

My stint as Professor and Head of the department, Neuropathology, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore from 1982 to 1998 concluded on 28.02.1998. After retirement, I did not wish to settle at Bangalore and hence returned to Cuttack, my native, soon thereafter. My husband, Dr Bhabani Sankar Das, who had served as Professor and HOD, Neurosurgery at NIMHANS, Bangalore had retired earlier, was already at Cuttack. He was working at Bhubaneswar in the newly established private hospital - "Kalinga Hospitals". Unable to idle, I started to work from home as a neuropathologist! I reported on specimens of brain and spinal cord, muscle and nerve biopsies. The slides for histological examination were prepared by a trained technician; however it fell short of my expectation. Shortly thereafter, I joined Kalinga Hospital as chief pathologist and set up their laboratory services including histopathology. With the launch of this post-retirement engagement, I began to organise the domestic front to lead a happy family life. My daughter, an educational psychologist was at Hyderabad and son, a paediatric surgeon had just returned to St.John's Medical College, Bangalore after his training at AIIMS, Delhi.

It was my good fortune that the other consultants in histopathology, microbiology and biochemistry were competent and helpful; and with their co operation, I was able to establish the laboratory for routine diagnostic services. We updated the laboratory services, especially biochemistry with the introduction of machines for automation. As a neuropathologist, i initiated a few special techniques like squash preparations and special stain in histopathology. My colleagues were equally prompt in setting up state of art services in their respective specialities. The functioning of this laboratory not only facilitated quality diagnostic support at Kalinga hospital, but also helped us gain recognition as a referral laboratory in Bhubaneswar.

Meanwhile, I was invited by several institutions at Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ranchi, Guwahati and Chennai for delivering guest lecturers in conferences, workshops and short training courses for post-graduates. This gave me ample opportunity to meet and interact with young students and senior colleagues at these institutions. It provided me the much needed professional satisfaction. I have

benefitted from the exchange of ideas and cherish the love and respect they have showered on me. These lectures were prepared from the material collected during my service at NIHANS and at Kalinga Hospital. A good lab, efficient technicians and active support from clinical departments provided for the preparation of the teaching material. In retrospect, I had never imagined that after my return from Bangalore, I would set up a laboratory where I could continue to work up cases optimally.

On the home front, I relished spending time with my close relatives and friends. Before i moved to NIMHANS, Bangalore, I was a faculty at SCB Medical College, Cuttack from 1961 to 1981. Many of my professional contemporaries of those days had also retired while several of my junior colleagues were still in service as faculty in the Department of Pathology in the medical colleges of Odisha. I used to frequent the department of pathology at Cuttack and refresh myself with examining the slides and interacting with the pathologists there. At their behest, I discussed neuropathology with the postgraduates too .This kept me updated and brushed up my concepts in pathology of other systems too. I helped my colleagues in Odisha establish the “IAPM House” for the Indian Association of Pathology and Microbiology at Cuttack.

Dr. Das and me continued to attend several national conferences regularly – the Annual conferences of Neurological Society of India, Annual Association of Neuroscientist of Eastern India, Neurotrauma conference, Annual Conference of Indian association of Pathology and Microbiology etc. Indeed, after retirement, I had the good luck of being elected as President of the Association of Neuroscientists of Eastern India in 2013 and President of the Neuropathology Society of India in 2015. These responsibilities kept me occupied and were an impetus to work assiduously. Besides, I was glad to offer my expertise to further the progress of these scientific societies. I am thankful to my senior colleagues who have reposed immense faith in conferring such onerous responsibilities onto me. I have often pondered the gain in this ardour and must confess they have been lessons in

academics, management, networking and above all these have nurtured a pleasant friendship and camaraderie amongst my colleagues.

When the laboratory at Kalinga Hospital was outsourced to an external agency , I resigned from the job and spent my time leisurely visiting the department of Pathology at SCB Medical College ,Cuttack ,my Alma Mater . A few months later, I was offered to start the lab at a new private hospital - “The Apollo Hospitals” at Bhubaneswar. I donned the mantle of Senior consultant, Neuropathology and Pathology and got the laboratory going with the technicians there. Soon thereafter, another subspecialist Dr Nachiketa Mohapatra - a Nephropathologist joined us. Able technicians and a good cryostat made it possible to set up a functional histopathology laboratory in a short time. Frozen section reporting, special stains and immunohistochemistry followed as we expanded our services. We were joined by an oncopathologist, Dr Manas R Baisakh. The lab is now NABL accredited. In the last one and half years, we have embarked on a DNB pathology program. Currently, we are training two such students. These feathers on my cap reflect the hard work of my efficient colleagues and other staff members. I am also privileged to work with experienced consultant Neurosurgeons and Neurologists.

My husband and I visit our village, Gajrajpur frequently; we love the rural freshness and the rustic homeliness of our caretaker, his family and other villagers. It is an interaction based on mutual affection and support. I believe that village folk are generally simple and frank and we ought to lend a helping hand to them to climb the ropes in an urban society. Our modest two bed room house with a central courtyard and greenery around has amenities for comfortable living. In addition, the backyard has a pond and the village is flanked by the ‘ Debi’ – a large distributaries of the Mahanadi.

The post retirement blues were hardly ever there! I have reconnected ties with my family members, close relative and long lost friends. I have renewed contacts with old professional acquaintances and students – old and new. I have enjoyed strong family support at Cuttack from my parents’ place as well as my in laws. We meet our friends, relatives, students, teachers and colleagues in marriages,

meetings and social gathering. Between our continuing professional engagements, we visit our daughter's family at Delhi and son's family at Bangalore. There is family reunion of sorts now and then ....a most memorable one was a Europe trip in mid 2017! This was orchestrated by my eldest granddaughter Madhavi ! Visiting Switzerland , Paris and Amsterdam with the kids was so different from the earlier professional ones ! I must admit that travel has become less cumbersome though age seems to be catching up nonetheless.

As a family, we love to be in the midst of greenery. This has spurred us to build a garden and lawn in front of our house. It infuses freshness into our existence and looks elegant. We spend some quality time in the evening in the lawn or on the balcony overlooking it. After several difficult stepping stones all along our career since 1962, I realise that one should march though any situation that comes in life with stoic acceptance.

Today, we live with our son Kanishka at Cuttack. He has recently joined as Professor of Paediatric surgery at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar after a two decade stint at St.John's, Bangalore. It appears as if his career is mirroring ours in a different manner and our lives have taken a pleasant turn of enrichment again! My daughter Tapaswini (Delhi), son in law Tushar ( Bangkok) , their daughters – Madhavi (Jewellery designer) and Tavishi (Graphic designer) ,daughter in law Suravi (Paediatric Pathologist)and grandsons Tejaswi and Kharabela (both footballers and Odissi artistes!), our Dalmatian 'Spotty' and their activities garnish our lives ! I am grateful to the almighty for providing me all that it takes for a contented retirement and hope to continue to work and serve the sick in His creation to the best of my abilities.