



Pradeep Guha
Chairperson AFAA
(2009–2015)
India

The demise of media and advertising doyen Pradeep Guha has left a huge void in the industry as well as in the hearts of his many friends and admirers.

Pradeep Guha, A Great Friend And Leader

by Raymond So, AFAA Chairman

When I heard the sad news that Pradeep Guha, immediate past Chairman of AFAA, passed away because of illness, I was so shocked and saddened at the loss of a good friend and leader in the Asian Advertising Community. I have known Pradeep since 2000 when he joined the AFAA General Body meeting in Taipei. He was the key member of AdAsia Jaipur Organizing team. I was impressed by his professionalism and we started a friendship of over two decades.

Pradeep was a calm, intelligent person and a born leader. He spoke softly with strong, very convincing power. He was very thoughtful and always looked at matters from different perspectives. When he became AFAA Chairman, he invited me to join the AFAA Executive Committee. I got to know him better when we worked together and shared the same mission of revitalizing AFAA. He entrusted me to develop the AFAA reform plan to turn AFAA into a new, progressive organization structure. It is not an easy task and Pradeep used his wisdom and excellent skills to convince all members to make a bold and important decision for AFAA.

I have the honor to work as his partner and AFAA Vice Chairman when he became the first elected AFAA Chairman under the new constitution. All AFAA members agreed Pradeep was the best person to kick start the new AFAA era.

We were so glad to accomplish our goal under his leadership and launched a new AFAA successfully. I was so glad to take over the AFAA helm from him as he has laid a solid foundation for the future. Pradeep is well respected because he is fair, unselfish and respects different views and personalities around him. I am sure we'll all remember his charm, leadership and friendship forever.

We put together this issue of AFAA newsletter to show our respect to our past Chairman and express how much we thank him for the contribution he made to AFAA and the Asian Advertising Community.

May we all wish him rest in peace in heaven! He is going to make a difference there!

Thank you Pradeep!!



PRADEEP GUHA

With thanks, and thanks; and ever thanks

*Once in a while,
There comes along a decisive leader,
A compassionate colleague,
A warm and delightful friend.*

*Once in a while,
There comes along someone
Who has truly cared
With whom you have genuinely shared
Experiences that will always linger.
Memories that will never fade.
Thank you Pradeep, for having come along
And been that special person.*

Pradeep Guha Combined Creativity With Business Sense - And A Big Heart

by Ramesh Narayan

‘I know of no person who successfully conducted three Ad Asia Congress’ writes Ramesh Narayan, Chief Strategy Officer, AFAA and Founder of Canco Advertising Pvt. Ltd.

The first one was in 2003 in Jaipur, which even today is a benchmark, others have not come close to. He was then the Chairman of the Organizing Committee. As the Chairman of AFAA (Asian Federation of Advertising Associations organizes Ad Asia every two years), he was instrumental in the smooth and fruitful conduct of Ad Asia in Delhi in 2011 and in Hanoi in 2013. His penchant for being completely hands-on worked wonders for these events.

Pradeep was initially elected as AFAA Chairman for two years in 2010 but was unanimously elected for an unprecedented four-year team for the great contribution he has been making to the progress of AFAA and the advertising community in the Asian region.

His contribution to the rise of India’s advertising on the global stage is acknowledged. As President of Times of India, the world’s largest English newspaper, he introduced the Cannes Advertising Festival to that country. He not only promoted the Cannes Festival for award entries but also motivated a few hundreds to participate, learn from the festival and make it an annual pilgrimage for creative people from India. This raised the bar for Indian creativity in general and India has consistently won big at Cannes thanks to his initiative. Pradeep has lobbied hard and ensured that India’s creative and media fraternity were also a significant part of the Jury, and once even to head the jury panel. The cocktail-dinner party that he hosted at the Cannes beach was legendary, attended not just by Indian delegates but by senior creative and media fraternity from across the globe.



Pradeep Guha helped financially sponsored an IAA/AFAA initiative that was close to his heart, the IAA Olive Crown Awards. These awards were the first-ever Awards for creative excellence in communicating sustainability. The Olive Crown is truly a pan-Asian award now.

Pradeep is acknowledged as the person who steered the fortunes of the Times of India Group. He took over as Publisher of two dying magazines Filmfare and Femina, turned them around, and built them into leading brands in the country. He conceived of and implemented the launch of the Bombay Times, arguably the most commercially successful print media launch in India. Pradeep worked as CEO of the Zee Entertainment group for three years and took the group that runs a large bouquet of TV channels in India from a poor third position to the number one TV channel network. He also distributed the Zee channels to many countries. Pradeep partly owned and managed a music video channel 9XM, which he turned around in just three years and made it a large multi-channel profitable enterprise. He remains probably one of the rare professionals anywhere in the world to straddle both print and television so successfully. In 2019 he was nominated to be inducted into the AFAA Hall of Fame. Since he could not accept it at the AdAsia Lahore, he was to be honored at the AdAsia Macau slated for December 2021.

PG Took Indian MARCOM Global

by Sarmad Ali

Saturday morning, I woke up to a Facebook post by Annurag Batra (Chairman & Editor-in-Chief, BW Businessworld) that said miracles do happen. Annurag was talking about Pradeep Guha fighting for his life at an ICU in Mumbai. But the prayed-for-miracle did not happen. Half an hour later, while his friends and well-wishers were praying for his recovery, he passed away to his heavenly abode. His sudden illness and his death came as a shock. I just couldn't believe that the ever-smiling, helpful Pradeep Guha was gone. More than anyone else, Pradeep is single-handedly credited for transforming the media business in India and introducing the Indian, over the years, Marcom industry to the world. He was a mentor to many in and around India. He built brands but perhaps became bigger than the brands themselves. As we mourn his death and celebrate his life, I am reminded of my various interactions with him. It's like a film playing in my mind. Rewind. Play.

I met Pradeep for the first time in Manila in 1997 at AdAsia. I had heard about the momentous changes he had brought in at the Times of India Group and was eager to meet him. We briefly chatted about TOI and then talked about the possibility of Response representing Jang Group in India. A few months later we met again in Mumbai when Jang and TOI (unsuccessfully) tried to bring out a collaborative report on 50 years of India and Pakistan.



Pradeep Guha was among the Indian leaders who created opportunities for better co-operation with neighbouring countries, pens Sarmad Ali, Managing Director, Jang Group

Since then, we have met almost every year at AdAsia and IAA World Congresses as well as AFAA and IAA board meetings. AdAsia Jaipur 2003 was his show. As Chairman of the organising committee of the 23rd AdAsia, he spearheaded the team that delivered one of the most talked- about AdAsia congresses, raising the bar so high that it became an impossible act to follow for the subsequent congresses. For us from Pakistan, he went out of his way to roll out the red carpet. The Pakistan delegation was issued what is called a Police Reporting Visa. Pradeep was himself there to receive us at the hotel and to facilitate us by getting the police team to come to the hotel for visa reporting formalities. Despite his engagements, he got me a cherished photograph with Amitabh Bachchan.

He had visited Pakistan twice. The first time was in 2005. He had just left TOI but was still the President of the Indian Newspaper Society (INS) and in that capacity had organised the 500th meeting of the Society's executive committee at Lahore. The APNS (Pakistan Newspapers Society) hosted a dinner for the INS team at Islamabad where Abida Parveen performed. Pradeep loved Abida. The next day in Lahore, I hosted a lunch for the INS team. We talked about music, cricket, and all the things that bind our two nations.



The next time Pradeep was in Lahore was in 2013 for the South Asia Conclave, where Imran Khan was the keynote speaker. In 2015, in Taipei, when Pakistan was bidding for 2019 AdAsia there were concerns amongst AFAA members. But it was primarily due to Pradeep's support that Pakistan won the bid. In fact, Pradeep went as far as to say that India would host the Congress if for any reason Pakistan would not be able to do so. This clinched the bid for Pakistan.



Two years later at AdAsia in Bali, we hosted the Pakistan Night with Arif Lohar. He told me that Arif Lohar was one of his favourite singers, so I asked Arif Lohar to come down from the stage to Pradeep's table and dedicate his Jugni to Pradeep. I still remember Pradeep smiling and dancing into the wee hours of the morning to his favourite number. We did not meet again as he was not able to come to Lahore for AdAsia 2019. And I wasn't able to go to Kochi for the IAA World Congress. But the day AdAsia Lahore ended, I received a text from him congratulating us for hosting a successful congress. The last WhatsApp message that I got from him was Eid Mubarak in May this year. He is gone but his smiling face will always be there.

Farewell, my friend. Rest in peace.

PG Was A People Builder

by Bharat Avalani

Leaders are admired for their competence but loved for their compassion, remembers Bharat Avalani, member of the Executive Committee of the Asian Federation of Advertising Associations and the Vice President of the International Advertising Association.



I first met PG, as Pradeep Guha was known, in Jaipur in 2003. He was the Organizing Chairman of the 23rd Edition of AdAsia organized by the Asia Federation of Advertising Associations (AFAA). I looked up to him with great admiration for the way he pulled off perhaps one of the best AdAsia Congress' ably supported by his buddy Ramesh Narayan. He left no stone unturned and laid out the red carpet for all of us.



In 2012, PG as Chairman of AFAA nominated me for the Executive Committee of the Asian Federation of Advertising Associations. At a meeting in Pattaya, Thailand, later that year, we were lamenting the shortage of good talent in our industry. Pradeep was inspired to do something about it. He had a dream to give young talent the boost that would lead them to make a quantum leap in their careers. He requested me to design a programme to prepare young people to take on the challenges ahead of them in a fast-changing world.

The AFAA / IAA Fasttrack Program was inspired by his vision to help young people in the marketing and advertising industry manifest their true potential - a goal that resonated with me both personally and professionally. Over the years from 2013 to 2019, Fasttrack has impacted more than 200 talented individuals from 11 countries. The 200 plus young enthusiasts are his legacies. Post the Pandemic I hope to continue to deliver the program to honour his vision and dream. It gratifies me now to know that he saw this dream of his, fulfilled. I was touched to receive a note in 2019 from PG saying,

“Bharat, it feels really good to see saplings grow into trees. Thanks for being the quintessential element of this beautiful dream.”

I last met PG face to face in February 2019 in Kochi. He was the Organising Chairman of the 44th Edition of the World Advertising Congress organised by the International Advertising Association (IAA). He gave me the experience of a lifetime.

He and Jaideep Gandhi who was assisting him with the Speakers were waiting for Amitabh Bachchan to arrive from Mumbai to deliver his opening keynote speech the next morning. It was almost midnight when the iconic star landed in Kochi. Despite being late into the night, Amitabh Bachchan insisted on doing a proper rehearsal in the Conference Hall. PG invited me to observe how a professional prepares to deliver a speech. Even though it was a prepared text, Amitabh Bachchan took almost two hours to rehearse and correct his delivery.

It was deeply humbling to see how a top iconic star prepares. There is no shortcut to success. Later Pradeep introduced me to Amitabh and he took an iconic photo of me with the legend at 2 am. At the Kochi IAA World Congress, there was lively banter about Brand Dharma. But in my mind's eye, Pradeep Guha will remain embedded for the kind of person that he was and for the number of people whose lives he influenced and touched. Perhaps he fulfilled his mission on earth, and it was his karma to be recalled to his new heavenly abode, on such an auspicious day as Onam, the harvest festival. It was Sivapriya, my batchmate who pointed out that it was the day when Lord Vishnu granted moksha (eternal salvation) to Mahabali Chakravarthi, the noble and prosperous ruler.

Who knows it may have been the same for PG.



The Last Word

by Srinivasan K Swamy,
Vice Chairman-AFAA

Bon voyage to our dear friend and benefactor

Pradeep Guha, PG for many of us, left us on Saturday 21st August 2021. It was the auspicious day of Onam, a Hindu festival celebrated with fervour in the State of Kerala and by many Hindus across the world. The celebration is in memory of the benevolent demon King Mahabali who was given the rare gift by Lord (God) Vishnu of returning to his kingdom every Onam day to provide riches and happiness to his subjects. On the day when he descends on earth every year, all the houses are decorated in a manner appropriate to welcome the King. And a special feast is arranged for him in all the households.

I see many parallels to this in the life of PG. He lived like a king and was very kind to all whose lives he touched. He continued to be the “boss” to many who had become boss in their own right. His reach was not limited to the media industry or the companies he worked in (Times of India group, ZEE Group, or 9XM), to which he made a big difference. His contribution to the entertainment industry, the film award shows that he more than glamorised, or the Miss World pageants which he took to a different level had been nothing short of extraordinary.

His influence on the marketing and advertising world is legendary, not just because of sponsorship support, but thanks to him providing generous time, ideas and personally sweating the details of very important activities and events he took on. After his demise, there are scores of articles and memoirs written on him in print and digital media. Frankly, I have never seen so many articles written on a person that too by very senior artistes, entertainers, businessmen, and industry colleagues. This only shows how much he was respected and loved and how many people’s lives he had touched and made a difference.

PG was involved with AFAA for 21 years, six of these as its Chairman. He took many initiatives during his tenure, including the most important one of giving a legal status for AFAA, by registering this as a Society in Kuala Lumpur. A keen observer of what the future has in store, he encouraged the starting of Digi Asia as a bi-annual event when Ad Asia is not scheduled. He also started Fasttrack, an annual programme for getting young professionals to fast-track their careers.

We wish him a bon-voyage when he leaves the earth for now. I have no doubt that he will keep visiting us in our minds and thoughts. We will search for answers, trying to step into his shoes for some of the issues that confront us.

But few things we will surely miss... his generosity, his leadership, and the gracious smile!



**AdAsia 2021 is at Macao,
3rd and 4th December 2021.
Await further details.**