

Deshamanya Dr S Ramachandran DSc Honoris Causa, MD, FRCP



Dr Surendra Ramachandran, a renowned physician and an icon in the medical profession during the past several decades, passed away recently. He was a man of rare distinction. During his lifetime he made great contributions to medical education, medical research, patient care and medical associations.

His fellow medical students had several names for him, such as Rama, Suren and 'Therium'. The last name he acquired because he had a photographic memory. He would read chapters of medical textbooks, close the book and say '*therium*' – which translated to Tamil means 'I know'. The main reason for recording this was that whenever Rama was put to the test at examinations or in private conversations, he clearly demonstrated that his self evaluation of his learning as '*therium*' was beyond doubt.

Some of the highlights of his curriculum vitae include an outstanding undergraduate academic record which included passing his 2nd MBBS, 3rd MBBS and Final MBBS with First classes, 8 distinctions, 4 medals and the Perry exhibition prize. His postgraduate achievements included numerous fellowships and other honours. A commitment to research over a period of 26 years resulted in a number of scientific papers being published in reputed journals. Dr Ramachandran's research had wide coverage including nephrology, malaria, typhoid, diabetes, alcoholism, elderly patients, hepatic amoebiasis and leptospirosis. He deserves special praise for his research as this was done at a time when there was little or no formal funding.

Dr Ramachandran taught and examined students in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Colombo for 17 years. His students held him in high esteem and often spoke of his teaching in glowing terms. Most of his trainees and registrars held or now hold, prestigious consultant posts in Sri Lanka and abroad.

Dr Ramachandran participated in many international meetings. He delivered several prestigious orations in Sri Lanka. He played a major role in the setting up of the first

kidney unit in Sri Lanka with facilities for haemodialysis, and the Medical Intensive Care Unit at the General Hospital Colombo. These units were constructed entirely with public funds.

In 1997, Dr Ramachandran was the President of the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA). During his tenure of office he supervised the extension to Wijerama House and refurbished the existing building and the Lionel Memorial Auditorium. He also started the 'Foundation Sessions' of the SLMA.

He held several other prestigious posts such as President, Ceylon College of Physicians, member of the Sri Lanka Medical Council, member of the Board of Study in Medicine in the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine and member of the Board of Management of the Colombo Nuclear Medicine Unit.

The conferment to Dr Ramachandran by the State of one of its highest national honours – Deshamanya, was in recognition of his services to Sri Lanka.

Suren and Nirmala Ramachandran had a happy married life for over 50 years. They have one son, Sudarshan, who is a consultant in metabolic medicine in the United Kingdom. Rama and Nimmo first met when they became neighbours in Colpetty and fellow students in Ladies College during World War II. Nimmo was a pillar of strength to Rama in all his activities. Likewise Rama always supported Nimmo in her endeavours, such as, the three well-researched books on Hindu heritage and Hindu legacy which she authored. The decor and every detail of the launches for each of these books was handled by Rama. He was showered with praise by all the distinguished guests present.

Rama was undoubtedly an artist. Single handed, he produced the decor for the Medical Dance of the SLMA on at least two occasions. His budget allocation was very small – Rs. 3,000. Nevertheless he converted the Lanka Oberoi Grand Ballroom into a spectacular showpiece on these occasions. The Academic Gown of the College of General Practitioners was designed by Rama and for the past 32 years the Family Physicians have proudly worn this at their ceremonial functions.

Those of us who knew Rama will remember him as a man with a superb intellect, an unflinching positive attitude and a focused mind. To me he was a loyal, dedicated, brilliant, graceful advisor and friend for nearly fifty years.

I shall miss him dearly.

D J Aloysius

Past President

Sri Lanka Medical Association