Prof. B. Ramamurthi

Prof. B. Ramamurthi was a very bright star of the neurosurgical firmament in India. He self-luminously shone dazzlingly, in a pioneering fashion, to illuminate the lives and works of many an Indian neurosurgeon. His contributions to Neurology-India in general and Neurosurgery-India in particular are like milestones in the evolution of these disciplines. The likes of him will be rare to come by. He has set an example, that is difficult to emulate, and worth all its while.

My reminiscences of him as a neurosurgeon belong more to the continuing folklore around him. Whenever the question of eminence in neurosurgery arose, Dr. Ramamurthi’s name occupied the forefront. My brush was with Dr. Ramamurthi, the humanitarian and the educationist.

The Vivekananda Institute of Culture, Calcutta had organized a seminar on ideal doctor-patient relationship, a decade ago with Prof. Ramamurthi in the Chair, and I as one of the participants. I was impressed by his cool bearing, his charm of manners and courtesies, and his deep concern for exemplary doctor-patient relationship. He raised a number of issues wherein his attempt was to synthesize the disparate forces of high technology, expensive care, and the inescapable needs to adopt such measures. May be, all this he could do with ease for it sprang from direct experiences of his own life.

We had written a piece in the BMJ (Nov. 1977), questioning the veracity of the word cure, and quoting Hughlings Jackson, a pioneer neurologist of the 19th century, who opined that anyone who used the word ‘cure’ as removal of the disease was but a quack. We got a prompt letter from Dr. Ramamurthi, saying that while he agreed with the essence of the article, he felt that the faith of doctors, students, and patients, in the concept of ‘cure’ should not be shaken. He believed in establishing and maintaining traditions.

At Calcutta, beyond the working hours, he was flooded by grateful patients and their kin. The reverence with which they offered their salutations to him spoke volumes for the name and fame this venerable neurosurgeon enjoyed. It was an honor to have met him; a greater one to have known him.

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