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It was a unique sight during my early childhood, which left a lasting impression in my mind, when I saw many residents of a small village named Thoripaju gathered at a place to receive us (my father and me) on a fine evening. I was about three years old and as a child, I could understand that most of them were anxiously waiting to consult my father regarding their health problems. My father (late Dr. Sreedhar Mohanty) was a doctor working in the Government Hospital at Phulbani, a small town in Orissa and used to be the only physician providing a treating facility to all the people living in and around the town. Often, I used to accompany him during his visits to the adjoining villages and seeing the respect and gratitude of people for a doctor, I developed a strong desire in my mind to take up the medical profession, when I would grow up. With such imaginative ideas and determination, I continued my studies with sincerity and enthusiasm and completed my basic training of M.B.B.S from S.C.B. N Medical College, Cuttack in the year 1960. I enjoyed a happy childhood with a congenial atmosphere at home and a successful career at school. The natural beauty of hills and rivers in small towns of Orissa provided a serene atmosphere for my studies. Even though I had my education in schools and colleges which were not of national repute, I did have the opportunity of being taught by teachers committed to their profession. I actively participated in extracurricular activities like drama, music, painting and other organisational events which, I feel, influenced in developing my personality.

After completion of rotating internship in medical college, I got married to Dr. Bhabani Sankar Das who happened to be my classmate during M.B.B.S. career. Subsequently we lived with my father-in-law and mother-in-law and I had to take up the household responsibilities as a housewife. I decided to take up the postgraduate course in pathology instead of any other clinical subject to avoid odd time duties. Nevertheless I always had a liking for this subject. My in-laws and my husband extended their wholehearted support when I wanted to pursue my postgraduate studies further. My mother played a key role in this regard by looking after my daughter while I completed my M.D. in Pathology and Bacteriology from K. G. Medical College, Lucknow in 1965. Known for maintaining a high standard of teaching and training, the department of pathology at K. G. Medical College offered me a suitable ground where I could acquire the basic knowledge required to build up my career as a pathologist. It was here that I learnt how best to set up laboratories in our country with limited finance and minimum equipments adopting innovative methods. During the same period Dr. Das completed his M.S. in general surgery from K. G. Medical College and both of us returned to Cuttack to start our new career.

I joined at S.C.B. Medical College, Cuttack as a demonstrator of pathology and enjoyed my assignment of teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students in addition to assisting Professor A.M. Tripathy in reporting histopathology slides. I developed a liking for the subject (histopathology) and intended to have further training in a specialized branch of pathology. At the suggestion of Dr. N.C. Nayak, the then Professor of pathology at A.I.I.M.S., New Delhi, I contacted Dr. S. Sriramachari, the Director of Indian Registry of Pathology, I.C.M.R., New Delhi, who was a neuropathologist and was the honorary professor of neuropathology at A.I.I.M.S. and expressed my intention of getting trained in neuropathology under his supervision. At the same time Dr. Das was planning to undertake M.Ch course in neurosurgery. We thought, it would be quite beneficial for both of us to take up the neurosciences speciality in building up of our future career.

My initiation into neuropathology started when, availing I.C.M.R. research fellowship, I joined I.R.P. to undergo training in neuropathology and work in the research project on Duchenne muscular dystrophy under the guidance of Dr.

Sriramachari. Subsequently my husband and children joined me and I completed Ph.D from Delhi University working on biophysical and histochemical aspects of brain tumours.

When I look back, I cannot believe as to how I could leave my ten month old son with my mother and proceed to Delhi for higher studies.

Whether it was my determination to become a neuropathologist or foolishness to satisfy my ego is difficult to comprehend. However, once all of us were together life became much easier and meaningful.

During my training period. I had the opportunity of being associated with very senior neurosurgeons and neurologists of our country. Professor Baldev Singh, Professor P.N. Tandon, professor A. K. Banerjee, Professor Vimla Virmani and professor Ramamurthy were amongst those who encouraged me and extended help in undertaking my Ph.D-work. I had access to the neurosurgery operation theatre at A.I.I.M.S. and I used to collect fresh tumour material for study. This enriched my clinical acumen. I received full co-operation and help from my husband, who was then registrar and post graduate student in neurosurgery, in carrying out my thesis work. Greater was the contribution of my mother who relieved me of all my household burden so that I could do justice to my research work.

Dr. Sriramachari, my guide, who laid the foundation stone for me in this speciality, greatly influenced me in building up of my future career. Apart from theory, I learnt from him the practical aspects of neuropathological techniques. I started to study of muscle biopsy by employing special enzyme histochemical techniques on cryo- stat sections, a facility not available at any other centre in the country during that time. Never did I realise that this initial work on muscle would be the main subject of interest and research in the latter part of my career. It was Dr. Chari, from whom I learnt how to be meticulous, honest and methodical while undertaking any research work. I also had the privilege of acquiring working knowledge in photography (gross and microscopic) and essential requirements in research and teaching.

When I was working at I.R.p., Dr. D. K. Dastur was the seniormost neuropathologist in the country and heading the division of neuropathology at J.J. Hospital, Bombay. Apart from this centre hardly there was any other institution where the speciality was established. Subsequently in 1970s, Dr. Sarasabharathi started the neuropathology department in the Institute of Neurology at Madras. During the same period Dr. Subimal Roy started organising neuropathology division in the department of pathology at A.I.I.M.S., New Delhi.

With lots of hope and ambition to set up a good neuropathology laboratory and provide satisfactory diagnostic service in my state, I returned to Cuttack and joined as a faculty in the department of pathology in 1971. By then Dr. Das on his return from A.I.I.M.S. had joined as Assistant Professor of neurosurgery in the medical college. For a period of ten long years, I tried my best to introduce and establish the speciality service in the department. Even though diagnostic service in neuropathology could be provided, I was not able to utilise my expertise to its full extent. However, in the home front, I could spend more time with my family members especially children and enjoyed looking after their studies.

In 1974, I got an opportunity to work at different neurological centres in U.K. for a period of one year under the Commonwealth fellowship programme. To start with I worked at the department of neuropathology under the supervision of Professor B.E. Tomlinson at the Institute of Neurology, Newcastle upon Tyne. As I had a liking to pursue work on muscle disorders, I undertook a small project on Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) to prove or disprove the "Sick" motor neurone concept in DMD postulated by McComas and associates in 1971-72. I could also study interesting neuropathological material in the department collected and filed over the years. I had the privilege of working with Professor Bradley from whom I could learn the investigative procedures employed in studying nerve and muscle biopsies. The slide seminars conducted every week by Dr. Bradley were educative while the clinopathological

conferences taken up by Professor Tomlinson were very interesting and informative. It was during my training period at U.K., I realised that, for a neuropathologist, acquiring basic knowledge in neurology and neurosurgery is very important. Subsequently I visited two other neuropathology centres, one at Royal Infirmary Edinburgh and the other at the National Institute of Neurology, Queen square, London. Professor Malony at Edinburgh and Professor Black Wood at Queen Square London were kind enough to provide me autopsy slides of several interesting cases to study. The experience which I acquired, working at these three neurological centres of excellence in UK, further enriched my knowledge in the speciality and moulded my further career. It was possible to work with commitment during the fellowship period because I was living with my family during my stay at U.K. Dr. Das was visiting different neurosurgical centres in U.K. under Commonwealth fellowship programme during the same year while my children were studying in the local schools in U.K.

Until 1981 I did not have much scope of pursuing neuropathology especially myopathology. at cuttack except for providing routine diagnostic service in the speciality. To add to my frustration, i was asked by the Government authorities to proceed to Medical college, Burla as a faculty in microbiology despite my training and -expertise in neuropathology for thirteen years. The situation was such that I had to take a decision to leave the service honourably and change my place of work. Dr. Das was not in a better situation either. perhaps, at such a critical moment, the Almighty came to our rescue. My husband got the job of Professor of Neurosurgery at NIMHANS, Bangalore and within a short period I was appointed Professor of Neuropathology at the same institute. Thus we started a new chapter in our life. my this time my family commitments have been minimised. My daughter was married in 1980 and continued her post graduate studies in orissa while my son was studying in IX standard.

when I joined NIMHANS as professor and head of the department of neuropathology, I had the responsibility of reorganising the existing laboratory set up by my senior colleagues earlier. Dr. D. H. Deshpande was my predecessor who had laid down a good infrastructure and started the teaching programme in neuropathology for post graduate students of neurosurgery and neurology. In addition to diagnostic service manpower development and research were the other important functions to be taken care of. Dr. s. K. Shankar and Dr. Vasudev Rao were the two faculty members who were running the department. with their active co-operation and dedicated service I was able to start my work with full vigour. while appearing in the interview for the post of professor of Neuropathology, I had expressed my intention of setting up a good laboratory for diagnosis and research of muscle disorders in the department since such a facility was not available elsewhere in the country. I started my newly assigned job with expectations and apprehension. NIMHANS provided an ideal base for undertaking academic activities and I received full co-operation from the faculty of neurosurgery, neurology and other allied departments in this regard. Dr. G. N. Narayan Reddy, the Director of the Institute was very considerate and extended timely help. Needless to say that by interacting with Dr. B. S. Das, professor of neurosurgery and Dr. Gourie-Devi, professor of neurology, the academic activities and diagnostic service could be further augmented.

By 1983 we were able to provide satisfactory diagnostic service to patients having neuromuscular disorders using the latest techniques like enzyme histochemistry and electron microscopy. Professor Gourie-Devi was interested in myology and hence with her co-operation, it was easy for us to develop myopathology as a part of neuropathology. I was fortunate to get Mrs. N. Gayathri as a research scholar in my research project on muscle disorder who was very sincere and dedicated. It was her untiring efforts which helped in standardising the techniques used in myopathology. Subsequently she learnt electron microscopic techniques which were also important in study of muscle diseases. In course of time, working on neuromuscular disorders in infancy and childhood, she got Ph.D degree in neuropathology. Referral biopsies were received from centres other than NIMHANS at Bangalore and from other parts of the country. especially South India, for expert opinion. Post graduate students of neurology and neurosurgery were offered short term training courses in neuropathology. Students from other institutions regularly came for such training during their

post graduation tenure. With a view to develop neuropathology diagnostic service in different medical colleges short term training was also provided to faculty of pathology coming from colleges where neurosurgery and neurology units were existing.

In our department each of us identified different areas for research. I got interested in stroke in young and pathology of head injury and analysed the available autopsy material this was in addition to my main field of work in muscle disorders which I pursued through out my career. Dr. Shankar studied degenerative diseases, C. J. disease and infections of C.N.S. Dr. Rao was interested in tumours of C.N.S. and other miscellaneous conditions. Dr. Y. Ramamohan was in charge of electron microscopy and offered diagnostic and research facility to research workers of NIMFIANS and other institutions as well. His interest was in basic sciences and pursued study of retina and its neural connectivity, especially in fro-e. With the help of administrative authority we could expand . the department by increasing the staff strength, acquiring new equipments and undertaking research projects. In the mean time Dr. Shankar was trying to start a "Brain Bank" at our centre where valuable neuropathological material can be collected and stored (fresh without fixative) for future research to be utilised by any scientist in the country to understand the pathogenesis of neurological disorders. He succeeded in getting a research grant through D.S.T. project, the finance being provided by D.S.T, D.B.T, & I.C.M.R. We have now a "Human Brain Repository" at NIMHANS. the only one of its kind in India. Thus with active participation of all the faculty members and technical staff of the department, our department of neuropathology at present is in a comfortable position to offer diagnostic service, research and training facility in the field of neuropathology.

I admit, with gratitude, the co-operation extended to us by most of the neurologists and neurosurgeons in the country to bring our department to the present status. The rapport which I developed with most members of Neurological Society of India during the period of my stay at NIMHANS, helped me in being elected to the post of Vice President of the society in 1996. NIMHANS provided the necessary infrastructure for me to have an eventful career and I hope I have contributed my share for the development of the department and institution.

I left NIMHANS in March 1998 following superannuation and came back to my native town, Cuttack. Both of my children who had ungrudgingly permitted me to pursue my career are married and well settled: My son, a paediatric surgeon, is working at Bangalore and daughter, a psychologist lives with her husband and children at Hyderabad. The life style will change and I shall not get an equivalent academic atmosphere as in NIMHANS. But my husband and I take this event as a happy 'home coming'. The medical college at Cuttack offers neurosurgical and neurological services while practioners in these specialities also provide treating facility to patients. But I intend to set up a small laboratory to facilitate diagnostic service in neuropathology. Dr. Das is busy in providing neurosurgical service to patients of Orissa. He hopes to organise a better set up in the private sector which can offer reasonably satisfactory treatment facility to neurosurgical patients.

In my life I have always carried the pleasant memories of the past. The odd circumstances I had passed through had always turned out to be blessings in disguise. We belong to the class of "fortunate lot" on this earth and I feel, it is our ardent duty to give to the society something more than what we have got. Whether my share of contribution is significant or not will be judged by the society.