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“Assess, don’t judge” is YV Reddy’s mantra

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Reddy’s latest book project ‘Work, Wisdom, Legacy—31 essays from India’ talks about the meaning of work, how do values shape life and success, and the impact of technology on work life.

By [Richa Mishra](#)



Former RBI Governor YV Reddy along with leadership training expert Ravi Menon, Journalist Shaji Vikraman and Former Development Economist Kavi Yaga during the book launch of ‘Work, Wisdom, Legacy: 31 Essays from India’ at Administrative Staff College of India in Hyderabad on Sunday | Photo

Credit: SIDDHANT THAKUR

Former RBI Governor YV Reddy is known for his wit and pragmatic approach towards life.

On a rather warm Sunday morning here, introducing “Work, Wisdom, Legacy—31 essays from India”, which he termed as probably his last book project, Reddy said, “this book is for my grandchildren and for all other grandchildren.”

At a time when maximum debates are happening on number of working hours, this series of essays, written by people of eminence from varied professions and compiled by Y V Reddy along with Ravi Menon, Shaji Vikraman and Kavi Yaga (Reddy’s daughter), talks about the meaning of work, how does values shape life and success, and the impact of technology on work life.

The idea behind the book was “how a generation that began their careers shortly after India’s independence explain the meaning of work to their twenty-first century grandchildren?” Reddy said.

The final essay in the book, “Rear View”, explores the constantly evolving relationship between State, market, and citizens, which have defined our working lives.

When reaching out to contributors, Reddy’s message read: How will you tell the story of your professional life to your grandchild —the journey, the highs and lows. Almost all contributors whom Reddy reached out, responded to his calling, and some made it to the final list of essays which now are part of this book by Orient Black Swan. Those who didn’t make it were humbled by the fact that they were considered for this project by Reddy.

Trademark Reddy style

The preface of the book tells us what Reddy is made of—his grit and dedication to work. The book is a collective effort, but done in trademark Reddy style—simple, retrospective and yet of today, without giving any sermons.

The essay, “God laughs and other reflections,” where Reddy’s own journey has been captured, done along with Kavi Yaga, stresses on an often used term by Reddy— “Assess, don’t judge”. A mantra he followed throughout his career.

Of course, humour is everyone’s best friend, and Reddy has it in abundance. “Because of the formality of my job in the RBI, public often expected me to be serious. They were constantly surprised that I could be humorous,” he said.

“In my first year as RBI Governor, I was at a press conference when a journalist asked whether I was comfortable with the prevailing exchange rate. I said, I didn’t know. He asked, how I could intervene in the market if I did not know the desirable exchange rate. I said, I can’t define God, but I can recognise the devil. And whenever I see the devil, I fight,” Reddy shares in the essay.

The book has essays each from Shankar Acharya, P Chidambaram, Shyamala Gopinath, Venkatraman Anantha Nageswaran, Arun Shourie, N K Singh, Yashwant Sinha, Usha Thorat, KV Kamath, Nayarana Murthy and number of civil servants as well as journalists.

In the essay “Rear View”, which sums up things, Reddy along with Ravi Menon and Shaji Vikraman, says, “It is impossible to predict anything about future with anything remotely approaching certainty. As the world changes, the regulators in times to come will face challenges of a magnitude and complexity that we can only imagine.”

“India has always been a country of many paradoxes. One can only hope that her innate resilience and the unbreakable spirit of its people, who preserved a way of life through centuries of foreign dominance, will see her through. These aspects must ensure a better world for its citizens to lead lives of improved quality—with or without work,” they say.