

“Dear sisters and brothers,

It is an emotional moment for me today as we launch the book ‘Dr V L Dutt-Glimpses of a Pioneer’s Life Journey’ written by Smt. V L Indira Dutt.

My late friend, Velagapudi Lakshmana Dutt was a respected industrialist, philanthropist and a visionary par excellence. It has been almost two years since he left us but his friendly and warm nature, love and hospitality remain etched vividly in my memory. There are very few people who leave an indelible impression on the sands of time and Shri Dutt was one such blessed soul with whom I shared a close relationship.

Born to Shri Velagapudi Ramakrishna and Durgamba on December 27, 1937, Shri Dutt earned a name for himself in the business community in India and abroad. As the Chairman & Managing Director of KCP Limited, he proved himself a worthy heir to his illustrious father who had made great contribution to the nation’s development-- first as an ICS officer and then as an industrialist. It can be rightly said that if Shri Ramakrishna sowed the seed of KCP Limited, it was his son Lakshmana Dutt who nurtured it into a banyan like tree. Shri Dutt headed industry body FICCI during the crucial years of 1991-92 when the economy was passing through a tumultuous phase and his vision and foresight played an instrumental role in bridging the gap between the government and industry during those days.

Indeed Shri Dutt was not an individual but an institution. He was a corporate statesman who inspired a whole generation of young entrepreneurs.

As Executive Chairman of the KCP, Shri Dutt made successful ventures in various sectors including Cement, Sugar, Heavy Industrial Machinery, Power Generation, IT and Hospitality. Conscious of his societal responsibilities, he served on the Board of various charitable organizations such as Indian Education Trust, Chennai Willingdon Corporate Foundation and Cardiac Medical & Research Foundation among others.

Shri Dutt was a great visionary and a stalwart in administration. Here, I would like to narrate one particular incident as a testimony to his managerial competence. There was a sugar factory near Challapalli in Krishna district which was making heavy losses and defaulted on farmers’ payments. Then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri NT Rama Rao called over VL Dutt and told that farmers in the region had fallen on hard times and wanted someone like Shri Dutt could take over the management of the factory. Shri Lakshmana Dutt took an extraordinarily courageous risk and KCP took over Challapalli Sugar Factory in 1987. Shri Dutt, through his enterprise and hard work, modernized and transformed the factory within a year and most of the dues of farmers were cleared in a record time.

During his lifetime, Shri Lakshmana Dutt touched many lives and the most outstanding quality he had was that of giving unconditionally without any expectation. In memory of his late father, he established a trust called the V. Ramakrishna Charitable Trust, contributing to the cause of Education, Health and Rural Development. He generously donated large sums for construction of colleges, skill development centers and health facilities.

For his illustrious services, Shri Dutt was showered with numerous awards and recognitions at national and international level. In 1989, the Government of Andhra Pradesh conferred him with the Yajamanya Ratna Award. The President of Vietnam presented him the Friendship Medal in 2017 for his positive contribution to the development of Socio Economy of Phu Yen Province and contribution to strengthen traditional relations and overall partnership between Vietnam and India. Beside these, ASEAN-India Achievement and Excellence Award and Paul Harris Fellow award by Rotary International are some of the notable recognitions.

Dear friends,

The world knows Shri Dutt as a successful businessman, but this book brings out his human side. While sifting through its pages, you get to know him as a family man, his conduct as a husband, father and friend.

I must compliment Smt. V.L. Indira Dutt ji for sharing the memories and experiences of her beloved husband for the larger benefit of us all. It is to her credit that the reader gets a completely fresh perspective into Shri Dutt's fun loving and cheerful personality, his hard working but humble nature and concern for the well being of others. He was a people's person who enjoyed being with people and giving them importance in his life, a quality so starkly missing in today's highly competitive business environment.

This book has rekindled my own memories about Shri Dutt. We used to discuss various issues of common interest. Sports used to be one such topic of our discussion. Like me, he was also a sports enthusiast and would often fly to London to witness Wimbledon tournaments. Today's young entrepreneurs should learn from him and always find some time for sports and outdoor activities, no matter how busy they are. If one remains physically fit, one can be mentally more alert and make better decisions.

This book might come as a surprise for many who knew Shri Dutt only as a busy industrialist. When you read this book by Indira ji, you will marvel at the manner in which he balanced his family life and the business world perfectly. This should be a lesson to all businessmen and entrepreneurs. While performing one's professional duty, one should give equal importance to friends and family because in the end that is what gives one an everlasting joy and support. I would also urge all business leaders to frame their HR policies in such a way that their employees are able to manage their work-life balance easily. This would not only lead to better performance by employees but would also help in addressing mental health issues which are rising in our society. For Shri Dutt, his employees always came first and he deeply cared for them. He ingrained this value in the work culture and nurtured his group of companies with kindness and love.

The book mentions one incident. Once, when Indira Ji's mother was seriously ill, Dutt told her "Kumari don't worry about company's affairs. I'll see that they are taken care of by someone or the other. You just focus on the mother's health." Here was a true son speaking, his samskara speaking, his compassion and respect for elders speaking. These are the qualities that make one great.

The virtues of respect for elders, service and compassion are at the core of our civilizational values. Although Shri Dutt was high-flying corporate leader, he never forgot this. Present generation must draw inspiration from personalities like Shri Dutt. I agree with Smt. Indira Ji's observation in the book that "collapse of joint family system has led to the dilution of mutual care and concern, the spirit of adjustment and collective ethos." Our youth need to understand that this age-old tradition needs to be preserved and propagated for their own good.

He proved the meaning and spirit of the adage 'Atithi Devo bhava' (the guest is divine) while conducting his guests. On several occasions, I myself had an opportunity to enjoy his lavish hospitality and nostalgically still remember those days.

Dutt was a very warm soul with no vanity. He was lovingly playful with all the children in the extended family. A man of clear conscience, he was artlessly affectionate to anyone – children, friends or relatives.

His passion for work was such that he looked upon his factories as his matriarch. KCP Ltd made tremendous progress under his active and constructive leadership. It is heartening to note that December 27, the birthday of VL Dutt, is observed as Quality Day in every factory of KCP. Similarly, September 14, birthday of Smt Indira Dutt is observed as Environment Day. I am also happy to note that on this occasion, tree plantation drives are also conducted in villages around KCP factories, enhancing green cover and protecting the rural ecology.

When I was going through this book, I was deeply touched by the personal details of Indira Ji's marriage ceremony with Shri VL Dutt at her native place Muktyala. One more thing that I particularly liked in this book is that Indira ji has mostly written all names in full, not in abbreviated form. This is appreciable and shows her respect towards her family elders. More people should follow this.

I once again congratulate Smt. VL Indira Dutt for coming out with this beautiful book and Shri U Atreya Sarma and Ms Ambika Ananth for transcribing her thoughts beautifully.

Shri Dutt's legacy lives on and will continue to inspire generations to come.

Jai Hind!"