

Tribute to Professor H. V. Nema: Ophthalmologist, teacher, author, and academician

Dear Editor,

Renowned ophthalmologist and famous author, Professor Hari Vallabh Nema (Professor H. V. Nema) passed away on August 8, 2022, in Indore at the age of 88 years [Fig. 1]. With his demise, there is end of an era and a great loss to the world of ophthalmology. Professor Nema was one of the most respected authors and among few authors who have left behind such a vast legacy. Professor H. V. Nema contributed vastly to ophthalmic literature.^[1-10] Generations of ophthalmologists learned and are still learning from his works and his tremendous ophthalmic books including *Recent Advances in Ophthalmology* and *Gems in Ophthalmology* series. As one of the most popular contemporary authors of ophthalmic texts, he will be sadly missed, but his work will live on indefinitely. He published the *Recent Advances in Ophthalmology* series that started in January 1992, and the most recent 15th volume was published in January 2022 [Fig. 2]. Similarly, Professor Nema (together with his ophthalmologist son Dr. Nitin Nema) also contributed six *Gems in Ophthalmology* series that include cataract surgery, uvea, retina, glaucoma, cornea, and external diseases. He edited several ophthalmic books that include *Textbook of Ophthalmology*, *Manual of Ophthalmology*, *Ocular Tumors*, *Genetics of Ocular Diseases*, etc. Prestigious medical publishers of India and overseas (Jaypee brothers, CBS publisher, Butterworths, Wiley and Springer) published books authored by Professor H. V. Nema.

Hari Vallabh Nema was born to Shrikrishna Das Nema and Janaki Devi Nema on July 1, 1934, in Rajgarh, Madhya Pradesh, India. He did his schooling at Vinay High School,



Figure 1: Professor Hari Vallabh Nema, July 1, 1934 to August 8, 2022

Rajgarh, Madhya Pradesh. From his schooling days, he was meticulous and hard working. He used to burn midnight oil reading for hours under the dim bulb of Rajgarh post office where his father was the postmaster. He pursued his medical studies from Gajra Raja Medical College, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, joining MBBS course in 1953 and obtaining postgraduation degree in Ophthalmology in 1961. He joined as a lecturer in Department of Ophthalmology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, soon after completing his postgraduation. From there, he moved to Varanasi in the year 1966 to join the prestigious Banaras Hindu University (BHU) as a reader in department of ophthalmology (Bhuwarka Netra Chikitsalaya). He did his fellowship at the University of Manchester, UK. During his fellowship days, he started working on his book titled "*Ophthalmic Syndromes*," which was published by Butterworths in the year 1973. After returning from Manchester, Professor Nema continued his teaching profession and taught medical students and residents at the Institute of Medical Science, BHU, Varanasi. He worked there for several years till his retirement as a professor and head of the department of ophthalmology. He served as consulting editor and advisory editor for the *Indian Journal of Ophthalmology*, *Afro-Asian Journal of Ophthalmology*, and *Indian Journal of Optometry*. He had more than six dozen publications in national and international journals and authored and edited several ophthalmic books. He was an excellent orator and delivered guest lectures at several ophthalmic conferences in India and abroad. He served as the honorary general secretary and the president of UP State Ophthalmological Society and was conferred the "Lifetime Achievement Award." He was a passionate teacher and academician par excellence and spent all his free hours on outstanding ophthalmic books, teachings, and sharing his research/observations with ophthalmic colleagues and



Figure 2: Professor H. V. Nema presenting the book *Recent Advances in Ophthalmology* to the Honorable President of India (late Sh. Shankar Dayal Sharma) during the 50th AIOS Conference held at New Delhi in 1992

residents during the ophthalmic conferences. In doing so, he left no page unturned and presented us with the 15 *Recent Advances in Ophthalmology* series and the six *Gems of Ophthalmology* series. Professor Nema's some other popular books include "Textbook of Ophthalmology," "Manual of Ophthalmology," "Eye in Systemic Disorders," "Diagnostic Procedures in Ophthalmology," "Ocular Tumors," and "Genetics of Ocular Diseases," which are read by ophthalmology residents worldwide. His books are accepted and liked by most of the ophthalmic residents and surgeons, and this is the very reason why he has etched a mark in the life of anyone related to the field of ophthalmology.

I first met Professor H. V. Nema during my residency period in 1992 when he visited Chitrakoot to attend the Madhya Pradesh State Ophthalmology Society conference. Late Professor R. K. Mishra invited him as a chief guest at the conference. Professor Nema was very humble and was approachable to any ophthalmic resident. In 1995, after reading his *Recent Advances in Ophthalmology* series (volume 3), I wrote a letter to Professor H. V. Nema suggesting a few chapters for volume 4. I suggested a chapter on recent advances in endophthalmitis management, advances in cataract surgery (phacoemulsification), and advances in penetrating keratoplasty. His reply was very prompt and encouraging. To my surprise, he submitted a fax to the Department of Ophthalmology, PGIMER, Chandigarh, and encouraged me to contribute a chapter on recent advances in penetrating keratoplasty together with one of the faculty members (late Professor Jagjit S. Saini) of the Department of Ophthalmology, PGIMER, Chandigarh. He also mentioned that two chapters (endophthalmitis and recent advances in cataract surgery) are already included in the volume 4 series. I wrote a chapter "recent advances in penetrating keratoplasty" together with the late Professor Jagjit S. Saini (Head Cornea Unit, Department of Ophthalmology, PGIMER, Chandigarh). This became my very first publication while pursuing my first year of residency in ophthalmology.

Professor Nema married Pratibha Nema on 22nd November 1961 at Indore. Mrs. Nema was a homemaker and she beautifully groomed her two sons - Sandeep and Nitin. Sandeep is presently the Senior Vice President of SalioGen Therapeutics, a gene coding company based in MA, USA. He has earned a doctorate in Parenteral Medicine from Memphis, Tennessee, USA, and is currently working on the Genetics of AMD. The younger son is Dr. Nitin Nema who is working as a Professor in the Department of Ophthalmology at Sri Aurobindo Medical College & PG Institute, Indore. After his Post graduation in Ophthalmology from the Department of Ophthalmology, Institute of Medical Sciences, BHU, Varanasi he completed his fellowship in Vitreoretina from Aravind Eye Hospital & PG Institute, Madurai and UW, Wisconsin, Madison, USA.

Professor H.V. Nema used to love playing chess from the very beginning of his college life in medicine. Moreover, he was an ardent follower of cricket. He used to listen to running commentary on the radio in the pre-television era. Later on, he never used to miss any match on TV featuring India. Just a day before his death too, on August 7th, 2022, he watched the last T20 match between India and West Indies as well as the Commonwealth Games woman's cricket final played at Edgbaston in Birmingham, England between India and Australia. Finally, he also had a passion for spirituality. He was a daily visitor to Sankat Mochan temple round the year throughout his stay in Varanasi. When he shifted to Indore, he devoted his free time to prayers and poring over the books on spirituality.

Professor Nema was a true academician and inspired each and everyone who came in his contact. His passion for teaching was unparalleled and inspired thousands of his students who

excelled professionally. He donated both his corneas after his death, and as per the wish of *Dehdan* (body donation) of late Professor Nema, his son and family members also donated his physical body to Sri Aurobindo Medical College and PG Institute, Indore, for teaching and research. This reflects his passion and dedication for teaching to the medical fraternity. As one of the most popular contemporary Indian authors of ophthalmic texts, Professor H. V. Nema will be sadly missed, but his work will live on indefinitely. Ophthalmologists, optometrists, and vision professionals around the world will remember him forever for his priceless contribution to the field of ophthalmology.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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