

A Legend

The first encounter with this personality happened during the course of an examination when this luminary asked a question that foxed me with its depth. The surprise got further deepened when his student answered the question so ably. Not stopping at that the rain of questions put so vividly added to my surprise. I had not known this person so well earlier and used to wonder who he was other than just knowing his name. One examination went by and another one came and at times I used to feel a bit restless at the time he would spend asking questions, digging into one X-ray film and keeping on asking the radiological features connecting it to the clinical features and then slipping into the depths of pathology and blood parameters and then surgery and the basis of giving a particular medicine. It was nothing less than first class understanding of medicine so well knitted into the minds of the great man. The restlessness converted into a long admiration and then curiosity into what this person was made of.

The contacts I had in the same department were so strong and I used to get pre-occupied that it did not allow me to 'mix' so much with him and to 'know' him further other than meeting during the examination time. Once, I had more time and peeped into his inner self to find a person who was dedicated from all angles, to his professions, students, patients, work and more work. He was a storm of knowledge that no one could stand in front without getting carried away. His students loved him and touched his feet and he would smilingly keep teaching, keep petting, scolding and keep getting the work done from them. His patients would worship him and his one word of advice was enough for them to bow in front of him and follow. His care for the persons with disability specially those having gait difficulties was so great that patients won't leave him even if he was busy with examinations, meetings or other affairs. He always carried the latest enviable gadgets with him. He had the best digital camera when those were unknown in India. If during those times, anyone had one, he would have kept it in the safest closet at his home to be brought out only during family picnics or functions but this gentleman carried it on his shoulder always ready to click the stills or the movies in the clinic. To top it further, he also carried a laptop not to show that he was affluent but only to show that he had his hard drive full of videos and the stills of the patients before surgery and after surgery. He had used his personal gadgets so well in place of the expensive instruments like the gait analysis equipment which run into crores and most laboratories doing only a couple or more of analyses on a daily basis but still having nothing much to

show save a few laboratories. He had an inventory of patients with different gait deviations and the effects of surgeries he so ably performed on those poor and needy patients make them walk better and straighter to the delight of their parents and to the awe of the so called professionals like us. It was no surprise that he was a master in teaching the gait analysis, including mimicking the deviations in the gait so well on the stage. That shows the dedication to his work and the commitment to teach from the heart. If we look into the dossier of his works, we would find a strong database of patients of spinal cord injuries for which he dedicated his life. He may be called perhaps the only person in India who has such a big demographic profile of patients with spinal cord injuries and amongst the largest databases with long follow-ups in India, where it is so rare to find people even think about maintaining one. He opened up realities and quashed the myths about the early management of spinal cord injuries and brought forth the guidelines of its management in India. That was the reason he was called in all conceivable conferences whether these be in India or overseas. He was busy doing that only until the last few days of life coming back from one international meeting and preparing to go for another presenting his research work so well appreciated all over.

Looking back into his personal life, he was a pal to all. No one can forget the everlasting smile on his face and his readiness to go out and do anything possible to make someone comfortable. I can't forget the sumptuous lunches and dinners with his family which also gave us an opportunity to peek into his home having loads of photographs from his wide travels and the hoards of food so well packed and organized in deep freezers. Such an organized person, with such an educated and well mannered and loving family, such a big heart of a friend, a father, a husband, a teacher a colleague a researcher that the Almighty thought perhaps he was better with HIM rather than continuing to serve on HIS behalf in this worldly world. Dr Navnendra Mathur's span on this earth was in our eyes cut short by HIS call to the heavenly abode perhaps doing all the good work now in association with HIM. He would be remembered by all who came in contact with him directly or indirectly through his works. No one can forget the smile and 'ho jayega, janab' (it would be done, Sir) attitude for any request. God does not send such emissaries often on this earth. He would be in our hearts for ever.

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Editor