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Obituary

D. D. Prabhu

(3 March 1902-2 June 1995)



Dr D. D. Prabhu, popularly called Duttprabhu, passed his matriculation examination from the Gibb's High School, Kumta, North Kanara in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency; InterScience from the Karnataka College, Dharwar and qualified LCPS from the Topiwala National Medical College, Bombay in 1928.

After trying to practice in different rural areas, he settled in Ankola, where he was a general practitioner up to 1971 when he had to retire for health reasons.

Dattatraya P. Prabhu was born on 3 March 1902 in Shiroor (Chandumath village) near Ankola in the north Kanara District of Karnataka. He had an elder sister and two older and two younger brothers. He completed his early education away from home and decided to study medicine much against the wishes of his parents.

He went to Bombay—the Topiwala National Medical College had just begun—to enter the licentiate course in medicine. He was probably in the second batch, one year junior to the famous surgeon, the late Dr A. V. Baliga.

After obtaining the Licentiate of the College of Physicians and Surgeons (LCPS) of Bombay in 1928, he returned to his native village and tried to set up practice in north Kanara in places such

as Halyal and Honnavar. However, he had to move to Ankola to settle in practice.

He had a great interest in ayurveda, dentistry, obstetrics and ophthalmology and possessed many dental instruments that he used for extracting teeth as well as outlet and axis traction forceps to assist in the delivery of babies. His knowledge of obstetrics became useful to my wife and myself when we started practice in Shimoga and were faced with a breach delivery. He would guide us from outside the delivery room through the manoeuvre of delivering a breach presentation according to classical textbook methods. He believed that there were many ayurvedic remedies for chronic ailments like degenerative bone and joint diseases and would prescribe the medicines of that science. He said that ayurveda had more to offer for chronic illnesses and allopathy was better only for acute ailments.

He was a general practitioner in the true sense of the term. He had to go far away from home to see and treat his patients. A bicycle was his only means of transport, though later he bought a BMW motorcycle. When he visited a remote village, he had often to stay overnight in the patient's huts or in some nearby place of shelter. He was reputed to be a very shrewd diagnostician and he rarely demanded a fee.

He was fond of hunting and had bagged many a big game like tigers and panthers with his twelve-bore double barrelled gun. He also loved to play on his metal flute and on the 'dilruba'. He slowed down his medical practice after suffering a myocardial infarction in 1963, and stopped it in 1971. He died on 2 June 1995 at the age of 93 and is survived by three sons and a daughter. Two of his sons, of whom I am one, followed him into the medical profession.

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