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Prof. A. C. Ganguli

Glimpses of a master

Dr. Amit C. Ganguli Born on 18th May 1931 at Dhaka to Indu Prova and Adhir Chandra, his childhood was spent in the districts of Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Kushtia, and Chittagong. His eyes would light up narrating innumerable fascinating stories of his very enjoyable and colourful childhood days with family and friends, spent in the various provinces of the beautiful East Bengal (now Bangladesh).

After the care-free life of Zilla schools, it was destination Calcutta for his ISC, followed by MBBS (at Calcutta National Medical College).

Destiny saw him on the train to Lucknow for his Masters in Surgery at King George Medical College (1959-1961).

Back in Calcutta, he joined the government medical service and was posted as a junior colleague to Dr. M. M. Mukherjee in the newly formed department of Plastic Surgery at PG hospital; thus started the evolution of a career – essentially a process of self-educating and fine-tuning of skills. It was in this department that the idea of ‘cheek flap for primary palatal lengthening’ developed and later put into extensive clinical practice. The paper was published in international plastic reconstructive society (IPRS) Journal and presented by Dr. Ganguli at the IPRS meet at Copenhagen. Mukherjee and Ganguli’s ‘cheek flap technique’ finds mention in Millard’s Cleft Craft – considered the ‘bible’ of cleft surgery.

It leaves us amused and wondering as to why many of the present day cleft surgeons, in our own country and abroad, keep referring to the same cheek flap as ‘buccal mucosal flap’ as if something original out of their minds !

Why the need to change the nomenclature?

In 1974, Dr. Ganguli started the department of plastic surgery at Calcutta Medical College hospital and over the years nurtured and developed it into one of the finest super-specialty units. Large volume and varieties of clinical work was performed in cleft surgery, myocutaneous flaps, oral cancers, jaw tumours, incisional hernias, etc., Academic activities and training of junior surgeons went on simultaneously.

To his students, he was a feared task-master, yet caring and affectionate. In his eyes, one’s behaviour and how they conducted themselves were far more important than pure academic brilliance!

A. C. Ganguli was indeed one with a large heart and welcomed, with open arms, surgeons from other specialties who showed keen interest to learn plastic surgical procedures and principles. He strongly felt that ‘knowledge to be shared and not hidden away for selfish gains!’ ‘He would always stand by junior surgeons and colleagues and help them out of troubles with sound advice and guidance. Little wonder that even today, his name evokes respect and reverie amongst one and all!’

President of association of plastic surgeons of India in 1983, he hosted a memorable national conference at the picturesque hill town of Darjeeling. He was deeply involved and active in the affairs of our association and later nominated as a member of the Board of Trustee.

On the other side of life, he was a perfect family man. The eldest of a large family of brothers and sisters, he was the huge banyan tree, protecting all with shade, love, and comfort. His wife Aloka, also a doctor by profession, was a perfect companion, supporting him in all his endeavours, but not hesitating to be critical at times.

To his three sons, he was a ‘royal Bengal tiger’ so far as a discipline was concerned, but otherwise loving and

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encouraging. In spite of a hectic professional routine, he would always find time out to sit and talk and family vacations were a must, which were a source of great joy.

A. C. Ganguli was a person of diverse interests and hobbies. Reading was his passion as was Photography, Angling and Music. He was as good with his fishing rod and camera as with surgery! He greatly enjoyed the music of K. L. Saigal and Pankaj Mullick. He was the President of Calcutta Rowing Club (one of the oldest rowing clubs in Asia) for 5 consecutive years and did a lot of research work on the history of rowing in India.

A man who believed in 'simple living and high thinking', he would love nothing better than a quiet evening at home with a glass of fine scotch and watching a Hollywood classic.

An epitome of grace and elegance, Dr. Ganguli commanded wide acclaim, love, and admiration from all who ever touched his life.

It is said that 'we should guide our life by the stars and not by the light of every passing ship'... A. C. Ganguli will forever remain such a shining star.

Arun Ganguli

Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Lake Gardens, Kolkata

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Arun Ganguli, 468 Lake Gardens, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.
E-mail: oroon75@hotmail.com

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