

**GREAT GANGES
GLEAMS**

JOURNEY OF MY LIFE

**A Historical Presentation
1952 to 2018**

**BY
GANGAMMA N PRASAD**

*I loved the life I lived
I lived the life I loved*



Some of my best thoughts in Life

- There was no elevator to the successes in my life so I had to take the stairs.
- I tried to be strong enough to fight alone and wise enough to wait for my turn in life.
- Our life is so fragile that we have no guarantee for the tomorrow so let us give it everything we have got today.
- I never liked to be pushed around by the fears in my mind but tried to be led by the dreams in my heart.
- I was mindful of the fact that when it rained, it poured but soon the sun began to shine again. So I stayed positive because better days were on the way for me.
- Even though I had no idea what my tomorrow will bring for me I was always doing my best to think positive and hope for the best.





**I
LOVED
MY LIVELY LIFE
&
MY SIMPLE LIVING**

**This is an
Eventful Journey to get to my
Destination Safely**

**Family and Work Life
of
Gangamma Naidu Prasad**

From 1952 to 2018

Journey of My Life is an autobiography which is my first publication and it is dedicated to my parents, grandparents, my late husband, my children and grandchildren.



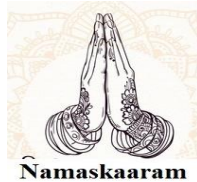
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DEDICATION

Some very kind and dedicated people have been real mentors to me throughout my life. My late mother and father, Ayakannu Goundar and Alumeluamma Goundar were exceptional individuals who filled me with multiple talents, skills and lessons of life that have always guided me to stand up whenever I fell. They left their heavy footsteps behind for me with which I have always walked with pride and maintained a pleasant living.

Then I salute my father in law and my mother in law, Krishna Swamy Naidu and Latchmi Naidu for their unconditional love and support throughout my married life. They created a life full of love, loyalty and learning for me.

Of course, my own family members including my late husband Veera Swamy Naidu, my children Dhanajaiya Krishna, Luta Taia and Jaya and Murli together with my grandchildren Nirav, Veeraj, Nishtha and Aayush have always energised me to perform my family obligations with honour and pride. If there are any better family members in this world I have yet to meet them.

It has been my good fortune to have their loyalty, love, affection and support throughout my life. I became richer on every step. Finally a new chapter was added to my life with the loving attachments of the Prasad Family members who have accepted me in their fold with open arms.

This Journey of My Life is dedicated to all those merry souls.



EDITORIAL



It has been a privilege to edit Ganga's "journey" as I have had an insight into a rich and full life. Ganga's deep ties to family are apparent from start to finish. She is a deeply spiritual person who is sensitive to the nuances of many faiths, as is evident in the connections she draws between her spiritualism and the Fijian beliefs.

The account of her working life stands as a testament to her determination to be successful and to be a role model for not only her daughter, but other women. I found the chapter on the effects of the coup d'état enlightening, as we are not usually given personal insights as to how these events affect the everyday people. Ganga's long association with the Fiji School of Medicine and its many Deans and mergers means that she holds a wealth of historical knowledge. Historians know that recording personal memories allow future generations to gain greater insight and are thankful for people like Ganga, who take the time to share their memories.

I have come to know Ganga as a result of her friendship and marriage to Dr Ram Lakhan Prasad. Therefore, she has become part of my extended family. She exudes graciousness and dignity in her everyday life as is evident in these pages. Just as she enriched the lives of her Fiji friends and families, she is now doing so in her new home in Brisbane.

I therefore recommend this book as a delightful reading of Ganga's journey for past, present and future friends.

Dr Donna McGrath, Head of English, Stuartholme School, Brisbane.

FOREWORD



“**Great Ganges Gleams**” is well placed on the cover of this creation titled **Journey of My Life** of my aunt Gangamma Naidu because she has placed great effort with joy to express her feelings and emotions from birth to Brisbane. I congratulate her for this great historical presentation. Having read the manuscript, I know that she has worked hard to collect all the needed information for her publication. Bravo Aunty! You have sparkled and reflected well.

I have known her from my Fiji National University days as a person who would go out to help anyone in need but most of all I have admired her simple but adorable personality that we are able to extract by reading this book of detailed episodes of her home, family life, education and work life. She has done it with great joy and the readers will love to read and share these with their friends and colleagues.

The writer has given us some very relevant ideas that she has been accumulating for a long time. She has exposed these in such a way that the readers will have no choice but to admire and accept as words from an experienced performer and a dedicated family member. The way she has presented the family love and care is admirable especially the love and care for her ancestors, children and grandchildren. Since her daughter Jaya and I were school mates from primary days and graduated together from the Fiji School of Medicine, I regard myself as one of the family members and am honoured to be asked to write this Foreword for this worthy publication.

I wish her all the best in life and I am confident that her book will be loved by her family, friends and colleagues.

Undeniably her best words are *'I love the life I live and I live the life I love'*.

Well done Auntie Gangamma Naidu Prasad.

Dr Vinita Prasad. Brisbane, Australia.



Vinita and Gangamma



Jaya with Amma



PROLOGUE

We all are blessed with our past and we cannot escape from it because it is always present in our life. We can sing about it, bark at it or take it as an aspect to reflect on our present and develop our future. My past was good but bad and ugly times did crop up on occasions however, I moved on regardless. This became the **Journey of my life**. I took my life as a journey and not a destination and decided to sing about various events that made me progress in life. I looked at my past seriously and decided to present it in a form of an essay of various chapters. I have called it **Journey of my Life**.

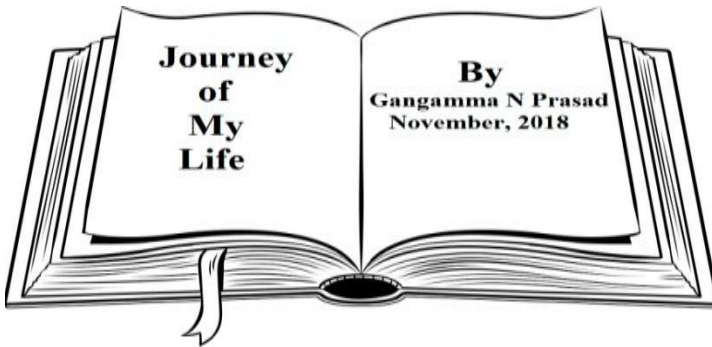
I was blessed by my loving parents, a wonderful family and efficient work mates as well as many faithful friends and reliable relatives so I decided to venture on this project to show and tell the story of the family and friends who helped me evolve an effective life, sound education and invaluable inspiration to enjoy and appreciate a variety of remarkable things in life.

There were a few things I admired in life and they included my parents, my family, my friends and the workmates during my work life. Hence, this short and simple presentation is written for the reading of my family members, friends and relatives. If I have missed any important aspects of the family life, my work life and the life as a whole in my recollections I wish to be forgiven and maybe one day someone would come forward and expose whatever is missing.

There were a few specific reasons for developing this composition and they were my dedication and devotion to family and work life plus my intention to leave a memory behind for all the loved ones. I have loved composing these episodes and I hope the readers will equally appreciate and love to read and treasure this historical composition. I dedicate this presentation to my parents and teachers who gave me the tools and stamina to live this life with dignity.

One aspect that thrilled me is the contribution from my children and grandchildren who have presented their thoughts and ideas as Our Mother and Our Grandmother.

Therefore, it is my pleasure, pride and privilege to relate my stories and make my past into a fruitful journey and not repent about any event that may have hurt me because they became my inspiration to flow on with pride. I prayed to God to give me the strength and stamina to create this eventful journey and thanked my teachers for giving me the tools of skills, knowledge and needed vocabulary. The rest is in the hands of the readers. People around me were like my eyes and ears so I constantly saw and heard things and now they have become my memory and stories to read.



**I LOVED THE LIFE I LIVED
I LIVED THE LIFE I LOVED**



INTRODUCTION

JOURNEY OF GANGAMMA



I feel proud and am privileged indeed to be asked to write the introduction for Aunt Gangamma Naidu (Maasi). When translated into simple English, Gangamma means holding of the Great Holy Ganges River that flows and gleams merrily from the peak of the Everest through the plains of Northern India ending into the Bay of Bengal of the Indian Ocean. Thus, Gangamma is that

loving lady who resembles that great river that makes her journey from the base of Nakauvadra Range, a village called Wailevu in Fiji, through the Kings Road into Kaba Street in Tamavua Heights in Suva then crossing the vast Pacific Ocean to peacefully land in beautiful Bellbowrie in Brisbane, Australia. What a joyous journey!

Gangamma has been a devoted daughter, a successful student, a faithful friend, a wonderful wife, a memorable mother, a gracious grandmother, a clever colleague, an effective employee and a perfect present partner of a person she chose to spend rest of her life. She has made a joyful journey of her life that she so meticulously narrated for the readers. I have known her from the days whilst I was a student at the Fiji School of Medicine and feel delighted to introduce her jovial and pleasant journey to the readers.

Gangamma became the aunt of almost all the students because she had the heart of gold and was always willing to assist us to make our student life a lot more enjoyable. Without doubt she is a unique individual because she knows

and understands what her kind of generosity means for the people she serves. People who associated with her always admired her art and science of patience and kindness.

She gets respect of people around her because she respects them and she is very compassionate. She has shown us to stop, look and listen before using our words and taking any action. This has been an idea that helped us meet success in our profession and we thank her very much for her contributions at work, home and the community.

Gangamma N Prasad, as she is now known, has very carefully culled her various life stories and called it **Journey of My Life**, which makes a pleasant and interesting reading from the beginning to the end. The episodes narrated in her journey would certainly fit into history of a variety of important events and would be treasured by people who had come in contact with her during this eventful journey.

Finally, I congratulate her for her courage and effort to produce this historical presentation that would make an excellent reading for everyone. I have much pleasure in presenting this publication by a lady that has served the community and the people with great pleasure, dedication and tender loving care.

Jai Shree Krishna.

Dr Dip Chand, A/Prof, MBBS, DMDR, DHCP, DANat, DCH, FRACGP, FARGP AFRACMA, FACCRM, FAIM, aFCHSM, MAICD.MAAPM, Brisbane, Australia.



THE BEGINNING

Since my belief has always been to live simply, behave humbly, give generously, dress modestly, pray faithfully, think wisely, worship religiously, act kindly, smile honestly, speak truthfully and love sincerely, I developed a life and living that not only gave me a lot of pride and peace but it provided me great opportunities and friends and family members to interact and share. I am glad that life and all those loved ones treated me with dignity.

My humble life and living have been blessed by my teachers, the God Almighty and my parents so to make this blessing worthy and rewarding I would like to venture on expressing some of the events, episodes and truths about my family, my work, my friends and the institutions that gave me the needed guidance and strength to move forward in life.

My life began on 15th April, 1952 when I was born in a small village of Vaileka in the province of Rakiraki called Wailevu on a farm on which my extended family subsisted with pride and pleasure for almost a century. My parents were Ayakannu Goundar and Almeluamma. While my father migrated from Tamil Nadu in Andhra Pradesh in India around 1916 as indentured worker, my mother was the daughter of the indentured workers Munsamy Pillay and Dhanbhagium from Tamil Nadu but she was born in Taveuni in Fiji.

My father came from a village in the district of Ariyalur in Tamil Nadu known as Rayampuram in India. He was the youngest of a family of ten people who lived in an extended structure doing their own farm work. He used to narrate his past events of India to us whenever we sat and discussed things of importance to the family. These led us to develop an exchange of ideas as father and daughter.



My parents on their farm in Wailevu

He was a man of great belief in God because his family in Rayampuram lived next to the temple and they were regular worshippers there so he always trusted his instinct to do the right things at the right time. He loved his family in Fiji and worked hard to support everyone and guided them to success. Nothing was impossible for him as he used to say because as he put it if we tried hard enough we would be enjoying this short life given to us by Almighty God to prosper and progress at our own pace. He was determined to do his best to ensure that his lost family members in India would feel elated.

There are a lot of things that come to my mind when I reflect on his teachings. Firstly, I admired his courage and tenacity to work for his family. Secondly, he was a person who moved around his farm with special love and liking for the mother earth because he said if you respect the earth then you will enjoy the fruits and crops from the land. Thirdly, he never gave up even if his first attempt at any activity was not giving him the expected benefits so he tried harder the next time round and succeeded in his ventures.

Then the whole family admired his habit of encouraging everyone to be truthful, beautiful and good in

their words, actions and habits. He said that these were the great pillars of strength for all human beings. Maybe this was the reason why he would regularly go to the nearby temple in Wailevu in the evening to light the lamp. Of course, he always had high hopes for things to come to his favour and encouraged all of us to have faith in God thus our own faith in us will enlarge and magnify.

He arrived in Fiji in 1916 on the steam ship called Sutlej II but he said he had lost count of the days and times and wanted to make a fresh start. The journey from Calcutta to Suva and then to Nukulau Island for quarantine purposes was difficult and extremely dangerous but they made it and reached their workplace on the island of Taveuni.

If ever any news of anyone who visited Fiji from India was given to him he became excited, thrilled and deeply interested and wanted to meet the visitor. This was the reason why when Indira Gandhi visited Fiji in 1981 he urged his local leaders to give him the opportunity to meet her and touch her hands. His wish was granted.



Indira Gandhi visiting Fiji

He always prayed and begged God to give him eyes that saw the best in people, a heart that forgave the worst, a mind that forgot the bad events and a soul that never lost faith in God. His wish was granted and upon shaking hands with Indira Gandhi he felt enthusiastic and was greatly honoured because with tears of joy in his eyes he said he got a lot of

pleasure and was thrilled to renew his loyalty to his mother land. As a coincidence when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Fiji in 2014, I had the opportunity to meet him personally.



My father was always a great motivator for all of us at all time because he believed that when we do something we should always do it with deeper interest and faith. Thus he used to say that we would succeed in all our genuine efforts, come what may.

I have learnt the hard way that I cannot always count on other people to respect my feelings and ways of life even if I tried to respect theirs. Therefore I realized early in my life that being a good person did not give me any guarantee that all people who interacted with me would be good people too. I only had control over myself and how I choose to be a normal human being. As for others, I had the choice to either accept them or walk away from them. I accepted many as my true friends but I had to walk away from some who caused me headaches and problems.

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