

Dr Ravi Shankar: To whom it may concern

I have known Dr. Ravi for the last 40+ years, and Dr. Uma since her marriage to Dr Ravi. We hail from the same native hometown Hassan, a district in the state of Karnataka. Even though educated in a small city Dr Ravi, went on to become an eye surgeon, highly specialised and trained in Chennai. Dr Ravi had all the opportunities that his contemporaries had, to elope to a different country to further one's personal aspirations. However, Dr Ravi and Dr. Uma chose a less trodden path to truly create a resounding impact to the society, especially the underprivileged parts of the society for whom even availability of basic eye care is a challenge. Dr. Ravi chose Mysore to start an eye hospital, given its easy access to large parts of rural areas of South Karnataka.

Dr. Ravi was establishing himself in Mysore, where his profession had to take care of his family and his hospital staff, and establish his practice that the community looked up to. Dr. Ravi could have easily delayed spending his time and resources on improving the eye healthcare for the needy to a later future time when he had the resources to pursue that. However, Dr. Ravi insisted on the highest standards and was committed to his mission to make state of the art eye care available to one and all, especially to the needy, the ones financially unable to even consult the right doctor, let alone afford the treatment. He knocked on many doors to raise funding to support such a cause, one of whom was myself when I was in the US. We jointly raised funds through ASHA volunteer network in the US to support Dr. Ravi's work in the hinterlands of Karnataka. I still profoundly remember Dr. Ravi personally going to the villages of Mysore and Hassan district to perform preliminary eye checkups in the villages to identify those who needed surgery or advanced treatment, providing them transport and other facilities to get them to Mysore and also treat them, all of it free of cost to the patients.

It is easy to do such work when one is established and has earned a reputation in the field. Dr. Ravi showed that it is possible to prioritise serving the society in parallel to creating an eye hospital of international standards.

Scaling any activity requires tremendous organisational and leadership skills. Dr. Ravi has demonstrated to be a tall leader who has shown that it is possible to bring together eye experts from across the world to make their skills and time available to the disadvantaged parts of the world and also broaden his network to raise funds to support servicing the underprivileged. He is truly a force multiplier, to not only dedicate his own personal time and resources to this noble cause, but also motivate and convince many of his colleagues with diverse expertise in eye care from the just born to the super senior citizens and to those who had disabilities to all join forces to amplify the impact of the initiatives that he has driven over the last 30 years. Dr. Ravi has created a flywheel that amplifies the impact to the lowest strata of the society, without seeking to be in the spotlight. He has created a mechanism that allows many professionals and donors to join hands to spin the flywheel faster to provide eyesight back to the poorest of the poor in the corners of the world.

Dr. Ravi plans and executes his initiatives to be sustainable for the long term. He has demonstrated to grow these causes even during extremely testing times such as COVID. Dr. Uma and Dr Ravi have complemented and nurtured each other in this difficult and long journey of 30+ years providing yeoman service to the community across the world.

It is my honour to support Dr. Ravi and Dr Uma to be nominated for the "Champion of Impact" award. I know no other who deserves this more than Dr. Ravi and Dr. Uma. I truly believe that the prestige of this award will be amplified by conferring it to Dr. Ravi and Dr. Uma's tireless work over 3 decades.

Harsha Nagesh
Director, Amazon