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Explore Basavanagudi's medical legacy at a unique photo exhibition honouring visionary doctors & their groundbreaking contributions

# LEGACY OF CARE

Bindu Gopal Rao

This weekend, step into nostalgia at a photo exhibition celebrating the esteemed doctors of yesteryear from Basavanagudi, renowned for its rich heritage and culture. This unique showcase features sepia-tinted exhibits that vividly recount the pioneering healthcare contributions of these practitioners, who initiated several city-firsts while serving the community.

Maya Chandra, Founder-Director of Maya Films and an avid history enthusiast and Basavanagudi resident, had the idea for a photo exhibition honouring local doctors struck her in the lead-up to Doctors' Day on July 1. Inspired by the compassionate care she received from doctors during her childhood, Chandra decided to pay tribute to these unsung heroes with an exhibition aptly named "Vintage Salute".

"For this Doctor's Day, I thought it would be a good idea to celebrate the doctors of Basavanagudi and focus on how they contributed to the city's medical fraternity. I discussed this with Radha Rao, a fellow resident who was equally enthused about the idea, and we decided to go ahead," explains Chandra. To chart out a plan, Chandra decided that the focus of the exhibition would be to cover doctors who worked between the 1940s to 1980s.

The next question was, how to go about collecting information on them. "So, we decided to reach out to old-timers. While Radha focussed on NR Colony, I directed my attention to the other



Dr AV Krishna Murthy & Dr Nagamma and the women staff of Vani Vilas Hospital

areas," says Chandra. Radha got her first reference from her elder sister Saroja, who completed her medical education in 1975. She knew many doctors from the area and had strong recollection of the names and information on some of the renowned ones.

"I contacted longtime residents of Basavanagudi to gather additional information about the doctors. I located their former clinics and visited their families, who graciously welcomed me and shared valuable insights about their loved ones' contributions to the community," says Radha.

In the end, the team compiled information on 34 doctors, acknowledging that a few families remained untraceable. During their research, they also unearthed the stories of many "general practitioners" (GPs), a concept that has gradually faded with time.

"It was incredible to connect with these families and gather information along with old photographs of them and their clinics. In their shops, which were known as

clinics back then, rows of bottles filled with coloured liquids held different medicines. In those days, there were no pharmacies, so these GPs would prepare the medicines themselves and hand them to us. We would carry empty bottles to collect these medicines when we fell ill. Additionally, these doctors made house visits, which was a fascinating aspect because today, it's hard to imagine a doctor visiting your home. You might get a physiotherapist, but not a doctor who comes home to see you," says Chandra.

### Stories unfold

With thorough research in place, the exhibition showcases around 70 photos, each illuminating the remarkable stories of the doctors. One particularly heartwarming

tale is that of Dr. Nagamma, born in Mysore in 1900. Orphaned at the age of six, she relocated to Bangalore under her grandmother's guardianship. In 1927, she earned her LMP (Licensed Medical Practitioner) degree, graduating in the second batch from the government medical college. She subsequently joined the state health services and was assigned to Thirthahalli in Shimoga district,

where she established the Thirthahalli Government Hospital.

In 1935, along with Dr. Albuquerque, Dr. Shakarambal, and Dr. Kokila, Dr. Nagamma planned the Vani Vilas Hospital in Bangalore. In the early 1940s, with generous grants from the late Sajjan Rao, she founded the Visveswarapura Government Maternity Hospital, popularly known until recently as Nagamma Hospital.

Another notable figure is Dr. Kamalamma (1911 - 1980), a medical officer at Tallam Subbaraya Chetty Dispensary, who later established her own clinic in Gandhi Bazaar. From 1942 to 1961, at the height of her career, she not only managed her clinic but also conducted numerous home deliveries regardless of caste, creed, or social status, a legacy cherished by many families today. Dr. Kamalamma's relatives recall a line of bullock carts and horse-drawn carriages in front of her clinic, highlighting her dedication to her patients' care. "She would travel in a horse carriage when she came to do the deliveries," informed Chandra.

### Achievers galore

What makes the show endearing is its tribute to visionary doctors who were ahead of their time.

For example, Dr. M. Mary Ratnamma Isaac (July 13, 1887 - February 11, 1970) was India's first lady surgeon. "In 1948, she established Abhaya Ashram with the support of the Maharaja of Mysore, providing shelter

and educational opportunities to thousands of women. She ran Ratnamma's Maternity Home (RMH) at her spacious bungalow situated at the corner of Ranga Rao Road and trained local villagers in midwifery, conducting extensive social work in nearby communities," says Chandra.

Dr. K.S.Shadaksharappa (October 13, 1913 - August 5, 2003) served as an IMS specialist during World War II in the Middle East and was Karnataka's first Professor of Cardiology. He played a pivotal role in establishing the Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiology and served as the Founder President of various prestigious medical associations at both state and national levels, including the Karnataka Chapter for the Association of Physicians of India, Cardiological Society of India (CSI), Association of Gastroenterology, and Indian College of Cardiology.

Additionally, Dr. B.K. Narayana Rao, the first eye surgeon of Mysore State and founder of Prabha Eye Clinic, along with Dr. Y.N. Krishnamurthy, the first Indian to specialize in radiology abroad, all hail from Basavanagudi, further underscoring the area's rich medical heritage.

The exhibition honours doctors from various fields including allopathy, homeopathy, ayurveda, and mental health, highlighting their diverse contributions. A remarkable aspect is that several families continue to uphold these medical legacies.

- Where: Indian Institute of World Culture, 6, BP Wadia Road, Basavanagudi, Phone: 080 2667 8581
- When: 10:00 am to 7:00 pm July 2-8, 2024

