

Prof. Jai Kumar Sinha: A Doyen in Plastic Surgery

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Prof. J.K. Sinha (► **Fig. 1**) played a vital role in my life when I was a plastic surgeon in the making. On reflecting, my memory goes back to four and a half decades of my association with him as my Chief.

My intimacy with him grew in June 1976 as one, among his first batch of MCh students along with Late Prof. F.M. Tripathi. He had a secure belief in me from the very beginning. After acquiring the MCh degree I frantically started hunting for jobs elsewhere. Prof. Sinha used to forward my applications with a usual response, “I need you.” Consequently, I became Lecturer in 1978 and gained the privilege of participating in discussions on how to raise the bar of our department to prominence on the national level (► **Fig. 2**). Such was his confidence in me as a new recruit.

Prof. Sinha involved me deeply in every aspect and gave me a free hand. He ensured that each team member participated actively. Thus, we worked as a family in a congenial, disciplined atmosphere. When several major responsibilities fell on his shoulders, he entrusted me with the responsibility to look after departmental activities. I was the only one to have an access to his maroon briefcase encased with instructions. His strong faith in me bolstered my confidence and helped me immensely in achieving surgical competence. He would call me any time and instruct me firmly. I would just look at him and nod. During APSICON 1991 under his Presidentship, he instantly made me the Organizing Secretary. At times he affectionately addressed me by my nickname. His affection for me did not cease even after superannuation. Whenever we met in conferences, he used to become emotional. Embracing me, he would shower his blessings on me. He was very close to my family. Whenever we called him for dinner, he would relish Bengali cuisine, especially fish at our place.

He motivated me to get registered for PhD under him and appreciated my cadaveric dissection, research work, and publications. Whenever I got recognition at the national



Fig. 1 Prof. J.K. Sinha (1935–2021).

level, he pronounced with great pride, “My student,” to his contemporaries. He responded affectionately to my greetings on “Gurupurnima” and “Teacher’s Day.” Thus, unique was the bonding and goodwill that we shared, in keeping with the “Guru Shishya Parampara.”

Prof. Jai Kumar Sinha was born in an exceptionally wealthy family in Patna. His father, Sri Brajnandan Prasad, was a leading lawyer. Born on the festival of “Holi” in 1935, he always celebrated his birthday on the day of the festival, irrespective of the date. His father was a man of strong principles, a committed freedom fighter, and very close to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of our nation. The family fortune was used freely for charitable purposes especially to educate hundreds of students in a four-storied

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Fig. 2 Division of Plastic Surgery, 1980, Prof. J.K. Sinha in the center. On his right—Dr. F.M. Tripathi (Lecturer), on his left—Dr. V. Bhattacharya (Lecturer), left of Bhattacharya—Dr. J.M. Das (Sr. Resident), right of FMT—Dr. L.M. Bariar (Pool officer), right of Bariar—Dr. Arvind Singh (Sr. Resident), standing behind FMT—T.H. Azmi (Laboratory technician). Behind JKS—Mahesh (OPD attendant), behind VB—Faujdar Singh (laboratory attendant).

residential “students block” and was donated generously to the freedom struggle. His mother, Smt. Parwati Devi, died when he was barely fourteen. His sister Krishna was left to manage the maternal mantle. He was the youngest of four brothers and one sister.

He grew up deeply entrenched in middle-class values. After schooling in Patna Collegiate, he joined the Patna Medical College, one of the oldest institutions, and completed his MBBS in 1959. Then he joined MS in Plastic Surgery in the same institution. He qualified and got trained under Prof. R.N. Sinha, one of the founder members of APSI. He completed MS Plastic Surgery in 1964. Then he proceeded to the United Kingdom for FRCS in 1965. After getting FRCS, he had two destinations. Despite the obvious path of migrating to that country, his ties to his homeland pulled him back to India. This was not surprising given that he had witnessed the freedom struggle from close quarters.

Once home, he was identified by Prof. K.N. Udupa (—Fig. 3), a giant in the field of medicine, and the then Director of the Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University. He realized that Prof. Sinha was the right person to develop a Plastic Surgery Division. Prof. Sinha joined the institute in 1973 as head of the division. He was selected by Prof. M.M. Mukherjee, another founder member of APSI. The specialties were just taking shape. It was a matter of great pride for him to live and work in the same city where Sushruta had practiced plastic surgery.

The Division of Plastic Surgery later became a full-fledged department under his dynamic leadership. His primary aim was the upliftment of the department. He initiated MCh program in 1976 and dozens of students were trained until he superannuated in 1996. He meticulously formulated the weekly academic schedule and set up an experimental microsurgery laboratory. He used to get feedback from the passed out students and would modify the weekly teaching program. He attended various conferences actively. Every time he encouraged the students to participate but not without a presentation. He was extremely conscious about the image of the department. He always encouraged research according to the choice of individuals. His areas of interest were cleft surgery, reconstructive surgery, and burns. He established the “Burn Unit” in the S.S. Hospital, BHU.

An elegant personality, he always dressed up soberly. He was a rigorous taskmaster, tough at the job but immensely supportive and loyal to his students and the institution. If residents fell short in their work, he would often ask them to scrub the very next day and would personally assist them during the entire surgery, patiently teaching them the steps. He encouraged independent thought. He would jokingly refer to the residents, as millions earned through his teaching. His first publication was in British Journal of Plastic Surgery in the mid-seventies on bilateral cleft lip. During his career, he discharged many portfolios. He became Head of the Department of Surgery, Dean, and Medical



Fig. 3 Farewell of Prof. K.N. Udupa in 1980. JKS is sitting on the extreme right.

Superintendent of S.S. Hospital (1994). On account of his sterling qualities of leadership and academic brilliance, he was made the Director of the Institute of Medical Sciences, BHU, in 1995.

In 1991, Dr. Sinha became President of the Association of Plastic Surgeons of India (→**Fig. 4**) and later served as a

trustee. He was also President of the National Academy of Burns. He was an examiner for MCh in a large number of institutions and also of the National Board. He has left behind a rich professional legacy through his students who either went on to chair several departments across the country or are very well established in practice. His unquenchable



Fig. 4 Felicitation during APSICON 2008.

brilliance and the undaunted spirit shall live in the minds of innumerable students taught by him and by grateful patients treated by him.

During his illustrious constructive career, Madam Sinha (Dr. Usha Rani), PhD in History, gave full support to him. Together they brought up their children with immense care; Dr. Nita Srivastava and Dr. Sanjai Sinha are absolutely brilliant. Dr. Sanjai Sinha stood first in class 12th at the All India level. It was a proud moment for the family and all of us associated with him.

On festive occasions and even otherwise, there used to be a gathering at his residence in New Medical Enclave. Everybody enjoyed his accessible social nature and delicious snacks and food prepared by Madam Sinha (—Fig. 5). After superannuation, he went back to Patna. Later they appropriately moved to his son's place at Hyderabad in 1999 and was engaged actively in patient care till 2007.

He did not have any major illness throughout life and departed for his heavenly abode peacefully on June 18, 2021. Indeed, he had a very fruitful and meaningful life, be it family, academics, professional, or administrative. As a legend, he commanded very high respect amongst his colleagues and students. His passing away signals the end of an era and the loss of an exemplary and iconic human being.

Prof. J.K. Sinha will be fondly remembered by everyone. His physical void will always be felt, but his love and affection shall live in our hearts throughout life.



Fig. 5 Golden Jubilee of Marriage anniversary 2012.

Conflict of Interest
None declared.