

Obituary

Prof. U. S. Nayak M.S., M.Ch., F.R.A.C.S.



Prof. U. S. Nayak (1932–2016)

Prof. Ullal Subraya Nayak, the former Head of Plastic Surgery Department at Madras Medical College (MMC), Chennai, was a teacher par excellence, innovative and much admired skillful surgeon. Widely regarded as a Gentleman of Plastic Surgery, Prof. Nayak trained and mentored a large number of plastic surgeons across the country and played a seminal role in establishing the speciality particularly in Southern India.

Born in Vijayawada, to Dr. U.V Nayak, Professor of Anatomy at MMC, and Mrs. Sanjeevi Bai, Dr. Nayak graduated in medicine from MMC in 1954 and went on to pursue post-graduation in general surgery from another prestigious institute, Stanley Medical College in 1959. He was the first batch pupil along with Dr. Mathangi Ramakrishnan, when the legendary Prof. C R Sunderarajan started the first M.Ch. course in plastic surgery in Southern India, at MMC in 1966.

Immediately after his M.Ch., Dr. Nayak spent some time at Stanley Medical College with pioneer hand surgeon Prof R. Venkatswamy and played a crucial role in starting the first hand surgery unit in India in 1971. Prof. Venkataswami reminisces, 'Dr. Nayak and I meticulously recorded all that we did, and you will still find handwritten details of even our first patient in the hospital. We performed over 1000 hand surgeries in the first month!'

Around this time, the Indian government, in collaboration with Australian counterpart invited Sir Benjamin Rank, Professor of Plastic Surgery, the University of Melbourne to develop the speciality of plastic surgery in the country. Under the *Colombo Plan*, Sir Benjamin Rank worked in Calcutta, Nagpur and other parts of the country to ensure plastic surgery units were started. Dr. U S Nayak was one among the 15 surgeons, along with Dr. R. L. Manchanda (Patiala),

Dr. S. S. Rawat (Rajasthan), Brig. R.Ganguly (Calcutta), Dr. C. Balakrishnan (Nagpur) and Dr. J. L. Gupta (Delhi), who were selected by Sir Benjamin Rank, for a training in Australia under the *Commonwealth Fellowship*. Dr. Nayak obtained F.R.A.C.S. qualification at Melbourne during this time and cherished the opportunity of working with the best brains in the field, including the renowned Dr. Ian Tylor, who revolutionised the reconstructive surgery with angiosome concept.

Dr. Nayak, returned to India and to MMC, as a Reader (1973–1985) and served until he retired as Professor and Head of Plastic Surgery in 1990. He mentored a large number of plastic surgeons, who fondly remember him with great respect, love and admiration.

Prof. Nayak had the right combination of academic prowess, clinical acumen and surgical skills. He was innovative in thoughts as well as in actions which was reflected in his surgical skills and treatment plans. He always deliberated in elaborate planning sessions with his students and encouraged them to present theirs. He was open to suggestions, welcomed criticism and would change his plan, sometimes at the last minute, even if the idea was from a junior-most colleague, if he found it worthy.

He was among the first few in the country to practice aesthetic surgery. At a time when our speciality was focussed on reconstruction alone, Prof. Nayak pioneered aesthetic surgery procedures in South India. He was an avid reader, abreast with current knowledge and concepts. Always finding new, innovative and productive ways to improve his surgery, he was equally eager to incorporate new, viable techniques initiated or proposed by other surgeons. He had special interest in cleft surgeries and was among the first few in the country to imbibe Millards technique for the lip

repair when the majority practiced triple wedge and triangular flap techniques. He readily incorporated the introduction of myocutaneous and fasciocutaneous flaps. Likewise, he used tissue expansions in very early days of its introduction. To put it simply, he was a man of innovations and excelled in whatever he did, and even more importantly, he always taught what he practiced and practised what he taught.

Several honors and awards came Prof. U. S. Nayak's way, including 'Lifetime Achievement Award' from the Indian Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (2013), the International Cleft Palate Foundation of the Ministry of Health of Seychelles (2012), The Tamilnadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University, International Cleft lip and Palate Foundation (2005) and MMC, Madras (2002). He delivered Sushruta Oration at APSICON 2005, Delhi and Dr. Padamanoor Rama Rao Memorial Oration in 1991 at Salem.

His colleagues fondly called him 'Buddha' for his demeanour - Prof Nayak possessed vast knowledge, yet remained quiet without promoting himself, contented, lived a simple life with extraordinary capabilities and disseminated the knowledge through his pupils. He remained an unassuming role model, kind, helpful and friendly.

EVOCATIVE TRIBUTES

A man of few words, but every word of his a gem
"He was one batch senior to me under late Prof CR Sunderarajan. If I had any doubt or any difficult problem in my practice, it was to Prof. US N, I would turn to clear my doubts and get the best advice and guidance. Very knowledgeable teacher, highly skillful and dexterous in executing any surgery, a man of few words, but every word of his a gem, a remarkable speaker - generally short and sweet mixed with quiet humour."

-Dr. M Mohan Rao

"An excellent teacher and a brilliant surgeon, innumerable plastic surgeons owe their training to him."

-Dr. T C Chandran

The only Plastic Surgeon who did aesthetic surgeries
"He was my teacher for 2 years between 1980 and 1982, during those days, he was the only Plastic Surgeon who did

aesthetic plastic surgeries. He taught us aesthetic Rhinoplasty and Breast surgeries. He was a man of few words, but with skilled hands and a perfect gentleman to the core."

-Dr. Murugesan

He emphasised the importance of personal follow-up
"His dedication and commitment to patients were unparalleled. He used to emphasise the importance of personal follow-up of even a small case till the suture removal and more. I am yet to see a surgeon who gives gentler handling of tissues than Prof. USN. Assisting a case of rhinoplasty (with him) would be a great fortune to learn his mastery of Nose Surgery."

-Dr. James Roy Kanjoor

Even when he was not well, he was ready to do workshops
"A very humane plastic surgeon with ever smiling face. Even when he was not well, he was ready to do surgical workshops in MMC. Interested so much in teaching youngsters."

-Dr. Alamelu Venkataraman

A content person and a noble soul
"I had the good fortune of visiting MMC in 1986 and watch him operate. A very deft surgeon indeed. A person given to reticence. A content person and a noble soul. I silently admired him always."

-Prof. Arun K. Singh

The enlightened one
"He will always be remembered by the many who studied, worked or interacted with him as 'The Enlightened One.'"

-Dr. K. Ramachandran

A great surgeon and an excellent teacher.

-Dr. V. Srinivasan

Prof. Nayak always followed the motto of 'Actions speak louder than words'. He was a dearly loved husband, father, grandfather and brother besides an admired and well-respected teacher, mentor and surgeon who touched the lives of many. He peacefully passed away on 9th March 2016 at his daughter's residence in Mangalore. He is survived by his wife, daughters, son-in-laws and grandsons. Prof. U. S. Nayak will be greatly missed and will always be remembered with

love, respect and affection by all his students and patients.

Anand U. Kini, Dinesh Kadam¹

Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery,
Kasturba Medical College and Hospital, ¹Department
of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, A. J. Institute of
Medical Sciences and A. J. Hospital and Research Centre,
Mangalore, Karnataka, India
E-mail: drkadam@yahoo.co.in

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