

Homage to Rushikesh M. Maru

Footprints of an Auspicious Life

It was the night of 23 April 1998. It was no different from any other stifling summer night in Jaipur. The air was hot as if it had inhaled the extreme heat of the desert. The still of darkness prevailed under the starry sky, with an inherent promise of light for another day. Half an hour and a new day would gradually unfold itself. Rushi was getting ready to sleep.

Instead of waking to another exciting day at IHMR, Jaipur, Rushi silently crossed that fine line between life and death like a breeze and merged with the cosmic rhythm. Even in death, the dignity of a fine human being and the utmost fulfilment of a meaningful life were aglow on his serene face. A sudden massive heart attack became the cause of his untimely departure.

Thus, 23 April 1998 became a day of intense loss not only for his family and friends but also for the IHMR and other professionals in the field of health management around the world. Rushi was a visionary, a thinker, an innovative scholar, a dedicated educationist and an empowering leader.

Rushi was an ever learner. His multifarious interests, depth, clarity and originality of thinking were reflected in everything he chose to do. He would listen and consider others' points of view with respect and patience, and shared his honest views without hesitation or fear. He possessed an exceptional capability and insight for perceiving the whole picture of any issue and designing realistic plans to address it. He made valuable contributions over many years to academic institutions as a professor and a scholar. Rushi is irrevocably linked to institutions like the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (India) and the School of Public Health, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (USA). He was a born teacher, who inspired and touched his students for ever.

He was actively involved in a wide range of government and non-government, national and international development programmes as a health management scholar and consultant. His significant contribution to international organisations like WHO, WB, UNFPA, Population Council, ICOMP, ICDDR,B, UNICEF, SIDA, Ford Foundation and many others, is highly valued, despite his physical absence.

In 1996, Rushi and I decided to return to India, our homeland, after staying abroad for many years. He took up the responsibilities of Director at the Indian Institute of Health Management Research, Jaipur, in October 1996. On the basis of his extensive experience and knowledge, he initiated a vital and viable institution building process with commitment and confidence. He did not spare his energy in realising his dream of bringing IIHMR on the global map. He succeeded in making significant strides in that direction even in the short period of 18 months at IIHMR.

In March, it was a historical and proud moment for IIHMR to host a high profile Chinese healthcare delegation for a dialogue regarding public health issues in both countries, and share the achievement of the acclaimed *Vikalp* project of the institute. During this time, WHO had also recognised IIHMR as a centres of excellence. Besides the larger goal for the institute, he had a special dream of enabling all the young scholars, leaders and administrators-in-the-making to blossom to their optimum potential. I proudly cherish the genuine words of appreciation of all who had found an empowering and inspiring mentor, guide and friend in Rushi. He was always there for them. His respect for each individual as a significant person and his willingness to facilitate his or her personal and professional development was reflected in his leadership style.

Rushi's personal qualities like simplicity, straightforwardness and poise made him easily approachable. His sensitivity, empathy and transparency touched everyone who came in contact with him. He generously shared his love for life with everyone. He was a connoisseur at heart. He enjoyed literature as a reader and as a critic. He used to feel ecstatic listening to music and, even though he did not have formal voice training, he loved to sing—especially folk music. He was a natural orator. He was fortunate to have had training as a stage actor and a director by great dramatists like Dr. Chandravadan Mehta, Shri Jashwant Thakkar and Shri Markand Bhatt during his college years in Baroda. It was a treat to see him as an actor, connoisseur and critic.

Rushi was an optimist. He always recognised and trusted the positive qualities and potentials of people and helped them bring out the best within themselves. He felt sad, not angry, whenever he saw people wasting their emotional energy in trivialities, self-centeredness, manipulations and negativism. His optimism and patriotism were not limited to the glorification of the ancient Indian civilisation. He used to get agitated whenever he saw spirituality and religiousness being entangled and confused in mere rituals. He believed that when the

means become an end in themselves, the rigidity of thoughts stunts the inner growth. His concept of spirituality encompassed the concept of a vast culture which nurtures the synthesis of the internal growth of an individual, with social development. He held committed and innovative individuals and organisations in high esteem for being actively involved in the formidable task of social development and philanthropy. He knew the importance of such innovative processes at the grassroots level, especially in the disheartening environment of power struggle and failing political leadership. Thus, he always encouraged young people at home or abroad to understand the new India with an optimistic attitude.

Rushi was a modest, humble human being. There was no trace of arrogance of intellect, knowledge or achievements. He faced the struggles and challenges of life with a composed mind and inner strength. His desire to develop from within, with pure joy of life and share goodwill with everyone glimmered in his behaviour. To him, his wife was also his friend and so were his children. He practised democracy at home and at work. Thus, his relationships were laced with openness, purity and unconditional love. He never felt small in learning from anybody. He stepped into eternity with the richness of spirituality in heart, respect for individuals, values, ideals and the belief of *Sarvesham Mangalam Bhavatu*.

Fragrance of Life

I gaze like a witness,
The resting soul of mine,
With an auspicious dream,
Enclosed in his lotus eyes
Under unblemished canopy of *Parijat*,
Beneath embellished night of
Shimmering memories,
Gently touched by breeze,
The blossoms descend
With glowing sentiments,
Drizzling softly
Like dew drops fragrant with life,
Profound silence, peace, absolute peace.

Nirupuma R. Maru

In Memoriam

I knew Rushi as student, co-researcher and co-author, colleague at CSDS and at a personal level as a friend (with Nirupama, a family friend) who, throughout his various postings and explorations in branching out from political science and economics to health and health management, kept in touch and never forgot the distant roots of his latter day recognition as a professional and an institution builder. The last I met him along with his sweet wife Nirupama was at the Delhi airport, when he was on his way to Jaipur to join the Indian Institute of Health Management Research. I was very pleased that he was back in India and would be able to contribute to a growing field which, however, was beseeched with a variety of problems. He certainly had the will, the academic potential and the vision to undertake this task. Alas, his sudden heart failure—which came as a terrible shock to many of us—will leave behind a vacuum which, one hopes, will be filled by his colleagues and younger professionals whom he had inspired by his perseverance. I feel particularly deprived of a warm and dedicated friend and colleague of long standing. My wife Hansa joins me in writing this tribute.

Rajani Kothari
Chairman, Centre for the Study of
Developing Societies,
Delhi

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I first met Rushi in 1976, when he joined the group on population and health at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, India. We came from very different backgrounds. He from political science and humanities, and I from engineering and science. Therefore, we looked at management problems very differently. I would look for causes of problems and search for solutions. He would try to understand the organisational, personal and political considerations behind the behaviour of people and suggest the 'whys' of the problems. I would argue that politics can only redistribute resources, not create them. He would suggest that it is how you redistribute resources that determines incentives or disincentives to create resources. Thus began a professional collaboration and personal relationship. Over time, we began to synthesise our views and I feel it left both of us different, not only professionally, but also personally.

Prof. Maru's contributions to health management began when he wrote his doctoral dissertation comparing China and India's healthcare

policies and programmes. The insights he developed through these, led to work on health policies and programmes in India. Nearly a decade later, he spent two years as visiting faculty at the University of Michigan and moved to the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh to continue the work on improving health and population programmes through research, training and technical assistance.

Prof. Maru was always devoted to developing the capacity of people who worked with him, generously devoting his time and effort to that cause. I am sure many remember him for his contribution to their own professional development. This devotion found full realisation when he took over as Director of the Indian Institute of Health Management Research, Jaipur, India. We spent many an evening discussing his plans, achievements, frustrations and potentials. His sudden death put a stop to many collaborative activities we had planned only a few weeks earlier. Under his stewardship, the institute began moving towards its true potential as a world class institution. Alas, time was too short for his dreams for the institute to come true. All of us, the institute and his friends, are poorer for this loss. May his soul rest in peace.

Jay Satia
Executive Director, ICOMP,
Malaysia

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Dr. Rushi Maru's untimely demise has been a terrible loss, not only to IIHMR, but also to his friends and colleagues in India and abroad. My friendship with Rushi goes back to the 1970s, when he joined IIMA's Public Systems Group. He brought to IIMA new perspectives on the health sector and on public management in general. A scholar with strong applied interests, he made a major impact in terms of both teaching and research. Even after he moved on from IIMA to the University of Michigan and other international projects, we kept in touch. I was pleased to learn that he had finally returned to India to head IIHMR, a challenge that he immensely enjoyed. In his death, I have lost an esteemed friend and colleague, and IIHMR has been deprived of a fine leader. All of us will forever cherish happy memories of Rushi and his contributions to society and the diverse institutions that he served.

Samuel Paul
Former Director, IIM,
Ahmedabad

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I had several interactions with Prof. Maru over the last few years. The one which I remember the most is when he organised a workshop in Bangladesh at ICDDR,B. We were all impressed by his organisational capabilities and his technical excellence in his subject. What impressed me further was his hospitality and simple ways. I remember one incident very vividly, where he entertained all the participants after dinner, by singing typical folk songs from his native Saurashtra. This was at a very remote place in Bangladesh on the rooftop of Matlab Hospital under a starry sky. This made the whole group feel very much at home, especially those who were from Gujarat.

I hope memories of Prof. Maru and the work he did will remain with us for a long time.

Dileep V. Mavalankar
Associate Professor, IIM,
Ahmedabad

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In Prof. Maru's untimely death, the profession of management has lost a stalwart who could envision the broader role of management in human affairs. He was as much at home in policy-related matters as with those of human resource development. This enabled him to lead programmes and institutions with clarity and effectiveness. He had expected to achieve a lot once he joined IIMR in Jaipur and, in fact, he had already brought about a measurable difference in the academic and research environments in this institution. I feel his loss all the more because of the privilege I had in enjoying his friendship for more than two decades, first in IIM, Ahmedabad, and later in the USA. The best way to cherish his memory is to follow his approach—building institutions by building people.

V.S. Vyas
Former Director, IIM,
Ahmedabad

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Rushi Maru walked into my office on a cold, rainy day in Ann Arbor in 1970—a distinguished-looking gentleman in his dark, formal coat and hat. He had heard that George Simmons and I were working on a project in India. He was a graduate student in Political Science, and he was interested. Soon, he moved into the small space next to my office. My awe of this distinguished scholar, with his extensive knowledge of

political developments in India and his work on science and technology, gradually melted away, and Rushi, George and I became not only good colleagues, but friends. Over the years, as our son Max began to play with Chiku and later with Sonu and Gabu, and Niru invited us over in Ann Arbor and Ahmedabad, the Marus and the Simmons became a family. Rushi made Gujarati tea for George when the two of them stayed together at our house while I was in India; Rushi taught us how to fly kites from the roof of his family's house in Ahmedabad; we visited his parents and his brother in Rajkot, and my German family attended their wedding anniversary in Ann Arbor. When George became very ill, Rushi wrote to him to wait for him until he could come back to Ann Arbor to be by his side. He came in time.

His colleagues and students at the University of Michigan admired Rushi for his understanding of the role of public sector bureaucracies in the process of social and economic development. He brought a sense of the real world to his teaching of theory, and a deep commitment to humanistic values as he addressed issues of public policy, institution building, population and health. I cherish my memories of field trips in India, where, with a great sense of humour, he taught me patience in interviewing senior government officials, and as we rode in the sticky, hot little car through the summer heat of Uttar Pradesh, entertained me with stories about Indian theatre and film.

As I write this note in November 1998, speaking about Rushi in the past tense, I know that his spirit will always be present in my life.

Ruth Simmons
University of Michigan,
USA