

## Dr. Santpur – a personal tribute

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Dr. Santpur was a man that could be described in one word as "upright". Close to six foot tall, he had the physique of a military man – it exuded strength, handsome looks, resilience, and most of all "uprightness". My first meeting with him was as a friend of Shashank at Walchand College when we went to his house for a casual visit. Any professor was to be regarded with respect and fear in those days, and Dr. Santpur at the very first look commanded a high degree of respect and fear. His light gray eyes seemed to glare down upon us from his great height with interest and scrutiny as he made some routine inquiries. It seemed that he was ensuring Shashank was not getting into "bad company".

Shashank's stringent health routine (swimming, running, avoiding outside food, etc.) quickly conveyed to us the kind of upbringing he was subjected to. In those days of immature and shallow youth, we of course probably made fun of this strictness, but, looking back, I see how wonderful and farsighted this routine was – which no doubt flowed from Shashank's father's beliefs about what was important in life.

Later Dr. Santpur took up the Principal's job at the college of engineering in Warananagar – my hometown. It was wonderful because it meant I could meet Shashank any time – although I was mostly away for my own job. There is a "professors' colony" in Warananagar where all the professor types live during their teaching tenures. My father being a professor as well, we lived close to Shashank's apartment. In no time, both families became close friends. My mother started taking badminton lessons from Shashank's mom. I became a frequent visitor to Shashank and Ravi (Shashank's brother who sadly passed away young due to an incurable health issue, and who was a wonderfully spirited person) and in due course came to "chatting" terms with Dr. Santpur too – if that was at all possible. Through my observation and the stories I heard I came to know how "upright" Dr. Santpur was. Principal's job is no joke – it requires dealing with the politics of upper management, the politics of employees (professors and the like) and on top of that the immature politics of students. Dr. Santpur quickly became known as a person who could be swayed neither by political pressure nor by subterfuge. He was uncompromising in the application of the principles he believed in and the rules of the institute he was governing.

Later, when Dr. Santpur retired and moved back to Vishrambaug, my visits became less frequent. And yet, every meeting was more intimate, more friendly, and more illuminating. He spoke more freely, shared his views more freely; he even laughed heartily at my silly jokes. He had a deep and booming voice that could not be ignored and indeed attracted immediate attention. Physically he seemed unchanged – tall, strong, and upright. It was always a delight for me to pay a visit to Shashank's household where old and young lived together happily and in a wonderful atmosphere – no doubt influenced directly or indirectly by the great patriarch. I saw Shashank's son and daughter grow up – with the genes of talent and intelligence, but also under the nurturing umbrella of discipline and values.

Dr. Santpur's demise is a great loss not just to his immediate family, but to all those, like me, who took inspiration from his uprightness, his attention to basic values, his priority to physical and mental health, his belief that strong individuals make up a strong society. I think the loss is felt even more because it is so difficult to find such upright individuals these days!

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