

Dr. J. K. Naidu

By Priya Venugopal

Editor's Note: The following is a transcript of a short, but moving, speech given by Priya Venugopal, a Balvihar student of N. Virginia chapter during a service held at Chinmayam in memory of Dr. J.K.Naidu. The service was attended by nearly 200 people including Dr. Naidu's family. Several speakers recalled with great affection the unique person that Naiduji was and how deeply he affected the lives of everyone he came in touch with.



Namaste. My name is Priya Venugopal and I am a Senior in high school.

When I sat down to write this, I was trying to find the right words to do justice to Naidu Uncle's memory. I almost believed that if I could just find the right words, Uncle would come back. I wanted to capture with my words his beaming smile, his magnanimous spirit, and his abundant love, but all I could recall were my snapshot memories of his life.

I still remember Chinmaya Mission when the VA branch first began in Naidu Uncle's house. At that time, only adult classes were held and the Balavihar classes had not yet started. I was 3 years old at the time and quite often, I would grow restless from sitting quietly for so long. Amma tried everything to pacify me but there was only one person who could accomplish this. Naidu Uncle would pick me up and sit me in his lap, and there I stayed. It wasn't long before this became our routine. Whenever we attended Chinmaya Mission, I could always be found sitting in Uncle's lap. Even when I got too big for his lap, I was never too big for his bear hugs, that became Uncle's trademark. And when it was time to leave, Naidu Uncle would always remember to say "I love you".

When I first heard that Naidu Uncle fell ill a few months ago, I had called him up to ask him how he was doing. In his usual, comforting way, Uncle told me "don't worry, I'll be alright". When I asked what he had been doing recently, I was surprised to hear that he was still volunteering at the Homeless Shelter. Naidu Uncle explained this saying, "The most important thing I can do on this Earth is love God and serve others". Naidu Uncle lived this message everyday of his life and he led others to follow in his footsteps as well. He was so selfless that he gave everything of himself- time, money, and love to help anyone in need, even forgetting his own needs in the process.

Naidu Uncle always said, "The Chinmaya Mission family is my safety net, that will safeguard me from falling". His happiness grew as he saw many kids, like myself, and our center thrive. I always assumed that Uncle would be present at those important times in my life... my upcoming graduation, my wedding, and maybe even my child's first day at CM. But I know Uncle is my safety-net and he will be there through it all, because he is alive in my heart and my memories now and always. Hari Om.

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Smrithi,