
To My Family

Preface

My urge to discover the mystery of life continued even after I had penned my thoughts in two contrasting books. The first one in prose is partially about myself and mostly about life, and the second one all about life, but in poetry. I had even surprised myself by writing poetry which *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* is quite unusual for *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* a military man of vintage. But then there are no boundaries for love and compassion and I believe that poetry is nothing but an expression of such emotions in a language which comes straight from the heart with far greater freedom than prose. I took some time absorbing the excitement which in any case did not last too long. Soon thereafter I was back to my small world enjoying a packed routine with my sports and plenty of reading thrown in and continuing *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* to take care of our pet, '*Summer*', a wonderful Labrador. Defying the stress and strain of the greater world surrounding me, life was back to business as usual. Time was flying once again and obviously passing fast until...

Then came a turn in our life. A metamorphic change ushered in by the enigmatic persona of '*Summer*' *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* who had imperceptibly blended in our life not *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* as *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* a mere pet but as one of us. She was a dog but with a difference. A co-soul, who shared the same God as us but never complained for being a lesser mortal and a lower form of life. Endowed with selfless love and

affection, she enriched our lives with the purity and innocence of a child spreading joy and happiness, demanding nothing in return. She became our measure of courage of conviction. Unruffled by ups and downs including a major life saving surgery, a diabetic condition and loss of two of her vital sensations in quick succession at Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer a stage of life when she needed these the most, she took life in its stride bouncing back to her original Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer buoyant-self each time with renewed vigour. She continued to be dignified at all times— times good and not so good. This was one single trait where many of us would fall well short of courage and will power to accept the reality and yet remain our original-selves. Content with what she got she remained eminently detached from the pleasure and pain of life as a sage. She was a true ambassador of happiness for one and all. A thinking dog, she was very intelligent and very humane bordering on Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer a shade more human than many of us.

'Summer' loved to travel with us and enjoy our forays, be these by any mode of transport, leaving an indelible mark on whosoever she came across in such sojourns. Her uncanny power of observation empowered her to sense any stress in the air and her ability to melt it in an innocuous manner, be it by an expressive look Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer straight in the eyes, a warm nestle or an affectionate lick was most disarming. She became an inseparable part of our life and soon it was hard to distinguish who was whose pet.

In view of her rare accomplishments and traits I was convinced that she had a story to tell. The story of her life to share not only as an example for canine life or only petlovers but for one and all transcending the borders of gender, caste and creed. The dilemma that lurked in my mind was how to narrate this, as a biography or an autobiography. Soon the mist was lifting. The answer lay in the way my relationship with her had flourished. With time, an imperceptible transformation had taken place in her. She became somewhat possessive about me. Our bond became more than a pet and an owner's bond. How and why had this happened, I can hardly recount. A paradigm shift had taken place in her. Although I called myself as her master but that never was the relationship. It was much deeper, intense and pure. May be of a father and a daughter, may be of a friend or a companion or of an inexplicable platonic romance or all of these rolled together. I Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer am unable to define this relationship specifically. For want of clarity in thought and my ability to express it in appropriate words, I opted to call myself as her master. Interestingly all this did not happen suddenly overnight. It developed over a period of time and flourished to its acme when I retired from active service. Even with the benefit of hindsight if I were to attempt to redefine our relationship at this belated stage of my life, I would face the same dilemma even today. Suffice it to say that it has been a sacred and pure relationship which has risen beyond any need to beg a definition. With this as the backdrop I was better equipped to deliberate on the nature of this narrative.

Some might consider the idea of an autobiography by a pet to be far-fetched or even repugnant bordering on utopian. However, after a great deal of thought I came to the conclusion that for her story to be credible it had to be narrated by her herself. Even if I had embarked to write her biography I could not have done full justice to it. No doubt, I could sense her feelings and thoughts in great detail through her expressive eyes, her body Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer language or even by telepathy, if I may daresay. I perhaps Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer knew her more than herself. I could

put myself in her shoes Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer and think what she would be thinking and wanting to convey. I had the benefit of Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer first hand observation of her moments of pleasure and pain. I had also been a witness to her ailments. I had closely watched her response to each and every moment of adversity and also of the moments when she had enthralled us with her innocence and playfulness. I could almost read her mind. It was as if she had empowered herself to express through me. But I was also aware that there was bound to be variance in my perception from her thought process in many situations. Although a tougher option, but I was convinced that for this narrative not to be overshadowed by any external thought and to retain its innate sensitivity it would be appropriate that the story of her life be related only by her and in the first person— pure and simple— straight from the heart, with a message of love for one and all.

**Purshotam Vig
Maj Gen (Retd)**

Introduction

Autobiography of a Labrador, The Enigma Called Summer is the saga of a wonderful Lab. A Lab richly endowed with selfless love and compassion. As if fired with the mission to spread happiness she kindles hope— hope of goodwill— seeking nothing in return. Rich in experience, her odyssey is a tale of inspiration. Tracing her roots, she has very fond memories of her mother and siblings. Little did she know that not very far in future she would be replicating the same motherly chores. She dwells on some memories of her early life,

“Walkie-Talkie of Goldmohar. Yes, that’s what my official name was. Born to Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer Jeston and Chinky, both of established lineages which had been pedigreed for many generations. I was therefore as pure as one could be. I was the proud member of the litter of these wonderful yellow Labrador retrievers....I have very hazy memories of my mother. But I recall her to be very warm, very affectionate. She had beautiful eyes. Hazel: expressive and mesmerizing. She would allow us to suckle, but only for a while. She would suddenly decide when it was enough and then playfully kick us aside and just walk off....”

Forced to sever the umbilical cord from her natural family she had to part from her doting mother and beautiful siblings early in life as is the wont of high breed pups brought to this world by the breeders with the sole purpose of pecuniary designs. She was the first pick out of the litter. Though suddenly exposed to a totally new environment and strangers who were to be her new family she remained calm and confident in her poise. She soon blended with her new

environment and the family as if she had belonged there forever. She fondly recalls her entry to the new environment *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* which was to change her life for good,

"I excitedly emerged out of the jacket of the courier and was presented to the family sitting in the lawn, eagerly waiting for me. I also observed a beautiful white dog, Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer which was as if made of soft wool, watching me intently with interest and curiosity...I blinked many times to observe the expressions of the members of my family to be. I could immediately sense a feeling of acceptance, warmth and affection. Everyone was vying to touch me. Having gained my confidence I chose to play lady like. Ignoring everyone I sauntered in on all fours, coquettish, as if walking down the ramp, inspecting all corners of the lawn, Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer sniffing and Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer absorbing the new environment. Having satisfied my curiosity, aware of the watchful eyes, I looked condescendingly at the expectant gallery...."

Although growth to adulthood ushered in physiological and biological changes in her but at heart she remained pure and innocent as a child. Her *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* naughtiness and penchant *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* to play the fool endeared her to one and all. She became the darling of children who had a *carte blanche* to take any liberty with her unlike many other pets. Her tremendous power of observation and love for nature endowed her with a rare ability to be by herself for hours. She would admire the beauty *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* of nature and its resplendence and also indulge in her ornithological escapades. She weaves us through the web of her thoughts when *Living in the Hills*,

"A view of the morning sun rising above Patni Top ridge line was amazing. As the sun rose higher, the valley would come alive rinsed by the dancing rays. It was a rare display of the resplendence of nature. The view would change with the onset of clouds, which would either be chasing each other or playing hide and seek with the sun....There were many species that would frequent the ambience. The chirping sparrows were the noisiest. The woodpecker with sharp and strong bill would be ever busy drilling and drumming the trees. The doves and the pigeons were the most frequent fliers around....They laid two eggs and persevered to hatch these....The young ones took their first flight out in two weeks or so. These birds had become friendly with me and sometimes would even expect me Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer to baby sit for them...."

Picking up threads from her life, she narrates her aspirations to be a thinking dog and seek the truth of life, which she felt otherwise to be the exclusive preserve of human beings. She dreamed herself to be another soul in this creation and reveled in the thought that the canine species too had the same God as us, *Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer* the humans. *The God of lesser mortals*. Her ability to dream gave her an unflinching courage to overcome her adversity by living two lives. One in real life and the other in her dreams recreated from her happy memories. This was to stand her in great stead when later in life she was to fall a victim to traumatic experiences of diabetic condition and loss of her vision and auditory faculties. This strengthened her will to take life in its stride and gave her courage to bounce back to her usual-self. She had risen beyond the mundane to learn to live and love life in spite of her trepidations. She vividly recalls,

"Collecting my thoughts I realised that much had happened and that too at a very fast pace. My life had taken a new turn. The diabetic experience had started innocuously, spread its fangs

unobtrusively and in no time had taken control of my life. To cap, it had surreptitiously sneaked in yet another demon in its wake, blindness; which appeared to be a passing phase of a storm but had dropped its anchor for good. In one single stroke it had transformed my life from an inspired journey to that of a forced vicissitude, condemning me to the precincts of the darkness. I was, as if exiled to another world. A world of my own, a world very small, shrunk to my own self....I then had a revelation. The vision was not what was intended to see only what was visible....”

She loved her forays in our car but air travel Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer was a novel experience for which I wonder if she was prepared for. But I took the chance reposing full faith in her will power and confidence in my decision and intentions for her well being. Air travel, particularly international travel is a bureaucratic quagmire. It is difficult to satisfy all conditions. Nonetheless it was handled successfully. But all this is besides the actual experience of the dog that has to travel in a cage that too in the hold hoping Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer that the pilot has condescended to have a pet on board and will switch on the air conditioning in the hold and regulate the pressure, failing which the dog could choke to death due to high pressure. She recounts her experience of the air travel,

“...Soon my cage was lifted into the belly of the aircraft. There was a whole lot of baggage stacked around me. I had no idea where my master and the lady were Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer and what was this mode of transport. It looked like a Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer huge monster. It did not have even four wheels. It was too big to move on road. I waited with bated breath....I heard a loud noise, I suppose of the engines. The aircraft had started rolling. It taxied and stood at one end of the runway. Sharp frightening sounds started emanating from the turbines. And then the aircraft suddenly lunged forward with tremendous force. There was shrieking noise of the speeding aircraft. After a short while the noise level abruptly dropped. Sound of rolling too disappeared. I was to learn that the aircraft had taken off. It was in the air and gaining height with speed. I was finding it difficult to breathe....”

Autobiography Of A Labrador The Autobiography of a Labrador - The Enigma Called Summer Enigma Called Summer

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