

Down Memory Lane

India's First Multi-Organ Donation

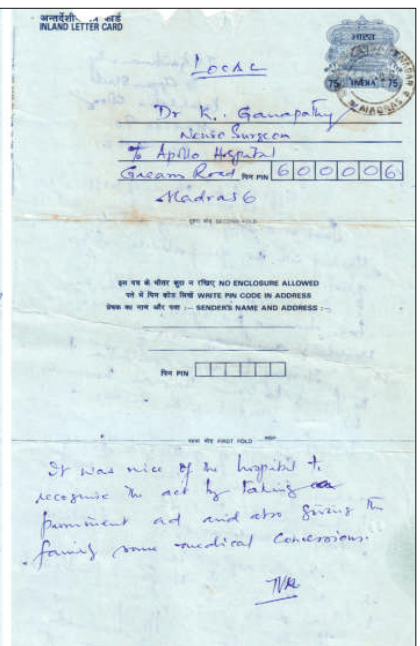
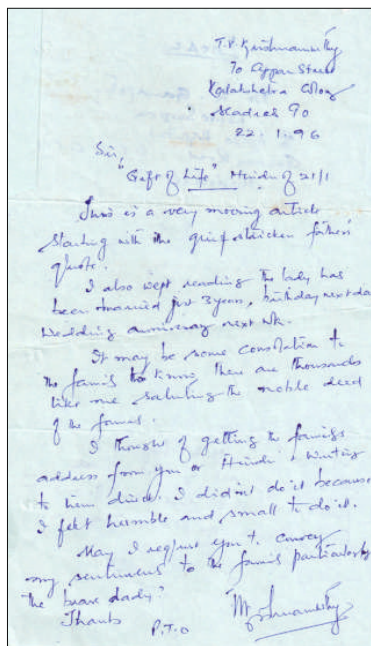
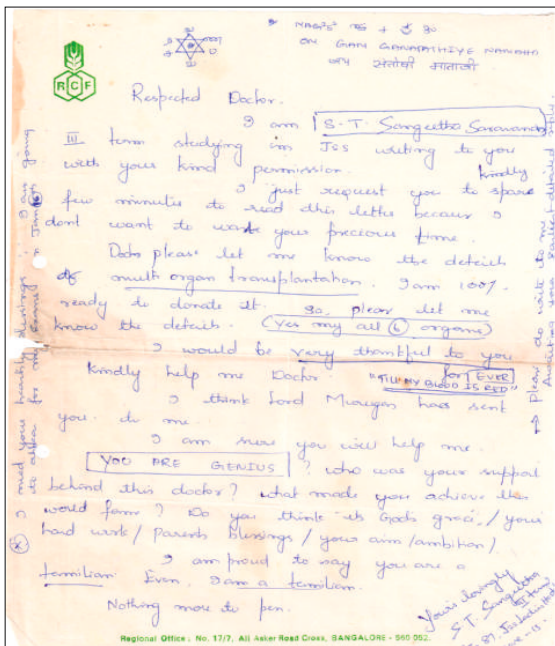


K. Ganapathy

Distinguished Professor Tamilnadu Dr MGR Medical University
Emeritus Professor National Academy of Medical Sciences
Former Secretary & Past President Neurological Society of India
Past President, Telemedicine Society of India
Director, Apollo Telemedicine Networking Foundation
Apollo Telehealth Services

It was reassuring to read that organ donations and transplants are slowly inching towards the pre-pandemic levels in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu has always been in the forefront of health care. I recollect with nostalgia, the public reaction to an article published in The Hindu on Jan 21st 1996 [ref: Indian Transplant Newsletter Vol. II Issue No: 6 (June 2000)] where I had shared my emotional turmoil in facilitating South Asia's first multi-organ transplant after brain death certification. Several months earlier I had presented a paper at the annual conference of the Neurological Society of India at Kochi in December 1994 on viewing the critically ill head injured patient as an organ donor. The presentation and subsequent publication created a furore. Most neurosurgeons at that time opined that we should not take proactive measures in encouraging organ donation for fear of being branded as

'Organ procurers'. However, the response from the general public even then was encouraging. Serendipity or otherwise, I had retained a few of the dozens of letters which the editor of The Hindu had forwarded to me. It is difficult in 2022 to understand a world without email, a world where one had to write on a post card or inland letter or go to the post office and buy a stamp to applaud and send encomiums to the team which did India's first multi organ donation. These sample letters which have been preserved, speak for themselves. From 1996 to possibly 2002 or so, I would have certified at least a hundred brain deaths. This was all done pro bono 24/7. It is most heartening to see the outstanding work being done by the MOHAN Foundation and similar organisations pan India. We have a long way to go . These letters say it all even after 26 years.



Corresponding Author: Dr. Sunil Shroff,
MOHAN Foundation, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
Email: shroff@mohanfoundation.org

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