

Dr. N.H.Athreya has been and will ever remain a Guru and Mentor to me. Since the last almost 50 years I have been blessed to have grown under his august influence. He has always stood for simplicity and quality in all his dealings. I gained a lot from my privileged association with him.

Godsend for me, Dr. Athreya came into my young life during my toughest period in the early 70s. Here was a fired-up teenager ready to build on his dreams but who had to abruptly leave his ongoing college education half way through due to financial challenges at home. Father had retired, sister had to be married off. Large family to be taken care of. Had to vacate the family quarters on father's retirement. Four siblings in school/college. Huge debts to be cleared. Same story of an average middle class Indian family of the 60s' and the 70s'

Took a job on a friend's recommendation with the intention of supporting the family. Eager to receive my first salary which I was looking forward to hand over to my mother as my contribution to augment family coffers. It's payday at last and as I approach the pay-clerk for my envelope I am informed that the friend who had recommended the job had collected the pay envelope (It used to be in cash in those days). How nice of him, I thought. On approaching my friend for the same I was shocked to know that he had collected my salary and taken it as his commission for recommending me the job in the first place. My world came tumbling down. What do I tell my mother? Why did my friend not tell me about the commission in the first place? Totally anxious and confused, I left my friend's place at Ghatkopar and started walking without knowing where I was heading, deep in thought. Suicidal thoughts crossed my mind. By the time I came to my senses I looked up and behold I was right in front of Sri Vithal Mandir near Sion Circle. I had walked almost 7-8kms. Deep in my thoughts I enter the temple and pray for a solution to get out of the predicament. I walk out and suddenly I recall about a special talk '**With Love from America**' being organized by Rotary Club of Sion East in the premises of the Bombay Tamil Sangham. The speaker was to be Rtn.N.H.Athreya.

As a member of the Rotaract Club of Sion I was eligible for entry to this function. I was late for the talk but by God's plan I was present at the right time to hear Rtr.Athreya speak about the '**American Spirit**'. This is where my life changed 180 degrees. While he was talking about life in America, on the table was a round bottom tilting roly-poly toy which he would press down a couple of times trying to push it down but as soon as he let go, the toy would push itself back erect. He showed it by example the 'Never say die spirit' that which was the American Spirit nay the Universal Spirit. It hit me mad! God had answered my prayers for good. He sent my Guru to show me the way. I got the answer to all my questions. With a renewed surge of positivity I rebuilt myself.

Later this led to active engagements with Dr.Athreya in many ways. In the early part of my professional career he was instrumental in recommending us (Atul Shah and myself) for our first major architectural project which incidentally was redoing the Bombay Tamil Sangham building as it stands today at Sion. What a way to open up your career! Have always been obliged to him for the faith he bestowed on us.

Dr.Athreya was a giver with a big heart. Not a single meeting with him ever did he let me go empty handed. Always he would gift me books and other publications to read. On one special occasion he coaxed me and my business partner Atul Shah (more of a friend than a business partner, in my opinion) to attend one of the seminars he used to conduct at Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai. Knowing that the cost of the seminar was very high for our young pockets he made it possible for us to attend the same free of cost. That was so generous of him. He exposed me to self discovery through his talks, books and seminars.

This was in the beginning. Thereafter I had the fortune to be with him for major portion of my life and have grown with his blessings with values of TRUTH, QUALITY, SIMPLICITY, HOPE, FAMILY and FREEDOM!

Every year 26th. December is and will remain a special day for me. That is my 'Teachers Day' for me. Fondly remembering Dr. N.H.Athreya on his 100th. birthday.

Om Shanti

Congratulations Usha for having the celebration in this unique way.