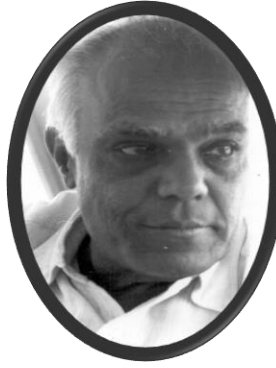


REMINISCENCES OF AN EDUCATIONIST OF OUR TIMES

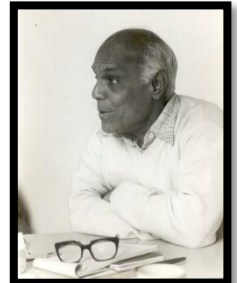


A YOUNG AND ENERGETIC LAD:

After resigning his job a young and energetic lad with proven proficiency has come forward and obliged to the call of Mahatma Gandhi and worked in the refugee camps of Faridabad and Sevagram. He has gained the friendship of Mrs. Ashadevi Ariyanayagam, who was an Indian freedom fighter, educationist and Gandhian, closely connected with Sevagram of Mahatma Gandhi and the Bhoodan movement of Vinoba Bhave. Attracted by the philosophies of Gandhiji he has committed himself to serve at Sevagram and became a dedicated celebrity to the ideals of Gandhiji with new dimensions.

MEETING SOUNDAM AMMA:

When he was working at Wardha refugee camp he happened to meet Dr. T. S. Soundram, Founder of Gandhigram, an Indian physician, social reformer and politician and moreover the only daughter of T. V. Sundaram Iyengar, popularly known as TVS initiator. That meeting with Dr. Soundram has made a turning point both in his life and in the history of Gandhigram. That young lad was nobody else, it was Shri. V. Krishnamurthy fondly called as 'VK Anna' who joined later in the services of Gandhigram and worked with Soundram Amma.



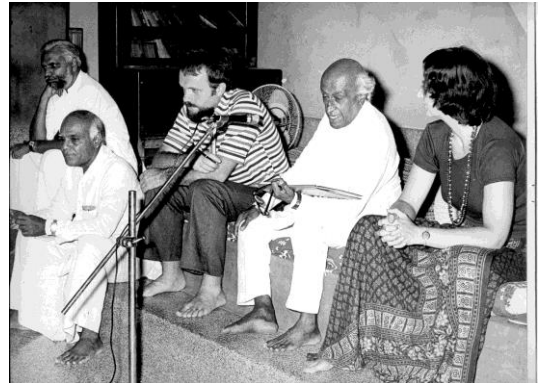
CHILDHOOD:

Shri. V. Krishnamurthy was born as the eldest son to the orthodox couple Shri. Venkataraman & Smt. Thailammal on 15th March 1917 at Thiruvannamalai. He lost his mother even at his childhood. He was then fostered by his uncle, Shri Seshachalam, an ardent freedom fighter and a fervent Congressman. He used to feed helpless and hapless in his home daily which persuaded VK Anna to serve for the unfortunates in later years.



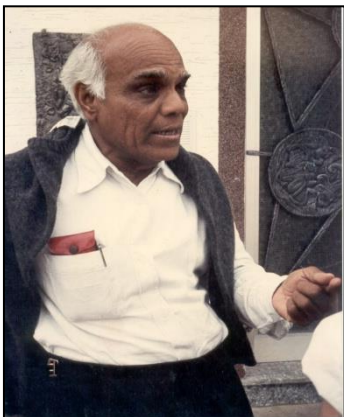
CALL OF GANDHIJI:

He came out with distinction in his graduation from Annamalai University; got his Post graduation at Michigan University, USA. After the completion of his post graduation he was in dilemma in choosing his career – whether it is Alamarthupatti village in India or at America? At last he came to a decision that a village in India was his best choice for his service minded soul. When he was in a higher position in Education Department of the then Madras State he turned up to the call of Gandhiji and relinquish his profession in order to serve in the refugee camps, where thousands of men and women were languishing after religious riots that have provoked after independence.



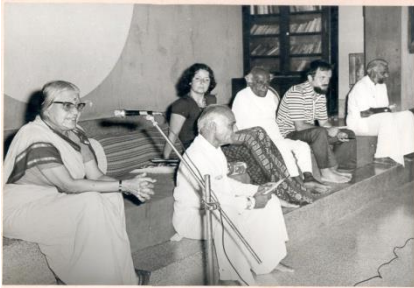
DEDICATION TOWARDS RURAL EDUCATION:

Gandhigram was started by Dr. T.S. Soundram Amma and Dr. G. Ramachandran Mama in 1947. V K Anna has joined in Gandhigram as an educationist and toiled for educating rural people and for their uplift. He has been the backbone of the development of educational institutions right from Balwadies to higher education. With support and blessings of Amma he raised the higher education institution to the height of Gandhigram Rural Institute. He used to visit all the villages in and around Gandhigram along with a team of volunteers and educationists and brought rural youths in the stream of learning. In addition he has helped to settle many conflicts between the villagers. Besides he was a well known benefactor and philanthropist of that time and paid the fees of poor students and helped them to complete the study. Most of the beneficiaries who are in better positions today remember him with gratitude. The education at Gandhigram Rural Institute has become a rural development oriented one besides research and development activities, which brought a new dimension to the rural education system first in India which lead to the Rural Institute in becoming a Deemed University. He has constructed many buildings in Gandhigram particularly in Gandhigram Rural Institute using the materials that were available in and around Gandhigram. The buildings were built in coherence with that of Laurie Baker, a renowned archeologist of yester years.



A CRUSADER OF RURAL FOLK:

Viewing the enthusiastic approach of VK Anna towards the well-being of rural people Soundram Amma entrusted the Government's Rural Development Scheme to him. He worked day and night towards the goal without bothering anything. Thus the development works were undertaken as war foot manner. VK Anna showed keen interest in meeting rural poor and imbibed them the art of co-living. He was active in all his endeavours. He would be seen in Kasturba Hospital at one time and would be seen taking classes for villagers; next seen at Thambithottam and next few hours would be seen at Sowbhagya Illam talking and playing with children. Next day he would be discussing with poor students from villages and in next few hours later he would distribute cash for their fees or hostel fees or reimburse the cost of books and note books. He lived for the rural people, rural education and for a holistic rural development throughout his entire life period. The beneficiaries of VK Anna still remember his gesture and concerns over them.



CONCERNS OVER WEAVERS:

Considering his concern towards underprivileged a German voluntary organization Action for World Solidarity appointed him as its Consultant for India. By the virtue of appointment he has adopted many villages in and around Gandhigram and started balwadies for poor kids with monetary help for its functioning. In 1981 a weaving master stopped his profession at T. Subbulapuram in Theni District most of the weavers lost their jobs. The jobless weavers approached Sri VK Anna who in turn discussed with Sri. V. Padmanbhan, then Managing Trustee of Gandhigram Trust and started Khadi weaving. Now the Khadi weavers of Subbulapuram are happy and remembering VK Anna for his timely help on those vulnerable days. Like that of Khadi weavers the Adi Dravidas were also imparted in training in Khadi weaving. In 1983 Shri VK Anna had constructed about 30 houses to Adi Dravida weavers under "Weavers Rehabilitation Scheme". Today they wholeheartedly remember Shri VK Anna who had arranged 50 kgs of maize through ASW at the time of construction of the houses. Besides, he was the counselor to the Seva Nilayam at Subblapuarum and knew well about the Founder of that Centre Mrs. Dora.



SUPPORTING NGOS:

With a view to developing villages at least to achieve minimal basic needs of villagers he has guides starting many NGOs through his students who have come out from Gandhigram Rural Institute. Moreover, he has guided in planning and financing through ASW to some extent.



CONCLUSION:

He was a good teacher to students; an affectionate father to the downtrodden; a light to those who were trailing in their lives; a man of kind and sympathy; a personality with mercy on poor and underprivileged. His long and steady journey ended on 13th January 1992 when he breathed his last. Let us remember his pioneering services towards rural people at large and for education of all poor during the celebration of his centenary year 1917 - 2017. It is worthy that all of us pray to God ***“Let His Soul Rest in Peace”***.

