Professor Börje Uvnäs, one of the most renowned pharmacologists in the history of mankind passed away on November 5, 2003, leaving a great void. It is a great loss to the whole of the pharmacology world, and in particular to India. A physiologist turned pharmacologist, he rose to the highest position of the first President of the International Union of Pharmacology and was re-elected to it for a second term of 3 years (1966-72). He attained the position of Chairman of the Nobel Committee for physiology and medicine, a position coveted by any medical scientist.

He had a special place in his heart for pharmacology in India. He laid the foundation stone of the Indian Pharmacological Society in 1969. Since then he attended several of its conferences. At the silver jubilee conference at Muzzafarpur in 1992, in his Achari Oration, he analyzed the recent trends in pharmacology research and expressed his concern about its future. He stressed the importance of keeping abreast of the fundamental pharmacological research and emphasized that young pharmacologists must be exposed to the techniques of cellular, subcellular and molecular research. Though he acknowledged the importance of branches like clinical pharmacology, he cautioned that they ran the risk of becoming merely a service discipline to the clinicians or to the pharmaceutical industry, if the clinical pharmacologists did not have satisfactory insight into the basic sciences. He said that a close collaboration and amalgamation of basic and clinical pharmacology would be advantageous to both the parties. He wished the IPS to be a strong initiating and uniting body in the development of basic pharmacology and its various branches like clinical pharmacology and drug control. He wished a brilliant future for the Indian Pharmacological Society and Indian pharmacology.

He always had a soft spot for the Indian Pharmacological Society and donated a large sum of money for initiating the Uvnäs Prize to be given to the best publication in the field of autacoids and monoamines to encourage research in basic sciences.

I had the good fortune of knowing Prof. Uvnäs for about two decades. I met him coincidentally in 1975 when he visited India at the invitation of Prof. G. Achari who fell ill and asked me to play the host. Since then he and his charming wife, Ingrid, invited me to Stockholm and we had several opportunities of being each other’s guests. Incidentally, Ingrid always expressed wistfully her desire to visit India, which Uvnäs could never resist. Once they visited Pondicherry and, were so charmed by the place and the people that they extended their stay which was quite unusual for them. He was very fond of his two dogs that used to accompany him to his office. Once, at home, one of them chewed the sandalwood elephants that I had presented to Ingrid. She got annoyed with the dog which he could not bear and asked me to airlift another pair to replenish her collection.

The death of Prof. Uvnäs, a friend, philosopher and guide to the Indian Pharmacological Society, and me is an enormous loss to the pharmacology community.

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