

Sri RadhaKrishna Illam

A Memorial for

Sri Sadhasiva Bhagavathar

and

Thailammal and Sundaresan

Kattuputtur, Tamil Nadu



Today, January 18th 2018, our dear mother passed away 41 years ago at Vellore CMC Hospital. I was there with our five year old Hari. We stayed at the Annex with father, Nannu and sister India Devi. India Devi was mostly in the hospital room with mother. Seenu visited to see our mother earlier and he has to return to USA because of his work and Suganda was pregnant with Ramya then. Rangan had just come to the USA in 1976 for his MBA, so he could not visit. But Kamali with Anu came to help.

I want to remember my mother not with this sad part, but think and be proud about how the community in her birthplace honored her. A few years ago in Kattuputhur, where she was born, they honored our parents by co-naming the Sri Radha Krishna Illam as a memorial in their name along with the divine Sri. Sadhasiva Bhagavathar who was the driving force in making the puja hall a reality. We are very humbled that my parent's name is associated with the Illam and this great man.

The village of Kattuputhur was blessed to have Sri. K. V. Sadhasiva Bhagavathar in the community. From a very early age, he was dedicated to perform *RadhaKrishna Kalyanam* in his village. As quoted by my nephew Pasupathy:

“K.V.Sadhasiva Bhagavathar is the key person involved in Radhakalyanam doing the same for 75 years performing unchavurthi and going to many places singly even at the age of 95 to collect meagre donations and performing the function. He was doing the function from the age of 25 till his last breath at the age 99. Such a wonderful person lived in the world for the well being of the people and maintained the uncared land and developed the building with all your support. In this building the function is going on and free food for nearly 600 people during the function being celebrated for 3 days. Previously it was 10 days and all the stalwarts were participated in the function starting from MS. Now Sri. Krishnamoorthy is doing it at his 72 years of age without much financial support.

Hence we have come to the rescue to perform the function without any break. It is all HIS Grace only”

Here is my personal diary of some background of my parents and why and how they were honored for the memorial:

In early 2014 Rangan had visited Kattuputtur to see our cousin Lalita who was in her early eighties. She was married to our Venkatanarayana mama's son Mani. Rangan had a pleasant surprise to see the sign "In memory of Thailammal

and Sunadresan” adjacent to the bold sign, “Radha Krishna Illam”. On the other side was the sign, “In memory of Bhagavathar Sri. Sadhasiva Bhagavathar”. Rangan took a photo of the signs and sent them to us. We were all thrilled!

Our father was born on December 2nd 1899 to K. V. Narayanan and Alamelu in Madurai and was named after the local deity Sundaresan. He lost his mother when he was four years old and was raised by his aunt Chellammal who was a young widow with no children. Our father excelled academically and graduated from St. Joseph’s College, Trichy, with B.A Honors with a gold medal in Mathematics.

Our mother was born on 17th May 1910 in Kattuputhur to V. Venkata Ramanan and Parvatham. Our father was her *athAn*, her athai’s son. It was very normal in that generation that these cousins could get married. We are told, that as soon as our mother was born they said that Sundaresan was going to be her husband! Also, when the time came, their horoscopes were not compared; and they cracked a coconut in front of the deity in a temple and proceeded with the auspicious occasion.

Our parents got married on June 24th 1920 in Kattuputhur.

Our mother was bequeathed with a small piece of land by her family, not far from where she was born. This plot was always referred to as *Thailamma Manai* in the *agraharam*. As kids, we have seen that strip of land whenever we visited Kattuputhur and felt good about it, though it was just a vacant plot with random shrubs growing. Unfortunately, the vacant area was also misused by some locals for throwing trash and even using it as a public nuisance site.

In spite of that, by the devotional and passionate work of Sri. Sadhasiva Bhagavathar and a dedicated community of volunteers in the *agraharam*, every year they would clean up the area thoroughly, erect a temporary *panthal*, install the deities, invite devotees from the neighboring villages and perform *RadhaKrishna Kalyanam*. It might have had small beginnings but as Pasupathy points out it used to be a ten-day affair in those days; even stalwarts like M.S.

Subbulakshmi participated! Unfortunately, after the ceremonies, the plot would return to its normal waste-land status. It must have been a sad sight to bear.

My mother's plot, *Thailamma's Manai*, was adjacent to Sri. K. V. Sadhasiva Bhagavathar's plot.

Since it was our mother's site, our dear cousin Lalitha used to tell us that it would be wonderful if we could build a permanent hall dedicated for the function. The option of course was to donate the plot. It took several years because it needed legal work. Our nephew Pasupathy, Lalitha's son and a well known Chartered Accountant in Trichy, took the responsibility. My brother Naranan provided the needed papers. It took Pasupathy's dedication to finally get all the i's dotted and the t's crossed!

Once all paper work was completed, they built the Hall and named it *RadhaKrishna Illam*.

When the *Illam* was ready for inauguration, Pasupathy emailed the information to brother Nannu, but unfortunately he never received it. Rangan, Seenu and I live in the USA and and were unaware of the building. *That's why it was such a pleasant surprise to all of us when Rangan sent those photos!*

Sri. Krishnamoorthy, son of Sri. Radhakrishna Sasthrigal, is in charge of the *Illam* now and is continuing his father's mission of celebrating the *Radha Kalyanam annually* with help from Pasupathy and other volunteers. It is very commendable. He is passionate and committed and does a grand job. It seems one of the highlights of this celebration is the delicious food served for hundreds of visitors who attend.

In 2014, I planned to visit India with Gowri and Aditya specially to see my brother Nannu. He lives with his daughter Venil and son-in-law Sumantran in Chennai. We had lost our very dear Visalam *manni* in 2013. So I wanted to visit.

I wanted to take this opportunity to visit Kattuputtur to see this very **special Illam**. We have many fond memories of our uncle, grandmother, Chella *patti*, Lalitha and Mani anna. India Devi and Nannu were born in our uncle's

house. Kattuputhur has a very special place in all our hearts and minds from our visits there during our childhood. Now, this *Illam* dedicated to our parent's memory was drawing me there.

The thought that even though our parents had moved to far away Berhampur, Orissa in 1921, the people there still remembered and honored them fondly with this wonderful gesture was very touching.

Our two week trip was going to be very tight. I informed Pasupathy that I would like to visit Kattuputhur to see the *Illam* in December and asked him if it would be alright to unveil a portrait of our parents at that time. VKV supported the idea and so did my brothers. Pasupathy agreed right away with an email even though he is a busy man. He talked with Sri. Krishna Murthy and chose December 26th 2014 to have the function.

This was already around Dec second week. We wanted a nice big photo for the *Illam* and selected a beautiful one of our parents taken in Berhampur by Thota in 1952. It took many email exchanges regarding the file resolution. Higher the resolution better and bigger can be the final product. Finally, Pasupathy was glad to receive a very high res file (2400 bpi) from Seenu on Dec 16th. Within 24 hours, his friend Anand Karthick of Cosmics Photo Gallery in Thillai Nagar, cleaned up the file, added a new background and created two versions of the photo: one a B&W version as the original one was and another a colored version. Our father looked majestic with his cane with our beautiful mother next to him. We were amazed at the speedy work by Anand Karthick.

Pasupathy who saw the photos in person, felt that the colored version would appeal to the people in Kattuputtur. He added that the photo looked like a *Ravi Varma* painting! Though we had some differences of opinion between the classic B&W and the colored versions, we all agreed to go with the colored version based on Pasupathy's strong endorsement!



The unveiled photo of our parents

I requested Ganesan and Revathy to accompany me to Tiruchy. They agreed. I went to Ganesan's place on 25th night and on 26th morning around 7 AM we three left for Trichy in a nice big taxi.

We reached Pappa's place around 2 pm. It was nice to see Pappa's son Cheenu and his family ready to join us. I asked Pappa if Pasupathy was going to join us. She said he had a client to work with in the evening, so he couldn't. I called Pasupathy and insisted that I wanted him with his wife and daughters to come; otherwise the celebration will not be complete. Luckily, Pasupathy agreed and could change his appointment and they all came around 3pm. Our car was big so we could have Pappa's family. The gorgeous colored portrait of our parents was big, about 3 ft x 4 ft, and was nicely laminated and framed. It was well packed and loaded on to the car. I was amazed how far some of these technologies have

advanced in India. The large photo was ready just within a very few days notice. It was a miracle to me. I went in Pasupathy car.

We were little late than planned. But Pasupathy and Krishna Murthy kept in touch with cell phones. Finally, when we reached, Lalita was waiting for us with others. Then we walked to the *Radha Krishna Illam* on the same street. What an exciting and touching moment I had when I saw other friends of this loving town were waiting for us! The building has a huge hall and a couple of office rooms. There were pictures and arrangements were made for the celebration. Our parent's portrait was placed and covered with a cloth so unveiling can be done at the auspicious moment.

There were about 25 people. We unveiled the portrait at the auspicious moment. It was a very simple ceremony but it will stay with me forever. Then we went to see the backyard and I saw the big shed where the food is prepared. There is a nice Tulasi garden and few trees; there is a well and bathrooms.

VKV had told me that I should make sure that the portrait is displayed in a nice area. There was room on the wall next to the picture of Krishna Murthy's father Sri. Radhakrishna Sasthriyal who was responsible for initiating the building of this Hall.

Then we went to Lalita's home and had a delicious food made by Krishna Murthy's wife Vasantha.

Lalitha showed me the room where India Devi and Nannu were born. We then stopped by at Krishna Murthy's house and a temple, before driving back to Trichy.

At Pappa's house, I told Pasupathy that I would like to meet and pay the artist who created the amazing portrait. I was surprised to find out that his studio was just across Pappa's house. We walked up and I met Anand Karthik, a cheerful young man, and thanked him wholeheartedly for his exceptional work and completing it in such a short time. Afterwards, with Revathy and Ganesan I went to Kasim's home to spend the night.

Later in the year, Pasupathy sent a video of the celebration of Radha Kalyanam in 2014. I could see the portrait on the wall and people looking at it. I heard Lalitha was very often says with pride, 'my periyamma and Periyappa'.

I have to thank so many people who are loving and caring and feel I am blessed.

Selvi
Los Alamo, NM

19th January 2018

Seenu, Austin, TX

24th June 2019

June 24th, 2019 is our parent's 99th-100th wedding Anniversary

NOTE:

We as a family feel honored that our parents have been memorialized by having their names permanently displayed along with the great man Sri. K.V.Sadhasiva Bhagavathar, the man responsible for making the *RadhaKrishna Illam* a reality. ("Such a wonderful person lived in the world for the well being of the people..")

Pasupathy's whole family gets very much involved with this annual festival from start to finish. Pasupathy, his wife Vidya and their daughters Nivedita and Tejushree design the print and online invitations and during the festival take videos and post them. It is heart warming for us all, who live so far away to imagine and picture the lively celebration of Sri. Radha Krishna Kalyanam. We are grateful to everyone involved.

Nannu, Selvi, Rangan and Seenu



B&W photo of Amma and Appa



Lalitha, with Pasupathy, Krisnamoorthy, Vasantha, Pappa's family



Ganesan and Revathy



The Backyard