

AN EVENING WITH DR.E.C.G.SUDARSHAN:

By Sockalingam Sam Kannappan P.E. September 9, 2009

It was September 9, 2009, I need to travel to Austin, Texas. I rushed to my office in Baytown and started a departmental meeting. My colleague, Simon Lee pointed that it was 9 minutes after 9 a.m. on the 9th day of 9th month in 2009. It was considered a lucky time in Chinese tradition. I was hoping that my day will proceed smoothly. Then I drove to William Hobby airport, parked my car and boarded a Southwest flight. A security agent stopped me when she saw my boarding pass showed Sam and my driver's license had Sockalingam. I told her that State of Texas bought my ticket not paying attention to the difference. She finally let me board the flight saying that letter by letter should match in the name for boarding after October 16th.

I had a rental car waiting. I drove to the Governor Rick Perry's office at the State Capitol and had a meeting lasting forty five minutes. Next on the program was a visit my sister's son Chidambaram to see his baby girl Kannathal. I knew Austin in 1968 when highway 183 was a two lane road called Research Blvd. Now it elevated freeway 183. He gave me the directions and then I reached his apartment. My daughter, Abirami, has packed dress for the baby in my carryon. Without paying much attention, I took some of the items and left some in the car. Of course, it was nice to see my younger sister's grand daughter. I ate and reserved a seat for the return flight. Now it is time to move on to meet the eminent scientist Dr. E.C.G Sudarshan.

Mrs. Bhamathi Sudarshan gave us warm milk to drink. Dr. Sudarshan and I started talking around 7.30 p.m. and it was past midnight when we realized that we need to go to sleep. First, I had asked him question after question. He patiently answered. At the end, I was talking about my own life experiences. Following are excerpts from this inspiring discussion.

Kannappan: Why do people feel jealous when someone known is successful?

Sudarshan: One compares themselves with people of similar background such as same school etc. and concludes that it is unfair for one person alone to be advanced .

K: Why we remember certain incidents and forget most others?

S: Usually, we store certain information because of its importance to us. But one of my professors from Tambaram remembered one minor incident about me for more than 50 years.

K: Why my mother, who is 93, still thinks about my childhood activities, not my other activities?

Bhamathi: She connects herself with you only through those activities you both were involved.

K: Ramana Maharishi wanted us to understand the self. Even in 1914, Aurobindo wanted humans to evolve together. Why the world is still full of bad people?

S: Self evaluation is needed to grow up. Aurobindo's expectations were high.

K: What is better? Doing charities after you become rich or when you hardly have enough for yourself?

S: Helping others when you have barely enough, gives more satisfaction and direct connection.

K: Why bad things happen to good people?

S: A Professor in New York was awarded a prestigious award and soon afterwards his son died in World Trade Center during 9/11. How can this be viewed? One needs to accept the way things present themselves.

K: Why people such as Mathematics Great Ramanujam died so young?

S: In his case, he did not take care of himself with proper diet in England.

K: Was Ramanujan known due to his English Professor's effort?

S: In Ramanujan's case recognition came early partly due to Prof. Hardy's effort. But great works recorded in some fashion will come to light sooner or later. For example two other Mathematicians from Kerala, Madhava and Nilakantha went without any recognition for centuries . Some of their work was attributed to Isaac Newton who lived at least a century later. Now their knowledge is becoming more recognized.

K: Does our intelligence come from our ancestors or from studying?

S: From both. Our ancestors give us a good start. Then we need to improve ourselves by our own effort.

K: Are we able to bring out everything our brain stores when we need?

S: A Canadian surgeon made a patient remember things by stimulating different parts of the brain.

On 10th morning, I talked with Dr. Sudarshan till 9.30 a.m. I had to leave to be in the Texas On-site Wastewater Research Council Meeting. The meeting cannot start without a quorum. The Council reviewed funding proposals and reports for past projects.

It is time to go to the Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst's office. It was pouring rain. I had very productive meeting. I flew back to Houston after many hours of flight delay.