

A UNIQUE BOND

L V Prasad

Sri Akkineni Lakshmi Varaprasada Rao

Telegrams : PRAPRONS

494 02 23
Telephone : 494 70 20
TELEX No. 11-76267

PRASAD PRODUCTIONS. PRIVATE LIMITED

MOTION PICTURE PRODUCERS, DISTRIBUTORS, STUDIO OWNERS
& LABORATORIES OWNERS

Branches :
BOMBAY
BANGALORE
HYDERABAD

Regd. Office :
2, SARANGAPANI STREET,
T'NAGAR, MADRAS-17.

810, BOMBAY MARKET,
TARDEO ROAD,
BOMBAY-400 034

Ref. No. : P/J/3/1902/87



11th March 1987.

Dr.Gullapalli Nw Rao,
L.V.Prasad Eye Institute,
Road No.2, Banjara Hills,
HYDERABAD-500034.


Dear Dr.Rao,

I thank you for your letter dtd.5/3/87 and happy to note yours and that of the Board of Trustees warmest appreciation, for my contribution to the development of L.V.PRASAD EYE INSTITUTE.

It is my earnest desire that the development of L.V.PRASAD EYE INSTITUTE, should help and mitigate pains and sorrows of masses. Towards that objective in mind, I shall endeavour my best to give my humble contribution in whatever way I could; and to fulfill such cherished desires,- I shall fully depend on your hard work and the wisdom of the Board of Trustees, to make the L.V.PRASAD EYE INSTITUTE, a truly International Institute.

With warm regards,

Yours Sincerely,


(L.V.PRASAD.)

P.S. In future please post a copy of all your correspondence to Mr.Ramesh Prasad, at Madras, also.

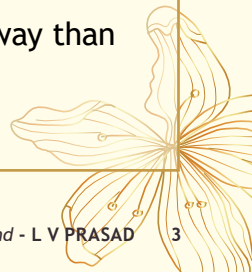
*A letter dated 11 March 1987
from Sri L. V. Prasad, acknowledging his
contributions to the eye institute.*



In June 1986, the trustees of the Hyderabad Eye Institute named the fledgling eye institute under their trusteeship after Sri L. V. Prasad, a legendary film-maker and the founder of Prasad Film Labs. The L V Prasad Eye Institute, as the world would know it from then on, would bring a unique focus towards ‘mitigating the pains and sorrows’ of millions of people with eye health issues.

It would be excellent in the services it offered, and the training it fostered. It would welcome everyone who lost the gift of sight, restoring vision where possible and offering rehabilitation when not.

Sri Akkineni Lakshmi Varaprasada Rao (L. V. Prasad) had made his name in Indian cinema with millions flocking to watch his movies. His gift to the institute would now be an opportunity to give back to India—and what better way than to help people see?



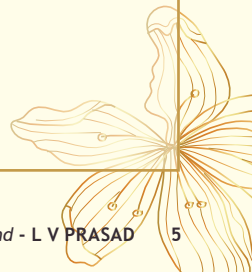


A life dedicated to cinema

Pedana, Palakollu, Ponduru, Eluru, and of course, Uppada—all markers of a major product during colonial times: Silk and textiles. The Telugu states have a long history of silk and textile production and weaving them into cloth. Today, Hanuman junction, a few kilometers away from Eluru, hosts a cocoon market and supplies silk to all the coastal Andhra districts with silk weaving communities.

In the 1920s, Sri L. V. Prasad's father decided to invest his wealth in growing silkworms on mulberry bushes near Eluru. The timing didn't help: this was the time of the inter-war slump, and a rolling economic depression that swept the world between the two World Wars. It was also an enterprise he was ill-suited to run, and he lost his wealth to this dream. This pushed his family into debt and poverty.

Turn-of-the-century Andhra theatre, especially from the 1860s on, was the opposite: bustling drama and theatre companies running packed theatrical performances all across the length and breadth of Telugu lands. The 1900s-1930s saw an explosion in commercial theatre companies, especially the musicals.





Bobbiliyuddham, *Harishchandra*, *Ramaraju charitramu* and many such dramas from that era drew the crowds.

Theatre groups like the *Hindu Nataka Samajam* from Rajahmundry and the Mylavaram company or the *Mote vari* company in Eluru were popular and did the rounds of Andhra towns and villages. Famous plays of that era, like the *Sri Krishna Tulaabhaaram*, went on to seed popular cinema decades later. By 1921, the fledgling world of Telugu cinema too began to take root with the first silent movie made by a Telugu production company, *Bhishma Pratigna*.

Early Years

Lakshmi Varaprasad was born in 1907 and grew up along with five brothers and a sister in Somavarappadu, near Eluru. He was a great fan of the theatre and went on to act in a few plays himself, growing up. By the 1930s, theatre's peak was behind it, and motion pictures were this bright new opportunity on the horizon. His father's disastrous foray into the silk business pushed Varaprasad's hand. Should he stay in Somvarappadu, or pursue his destiny?

On a January day in 1930, a young Varaprasad ran away to Bombay, leaving behind his wife and child, to weave a better fortune there. A Telugu-speaking twenty-two-year-old, Varaprasad knew no other language.





He wound his way to Dadar, and to the zinc-doors of the Kohinoor Film Company. He would stay outside for months, losing all his money and finding shelter at a Tailor's shop next door. He worked under terrible conditions at a variety of studios—Venus Pictures, Indian Pictures—but would earn a daily wage working nights at carnivals and other odd-jobs.

In 1931, he secured a small role in India's first talkie, Ardeshir Irani's *Alam Ara*, produced by the Imperial Film Company. One of Irani's assistant directors, H. M. Reddy, directed the first Tamil talkie, *Kali Doss*, and also the first Telugu talkie, *Bhakta Prahlada*, both produced by Imperial in 1931. So, Varaprasad got to act in the first talkies of all the three major film industries in India, establishing his place in the Indian film pantheon.

Bombay tested his will and abilities every day, but he survived and made a name for himself. In fact, Bombay, and an Imperial Film Company clerk, gave him the shortened name we know today: L.V. Prasad. Nearly two years after coming to Bombay, Sri L. V. Prasad sent a postcard home to let his family know about his whereabouts. He did not know that he had lost his daughter when he was away. In that first decade, he faced extraordinary hardships and his career was reset to zero at every turn. He lost his job at the film company and worked as a ticket collector at Dreamland theatre.



Mr Ramesh Prasad and Sri L. V. Prasad



His faith in himself and his sincere love for the craft of film-making sustained him through that troubled period. By the 1940s and 50s, his fortunes turned, and Sri L. V. Prasad made many successful movies in Telugu, Tamil, and Hindi, including *Grihapravesam*, *Missamma*, *Mangayar Thilakam* and *Sharada*. By 1955, he established the Prasad Studios in Chennai. In 1950, Sri L. V. Prasad's blockbuster *Samsaram* included a child actor: his son, Ramesh Prasad.

Mr Prasad grew up noting his father's many sacrifices, and the bittersweet success of his later years. Despite having no interest in making movies himself, he had an abiding respect for his father and would go on to build the Prasad brand himself. Mr Ramesh Prasad found his calling in film processing, making Prasad Film Laboratories in Chennai a leader in the field.

By the 1980s, Prasad Productions was a storied and successful Indian film company. In 1981, came one of L. V. Prasad's biggest successes in Hindi cinema yet: *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*.

Sight and Cinema

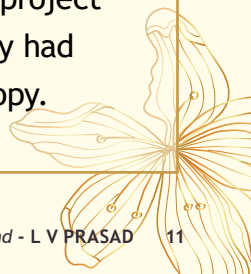
Ek Duuje Ke Liye also marked another key point for Sri L. V. Prasad and his family. Over his decades of film-making, Sri L. V. Prasad had built a reputation for quality cinema in the country. Soon, India began to shower him



From Left to Right: Actors Kamal Haasan, Rajendra Kumar and Sri L. V. Prasad

with awards and other honours. By the early 80s, Sri L. V. Prasad was felicitated with the Dadasaheb Phalke award, India's highest honour for the cinematic arts. Andhra University, one of Andhra Pradesh's premier universities, gave him the 'Kalaprapurna' award, for his contributions to cinema.

It was time to give back. Sri L. V. Prasad and Mr Ramesh Prasad had begun setting aside a part of the profits from a set of movies they had produced and distributed. They were planning to use this money for philanthropic purposes under the aegis of the L. V. Prasad Charities. With *Ek Duuje Ke Liye's* resounding success, the accumulated sum became substantial. The Prasads began to look around for a project that would be worthy of their vision. Intuitively, they had decided on education and health for their philanthropy.





Dr. Gullapalli N Rao and Ms. Pratibha Rao

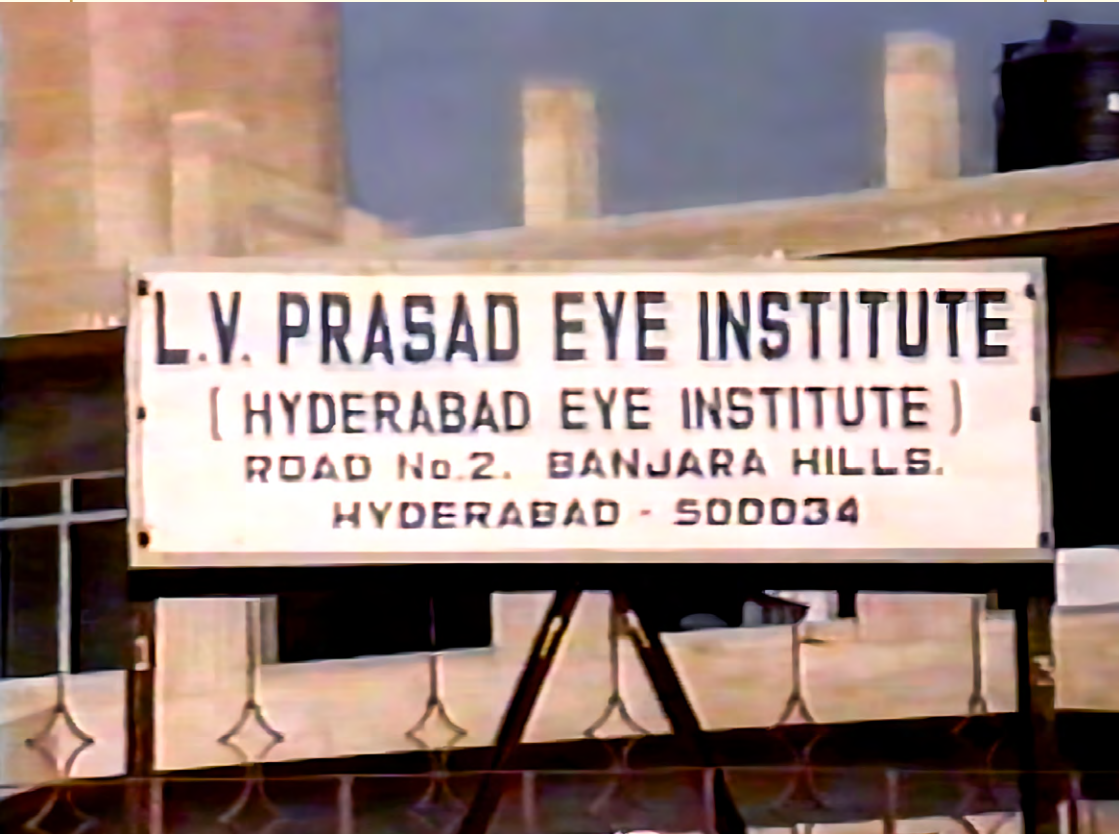
The L V Prasad Eye Institute

Thousands of miles away, another dream was taking shape. US-based Dr. Gullapalli N Rao and Ms. Pratibha Rao were working towards building a world-class academic eye care institution in India. The couple had moved to the USA a decade earlier, where Dr Rao's career as a corneal specialist had blossomed.

Despite their success in the US, the Raos nurtured plans to build an eye care institution back home in India. Inspired by

American institutions, they would build a new institute that would offer excellent eye care, irrespective of the patient's ability to pay. They had poured their savings into this plan and formed a US non-profit: the Indo-American Eye Care Society. Their commitment and talent began to attract donations from others in the US. Soon, the N. T. Rama Rao government in (then) Andhra Pradesh offered them a piece of land on the outskirts of Hyderabad, the state capital.

But they needed more to build what they aspired to offer.



L.V. PRASAD EYE INSTITUTE
(HYDERABAD EYE INSTITUTE)
ROAD No.2. BANJARA HILLS.
HYDERABAD - 500034



Around 1985, Mr Ramesh Prasad landed in Rochester, NY where Dr. Rao was a practicing ophthalmologist. Mr Prasad and Dr Rao did not know each other. Dr Mullapudi Venkataratnam, a cardiologist from Iowa, was also looking to come back home and start a speciality centre. Dr Ratnam had known the Prasads and was aware of their philanthropic plans. However, he recommended they meet this young couple in Rochester who were hoping to build an eye institute in India.

The Raos hosted Mr Prasad and discussed their plans with him. They sent along their project plan and spoke to him about their aspirations. On his return to India, Mr Ramesh Prasad spoke to his father: they had found a good fit. Like his father, he recognised honest intent and was convinced by their vision. Sri L. V. Prasad also found it fitting that their philanthropy would help restore sight, which was critical to enjoy cinema. Together, they decided to make this eye institute possible.

By January 1986, Dr Gullapalli N Rao and Ms Pratibha Rao formed the Hyderabad Eye Institute, with a board of trustees to take their plans forward. The government had given them land at Kismatpur, on the outskirts of Hyderabad, and was the likely location of this new institute. Dr Rao then travelled to Chennai and met the father and son. The Prasads offered the accumulated profits under the L. V. Prasad Charities, amounting to INR 1 Crore, for the setting up of a world-class eye institute.



In June 1986, the Trustees of the Hyderabad Eye Institute decided to name the new eye care complex they were building in Banjara hills, Hyderabad, the L V Prasad Eye Institute, in Sri L. V. Prasad's honour.



This was overwhelming news for Dr. Rao—but there was more. Sri L. V. Prasad also offered nearly 5 acres of land in the prime Hyderabad locality of Banjara hills for the hospital. He had built the Prasad Laboratories there, and the institute would come up right next to it. That day, this dream of a new kind of Indian eye care institution finally anchored down—and yet, there was more.

Over tea that evening, Mr. Ramesh Prasad wanted to know from Dr. Rao if anyone from the Prasad family could become an ophthalmologist at this new institute. Dr. Rao promised to do his best to help the Prasad kin get the best training possible, in ophthalmology. But if even after that they did not make the cut, then they would have no place there. This would apply to Dr Rao’s kin as well. Mr Prasad considered this for a moment, and agreed: this would be how they would work together. That conversation sealed their mutual commitment to honesty and merit, and set the stage for an eye institute that favoured rigor over bloodlines.

And so, the Banjara hills address became a natural home for this new kind of eye institute. The Kismatpur campus housed a training institute and the headquarters of the International Centre for the Advancement of Rural Eyecare (ICARE), LVPEI’s public health and epidemiology pillar. Today, Kismatpur also has LVPEI’s innovation hub. Nearly thirty-five years after the initial plans, a ‘satellite’ tertiary centre supporting the Banjara hills campus, the Shirin, Etian & Tara Brown Eye Centre, opened its doors to the public in 2022.

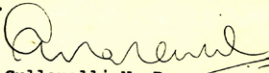
HYDERABAD EYE INSTITUTE

The trustees of the "Hyderabad Eye Institute" have unanimously agreed to develop an eye care complex at Hyderabad in conjunction with PRASAD CHARITIES to be named after SRI L.V. PRASAD.

This eye care complex will ultimately encompass an eye hospital, an eye research laboratory and a school for the blind.

It is the intention of the trustees of the Hyderabad Eye Institute to develop this facility to deliver optimal eye care to all segments of the population irrespective of their financial ability and at least 50 percent of the patients will be treated free of charge.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I hereby declare that the above statements are consistent with the decisions made by the Hyderabad Eye Institute.


Gullapalli N. Rao June 24, 1982
Chairman, Board of Trustees



The initial years

The L. V. Prasad charitable trust's donation helped fund 50,000 sq. feet, or about two-and-half floors, of the institute. The funds raised by the Raos went to purchase the land at Kismatpur, and a fair portion of the expensive equipment needed to run the Banjara hills campus. Even before the first patient walked into the institute, the education programme was flagged off at the Prasad Labs office next door. The first symposium saw the who's who of American ophthalmology in attendance at the Prasad Labs venue. LVPEI's first journal club meetings too began at the Prasad auditorium.

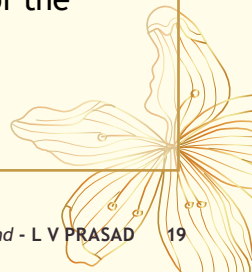
LVPEI was one of the first hospitals in India to offer intraocular lens (IOLs) after cataract surgery free-of-cost to those who could not afford to pay. IOLs were small artificial lens that would replace the clouded natural lens in a person's eye. Without IOLs, people would wear large, 'coke-bottle' glasses to make up for the missing lens that would focus light into the eyes. When LVPEI decided to offer IOLs to their non-paying patients, it was the Prasad family that stepped up to support this major project.

So, the Prasads' support to the eye institute extended far beyond the initial donation of money and land. In

the beginning, the small, hospital administrative office worked from the Prasad Labs building. The first telephone line for taking appointments, follow-up, and institute communication was a Prasad Labs line. In the 1980s, a telephone connection was a luxury few could afford. Dr. Rao had applied for 20 telephone lines years before he moved to Hyderabad, but the waiting list for a telephone connection in India was around 20 million people. The first line, at a steep price, only got allotted a few months after the institute opened. So, the Prasad Labs telephone line did the generous duties of telephonic appointments and sundry communications.

Despite such generous help, and their life membership of the boards running LVPEI, the Prasads never interfered with the running of the hospital. A few years after the hospital's opening, it had the opportunity to treat Sri L. V. Prasad himself. After a brief examination, it turned out that he needed cataract surgery. Sri L. V. Prasad insisted on paying for his surgery, a commitment that the Prasads continue to meet for all the patients they refer to LVPEI.

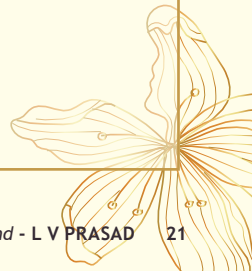
Sri L. V. Prasad closely followed the growth of the eye institute named after him until his passing away in June 1994. His son, Mr Ramesh Prasad, is a life member of the board of the Hyderabad Eye Institute.





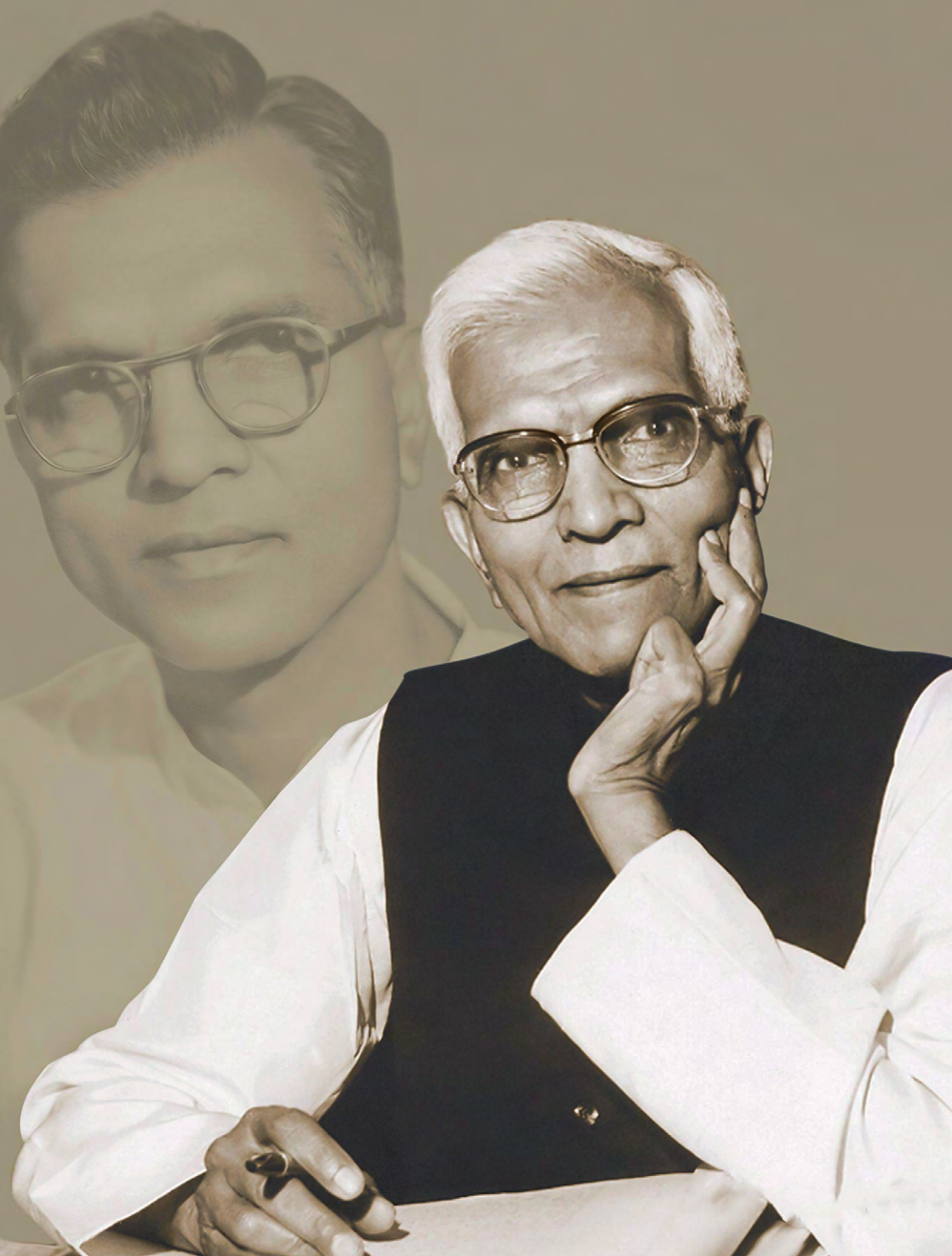
Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the Pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy...

- *Svetasvatara*
Upanishad IV: 6





Compiled by
L V Prasad Eye Institute
team in loving memory of
Sri Akkineni Lakshmi
Varaprasada Rao





H.No. 8-2-293/19
L V Prasad Marg, Banjara Hills
Hyderabad - 500 034
www.prasadcorp.com



L V Prasad Eye Institute

Kallam Anji Reddy Campus
L V Prasad Marg, Banjara Hills
Hyderabad - 500 034
www.lvpei.org
info.hyd@lvpei.org