

## **What a Life! What a Man! Personal Memories of Prof. N.S. Ramaswamy**

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Fifty years ago (almost to the date) I met Prof. N.S. Ramaswamy for the first time. In 1963, Union Carbide India Ltd in which I was working as the head of System & Procedures Department required department head to succeed me as I was to be promoted to the post computer manager - one of the first computer managers in India!

In response to the Union Carbide advertisement, we received many applications but the most interesting application was that of Prof. N.S. Ramaswamy. He was working as an Industrial Engineer in consultants firm BEACONS. I had worked earlier in IBCONS which was the originator of BEACONS. He was about the same age (36 years at that time) and had formidable qualifications and expertise so instead of calling him for interview; I invited him for a lunch that we can discuss about the job during the lunch conversation.

He was ready for all other conditions of the job, but its location in Kolkata did not suit him because he wanted to stay in Mumbai. He subsequently got a faculty job in Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies in Mumbai and took up that job. However, due to

our intense interaction in this period, we became friends and the friendship lasted for 50 years - in fact more than anybody except his immediate family.

Our friendship had a strong impact on each other. In fact, getting acquainted with Prof. Ramaswamy has been one of the most important turning points in my life. Not only he intensified my association with industrial engineering but also pushed me on to Management Education and Training. I became active member of Indian Institution of Industrial Engineering (IIIE) and helped Prof. N.S. Ramaswamy to expand IIIE activities to cover all important industrial centers in India. In this period of about 15 years, we occupied all the organizational positions in IIIE.

In Union Carbide I used to get Mumbai-Kolkata-Mumbai airfare for my leave travel. To expand our activities he wanted me to cover Kerala and Tamilnadu. In those days there was low industrial development in South India, so particularly the application of computers was rare. So our seminars on

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computers and automation became popular and that also led to the establishment of the Computer Society of India (CSI) and Indian Society for Training and Development (ISTD).

In those years of expansion I was working closely with Prof. Ramaswamy and were regarded as twins active in this field. We started lecturing activities on a big scale. We were amongst the first in utilizing humour in Management lectures in India. When I published my first management book “In the Wonderland of Indian Managers”. I wrote the following paragraph in the preface.

“The person responsible for a substantial number of my talks is Prof. N.S. Ramaswamy. For some time, the two of us were known as the Laurel and Hardy of the Management World. People stopped this when they could not distinguish who was Laurel and who was Hardy as both of us grew in several dimensions”.

He soon became the director of National Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE) in Mumbai. I also shifted to Mumbai around this time and our common activities continued. Then he became the founder director Indian Institute of Management Bangalore and got me there as a member of the Board of Governors. So this association continued till his departure from the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore.

Then we developed in different directions. I concentrated on understanding latest management thoughts and also the management thoughts applicable to Indian industry. Here Prof. N.S. Ramaswamy took the path of glorifying the ancient Indian thoughts starting with ancient Sanskrit scriptures. I felt most of this was irrelevant considering our development will be in the future. We had several hot debates on this point but this did not reduce our affinity to each other.

So the departure of Prof. Ramaswamy becomes my personal loss of a mentor. In spite of our differences, I appreciated and supported his various activities in the area of developing management in non-traditional sectors, experiments in different aspects of management, etc.,

Our friendship and exchange of communication continued. I wrote several articles when he was handling IIIIE journal, the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore journal and the Cartman. This continuous exchange of thoughts and ideas kept us together with a close feeling of comradeship and so I feel not only a personal loss but the loss of a part of my personality when I continue life without Prof. Ramaswamy. To quote a poet:

“I feel like one who treads alone  
Some banquet hall deserted  
Whose lights are fled, whose garlands dead  
And all but he departed.”\_\_\_\_\_●

The best hope for learning to live sustainably lies in schooling that is “smart by nature.” It includes experiencing the natural world; learning how nature sustains life; nurturing healthy communities; recognizing the implications of the ways we feed and provision ourselves; and knowing well the places where we live, work, and learn. Teachers are in a prime position to be able to weave these basics throughout the curriculum at every grade level.

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