

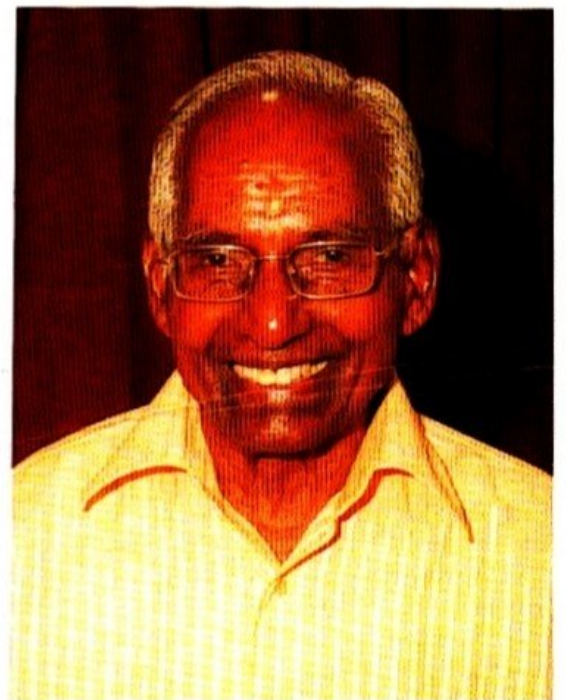


Dr K K Damodaran

PROLIFIC BUILDER OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

-P K Ravindranath

Teacher, trainer, institution-builder Dr. K K Damodaran can look back to a life of fulfillment as he turns 90. He has done his bit to implement Sree Narayana Guru's injunction to establish equality of mankind, through education.





For a man hailing from a backward community of Kerala that had been socially and politically oppressed for centuries, Dr. K K Damodaran, the shackles that he shattered in his 65-year long stay in Mumbai are numerous. During this period he trained about 3750 nuclear scientists, many of whom later became chairmen of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. Among them are Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Dr. A N Prasad, Dr. B Bhattacharjee and Dr. R K Sinha.

Thousands of students who have passed through the Sree Narayana Guru Samithi School and college for the last forty years, are as grateful as the scientists to Dr. K K Damodaran as their Guru. It is their love and respect and affection for their mentor that keeps Dr Damodaran active, alert and involved in social service and the maintenance of the several institutions he has founded.

In almost every major event in his life, Dr. Damodaran had a late start. He first went to school at the age of 7. He passed his Matriculation when he was 20. He passed his M Sc at the age of 27. Three years later he got his doctorate in nuclear physics and soon after his first job.

For a year after his M Sc he worked with SNDP (Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana) Yogam leader R Sankar, who later became Chief Minister of Kerala. Sankar was impressed with the young man and when he expressed a desire to go to London for research in nuclear physics, he arranged for a loan-

scholarship of Rs. 12,000. This plus the University's scholarship of Rs. 2,000 enabled Damodaran to get his doctorate and a flattering recommendation from his professors at London University College addressed to Dr. Homi Bhabha, who was then planning the nuclearisation of the country and had just attained criticality for his reactor Apsara at Mumbai. Damodaran, 30, got a job as Scientific Officer at the Atomic Energy Establishment under Dr. Bhabha. The Establishment later became the Bhabha

Atomic Research Centre (BARC) named after its founder in 1967. Bhabha before his death in a tragic air crash on the Alps in Switzerland, had appointed Dr. Damodaran as the Head of the Training Division of the establishment. He was put in charge of drawing up the curriculum, appointment of faculty and selection of candidates for the courses.

The selection process was tough. He, however, got the cream of Indian scientists to undergo the training.

As with other important events in his chequered life, Damodaran got married when he was into his 39th year. His wife, Saraswati was his student when he taught for a year, at the Sree Narayana College at Kollam at the instance of R Sankar. Saraswati had meanwhile done her M Sc in zoology.

Damodaran and Saraswati have two children: Asha (born on 27 March 1960) and Vinod (born 17 July 1962).

Asha and her husband, Pradeep Chandran are in Dammam (Saudi Arabia) where she works as a doctor and he as a Mechanical Engineer. Vinod is a software engineer based in California, US.

Saraswati, since her marriage, had her hands full, with visitors and guests and later with the upbringing of the children. They now have three grandsons and a granddaughter.

Enthusied with the revolutionary ideas of Sree Narayana Guru and with the experience gained by with working with R Sankar for a year, Dr Damodaran



Dr Damodaran and wife Saraswati

accepted the opportunity, when a group of other devotees of the Guru approached him to work as the President of the Sree Narayana Guru Samithi in Mumbai. He persuaded them to give up their idea of merely putting up a statue of the Guru on a five-cent plot of land in Chembur. He urged them to start an educational institution to further the teaching of the Guru and to empower the weaker sections of society through education.

From 1963, Dr Damodaran got fully involved in the activities of the Samithi, first as its Chairman and later as the President for 40 years. He now continues to be the President Emeritus of the Samithi, which can look back with pride on a number of institutions that it had set up.

By 1972 the Samithi had just about Rs. 2.75 lakhs in its kitty. When the Municipal Commissioner, J B D'Souza offered them land to put up a school, the Samithi invested all the funds it had to buy 14,288 sq yards. The foundation stone for the school project was laid in 1973, and K G classes were started in 1975. The school soon became functional up to SSC. Efforts are now on to raise it to a post-graduate training institute. The College already runs several professional courses including B MS and BMM.

To accommodate its growing activities, the Samithi bought 9,600 sq yards of land in 1996 for Rs. 65 lakhs. The Samithi besides has a flat in Goregaon, Bhandup, Ambemath, Kalyan, Thane, Dombivilli, Vasai and Powai, to run its Guru Centers, to propagate the basic teachings of Sree Narayana Guru. The Guru is one of the most revered social



Asha, Dr Damodaran, Saraswati and Vinod

reformers of Kerala who provided a platform for all oppressed sections of

society with his clarion call: "One God, one religion and one Caste." He had also urged his followers to set up educational institutions to draw the people into the mainstream of social and economic activities.

The followers of the Guru in Kerala form a distinct political force in Kerala. Dr Damodaran can take pride in being its most effective prophet outside Kerala.

The Samithi today runs a Marriage Bureau, Employment Bureau and an Accommodation Bureau. It has spawned two major housing societies in Chembur to provide shelter for needy people, at affordable prices. He continues to head and guide the largest educational and charitable organizations in the name of the Guru outside Kerala - all built up with dedication, hard work and a strong will that welded all followers of the Guru under his inspiring slogan.



Dr. Damodaran inaugurating the Seagull Corporate Office at Andheri. Suresh Kumar MD Seagull group on his right