

## Ambassador's Column

### Shattering Taboos in Society - An Ambassador's Journey

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With no qualification in the medical or legal field and with no history of organ donation or transplant in my circle of family and friends, I decided to dedicate my post-retirement life to spreading organ donation awareness. Since there was no single moment or incident attributable to my decision, I can think of it as 'Serendipity' or 'Maktub' (It was destined – Ref. Paulo Coelho's Alchemist).

I pledged my eyes way back in 1985, and after almost 3 decades later, I pledged my organs & tissues. During this time period, I educated myself and was deeply impressed by MOHAN Foundation's multifarious humanitarian and altruistic activities.

I relocated to Nagpur, my home town, in 2019. On finding MOHAN Foundation's office, just a few blocks away from my residence, one day I simply walked in and met Dr. Ravi Wankhede, Hon. Director of MOHAN Foundation, Nagpur. He was also a leading member of Zonal Transplant Coordination Committee, Nagpur and a doyen of Organ Donation in the region. His unwavering commitment and high level of involvement in activities to further the cause of organ donation had a profound effect on me. That visit changed my entire perspective of life. I realized that I had found my life's 'Will to Meaning' (Ref. Victor Frankl).

Soon I completed MOHAN Foundation's 'Gift of Life' course, got enrolled as a Life Member, and started conducting organ donation awareness sessions independently. Later, I successfully completed the course on 'Legal Aspects of Organ Donation & Transplantation' which gave me a holistic view of the organ donation and transplantation process. During this time I also received tremendous encouragement and support from members of ZTCC, Nagpur.

During COVID-19, I hosted webinars on organ donation awareness. Post-COVID, I started conducting awareness sessions at various places including IIM, Symbiosis, Dr. Ambedkar College Department of Law, Tirpude College of Social Work etc. In addition, I have assisted ZTCC in organizing events in support of organ donation and amplifying their events.

In the course of performing my role as MOHAN Foundation's Ambassador, I have realized that organ

donation is a very sensitive and personal matter. It is best to provide people with comprehensive understanding about the subject (process, legal aspects, ethical issues etc), appeal to their humanitarian sense and leave them free to make an informed decision after consulting their family. We must also shatter the taboo of not discussing death and encourage conversations on planning for post-death scenario similar to post-retirement scenario. This will help develop a mindset which would be receptive to the idea of organ donation.

By engaging and interacting with my audiences, I have realised that organ donation remains mired in misconceptions, myths and superstitions. A large number of our population still carries an impression of scams in trading of organs in living donation cases. Unfortunately, our movies and social media still continue to reinforce the misconception regarding organ trade under the garb of jokes in poor taste.

My journey as an Organ Donation Ambassador of MOHAN Foundation has been extremely fulfilling and gratifying. It has given me a golden opportunity to make a positive impact on people's lives and has provided a sense of personal motivation to continue advocating for this cause.

The journey has just begun. I fully realize the enormity of the task before me and acknowledge that I have miles to go....



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