

Icon of the issue

Prof. R. S. Thind – lived like a lion and worked like a horse!



Prof. Rajendra Singh Thind

Prof. Rajendra Singh Thind was born on August 25, 1934 as the fourth amongst 10 siblings of a modest Sikh family in Putligarh, Amritsar. Right from his childhood days, he was very laborious, thoroughly disciplined and very supportive of his brothers and sisters. He studied in Khalsa College, Amritsar, and later in Government Medical College, Amritsar, from where he obtained his MBBS and MS.

After spending some time in the Department of Physiology and later in the Department of Surgery at Government Medical College, Patiala, he was inducted in the Department of Plastic Surgery, which was then headed by Dr. R. L. Manchanda. The Chief fondly referred to him as 'My Prince of Wales' and Prof. Thind remembered this affectionate title with a lot of pride! He was always very close to Prof. Manchanda and recounted his experiences with him with lot of fondness, affection and reverence.

The Department of Plastic Surgery in Patiala truly blossomed under the guidance of Prof. Thind and he guided the destiny of many postgraduates who thronged to Patiala to do M.Ch under his tutelage and the first author too was one of them. It was February 1977, during his internship at the district civil hospital, Jalandhar, the first author came across a patient with a huge random pattern flap covering a defect of the entire upper arm. "Doctor! this arm is there because of Dr. Thind at Patiala", was the gleeful comment of that 40-year-old man who

had suffered a crush injury when his tractor overturned in the fields. Almost immediately something inside the first author told him that he has met his destiny and he would become a Plastic Surgeon. One afternoon while travelling back after a Laparoscopy tubectomy camp he read an advertisement in the newspaper that a post of registrar in the Plastic surgery department at Medical College, Patiala, was available for postgraduates in surgery.

This enabled him to have the first 'darshan' of his Guru, Dr. Rajinder Singh Thind on January 3, 1985, outside the college office. The first impression of him was indeed the most lasting impression. An immaculately well-dressed elegant looking Sardarji, with a state-of-the-art turban revealing his meticulousness, light eyes with probing gaze behind golden rimmed glasses and a glowing but stern face with mild smile conveying sincerity and interest. A brisk exchange of greetings, suggested no waste of time and his upright stance and straight walking posture suggested fearlessness.

It was only subsequently that the first author realized that his instincts of reading the person were not very wrong. "Evening round is at six," was his first statement and at sharp 6 in the evening the rounds started. He personally enquired about the welfare of all the patients. The morning rounds were preceded by dressings.

The authors would often marvel at the meticulous dressings and bandaging style of the patients in the postoperative period. They were sure all his postgraduates would vow that they had not seen better dressings. His atraumatic handling of the tissues with respect, coupled with the finest suturing techniques were a treat to watch and learn. Such a lasting visual imprint it left on us that even after more than two decades they still remember

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him while handling tissues and suturing wounds.

A strict disciplinarian, an efficient surgeon and a proud teacher, he led by example putting tireless working hours to improve patient care and surgical results. Never falling for short-cuts, he was very meticulous in whatever he did and was the father figure of Plastic Surgery in Punjab. Many a department heads of the modern generation were once his fond disciples and still remember his scholastic excellence, kindness and humility.

A very just and amiable M.Ch examiner to many universities, Prof. Thind remained very popular amongst the examinees till the very end. He was the Deputy Editor of *Indian Journal of Plastic Surgery* for a very long time and rose to become the President of the Association of Plastic Surgeons of India in 1980. Decorated by many honours and felicitations, he became the Principal of Medical College in Farikot and Amritsar. His joy knew no bounds when he was appointed the Principal of Government Medical College, Amritsar, which was his Alma-mater. He retired as Director General Research and Medical Education, Punjab.

Though a workaholic, who worked throughout the life with a lot of courage and forthrightness, Prof. Thind was a great family man and would readily attribute his success in life to his wife Mrs. Surjit Kaur Thind, and would never fail to acknowledge her sacrifices towards that end. A man of very few words, his blue-green eyes were very communicative. He had a tough exterior but had a very soft heart inside and was particularly kind to the poor patients, disabled individuals and Class IV employees of the Medical College.

Prof. Thind had four passions in his life: clothes, cars,

gardening and photography. He was fond of wearing well-stitched suits and traditional attires and he had a big wardrobe for them. His passion for cars was legendary – would keep them in the pristine condition and change them every other year. In his lifetime he possessed 13–15 models of automobiles, always spic and span, always new and gorgeous! He was very proud of his rose garden at home, which he manicured and tended personally and which had over 50 varieties of roses from all over the world! He also had a large collection of cameras through the ages and with them he captured mostly nature and his patients. He was an avid listener of Gazals of Jagjeet Singh and loved Raj Kapoor movies!

When it was time to leave this world on September 11, 2009 he advised his son, also an accomplished Plastic Surgeon, “to live like a lion and work like a horse!” This truly summed up this fountainhead of will-power and his spirit still lives on in Thind Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery Centre in Patiala, where his son is cherishing the dreams of his father by offering help to those who need it most. His students remember him with great pride and his spirit of devotion and hard work still finds a place in their minds and hearts.

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