



# Krishna

LIVING WITH  
ALZHEIMER'S

Ranabir Samaddar

# KRISHNA

Living with Alzheimer's

RANABIR SAMADDAR



## *Foreword*

This is an account of an Alzheimer's patient's fight against the disease and of the so-called medical system, glittering with specialists. A few days after Krishna's death a friend, V. Ramaswamy, suggested that I jot down my reflections before they blur in my memory. I concurred silently, without telling him that I had already started writing. Mihir Chakrabarty had earlier suggested the same while Krishna was alive. I will be happy if, on reading this account, they find that their suggestion has been adequately dealt with. More importantly, if this account helps caregivers of Alzheimer's victims, I will feel that the exercise has been more than an outpouring of grief, anger, and an acknowledgement of personal debts. In Bengali popular literature there is hardly anything available on the disease, on the importance of care in helping the victim, and on how caregivers themselves can deal with it. In English, too, there are few accounts. I wanted as many readers as possible to have access to this book, and apologise to V. Ramaswamy and Mihir Chakrabarty for not writing it in Bengali. I hope they will understand.

Finally, a note on style: I have tried here to interpret and understand what Krishna remembered; also what I remember and can recall, about the time and various phases of the condition's progress. Readers will find in it a play of tenses, which standard English grammar may not permit. I hope I will be pardoned for this. Memory games are difficult; at times they wound their players. For, in life we, along with Krishna, had broken the barrier not only of language but

also of sound. Now I had to devise ways, at every step, to narrate the experience within the frame of language and sound.

I can visualise some members of the medical community laughing at this small book, shaking their heads with indulgent gestures at the violent reactions of a patient's family. They know their power is intact. But the memory of a community of caregivers and the experience of caring itself are also there. The book is meant to be an act of solidarity with the caregivers of victims of Alzheimer's.

RANABIR SAMADDAR  
Kolkata, 2015

Alzheimer's is the commonest form of dementia, a condition that denotes not only memory loss but degeneration of all motor abilities. It has been estimated that the incidence of Alzheimer's and other dementias among the ageing in India is as high as 47 per cent.

This is the story of Krishna Bhattacharya's fight against Alzheimer's, written by her husband. It is a frank, sensitive and unsentimental account of inadequate medical knowledge; of the importance of care; the ethics of care-giving; and the confusing, heartrending, often frustrating, but also uplifting, experience of living with a loved one who is living with Alzheimer's.

In this moving account Ranabir Samaddar turns his attention to one of the most critical issues of human life today. He writes with the insight of a sociologist and the compassion of one for whom 'quality of life' depends as much or more on human interaction and empathy as it does on palliative therapy.

**RANABIR SAMADDAR** is a leading social scientist and director of the Calcutta Research Group. He is known for his work on issues of migration, peace and human rights, belongs to the school of critical thinking and is considered one of the foremost theorists in the field of forced migration studies. The much-acclaimed *The Politics of Dialogue* was a culmination of his long work on justice, rights and peace.

ISBN: 978-81-88965-92-2



Rs 250