self-denigration and known for his balanced view of himself and his life.

It has the vices of its virtues also. For example, although Professor CDN visited many major countries in the world like England, America and Australia among others, his attention was always concentrated on the academic life only but never on the social, cultural and political aspects of their life. Many times his descriptions of his visits to different countries creep into serious literary criticism without his being aware of it. Unlike Dr. K.Eswaran (1922-1998), a scholar from North Karnataka, who went to Oxford University for his B.Litt and then to Holland for his second Ph.D. in Anthropology and became an internationally known Anthropologist on par with M.N.Srinivas. (he had his first Ph.D. in Kannada already), describes the social and cultural life of the British people and offers a graphic picture of Oxford campus and city with all the surrounding places, Professor C.D.Narasimhaiah does not offer a graphic picture of the Cambridge University including its architectural features. He never refers to River Cam or the boating competitions or the 'bitchy weather of Britain.' He does not offer the details of the food habits and dress codes of the British people, the dating ventures of young men and women, their marriage celebrations, their divorces, their kissing and hugging in public, their night clubs, their games, their festivals, Christmas Celebrations, their industries and agriculture, their promiscuity, their cricket plays, the performances of Shakespeare's plays or Bernard Shaw's plays or musical concerts, in knowing which an Indian reader is eagerly interested. This is not to belittle the enormous importance of his autobiography for the Indian students and teacher.

Professor C.D.Narasimhaiah has recorded in his work how he thought and looked at life around him. But there is a lot to be said on him by others from their point of view. Hence I feel there is a great necessity of a literary biography on him, which may reveal several others details of his rich life and complement his autobiography. Many time an autobiographer has no patience or willingness to record certain details about his life due to his indifference to them, but a biographer can do extensive research about an individual and offer a more detailed and comprehensive picture of his life. For example, what I have in mind is the case of Max Mueller. Max Mueller has written his short autobiography of about 200 pages, in which he has revealed a few major events of his life, but Nirad Chaudhuri's biography entitled *Scholar Extraordinary* runs into about five to six hundred pages of close print revealing an abundant wealth of information in all its details about the life of Max Mueller, not covered by Max Mueller himself in his autobiography. I wish one of his beloved students, admirers and beneficiaries would venture to write a comprehensive biography of their great guru, CDN. I look forward to that golden moment. It is rather unfortunate to note that none of his admirers or beneficiaries has attempted a critical monograph on his literary oeuvre.

Professor Narasimhaiah had strong convictions about writers and literature in general. He was a critics' critic like Dr. Johnson, who would strongly rebuke and correct the wrong judgements of the younger critics and criticasters of India. He rightly believed that so far there has been no original critic in India after Sri Aurobindo, which is hundred percent correct.

Likewise, he has said repeatedly that no Indian critic (be he a senior Professor of English in a prestigious big or central University) has produced even a single original and insightful article like T.S.Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual talent" or R.P.Blackmur's "Language as Gesture." That is why many British and American academicians laugh at the dubious academic achievements of Indian scholars what with their bloated marks-cards and accidental gold medals in their examinations, which are no better than academic farces.

Professor Narasimhaiah was known for his strong likes and dislikes (as part of his convictions). For example, when his former student, Mr. Anantamurti manipulated to 'snatch' the Jnanapith award even when there were much senior writers in Kannada deserving it, Professor Narasimhaiah was bold enough to answer the television interviewers with a snap, "He doesn't deserve it. Having worked for it he had to accept it." There was a great furor and dissatisfaction in the Kannada literary circles about Anantamurti's getting the award so undeservingly. Similarly, when Arundhati Roy was awarded the Booker Prize for her second rate novel *A God of Small Things* containing a lot of vulgar element in like the descriptions of masturbation, women urinating in a standing posture, lovers engaged in sexual intercourse and references to the male genitalia, many Indian critics especially women scholars went gaga about it uncritically but patriotically. But Professor Narasimhaiah had the courage and honesty to say that the novel did not deserve the Booker Prize at all and offered the details of the politics behind the curtain. He said that there was a Western lady as one of the members of the jury and the others were men. Although the male members had selected some other novel for the prize, the lady-member insisted that the prize be given to a woman writer like Arundhati Roy as that year happened to be the International Woman's Year. Hence the award of the Booker Prize was more accidental than just and fair. Arundhati Roy has herself confessed later that she was quite lucky to get the Booker Prize, although she may not have deserved it. But in India no senior scholar or Professor had the guts to express such honest opinion about such literary accidents due to their lack of convictions and originality of approach.

Professor Narasimhaiah has always pleaded for a healthy controversy in Indian literary circles, debates and seminars, without creating any ill-will or hostility among the critics. Another interesting fact about Professor Narasimhaiah should be mentioned here. As he was a man of strong likes and dislikes, he used to denounce a brilliant writer like Nirad Chaudhuri and a delightful writer like V.S.Naipaul. We may not agree with their views, but we cannot disdain and denigrate them simply because we do not like them. On the contrary, Professor Narasimhaiah paid high tributes to a writer like R.K.Narayan, who is an empty and purposeless writer with a colourlessly simple English style (good only for high school children as a mere entertainer) because Narayan happened to be an acquaintance of CDN, a resident of Mysore and a student of the Maharaja College. Nowadays R.K.Narayan has been rightly relegated to the limbo of oblivion.

Professor Narasimhaiah has always pleaded for the use of Sanskrit aesthetics and poetics (like the concepts of *rasa* and *dhvani*) for the analyses of Western literary works in a cross – cultural manner. One day during my meeting with him at Dhvanyaloka at Mysore I gently brought to his notice the difficulty of applying *rasa* theory to western works of art, as they deal with modern life which is very complex and complicated with newer experiences not to be easily classified according to the taxonomy of *rasa*. Without irritating him I asked him how to describe the *rasa* of *Waiting for Godot*. My sudden and unexpected and pointed question seems to have puzzled him. He remained silent for a few seconds and came out with the answer that *Waiting for Godot* delineated the *bibhatsa rasa* (the odious sentiment). It was his instant

and offhand answer and not well thought out leisurely. I kept quiet though I was not convinced by his answer. But what was admirable about him was his readiness to talk patiently and affectionately with younger scholars like me, which was a rare honour for me.

Work Cited

Narasimhaiah, C.D. *N for Nobody: Autobiography of an English Teacher*. Mysore: Dhvanyaloka Publication, Second Impression, 2021.