**ALUMNI MEETING SPEECH**

**FOR**

**RAJU DATLA**

Hello everyone!! On behalf of the GPREC alumni in Chicago and Midwest US, I welcome you all to this beautiful city. I would like to thank the organizers, Mr. Gurucharan, Achyut and several others for taking this initiative and bringing us all together. I think we all appreciate the efforts required to gather at an event like this, and your presence helps to reinforce the very important bond we already share.

It’s an honor have the opportunity to speak to all you today, especially in the presence of members of our distinguished faculty who have taken the time, made the effort, braved the elements... (**If you want to make a joke you can say**);.... those airport crowds and TSA lines are **NO JOKE**... (**and wait for the laugh**).... and have **REALLY** traveled, crossing the oceans.... just to make sure the lessons we learned.... **stuck**.... (**Wait for the laugh**)... if that’s the case, let me share the words of Mahatma Gandhi who said, “A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks he becomes.” Thanks to the efforts and wisdom of the faculty and administrators of GPREC, we’ve made the most of learning our lessons, honing our thoughts and self expression, and evolving into the people we are today. I know I speak for all of us when I say, we truly appreciate all that you’ve done to expand how we think...not only our knowledge base, but also to extend our horizons.

When Achyut mentioned to me, a couple of months ago, about the alumni meet in Chicago, I started reflecting upon my days in the college. Our class was the 3rd batch to attend the school after the college was formed... we were there from from 1986 – 1990. Next year will be our 30th anniversary. If you look back in time, you can get an idea of what our college did provide for us. As you look back in time, it becomes clear that we should be thankful to our mentors at GPREC for three critical gifts our attendance made possible.

- The first and foremost thing was it provided us **opportunity**: the opportunity to learn and explore………. and to measure the various paths our lives would present to us.

- we received a priceless **Foundation** – our education gave us a foundation upon which we were able to build our dreams. While we were very young when we started our college, very few of us really had big dreams, if any at all, but the education we received and the foundations we built certainly played a key role in discovering and realizing the dreams we would later imagine and create in our lives.

* Life long **memories** and **friendships** - I still have vivid memories of my first day at school, back in 1986, when I stepped onto the campus with my uncle, not knowing anyone.… it was a chaotic scene... filled with a bunch of 17 and 18 year-olds trying to figure out many things – how is the life going to be in the college?, who are going to be their room-mates? etc.... and then I accidentally met with Venu, who is here today. I will never forget that instant revelation and bonding... It’s been said that “necessity is the mother of invention...” apparently it’s also the catalyst... maybe some kind of mystical, magnetic force, that invokes a “ law of attraction...” What made it click for both of us was that he had a **stove** and I had a **cooker**. (**Wait for the laugh**) That formed a strong chemical bond and we became roommates. Through all of these years, he has been with me during the bad times and good times. Fortunately, now, we can afford to meet in **restaurants**... let’s just say the friendship has outlived the cooker... **and** the stove... (**Wait for the laugh**). Also, when we first met, little did I know about his outstanding sports talent. Venu went on to win our SV university TT championship and made us all very proud.

The time we spent in Kurnool was very memorable – starting from the ragging (hazing) by our seniors in our initial few months. I recall the different modes of transportation we used to get to the college – I still amuse myself when I think of how we did that. We had bicycles in the first year and instead of biking, we used to just hold on to tractor trailers and get a free ride. Boy!!! **THOSE** were a testament to our will to survive!! (**Wait for the laugh**).... And those tiffin centers... you know... relaxed dining at its **FINEST**... where we had to stand and eat– it was the first experience of that kind... I remember the hustle and bustle of the private city buses (remember righ… righ… they try to pretend as if the bus was leaving but never leaves for another 10 – 15 minutes?), train travels from Kachiguda to Kurnool by meter gauge train, and of course, the constant hunt for finding better food and film watching. I would be remiss not to mention the sensation and drama around our social activities... our college sweethearts Veer & Malathi. We have a lot of stories around that. Veer used to hobnob with the seniors... **YES**.. he has always been the high thinker in our group. He became our roommate in our final year... because... destiny??? Strength of bonds??? Commitment to long lasting brotherhood??? **Nah**... only because there were no other seniors left for him to mingle with.... but history has prevailed... and we’re **STILL** friends to this day!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

We used to also have a lot of fun with our extended roommates in Devanagar ... I call them extended because that was like our second home... we used to spend a considerable amount of time in their house. They always welcomed us with an open heart and we spent countless hours playing cards on their rooftop... sometimes until even sunrise.

These are the memories that we carry for our entire life.

All of this was made possible because of the passion for education by the founder of our college, G. Pulla Reddy garu. He is an amazing inspiration not only for the alumni of the college but for many others. His rags to riches story only proves that with hard work, dedication and commitment, you can achieve wonders. There is no short-cut to success. You have to work your way up there. That’s what we saw in Pulla Reddy garu.

In spite of his own lack of formal education, he fulfilled his dream by founding more than ten educational institutions, providing the opportunity to receive the gift of knowledge to thousands of students. He is the type of selfless person that truly inspires us to acquire an education, go for our dreams, and set the pace for those who will follow.

While GPREC was only three years old when we joined, it already had modern facilities and infrastructure built up in a short span of time. It had all the required laboratories, highly qualified staff, a dedicated principal etc. That showed all of us how committed Pulla Reddy garu was to develop the institution. Today GPREC is among the top ten engineering colleges in AP. I was amazed to hear that the college now has masters and doctoral programs as well.

Every organization must have a purpose. Our North America GPREC Alumni association has done a great job bringing the alumni together by conducting events like this one. I consider this as a good, successful first step, **however**, I would like to call upon all of us to set some new goals in order to serve a larger purpose. As alumnae, we are reaping the benefits of the foundation given by our institute. I believe It is time to give back some to our alma mater and future generations of students. I would like to suggest that our NA GRPREC Alumni association raise funds that can be utilized to fund new programs launched by the institute and also provide aid to the more financially challenged students. To that effect, I would like to announce a donation of $xxx as a seed capital towards establishing a scholarship fund in order to insure and endow the wonderful work GPREC has done and to encourage students to exceed their expectations... of themselves, the benefits of an excellent education, and the importance of giving back and paying forward. Throughout my life, I always believed in 3 principles: Work hard, Be fair and Cause no Harm.  Each one of us has built a life based on the work we did at our school. Let’s continue to partner in extending this vision as well.

Thank you all for sharing our legacy.... it’s wonderful to be here, to refresh our collective memory, and set our sights on an even brighter future... thank you all!!