

On the night of 4th April around 9 or 10pm, I got a call from Mary of Timbaktu that Mutyalappa was seriously injured and was being taken to the hospital. A few hours later I got an update from her that they were bringing him to Bangalore in the hope of better care. Mary and a few others of family and friends were accompanying. After they reached Bangalore I joined them at Hosmat Hospital. He was on ventilator, therefore breathing. They had already gone to NIMHANS where the doctor said that "no doctor on earth could resuscitate him", but he would not stop the caretakers from trying elsewhere. With that ambiguous opinion, they took Mutyalappa to Hosmat where they got a similar opinion. But without the benefit of a trusted doctor who would properly explain the situation, we felt it was worth one more try and went to a smaller hospital in Banashankari where Timbaktu had had a positive experience some years back. Again the doctors felt that there was no hope of reviving Mutyalappa. So finally at around 5am in the morning, in the ambulance itself, (as there was no point in admitting him to the hospital and incurring the expense), he was taken off the ventilator. Needless to say it was a harsh and unreal experience. Other than a bandage to his head he looked fine, and it was hard to absorb that a person so dynamic and full of life was no more.

I learnt the details of what happened later. Mutyalappa and some friends had been out to the neighbouring town of Penukonda on an outing. They had gone on mobikes. On the way back he had an accident on the motorbike. It looks like some construction material from the Highway expansion project had been left on the road and he hit it. He was taken to the Penukonda hospital and administered first aid; at that time it seemed he had stabilized. From there he was taken to Anantapur. On the way he started complaining of severe pain in his head and lost consciousness. At Anantapur they said that his situation was very bad and suggested that he could be taken to Bangalore. But there was no ventilator properly available and a harrowing experience followed for Mary and the Timbaktu staff to procure one. Finally they did and left for Bangalore. His wife was to accompany them, but their child was in a very bad state and crying a lot, so she stayed back with the child. His co-rider who was also injured also was brought to Bangalore in another ambulance.

The body was taken back to his village by the family and Timbaktu people who had accompanied. Meanwhile a few people stayed back to manage matters with his co-rider on the mobike who was also injured and who had been brought to Bangalore along with him. He was refused admission at NIMHANS due to lack of space and then similarly at St. Johns. The St. Johns doctor referred him to a small hospital on Magadi road where we took him. Over the next couple of weeks it was a difficult experience at that hospital. The charges were huge, facilities and doctors and care did not seem that good. The boy had head as well as other injuries. He was kept in the ICU and there was no space for his mother, who slept on the floor of the reception area. The boy became very restive after a few days and would not cooperate with the hospital staff and wanted to come out of the hospital. At one point we decided to move him to another hospital and made all the arrangements but the boy's mother balked; she was concerned that we were moving him to a worse hospital in order to reduce costs, and we were not able to allay her apprehensions. Finally he was discharged in a satisfactory state; the cost of the treatment was approximately 2Lakhs. That amount was temporarily paid by Timbaktu ; they are still searching for a way to recover that. Any donations to cover that amount would be very welcome.

A few days later I went to Mutyalappa's village for the last rites. His wife seemed to have recovered some composure, I talked very briefly to her. Some of the friends had rallied around and were doing their best to help the family with the transition. In particular Gopal, one of the Timbaktu workers who lives in Mushtikovela and who had been an active part of Mutyal's work in the village was helping a lot. The young son had had a hard time of it, and we pray that he is able to recover. After the ceremonies Timbaktu had planned for a small programme at the village in memoriam ; I could not stay for that as I needed to catch the bus back to Bangalore.

-Vijay Krishna