

In Memorium: Dr. Arun R. Chitale

(28- 02- 1937 to 27- 02- 2021)

In the morning hours of February 27, 2021, the heart of Dr. Arun Chitale stopped beating, and a good soul ascended to heaven at the age of 84 years. With his sad demise, we lost a doyen in pathology and an esteemed member and a former President of the Indian Association of Pathologists and Microbiologists.



Born on February 28, 1937 in a town Dapoli, a Ratnagiri district of the Maharashtra State. His father was a principal of High School in Dapoli. After preliminary education, he received training in medicine at the B. J. Medical College, Pune wherein he graduated in 1960 and subsequently in 1964 obtained M. D. in Pathology and Bacteriology, under the guidance of Dr. Y. M. Bhende. Then he moved to United States of America to obtain surgical pathology training at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond. I (Dr. Vijay Joshi) was co-residents with Dr. Chitale in Medical College of Virginia and I distinctly remember that he maintained his academic orientation and published original articles in peer-reviewed journals even during his residency. In 1969, Dr. Chitale was certified as Diplomate of American Board of Pathology and then returned India in 1970.

At that time in early 1970s, most pathologists in private practice in Mumbai and for that matter probably in India relied heavily on clinical pathology and none confined their practice to surgical pathology however Dr. Chitale established surgical pathology practice and he was a pioneer in confining private practice **ONLY** to surgical pathology. Much to the delight of general and subspecialty surgeons and physicians in private practice, he pioneered the practice of sending reports of accurate and complete diagnosis with, if needed, an explanatory comment within two days of receiving a biopsy and within three days after receiving a resection specimen in his laboratory. He thus became a favorite amongst the practicing surgeons and physicians and he built a huge private practice receiving 25000 biopsies and resections every year in his laboratory.

With the help of our Guru, Prof. R K Gadgil, he got independent affiliations to Sir J. J. hospital for orthopedics, Municipal ENT hospital for otorhinolaryngology, Wadia Maternity and children's hospital, Mumbai. He had established: "Bone Registry" at the Grant Government Medical College Mumbai. Subsequently over the next eight years he got affiliations with fourteen different hospitals in Mumbai exclusively for surgical pathology (including cytology). Despite being so busy he accepted the position of Chief Consultant at the famous Jaslok hospital, Mumbai. There he established the Electron Microscopy laboratory and pioneered the modern method of processing and reporting renal biopsies. Later he published the first monograph on Renal Biopsy in India. During all these years, he offered free services of electron microscopic study in unusual/difficult surgical/autopsy cases for the faculties of pathology departments of all four medical colleges in Mumbai.

Dr. Chitale was extremely busy with his practice and with the work related to his affiliations to many specialist hospitals in Mumbai. However, he maintained, in the spirit of continuing the academic tradition of his father, by maintaining an academic approach to his entire work. He served as honorary Associate Professor and post-graduate teacher of pathology at the Grant Government Medical College, Mumbai, where he used to regularly teach undergraduate and postgraduate students. He also served as honorary cytologist at Seth G. S. Medical College, Mumbai. Subsequently, he chaired the Department of Pathology at the Bombay Hospital Institute of Medical Sciences where he was instrumental in starting post graduate course (M. D. in pathology) and wherein he created a state of the art pathology museum. He was a pioneer in introducing interactive microscopy courses of the international level by inviting six eminent surgical pathologists such as Juan Rosai, Steven Silverberg, and Bharat Nathwani etc. They had sent histology slides which the delegates could examine beforehand. The invited faculties were paid all their expenses including travel to India. Unlike some senior Pathologists, he used the modern computer technology in his laboratory. With the help of a software engineer, he designed as early as in 1997 a

software for surgical pathology reporting which he used for recording the huge data on 350,000 cases (biopsies and resections) of his own private surgical pathology laboratory. He had documented records of more than 6, 20,325 biopsies and resected specimens reported by himself. Towards the end of his active career, he started organizing his huge collection of surgical pathology cases into subspecialty teaching files for future publication. He participated in teaching sessions and seminars for the pathology residents at the local, regional and national level in India. He was a role model for the accomplished pathologists in India and for the pathologists of Indian origin working in USA and other countries.

During his illustrious career, he won an award for the best article presented at the International Conference on Electron Microscopy held in Oslo, Norway and he was also the recipient of a prestigious “R D Birla National Award” for research in Biomedical Sciences in 1999. Dr. Chitale delivered many orations, received several awards and published more than 100 research papers in national and international journals, book chapters and monographs.

I (Dr. Vijay Joshi) knew Dr. Arun Chitale personally and professionally since 1957, when we were co-students of B J Medical College Pune. Dr. Arun Chitale (we affectionately and respectfully called him as Arnya) had a many-faceted personality. I came to know him closely, because of our common interest in acting in Marathi plays in B. J. Medical College, Pune. He had a special talent for roles in comedies and he also used to play “Tabla” in concerts of amateur musicians. He had met his wife Dr. Shobha while acting together in a Marathi play. Later as co-residents in Richmond, VA, we used to have regular weekend family get-togethers over a dinner and used to listen recorded tapes of Indian classical music. Dr. Shobha completed her training in Pediatrics in Richmond and established her own successful practice in Mumbai. Both his sons are accomplished pathologists, his elder son Dr. Ashutosh continues his father's practice of Pathology successfully and his younger son Dr. Dhananjay is Vice-Chairman of the Department of Pathology in the prestigious Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, USA. It is a personal loss for me and my wife who have shared many pleasant personal and professional memories with him and his wife over fifty-five years. With his demise India has lost a great academic surgical pathologist. His legacy will continue with contributions from his sons and his many postgraduate students.

Dr. Arun Chitale had many pioneering accomplishments in the field of academic and private practice of Surgical Pathology. In India he has been referred as “Giant among the Pathologists” with an encyclopedic knowledge of his subject, most generous and the best consultant. In spite of his stature, he interacted unassumingly, freely and openly

with his students and junior colleagues. He was actively involved in the activities of the Indian Association of Pathologists and Microbiologists of which he was “President” in 1989. The office bearers and the members of the Indian Association of Pathologists and Microbiologists are deeply saddened by the loss of Dr. Arun Chitale.

He lived happy, healthy and contented life and rose to his heavenly abode in the morning hours of February 27, 2021. May God put Dr. Arun Chitale in a special place where he will be watching us, the people who loved and cherished him.

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