

THE METRO MAN

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“So, we have to snatch victories from the jaws of defeat.”

IT'S A SOCIAL PROJECT

Life has completely changed for the East Godavari-born after taking up the Metro challenge. “Earlier I was very short-tempered, but this project made me patient and has mellowed me down. Also, when my effigy was burnt, environmentalists did *dharnas*, and agitations were held by religious leaders, I took these in my stride. My stint in Konkan Railways taught me how to resist political agitations. I started interacting with people from different walks of life and focused on greenery (planting 5 lakh saplings), women’s safety measures, 360-degree camera coverage, etc. So today, the Metro has become a better project because of the criticism. It is no more an engineering project, but a social project.”

FAMILY TIME

Did he regret losing out on family time? “Luckily, my family understands me and my wife took care of the children (two sons). But I would not bring work home.”

Meanwhile, Mrs Reddy (Prathima) joins in the conversation and shares, “We all knew how dear and important the Metro project is to him. I took leave on the day of the Metro launch and watched it live on TV. I got goose bumps when I saw the crowd. I know the kind of pressure he was under. During a crisis, I could see the change in the way he talked and walked. I was worried about his health and even advised him to quit. But he persisted. So whenever he came home, I ensured things were smooth. We changed our habits to suit his style. His diet comprises one *dosa* or *idli* for breakfast, boiled vegetables, salads, greens, *dal* (for lunch) and a little rice during dinner.”

Prathima Reddy adds, “Earlier, I was a homemaker. But it was he who encouraged me to go to work. He didn’t want me to be a stereotypical wife waiting for her husband to come home. I am now the Principal of Kasturba College and I leave for work before him.”

They also come across as friendly parents. “We gave freedom to our



N.V.S. Reddy encouraged his wife, Prathima to work and she is currently serving as the Principal of Kasturba College

ON THE MANY CHALLENGES



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kids to pursue their dreams. But I have asked them to pursue engineering first,” he reveals, while Mrs Reddy adds, “The elder son is doing MBA at Oxford University while the younger son recently completed MS from the US. They earlier used to complain that we weren’t spending holidays with them. So we are trying to change that now.”

So is it all work and no play for Mr Reddy? “I enjoy watching sitcoms like the *Yes Minister* series and do a bit of gardening. I like listening to Telugu classics, but I don’t watch films. The last film I saw was *Shankarabharanam*. I love reading books, but unfortunately I’m not getting enough time for it now,” he reveals.

Interestingly, Mr Reddy considers himself a Delhite. He says, “That’s because the best part of my life was

in JNU. We used to have intellectual debates with Seetharam Yechuri, Nirmala Sitharaman, Prakash and Brinda Karat, etc. These intellectual debates changed the way I thought. Also, Professor Rashid (nominated member of the Rajya Sabha from Hyderabad) was the one who made me think innovatively.”

Mr Reddy recently walked in as the chief guest for an event at his wife’s college. “People were calling him ‘The Metro Man’ and mobbing him for selfies. I was shocked and didn’t know that my husband was such a big celebrity,” she guffaws.

And what are his plans after retirement? “I wonder whether he will ever retire! But I keep asking him to take it easy,” jokes Mrs Reddy, while he adds, “I have many ideas, but I haven’t thought of anything specific as of now.”



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— Prathima Reddy, N.V.S Reddy’s wife

THE METRO MAN



MD of Hyderabad Metro Rail N.V.S. Reddy with his wife Prathima

N.V.S. REDDY AND HIS WIFE PRATHIMA, OPEN UP IN A CANDID CONVERSATION ABOUT THE LANDMARK METRO PROJECT AND HOW IT CHANGED THEIR LIVES

SASHIDHAR ADIVI

DECCAN CHRONICLE

 There's been one question N.V.S. Reddy has been asked a hundred times over the last 10 years — "When will the Metro Rail come?" The senior IAS officer and MD of Hyderabad Metro Rail can now rest easy. The Metro dream has finally been realised (on November 29). And here's how it all unfolded.

Apparently, it was a casual conversation between two visionaries in 2006 that sparked this idea. "I was talking to my batchmate S.P. Singh (then Secretary, Urban Development) and I said 'Arey metro banayenge Hyderabad mein.' He said, 'Haan, theek hai.' The then Chief Minister Y.S.R. Reddy too accepted the idea and said, 'Ok, do whatever you want. But don't ask for money'," he recalls.

"After several brainstorming sessions with Gajendra Haldea (who introduced PPP and brought several reforms in our country) and other team members, we eventually came up with the standardised Model Concession Agreement," he says.

While the response to the Metro has been good, the design is being criticised as many people are getting down from the Metro and are directly coming onto the roads!. "The city is for people and not for cars. We have widened the sidewalks so that commuters can walk and more importantly, burn their calories. We shall soon guide them to a nearby transport station," he smiles.

Despite the Metro Rail, traffic still hasn't eased out. "It takes time and the Metro is not the only solution. We are trying for inter-model integration, where we can integrate


with bus and trains," he retorts.

He had to endure several challenges over the last decade and experts even wrote off the project. "Luckily, I had the most efficient team that stood by my side. I motivated them by telling inspiring stories of Hungarian rifle shooter Károly Takács and how he won an Olympic medal even after he lost his right hand. If you look at the famous battles in history — even though the commander of the team knows that he will lose, he stills keep saying that they are winning."

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THE CRITICISM

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