



# Appreciating Professor Sudharshan Seneviratne

**Isha Prematilleke**

Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka

[iprematilleke@gmail.com](mailto:iprematilleke@gmail.com)

---

It is difficult to recall the exact time I first met Professor Sudharshan Seneviratne, because I was very little—he was simply “Uncle Sudharshan” to me. Decades later, when I was old enough to be called “Aunty” myself, he chuckled warmly and insisted I just call him Sudharshan, joking that he didn’t want to feel older than he already did. That moment captures the essence of the man—youthful in spirit, humble despite his stature, and deeply human.

Sudharshan succeeded my father at the Department of Archaeology in Peradeniya and went on to become one of the towering figures in Sri Lankan archaeology. He was equally at ease in the excavation pits, working side by side with students and staff, as he was delivering keynote lectures on prestigious international stages. The breadth and depth of his academic contributions will be, I’m sure, discussed at length in this volume. My purpose here is simply to share personal memories, an opportunity for which I am truly grateful.

With an extraordinary ability to connect with students, colleagues, and even a child like me, he took a sincere interest in my life and pursuits, no matter how modest. When I designed a stall on cancer awareness for a medical exhibition in 2008, Sudharshan went out of his way to visit it, spending time with me at the display and engaging with my work as if it were the most important thing in the room. That gesture meant the world to me and to my students. He continued to encourage me throughout my academic journey. When I received my most recent promotion, Sudharshan was



*Ancient Lanka: Volume 4 (2025)*

© 2025 by the author/s. <https://doi.org/10.29173/anlk945>

This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

one of the first people I wanted to tell, because by then, my father was no longer with us. His affirmation filled that absence in a deeply meaningful way.

Sudharshan was unwavering in his support, particularly during the most difficult times of my life. He and Harsha stood by me, gently reminding me of my strength and worth when I most doubted it. Their friendship and validation were an anchor that helped me rise again, and I am forever indebted.

I have cherished memories of our visits, whether they came to our home or we went to theirs. Harsha, ever gracious and impeccably poised, is also a culinary expert. I still remember with great fondness the exquisite meals and cakes she prepared. It was always a joy to accept their invitations.

Then there is Shavi. I had the honour of holding her when she was a baby, and she truly became the light of Sudharshan's life. He would speak of her achievements with immense pride, often telling me how much alike she and I were in our thinking—a comparison I treasure. I am grateful to remain a part of her life.

A shared love for animals also brought our families closer. For Sudharshan, as for Harsha and Shavi, pets were family, an attitude we shared. Their dog, Bambi, once stayed with us while they were overseas, arriving with her bed and bowls, of course. Our own dog, Siren (named for her shrill bark, and not her behaviour), had an interminable crush on him. She would make a scene every time he visited, and he, in turn, would enter by calling, "Where's my girlfriend?" to our great amusement.

Sudharshan had a mischievous streak that belied his academic gravitas. I recall a train journey with my best friend from school, during which some boys were clearly trying to impress us. Enter Sudharshan, who happened to be on the same train and promptly whisked us away to tea in the dining car. Upon our return, the boys quietly acknowledged defeat and left us alone!

Sudharshan was close to both my parents and held them in deep regard. Later in his career, he played a key role in recommending my father for a Doctor of Literature, an honour made even more significant as my father had just recovered from a serious accident and cancer. The convocation took place on my birthday, a memory I hold especially dear. When I created a website in my father's memory, I asked Sudharshan to contribute a few words. What he wrote was deeply moving. He took the time to explore the entire website, and one of the last messages I received from him read: "Dear Isha, my congratulations. A true tribute from a loving child who worshipped her father. Prem would be so proud of you." It is hard to express how much that message meant to me.

When I learned of Sudharshan's illness, I never imagined it would be final. In my mind, his twinkling eyes and signature grin were simply too alive, too full of light to ever fade. Sudharshan, you were a profound and lasting influence on my life. Your wisdom, encouragement, and compassion shaped me in ways I will never forget.

May you attain the supreme peace of Nibbāna.