

Vijaya Prasanna Malalasekera
80th Birth Anniversary – 08.08.2025

(compiled by Ravi Rudra)



Vijaya Prasanna Malalasekera (8 August 1945 – 5 February 2022) - former Sri Lankan first-class cricketer and cricket administrator, barrister and top corporate executive.

Vijaya Malalasekera was born in Colombo on 8 August 1945. His father was Gunapala Piyasena Malalasekera, an academic and a diplomat.

Educated at Royal College, Colombo, Vijaya excelled in cricket and athletics. He had the distinction of scoring a scintillating century in the 1963 Royal-Thomian sharing an unfinished fifth-wicket stand of 165 with Cedric Fernando when the chips were down.



It was the Royal – Thomian of 1963. Royal batting second were facing a formidable Thomian total of 254 for 8 declared. Before long they were heading for trouble at 34 for 3.

That's when a fresh-faced youngster still only 17, made his way to the middle. Before his arrival, he was subjected to a copious dousing of well-meant advice from Saliya Atapattu – a former Royal sporting personality, seated next to him in the pavilion. It was all about what must be done to avert a possible calamity, since that possibility now seemed staring Royal, squarely in the face.

Distinctly funereal

As if to confirm Saliya Attapattu's worst fears were no stretch of his imagination, Royal were soon 42 for 4 when Tony Sirimanne (later of CR fame) snared the scalp of the Royal skipper S.S. Kumar for very little. Let alone overhauling the Thomians, getting past the follow-on mark now seemed a distant dream for the Reid Avenue boys.

The Thomian attack consisted of burly Roger D' Silva, Barney Reid, Tony Sirimanne, L.S. Perera, Panditharatne and Sarath Seneviratne, and as Cedric Fernando now wended his way to join Vijaya Malalasekera in the middle, the mood in the Royal camp was distinctly funereal, while the noise from the Thomian camp threatened to lift the pavilion rafters.

Roger D'Silva with his tail up, was bowling like the wind, and Barney Reid was doing his usual thing – bowling spin and swing with mesmeric skill and guile, out-foxing everyone standing 20 yards away. With Cedric Fernando's arrival, everyone resigned to expect the worst. That was when the perfect anti-climax slowly began to unravel.

Took the bull by the horns

Malalasekera -a fresh faced lad, strong of build and even stronger of temperament, wasn't the type to die wondering. Being a cricketing buccaneer of sorts, he quickly ditched Saliya Attapattu's well-meant advice, no sooner he got up from his pavilion seat.

Deciding instead to take the bull by its horns, Malalasekera cut loose with an array of stinging square cuts, drives, pulls and hooks, against Roger D' Silva's menacing pace. Then he proceeded to nullify Barney Reid's nagging accuracy, guile and cunning, by unleashing an array of strokes of such breath-taking fury, they were now being wildly cheered by even those in the Thomian camp, who by then had reached an advanced state of inebriation and didn't know who was doing what.

Noisy pavilion banter argued whether or not this was the most furious innings ever seen at a Royal-Thomian. Let there be no mistake; this was no exhibition of vulgar village green hitting. Instead, it was fearsomely orthodox stroke play, executed with immense power and precision. In short, it was reminiscent of an Everton Weekes' innings when in full flow. Some of Vijaya's drives to the cover boundary were of such ferocity and force, the ball would hit the short parapet wall at the front of block C or D at the Oval, and ricochet right back to the actual playing strip!

Thanks to this unprecedented assault, Malalasekera reached a sensational hundred in just two hours and 10 minutes on either side of lunch on day two. That innings which contained 20 fours and one six turned the flow of the game on its head, and to date ranks as one of the most fiercest exhibitions of sustained hitting ever seen in the entire history of the Royal-Thomian. Shortly after that blitzkrieg, Royal declared at 207 for four.

Hadrian's wall

Throughout it all, Cedric Fernando served as the perfect foil for Vijaya, presenting a bat which rivalled Hadrian's great wall beyond which no ball could pass. No amount of praise would do him justice for the role he played in this gallant partnership. Although playing second fiddle, Fernando played a stellar role in the proceedings and at the declaration was unbeaten on 47. Malalasekera remained unbowed on 112, whilst playing the innings of his life.

***STC 1st Innings: 254 for 9 dec. (A.P.B. Tennekoon 54, P.N.W. Goonesekere 53, K. Boralessa 33, C.L. Perera 45, D.U. Panditharatne 20, S. Sathikumar 4 for 44, T.R. Jansen 2 for 40).**

RC 1st Innings: 207 for 4 dec. (V.P. Malalasekera 112*, C.M. Fernando 47*, H.R.C. D'Silva 2 for 38, T. L. Sirimanne 2 for 29).

STC 2nd Innings: 115 for 9 dec. (L.S. Perera 53, S. Sathikumar 3 for 35, M.H. Macan Markar 3 for 21).

RC 2nd Innings 120 for 6 at close (S.S. Kumar 21, V.P. Malalasekera 25, S. Rajaratnam 24*, H.R.C. D'Silva 5 for 41).

Vijaya the Champion Athlete

Vijaya was an outstanding Public Schools Athlete – both as a champion high hurdler and a fine 440 yards relay runner. As a junior athlete (U16) in 1960 he won the 80-Yards hurdles and was part of the 4x110 yards relay team that came first setting a new public schools record.

1960 Public Schools Athletics Meet - Juniors

80-Yards Hurdles

1.	V.P. Malalasekera (Royal)	11.7s
2.	C. Samarasinghe (Richmond)	11.8s
3.	C. de Silva (De Mazenod)	12.1s

4x110 Yards Relay

1.	Royal	47.9s (*New Record 47.5s in the heats)
2.	St. Benedict's	48.3s
3.	St. Peter's	48.7s

Thrills Galore at Daily News Sponsored – First Ever Relay Carnival (1961)

“Repeated requests over the public address systems for silence during the start of the races fell on deaf ears at the Oval on Saturday afternoon at the ‘First-Ever’ Public Schools Relay Carnival sponsored by the Ceylon Daily News. Race after race provided them with thrills, the like of which they had not been accustomed to in the past.

The honours in the Senior events certainly went to the fine set of sprinters from Royal College who carried everything before them in the three sprint relays. Darrell Liversz was in excellent fettle and showed that the Public Schools records would be in danger in a month hence.

1961 Relay Carnival Results – SENIORS (U 19 Boys)

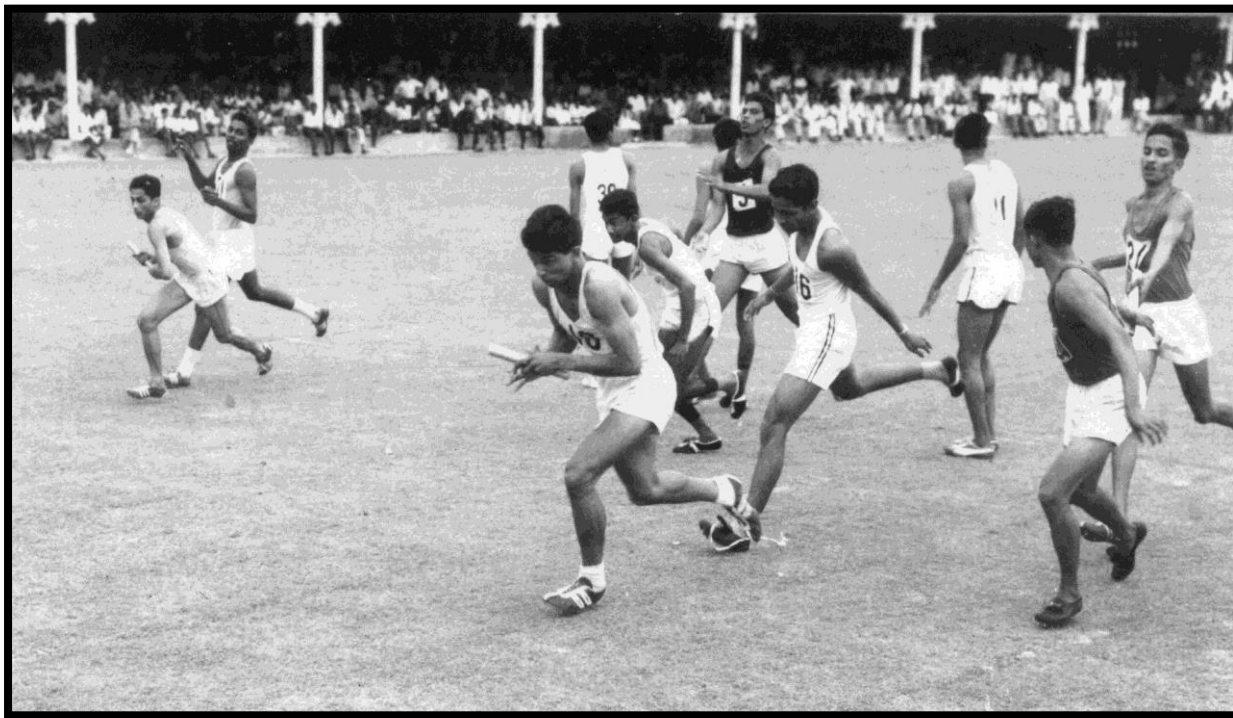
4x100 Metres: 1. Royal 45.5 seconds (M.I.M. Ablej, S.B. Atukorale, M.W. Sellayah, D.W.L. Liversz); 2. St. Joseph's; 3. St. Benedict's.

4x200 Metres: 1. Royal 1 min 35.7 seconds (M.I.M. Ablej, M.W. Sellayah, D.D. Ratnayake, D.W.L. Liversz); 2. St. Joseph's; 3. St. Benedict's.

4x400 Metres: 1. Royal 3 mins 35.9 seconds (D.D. Ratnayake, C.C. de Silva, V.P. Malalasekera, D.W.L. Liversz); 2. St. Peter's; 3. S. Thomas' Mount Lavinia.

1961 Public Schools Athletics Meet

At the 1961 Pubs, 16-year old Vijaya Malalasekera came 2nd in the Under 19, 120 yards hurdles....D. D Ratnayake, Chula de Silva, Vijaya Malalasekera and Darrell Lieversz combined once again to maintain their unbeaten run in the coveted 4x440 Yards Relay as they powered Royal College to victory in 3m 35.0s.



Darrell Lieversz takes over from V.P. Malalasekera to give Royal another win in the 4x400m schools relay. Also in the picture are the Goonetilleka brothers of St. Peter's, Andrew handing over to Godfrey.

1962 Public Schools Athletics Meet

"Royalist Vijay Malalasekera won the 120-Yards High Hurdles as expected from Cambrian Priyantha Perera (Prince of Wales). The Moratuwa boy was well up with Royalist up to the sixth hurdle but after that Malalasekera pulled away to win in 16.1s with the Prince Of Wales boy second in 16.6s."

120-Yards Hurdles

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| 1. V.P. Malalasekera (Royal) | 16.1s |
| 2. P. Perera (Prince of Wales) | |
| 3. J.M.V. Abeykoon (St. Aloysius, Ratnapura) | |

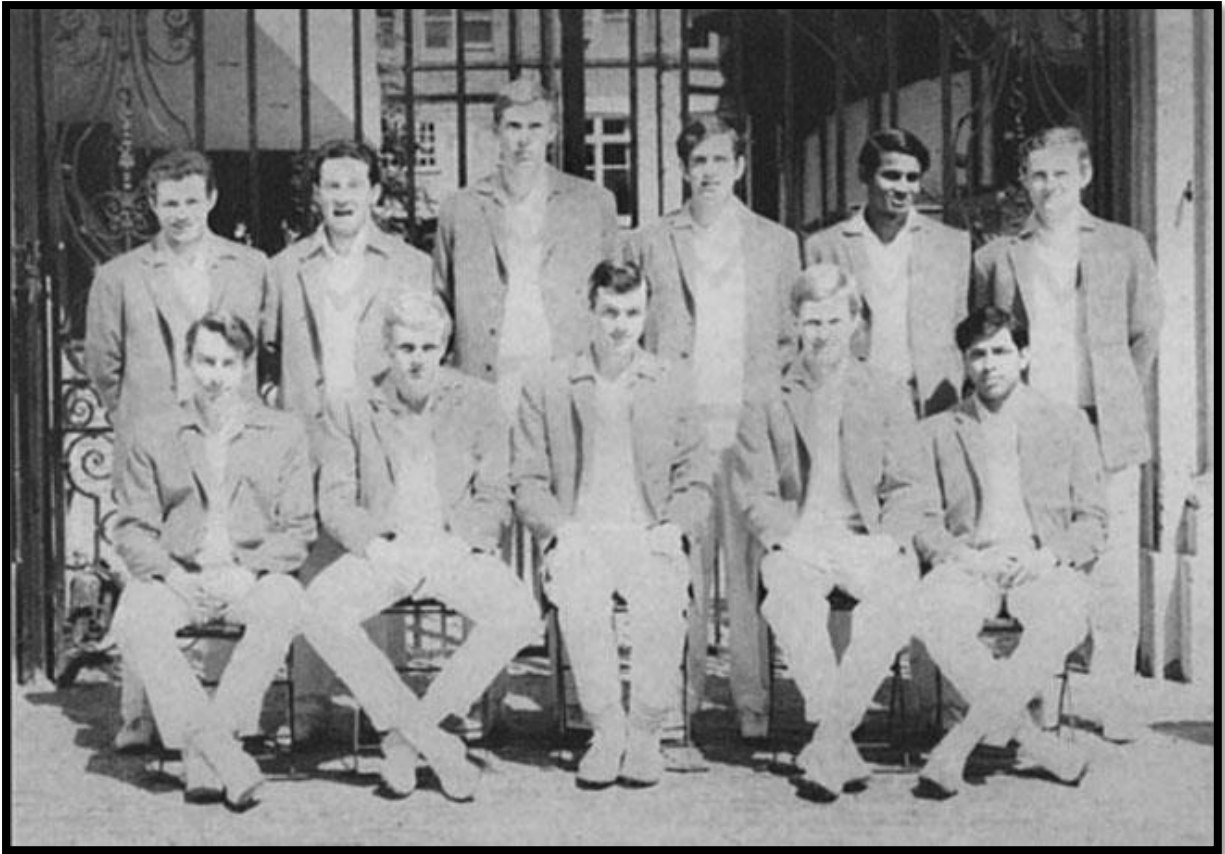
After attending Royal College, Colombo, he travelled to England to study law at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. While there, he played first-class cricket for Cambridge University Cricket Club from 1966 to 1968, making 27 appearances.

In 1967, he opened batting with fellow Sri Lankan Mano Ponniah, as they became the first Asians to open for Cambridge in a university game. In his 27 first-class appearances, he scored 699 runs including two half centuries, with a highest score of 80 on his first-class debut against Essex at Fenner's in 1966. His was the highest score in the Cambridge first innings.



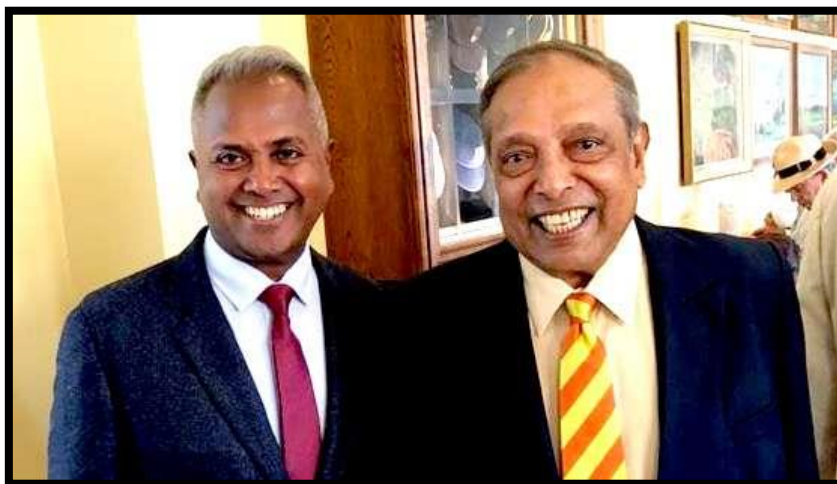
Vijaya Malalasekera & Mano Ponniah opening for Cambridge against Oxford at Lord's – July 1967.

Vijaya, however missed playing in the entire 1968 season due to a troublesome shoulder injury. After graduating from Cambridge, he was called to the bar to practice as a barrister from the Inner Temple.



Vijaya returned to Sri Lanka and played a few Sara Trophy games for the NCC and then shifted to the CCC where he played some Daily News cricket.

In 1973, he joined the Ceylon Tobacco Company as a Senior Management Trainee and became its Company Secretary in 1984. In 1995 he was appointed to its Board of Directors as Director of Corporate and Legal Affairs, holding the post until his retirement. He remained a non-executive Director.



Vijaya with Kushil Gunasekera

After the Rienzie Wijetilleke-led interim committee resigned less than year into their appointment in May 2000, Mr. Malalasekera was appointed by President Chandrika Kumaratunge as Chairman of the second Interim Committee of the Cricket Board in March 2001.

Michael Tissera, Sidath Wettimuny and Kushil Gunasekera were the others in what was one of the most productive and efficient Interim Committees the Board had ever known.

During his tenure, Sri Lanka counted 10 straight Test wins under Sanath Jayasuriya's captaincy, a record yet to be broken. During his tenure, he invited men of proven worth and capability to serve on the various sub-committees, and they were allowed to use their expertise and work without hindrance.



With the change of Government in 2002, Malalasekera-led committee to stepped down and elections were held to Sri Lanka Cricket, bringing to an end a sterling run in cricket administration.



LIONS OF SRI LANKA - THE ESTEEMED PANEL OF SELECTORS



(L-R): Messrs Vijaya Malalasekera, Chandra Schaffter & Kumar Boralessa



MY REFLECTIONS ON CRICKET – by Vijaya Malalasekera

“From my boyhood days I had been very interested in cricket since in our neighbourhood we always played cricket as a pastime. My interest grew further as a result of my being taken to watch the Royal-Thomian cricket match from 1952 onwards. I saw Royal being defeated that year but was enamoured by the players who performed for Royal.

This interest grew in me and since 1952 I watched every Royal-Thomian up to the time I left for England in 1963. Having seen players like T. Nirmalingam, Michael Wille, Lorensz Pereira, Michael Dias, the brothers Lalith and Nanda Senanayake and the likes of Dan Piachaud, Ronnie Reid, Michael Tissera, Michael Sproule of the opposing side made me want to play in the Big Match.

In particular, I remember Nirmalingam's 69 in 1954 where he was run out for 69 and when the Royal scoreboard read 70 for 1 and the man out was Nirmalingam for 69! It was an innings of sheer brilliance.

Ronnie Reid's 157 in 1956 and his two short innings of 65 in 1957 and Tissera's 49 in 1954 were all inspiring innings.

The Dias-Lalith Senanayake partnership in 1958 against the formidable leg-spinner Larif Idroos were innings to remember. Lalith went on to get 69 and 47 n.o. in 1960 and they were brilliant knocks made in absolute style for a right-hander.

They all inspired me to promise myself that one day I will play in the Royal-Thomian as a Royalist."

Big matches forged many friendships off the field

"In 1963, under late S.S. Kumar we (Royal) had a season with mixed fortunes. We had five coloursmen. I scored over 600 runs in that season. We lost to St Benedict's under Quintus Perera at Kotahena with Ranjit Fernando scoring a brilliant century before the milk break, 110 runs. That's one of the best I've seen. Then Neville Pereira ran through our batting line-up with his left-arm spin bowling.

We did well against the Antonians at Katugastota where I managed to score 95 runs and Wilson got 110. Royal managed to put on 200 runs in one session on the second day. The match was drawn. We also drew with Trinity, Wesley and St Peter's and I was within runs.

Then came the big match, S. Thomas' were led by Randy Morrel. The Thomians put on 254 runs (254/9) on the board with Premalal Gunasekera and Anura Tennakoon contributing with half centuries. When it was our turn to bat, we were 35 for 3 and I walked into the middle. Cedrick Fernando and I managed to put on a 165-run partnership, which is a record for Royal for the fifth wicket to date. We declared the inning at 207 for 4; I scored 112 not out and Cedrick 47 not out.

It was an interesting inning. I remember hitting Thomian off-spinner L.S. Perera for 14 runs in one over, which included three fours. Then I hit Barny Reid for a six, into the commentators' box at the Oval. I scored 86 runs in boundaries. I remember how I got to my century. I was at 89 runs and Roger D'Silva was bowling. He bowled a bouncer and I hit that over midwicket for a four and moved to 93. The next ball, he bowled another bouncer and this time I hit that square of the wicket and got another four. I moved to 97. I took a single and Cedrick too got a single. So, within the same over, I was back again facing Roger, on 98.

Then Thomian captain Randy Morrel walked up to me and said "Malli not everyone gets an opportunity to score a hundred at the Royal-Thomian. Bat carefully. "Now, that's the spirit in which we played cricket.

The next ball I hit Roger straight past mid-on; ball hit Gamini Panditharatne's boot and his "Gal Thoppiya" (Hat) and passed the boundary. I reached my century with that. My entire inning contained 86 runs in boundaries (20 fours and one six) and scored within 130 minutes. It is one of the fastest centuries in the series, for Royal College. Cedrick and I scored 99 runs in 30 minutes after lunch. It was just one of those days – everything clicked.

The match ended in a draw as the Thomians declared their second innings at 115 for 9. Royal, chasing 163 to win, were at 120 for 6 at close.

However, the Thomians broke the deadlock in 1964 as they beat the Royalists under Premalal Gunasekera's captaincy to record the first win since 1953.....

I cherish those memories, to date, some are my best friends. Randy Morrell insists every time I tour Australia to make it a point to visit him or to meet up for a drink or a meal. We had some wonderful cricketers those days, and it was great to follow them or be in their company or even when they are in opposing teams.

From Royal, the likes of Nirmalingam, Michael Dias, Michael Wille, Lorenz Pereira, Mahinda Wijesinghe, Daya Sahabandu, Sarath Samarasinghe, Nanda Senanayake, Lalith Samarasinghe, Harsha Samarajeewa.

Then among the Thomians Michael Tissera, Larif Idroos, Roger D'Silva, Keith Labrooy, Sarath Seneviratne, Kumar Boralessa, Anura Tennakoon, Premalal Goonesekere.

For Trinity Nimal Maralande, Malsiri Kurukulasuriya, Kanto Peiris, Sena de Silva, Raji, Errol Fernando; St Benedict's had Ranjit Fernando, Sunil Fernando, Felix Dias, Nihal Soyza; St. Peter's had Richard Heyn, David Heyn, Travis Fernando, Ravi Fernando, Tyrone Le Mercier, Adithya de Silva, and St. Joseph's had Hillary Marceline, Brian Perumal, Rufus Buultjens, and Placy Liyanage. Wesley had Darrel Mirando and Samsudeen.

These are some of the names that come to my mind of those great cricketers; brilliant sportsmen who played in the best spirit during their school days. It was a treat to watch them play or compete against them or with them.

Some we played together later in our lives, like Thomian Mano Ponniah and I played for Cambridge and opened the batting. The cricket played by these guys are of different league and incomparable, especially to the modern age. I sincerely hope, the modern cricketers get this into their heads. It's not what you win, it's how you play and the friendships you build."

- Vijay Malalasekera

“Just prior to the 1973 Royal-Thomian, I had the privilege of fielding as a ‘substitute’ for SSC in a crucial Sara Trophy ‘big match’ against NCC at Maitland Place.

It was a Sunday and I had gone as a mere spectator to watch the second day’s play. The two teams contained the cream of Sri Lanka Cricket in Michael Tissera, Ranjith Fernando, David Heyn, Anura Tennekoon, Sunil Wettimuny, Mevan Pieris....

To my utter surprise, I was asked by Neil Chanmugam (who was coaching our 1st XI team under head coach, PI Peiris)) to go home and bring my whites as SSC did not have a 12th man, for some reason.

Caught a bus home to Wellawatte and back – didn’t have my boots as that was left at College in the groundsmen’s room for our weekly practice.

So turned up in a pair of old Bata tennis shoes hoping that I would not have to go out as a substitute fielder. However, just after the tea break, Mevan split his webbing off his own bowling while attempting a return catch from Ranjit Fernando. So here I was fielding in the biggest domestic game.....After the game both teams met upstairs for a drink at the NCC pavilion.

While I was standing nervously by myself at the back, Vijaya Malalasekera, whom I have never met before other than admire as a 9-year old from the Oval pavilion his blistering century at the 1963 Royal-Thomian ten years earlier, approached me offering a glass of orange juice, congratulated me on my fielding and wished me the very best for the RT big match with some kind words of encouragement. What a superb cricketer and gentleman, Vijaya was!

Vijaya Malalasekera passed away on 5 February 2022, at the age of 76 following a brief illness. May his wonderful soul rest in eternal peace.

- Ravi Rudra