

**Ramesh Chandra Mishra, President NSI 2016**

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**Introduction:**

I was born on 12<sup>th</sup> February the day of Mahashivratri in 1954. I prefer to acknowledge each auspicious Mahashivratri as my new year of Life. My father Shri Tribhuwan Pati Mishra completed schooling, which my mother Kewala Devi did not. I am the eldest among my siblings. My father a Sarpanch, was the only one who knew English in the nearby 12 villages. There was no road or electricity in my village (in the district of Jaunpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh) till 1976. I studied in the village school till 12<sup>th</sup> standard doing my homework with light from a kerosene oil powered earthen pot. I thought that electricity was meant for the Physics lab only. I still got high marks in the board examination. I belong to a family where agriculture was the main source of income. We used to get light for our microscope in the Biology lab by keeping the reflecting mirror, towards the window. Scarcity and non development were the hurdles of life but the primary mission never got diluted. Today, I am compelled to question, whether the extent of facilities provided for better living, matter in education and acquiring knowledge.

After passing the twelfth standard with distinction, I moved to Allahabad University for further studies. For the first time I came to know that one can become a doctor after appearing for a specific examination! The purpose of revealing all the hardships here, is to emphasize my conviction that hardship and scarcity may not always be a curse. To a certain extent, it could be a boon up as they make one capable of cultivating and nurturing a strong personality. A better neurosurgeon could be the result.

During my B.Sc. in Biology / Chemistry I wanted to be a university teacher. All my teachers were endowed with knowledge, which they were ready to share. This created an unforgettable atmosphere for academic

excellence and character building. In 1972, I was selected (6<sup>th</sup> rank in entrance exam) to the GSVM Medical College, Kanpur, as was expected by my classmates.

### **Undergraduate and Postgraduate Medical Education:**

Due to major economic constraints I was expected to manage my livelihood and study simultaneously. With so many helping hands I recovered from the initial despondency. My continuing academic excellence (7 honors out of 10 subjects) also helped. The grit and determination learnt during childhood and adolescence played a very important role in my career and helped me face repeated challenges. I became an intern in GSVM Medical College in 1977. I quickly learnt to become useful to my colleagues, seniors, residents, teachers and consultants. This can only happen if one has a keen desire to learn. If you wish to become like your teacher you have to assimilate, continuously the art and science of medical subjects.

I became a valued and dependable colleague to my teachers and they also kept on raising the bar during my house job in 1978 and as a resident, demonstrator and Registrar from 1979 to 1981. I remember my MS Gen Surgery examination of 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1981 when my examiner stopped asking questions as I had answered all questions correctly. I was declared Master of Surgery in 1981 March and was short listed for a faculty position in General Surgery in July 1981.



*MBBS Final year 1976*

Most certainly I had become a doctor to uplift the financial status of my family. A teaching job in a Medical College would not have served the purpose. My parents' patience was wearing out. In search of quick money, I went to Delhi to get a job in a Gulf country. During this time I got a senior residency in Neuro Surgery in August 1981. For a brief period, I had to choose between a senior residency in neurosurgery and a lectureship in General Surgery. Prof. Tara Chand, an excellent teacher and general surgeon had told me "if you want four hours of standing (while operating) and 40% operative mortality, go and join

Neurosurgery”. Professor of Medicine G N Vajpeyi, a compassionate physician who used to console a grieving family by saying “I am doing some Mantra for you, you will be alright” advised me “Go to the west you will bloom. Do not have tubular vision. Go and see the world”. I touched his feet and came back to my hostel room thinking over his last words. “Go and see the world”. I packed my meagre belongings; resigned in the morning from general surgery without meeting my beloved teacher Prof. Tara Chand and left for G B Pant Hospital, Delhi, to join as senior resident in neurosurgery with zero exposure in neurosurgery during my general surgery residency. Till then my only exposure was to see, greet and meet Prof. D K Chhabra, an eminent neurosurgeon of Lucknow, when he visited Kanpur to pacify the ego of some VIP head injury patient in our ward. Subsequently he would either declare those patients pre-terminal or advice to shift them to Lucknow to his Department of Neurosurgery at King George Medical College.

My sole aim in G B Pant was to get a foothold to explore the possibility of going abroad to a Gulf country. As I was getting good exposure in neurosurgery I even thought of making this a career. I was now seeing in the ward, patients seen in the medical OPD – with complaints like tingling, numbness or visual disturbance. I became convinced that neurosurgery could be a different and challenging branch of medicine. The very first successful direct carotid puncture angiogram, the mainstay of decision making in those days in neurosurgery added to the conviction. CT era dawned in 1983/84 at G B Pant Hospital.

Every now and then senior residents were joining and leaving the dept in those days. I became the first one to stay. These small events laid the foundation of neurosurgery in me. Somewhere in Nov 81, I was to sign a contract for work in Libya, and then came that fateful night. A patient with a classical lucid interval following trauma, came in a very bad shape. Angiogram at 11PM showed large extradural Temporal Hematoma. Patient was deteriorating fast and passed into impending respiratory arrest. I proceeded to operate while the consultant was on his way, past midnight. By the time he arrived I was able to evacuate a large clot. He came, stood by me, guided me through and praised me for my decision making, approach and execution. Post surgery I happily retired to the doctors duty room. At 6:30 am when I went to the common ICU shared with Cardiac

Surgery, I saw the patient sitting on the bed. I could see appreciation in the eyes of cardiac colleagues. After my duty was over for the day (for few hours only) I came back as I was the only single senior resident. I wrote an inland letter to my father requesting him to allow me to further my career in neurosurgery. By that time I had decided not to sign any contract with Gulf countries. Thus began my neurosurgery career.

### **Neurosurgical training :**

In 1982 I got selected as first M Ch student in G B Pant Hospital under Prof. Brahm Prakash. I was engaged in developing protocols for beginning of the degree course in Neurosurgery and the department itself. It helped tremendously in my career. During my M.Ch days, I remember how Prof Brahm Prakash worked hard to expand the neurosurgery program in GB Pant hospital and how much he cared for the students. He never took formal attendance of senior residents and house staff. Senior residents were expected to train house staff. He informed the director that the senior residents work is their attendance. He once remarked, “My job is not only to train you but to ensure that you are well settled in life”.

During that period, Prof A K Singh, a newly joined lecturer, impressed me a lot. His humane approach, innovativeness and a grounded personality continues to be inspiring. He never failed to take us to coffee house after rounds but never spared us for any follies during our ward and OT activities. He differentiated his leadership obligations and interpersonal relationships. Once a colleague, very close to Prof AK Singh, removed sutures without wearing gloves. Dr Singh reprimanded him conveying the importance of asepsis to all residents in no uncertain terms.

My senior residency was over on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1985 and I was accommodated as pool officer till 19<sup>th</sup> September 1985. After leaving GB Pant Hospital I joined as a Lecturer in SCTIMST, Trivandrum. Due to personal reasons I had to leave and joined S N Medical College, Agra as lecturer. Being the first qualified specialist in the region it was a challenge to start neurological services.

### **Starting Neurosurgery in Agra:**

Accustomed to an organized neurosurgical department at G B Pant Hospital, Delhi and SCTIMST, Trivandrum it was even more difficult. I had been forewarned about difficulties in starting a neurosurgery unit in a

general surgery department. I started working and acquiring equipments and instruments. The first surgery done by me was on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1986. It was a Post CSOM Brain abscess. Patient became unconscious in the ENT OPD with impending respiratory arrest. I took the patient to the general surgery floor. There was no CT or even an X-Ray. As Temporal abscess was the commonest I tapped the brain through a classically placed burr hole. I encountered CSF under pressure. It indicated hydrocephalus due to Posterior fossa abscess. A drill hole in the Retro auricular Retromastoid region resulted in tapping 10 ml of pus which gave the all needed reprieve to the patient. He underwent excision subsequently. Post operatively he walked out of the ward. The news spread like wild fire, thus establishing neurosurgery among medicos and paramedics. Excision of Post Fossa abscess with a smooth post op recovery emboldened me to start neurosurgery,

Neurosurgical patients in Agra and adjacent areas had hitherto no help. A 40-year old female symptomatic for 8 years had been bedridden for 5 months due to quadriplegia. In Agra as I was my own radiologist I recollected how the radiologist in GB Pant Hospital had done a myelogram and did the procedure, A C2 intradural extramedullary compression was revealed. Post operatively she was able to walk The media highlighted that she had 350 papers from different consultants. For the first time it was shown that neurosurgery is a branch of medicine which could offer survival with good quality of life. I also had a brief fellowship in Tubingen University Germany in 1990 under Europa India Foundation. I worked on Transcranial Doppler under guidance of Prof Earnst Grotte from May to July 1990.

It is now 3 decades of continuous nurturing of the subject with a mission. The choice of easy going life had receded. It was hardship, but rewarded by every moment, with so many days and years gone by. My journey in this direction had another dimension too. It was to popularize the subject among budding medicos. On this front too I have no dissatisfaction. Today there are almost four dozen neurosurgeons from S N Medical College. Patient centric transparent approach was my main mantra. As I had no one to share with, discuss or get guidance from (no telemedicine in those days), I always resorted to books. Several times I took x-rays and investigations to GB Pant Hospital and got a second opinion from Prof A K Singh. I was

doing all types of surgery and was enjoying this. Private practice provided financial comfort as well.

Prof. A.K. Banerjee always encouraged development of a specialty in peripheral regions. Whenever some patient went to AIIMS New Delhi he always convinced the patient that treatment was available at Agra. My teacher's teacher encouraged me to organize two WFNS courses in Agra in 1993 and in 1999 - on Gliomas and Post Fossa tumors. From patient care, teaching in a medical college and doing private practice, I was now getting recognized beyond Agra. This led to the national neurotrauma conference in 2002, Neurological Society of India meeting in 2007, Indo-Canadian CME 2000 and WFNS/AASNS course in 2010.



Simultaneously, I started taking interest in professional bodies too. I was elected as President UP Neurosurgical Society, EC Member Indian Society of Pediatric Neurosurgery, President Neurotrauma Society of India and various positions in Neurological Society of India. I have no words to post my heartfelt thanks to the

members of NSI in their faith in me by making me secretary of NSI from 2012 to 2014 and President 2015-16. The whole narrative can be summarized to, "Struggle is not always frustrating. It can bear fruits of delight too, depends what strategy one makes and what measures one adopts". I can gleefully look back at the rise of neurology in general and neurosurgical care in particular, for the population at large in over three decades.

My wife Amita Mishra is truly a homemaker and is providing the necessary support. My son Dr Shashwat Mishra (1982) got his MBBS entrance in



*With PM Narendra Modi  
during his Agra Visit 2014*

AIIMS ranked one, in August 1999. He got selected with rank one again in his PG entrance examination of AIIMS Delhi. He preferred 6 year course of neurosurgery and got his M.Ch certificate in 2011. He did his fellowship for USA for one year. Presently he is working as Assistant Professor Neurosurgery in AIIMS Delhi. I remember his two sentences. When I asked his future program during his internship he told me that he would prefer to stay here. Despite his 3 year assignment in very renowned department of Pediatric Neurosurgery at

Chicago USA, he wrote to me that “I visualize nothing more than AIIMS to learn here. Better I do not waste time and come back”. And he came

back to search for positions in India. He stayed as Assistant Professor at R M L Postgraduate Medical Institute, Lucknow, from where he applied and got selected in AIIMS, Delhi on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014. During these upheavals he, most convincingly told me that he preferred to go to academics over private practice. And so he did. My daughter-in-law Dr Deepika, MD, is Assistant Professor in Oral Pathology in same institute. We



*With Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev*

are all blessed with grandson Tatsat (7) and Advait (2). They are those where I cling for my future. My younger daughter Dr Aditi Mishra (1986) is MD in Pediatric Medicine and is finishing her senior residency in Post Graduate institute and super specialty hospital in Pediatric Medicine, an autonomous institution of UP Govt., in Noida. My son-in-law Dr Abhishek, MD, is pursuing his career as intensivist. Both wish to go for private practice. ■