

EDITORIAL - Remembering the ICONS

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Psychiatry might render yeomen service to the medical profession if it could channel research towards the creation of doctors and psychiatrists whose seasoned knowledge, sound judgment and mature personality would substantially aid in the great leap forward of the country to a healthier and better life¹.

Bardhan L. Valedictory. Indian J Psychiatry, 1960;2:1-3.

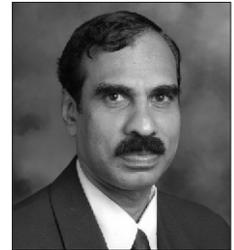
Much water has flown since the dawn of the distinct field of psychiatry in India. And, it is imperative for us to remember those who have laid the foundation for what we are today.

At a time when technological sophistication was unavailable, financial crunch was at its all time high, neglect and stigma from other branches of medicine prevailed that made paucity of supportive human resource, psychiatry was nurtured by some dedicated and passionate psychiatrists who kept the profession close to their heart. They helped to groom the profession by giving all what they had to its full extent and we are enjoying the fruits of what they have toiled. And that has led to formation of the Indian Psychiatric Society and launching the Indian Journal of Psychiatry.

The challenges to psychiatry in the immediate post independence era were many. Services that were centered on 'mental asylums' moved beyond mental hospitals and mental health centers/institutes to general hospitals. During the period when clear-cut sub specialties did not exist, many explored community psychiatry, family psychiatry, child psychiatry, military psychiatry biological psychiatry as well as psychoanalysis. Boost was given to psychopharmacology by initiating research in different disorders and in divergent populations in various geographical locations of the country. And the country was fortunate to have the icons spread across the country.

We had great teachers who treated their patients and the students with 'respect'. They taught us how to interview patients and elicit valuable information in dyadic sessions as well as during case conferences or while interviewing the patients in a group. They showed the path to conduct research and taught the research skills. Some of them dared to experiment with novel ideas that were considered impossible by many of their contemporaries. Some of them had turned their professional life into a journey towards 'sat agraha' toiling with the idea of finding the ultimate truth. Some of the teachers were very close with the trainee students and taught them skills staying back out of their working hours and in informal settings. Some of them kept their doors at home open for their students to feel at home. The experiential lessons that we learned from them paved way for exploring new frontiers in the area of psychiatry and helped us to become better professionals.

The specialty sections that we have with our society (IPS) have evolved out of one-man missions that were carried out by many of the icons- whether it is community psychiatry or geriatric psychiatry or others. And the starting of different societies on specific branches of psychiatry- like the Association of Industrial Psychiatry in India, Indian Association of Social Psychiatry, Indian Association of Child and Adolescent



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Psychiatry, and so on.

While some of them moved beyond boundaries, some of them made their presence felt with their contributions that took psychiatry in India beyond boundaries into the global village. Some of them got trained abroad and helped collaborative research that helped meet East meet with West. Some of them delved into the treasure of Indian philosophical psychology that brought to light the great potential of Indian thought.

Everything was not that rosy. Despite ego clashes and differences of opinion, not only did the professional association of psychiatry waded through, but the profession itself moved to greater heights. One cannot forget the fact that the icons that are no more with us laid the foundation for the phenomenal growth that psychiatry in India has achieved today. While we remember them with much gratitude, we are also hoping that the baton that they have passed on to us will be taken forward with a greater momentum.

Though the idea of this project of bringing out the icons of psychiatry in print form was visualized much earlier, it was put to action only a couple of months ago. The guiding principles or the criteria that formed the basis involved recognizing those who had pan Indian influence, who had international impact, those who influenced the area of psychiatry over a period of time and their influence and memory of their work lasted over a period of time and those who got a position and became known because of the position and who gave respectability to the position they occupied. However, one overriding criterion was that the recognized ICONS being no more with us. There are many names in the contemporary field who deserve mention for their monumental achievements. We only wish for their long life and fruitful years. The mention of some of the living legends in the write ups are only accidental and were not edited only to keep the flow and spirit of the write ups. We sent the e-mails requesting the names, details, biographies and the photographs of historical and heritage values atleast 5 times to all the email addresses available at the editorial office and elsewhere. We acknowledge our thanks to all those who volunteered to contribute as well as to all those who have accepted our last hour request and participated in this endeavor, which made it possible to bring this out in a short span of time.

We have attempted to present some of the icons/stalwarts of psychiatry in India. There are others to be remembered, who led a tireless life providing help to the suffering individuals and their caregivers and families and thereby serving the society at large. Some of them left us without any document that helps us to audit their yeomen services. Probably, only their benefactors could tell what the icons meant for them. This is a pioneering attempt and we hope that the first step taken would pave way to fill the gaps in the immediate future. Omissions or commissions are not purposeful and we seek the cooperation of every one to help us build a comprehensive account of icons. We remain grateful to one and all who participated in this endeavour.



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