

Shraddhanjali: Dr. Ashok Panagariya



Rare is a gem who comes in the play of life as Professor Ashok Panagariya, who left us untimely on 11 June 2021. We pay our *shraddhanjali* today with brimming hearts and folded hands to the great soul.

A stalwart in the field of neurology, he has commanded the highest regard among his fraternity due to his brilliance, clinical acumen, original research aptitude and an unquenchable thirst and ever-growing enthusiasm for knowledge and perfection. No wonder that such a personality has been a pioneer in the birth and growth of superspecialty training in neurology in the state of Rajasthan. His academic contribution has been huge with more than 100 national and international publications, research papers and book chapters.

A bedside teacher par excellence, he continued to charm and amaze his students and patients alike with his clinical and analytical skills. His systematic, simple and scientific approach to clinical neurology was something that all students invariably marvelled at. He would always emphasise to base all clinical analyses on the basic fundamental principles of neurology and keep things simple. He inspired his students to derive joy in the practice of neurology, which he himself loved immensely. With him we have lost a great clinical teacher of all times.

His contribution to the world of academics is self-evident in more than 100 articles, book chapters and research papers published by him. Noteworthy is his clinical series on 'Neuromyotonia', which was recognised internationally.

He is the recipient of the prestigious B.C. Roy award and was awarded Padma Shri in 2014 as an acknowledgement of his contribution to medicine and society through his rural epilepsy clinics.

He served as the President of the Indian Academy of Neurology and was a member of the state planning board in Rajasthan.

He was the honorary physician to the President of India and the Armed Forces of India.

During his tenure as the Vice Chancellor of the Rajasthan University of Health Sciences and Principal and Controller of the prestigious SMS Medical College, Dr. Panagariya's sincere, honest and dynamic contribution and administrative capacity is unforgettable, which made the institution grow tremendously. However, when he was offered the extension of his tenure for 3 years by the government, as a result of his exemplary work, he denied it saying that he wanted to pursue higher goals in life after superannuation. He remained actively involved and kept contributing incessantly by lending his wide vision to the various policy makers at state and national levels.

His generosity, impeccable honesty and large-heartedness are known to many, but not many people know his philanthropic side clearly. He gave amply for various causes of girl education, destitute and talented children, helping the poor patients, shelter for cows, funding postgraduate students, cataract camps, conducting various public awareness programmes and so on through the neurology research and care society.

While at an individual level, he loved to treat poor patients for free and treat his students time and again letting them enjoy the delicacies at his favourite 'Rambagh Palace'.

He effortlessly and successfully wore many hats. As his students, we feel proud of his astounding achievements and have always been mesmerised by his charismatic and charming personality. He was an eloquent speaker, an author and a compassionate listener, advisor and guide, especially to distressed youngsters, and gave direction to their lives, which he always enjoyed doing.

His amazing capacity to work hard and balance life, work, family and his interests always has been an enigma to most who know him closely.

Dr. Panagariya who belonged to an honest bureaucratic family had small beginnings. All his life he was guided by the values he imbibed from his father whom he regarded immensely. The unparalleled heights he achieved in his profession and life have been the result of his sustained hard work, honesty, discipline, tireless efforts, perseverance and unflinching faith and enthusiasm.

The pearls of wisdom he gave were always enlightening and opened gates of a wider vision towards life and world. We feel so grateful to him for having compiled the essence of his wisdom in his book *Monk in a Merc: Moksha in a Material World with All Its Perks*, his dream project and his last contribution, which has been released posthumously.

His brilliant sense of humour, practical sense and positivity always had an infectious effect on everyone. He inspired

everyone and brought out the best in his students. His eternal optimism brushed on to us whenever we were in his company. He always thought beyond the traditional limits and always fathomed the beyond, which made his approach to life tremendously vast. His holistic approach and the scientific integration of Astrology with neurosciences and life itself (brain, mind and body) had been an area of his perpetual interest.

As his students, what connects us to him goes far deeper, as he touched our lives personally each day, as he trained us in neurology and life simultaneously. His wisdom and love percolated into our lives as we sat in front of him in the Out patient department (OPD)s and followed him in the wards and his office. We feel so blessed that we got this beautiful opportunity to be so close to him. Over the years he has become intertwined in our lives inextricably and we cannot imagine neurology without Sir. He knit us all, his students, into a close family.

His principles and pursuit of perfection have always been and will always be our beacon light.

His physical demise is an irreplaceable loss to the society, to the neurology family, to all who know him.

In informal meetings, Sir would always choose to listen to these soulful lines of a song which he loved:

Kal aur aayenge nagmon ki,

Khilti kaliya chunne waale

Mujhse behtar kehne waale,

Tumse behtar sunne waale

Kal koi mujhko yaad kare

Kyoon koi mujhko yaad kare

Mashroof zamaana mere liye

Kyoon waqt apna barbaad kare

Main pal do pal ka shayar hoon...

But the life of such an extraordinary personality does not end with the physical body, it continues in our hearts and souls, in his values and teachings.

He lives on in our hearts with his affectionate smile, his blessing hand on our heads and his beautiful teachings.

Such a legendary life can only be celebrated in all glory and brilliance. We bow down and pay our humble tribute to Sir.

We pray with all our hearts to the Divine to take Sir's noble soul on his onward journey in utmost peace and light.

Dr. Bhawna Sharma

Dr. Parul Dubey

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