Remembering ‘Nanna’—a Life Well Lived (16 November 1928–22 November 2020)

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Received: 30 November 2020 / Accepted: 1 December 2020 / Published online: 23 January 2020
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Born in Machilipatnam, a port town in the southern Indian State of Andhra Pradesh, **my dear father** (**‘Nanna’**), Professor P.V. Chalapathi Rao graduated from Guntur Medical College (1957) and completed his post graduation (MS) from Patna Medical College (1963).

He served the Government of undivided Andhra Pradesh for 20 years (1963–1983). At the age of 38, he was one of the

youngest Professors of Surgery during his time and took voluntary retirement in 1983 whilst working as Head of Department of Surgery at Osmania Medical College - one of the most prestigious Centres of excellence in the Country. He later worked as Chief Surgeon in Abha (Saudi Arabia) for 6 years (1983–1989) and as Chairman of the Durgabhai Deshmukh Hospital for well over a decade (1991–2002), where he championed a number of innovative initiatives to help the poor and needy patients.

His final professional journey was a very satisfying 13-year term as Director, Medical Education at KIMS Hospitals in Hyderabad, which is one of the largest Corporate Hospital groups in South India (2004–2017). He played a key role in overseeing and securing National Board of Examinations (DNB) recognition for 25 specialties in addition to establishing a Nursing College, Bachelor & Masters in Physiotherapy Courses (BPT & MPT), Medical Lab Technology (MLT) Courses and 15 Paramedical Courses. He also spearheaded partnership between KIMS Hospitals and Texila American University and started five Postgraduate Training Programmes in the Specialties of Medicine, Surgery, Gynecology, Radiology & Paediatrics. These courses are being conducted in KIMS Hospitals under the auspices of Dr. KNR University of Health Sciences (Telangana). My family is very proud of the fact that during his tenure at Durgabhai Deshmukh Hospital & KIMS Hospitals spanning over 26 years (1991–2017), he served selflessly without taking any remuneration.

He refused to be chauffeur driven and insisted on driving to work up until 2015, which speaks volumes about how active and ‘hands on’ he was, until the age of 87!

He loved to dress up and his trademark suits made him one of the most well-dressed surgeons of his generation.

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Nanna's exceptional contribution towards imparting knowledge through the annual Continuing Surgical Education Programmes (CSEP) that he successfully implemented all over India during his 6-year term as Governing Council member (1986–1991) of the Association of Surgeons of India (ASI) is well known. Over the years, the CSEP helped scores of surgical trainees to better prepare for their MS/DNB final postgraduate examinations. He is widely credited to have popularized in India 'Highly Selective Vagotomy (HSV)', an operation that was performed for peptic ulcer in late 1970s and 1980s. He was in fact referred to as '*HSV Rao*' for propagating this technique all over India. In addition to publishing several articles in peer-reviewed journals, he contributed eleven chapters in four textbooks of Surgery. He played a pivotal role in the formation of Indian Association of Surgical Gastroenterology (IASG), a Section of The Association of Surgeons of India and organised the hugely successful very first national Conference of IASG in 1991. This landmark Congress is remembered to this date, even after three decades. He was unanimously elected to the apex position of this Organisation - President of IASG (1991 - 1992).

Fondly referred to as '*Dr PVC Rao*', he was the very FIRST Surgeon from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to be elected *President of the Association of Surgeons of India* (ASI) in 1994.

The Auditorium at ASI Head Office was constructed at a huge cost and was completed in 1991. Repayment of the principal and interest accrued on the loan taken towards the construction was a major challenge during his presidential term. He played a decisive role alongside other Principal Office Bearers in negotiating with the National Chairman of Indian Bank and was successful in securing a substantial subsidy. The Indian Bank waived off most of the interest accrued, i.e. Rs. 1, 33, 00, 000 (Rs.1.33 crores). This was considered to be big money 26 years ago. Also, Rs.5,000 was raised from every National Executive Committee member and other resources were mobilised to ensure that the entire principal and most of the outstanding interest on the loan taken towards the Auditorium were paid out during his term as President ASI. Tactfully resolving this huge financial burden upon ASI was considered to be a major achievement in 1994. Before completing his term, a road map was laid out for the remaining interest amount to be paid out within a year, and by end of 1995, there were no outstanding dues.

Twelve monthly organ-specific zonal CMEs were held for the first time in ASI throughout the country during his presidency, and equally, for the first time ever in an ASICON, organ-specific CME instructional courses were held on all the days of the Annual Conference from 7:30–9 am during ASICON 1994 held in Cuttack.

The concluding statement during his presidential address at ASICON 1994 speaks volumes of his commitment, dedication and contribution to the Association: "Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got a hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

It is a matter of record that for the first time in the 82 years history of ASI, '*father & son*' reached the highest position that can be achieved by a Surgeon in India—the distinct honour and privilege of serving Asia Pacific's largest and the world's second largest surgical organization as its President.

Dr. P. V. Chalapathi Rao
President ASI - 1994

Dr. P. Raghu Ram
President ASI - 2020

He was conferred the prestigious *Dr. B. C. Roy National Award* in 1995 by late Shri. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the then Hon'ble President of India for his yeomen contribution towards improving Surgical education in the Country. This is the highest honour that can be achieved by a doctor in India.

In 2009, he was conferred *Fellowship ad hominem* by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCS Ed). This is the highest level of recognition that is bestowed upon select few surgeons by RCS Ed, which is the oldest surgical college in the world. He is amongst the very few in the Subcontinent and the only Surgeon from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to have received this high honour.

In 2011, he was conferred *Lifetime achievement award* by The Association of Surgeons of India—once again first and the only Surgeon from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to have received the highest honour that can be achieved by a Member of the Association for his lifetime contribution towards improving the art and science of Surgery in India for well over five decades.

A philanthropist par excellence, all through his life, Nanna gave back to the society. He contributed much of his savings to develop **Ibrahimpur**—the remotest village in Medak District, which has been **adopted** by his family. Since April 2016, a number of life-transforming initiatives were spearheaded in this hamlet and many of the landmark projects have been recognized with local, regional and national awards including recognition from the Prime Minister's Office.

In the 1950s & '60s, arranged marriages were the norm. However, during their prime, my parents defied all the rules and created a sensation by falling in love whilst pursuing MBBS and spent a lifetime of together for 60 years!

‘Behind every successful man is a woman’

My dear mother (‘Amma’), who was one of the most sought after Gynecologists of her time, has well and truly been the ‘lucky mascot’ behind my father’s success story. A gritty breast cancer ‘conqueror’, she has been the inspiration behind genesis of Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation, a not for profit Breast cancer charity that has paved the path towards transforming breast healthcare in the region. Nanna was immensely proud of the impact created by the Foundation established in Amma’s name.

‘The greatest legacy that anyone can leave behind is to positively impact the lives of others.’

As his only child, my Nanna has been and forever will be my best friend, guide and philosopher. Many say I am his ‘carbon copy’ minus his skin colour! He was a great soul who shaped my life and played a decisive role in placing me where I am today. Without him, I am a ‘nobody’.

It has well and truly been my greatest fortune born to parents who have instilled in me values that really matter and brought me up by being role models themselves. And most importantly, I can never ever forget the fact that Nanna was there for me when I needed him the most. It has been a blessing to stand by him and take care of him, when he needed me the most...

Five years ago, during a felicitation function arranged at KIMS Hospitals after I was conferred the Padma award, Prof Kakarla Subba Rao, who is widely considered to be the ‘god father’ of Radiology in India, reflected upon a poignant quote from **Sumati Satakam**, which is a compilation of more than 100 poems composed in simple Telugu language (AD 1220–1280).

*Putrotsahamu Tandriki putrudu janminchinappudu kalugadu.
Janula Putruni kanugoni pogadagaa, putrotsahumu kalugunu*

Meaning...

The happiest moment for a Father is not just when a Son is born...

The happiest moment in a Father's life is when the community recognizes the son & is praised by a large section of people ...

That's when a Father is really Happy...

I believe that this **glow of Happiness** on my father's face has added **‘Life to his Years’**

Link

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=LgZMkK8ir9g>

In closing, my dearest Nanna's distinguished academic track record, contribution towards advancement of the art and science of surgery in addition to his philanthropic nature and passion for social service are very strong characteristics of the man. He was an advocate of best practices in his chosen field, coupled with human touch and many altruistic values. To him, Family was always First. His significant contribution towards improving surgical education in India shall always be remembered. A gentleman who is generous to a fault, he has always placed the needs of others before his own. All in all, he had the greatest fortune of leading a healthy, happy, enriching, productive and contented life.

Ever grateful to Lord almighty

A tribute from a proud son of a great father

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