

Tribute to Dr. R. Ganapati – Mahaguru of Leprosy Workers

Dr. R. Ganapati breathed his last on 13/11/2011 while undertaking anti-leprosy work till last. He started his career in Acworth Leprosy Hospital, Wadala, Mumbai from 01/10/1963 as an Assistant Medical Officer and within an year he became Research Officer. He had to face odd circumstances while undertaking newer concepts of Leprosy control, which he successfully put into practice, with the help of some likeminded colleagues who formed a 'ginger' group of Leprosy workers in that Hospital. He pioneered the work of active school surveys and slum surveys in Mumbai city.

In order to widen his scope of work, he founded Bombay Leprosy Project (BLP) in September 1976 with the help of the ginger group. He demonstrated effectively the importance of field work in the Leprosy control. He toiled too hard to pave the way to go to the root causes of Leprosy problem in the urban situation.

The GOI took cognizance of his gigantic work and bestowed upon him the coveted title of "Padmashree" in January 1983. Thereafter, he had showers of "awards" for his yeoman's services to Leprosy patients. He was a Research minded Scientist and became one of those who have published more than 100 Research papers on different aspects of Leprosy in the Medical and Scientific journals of the world. He knew the Pulse of the Leprosy problem and created a well trained team of workers to deal with it. He is the Doyen of history of Leprosy control in Greater Mumbai City.

He took active part in the genesis of organizations like The Society for the Eradication of Leprosy (SEL), The Acworth Leprosy Hospital Society for Research, Rehabilitation and Education in Leprosy (ALHRRE), Bombay Leprosy Project (BLP), Maharashtra Branch of Indian Association of Leprologists (IAL-MB) and rejuvenated Organizations like Maharashtra Branch of Hind Kushta Nivaran Sangh (HKNS-MB) and Indian Association of Leprologists (IAL) by his close association with the Executives of those Organizations and played a Samaritan's role of achieving their aims and objectives.

Welfare of the patients and their rehabilitation was the ultimate motive of this stalwart. People remember his role in inculcating interest about Leprosy amongst skin specialists all over the country. GOI took his help in assessing the anti-leprosy work in the country including the work of training centers of Leprosy. As per his name, he was God of knowledge of Leprosy. Patients all over the country knew him because wherever he visited for conferences, workshops, he made it a point to keep rapport with local Leprosy patients in their colonies. There is resurgence of Leprosy problem now but unfortunately there is not going to be resurgence of Dr. R. Ganapati!

He was very much concerned and wanted to draw attention of the authorities concerned to the subject of care after cure of Leprosy patients with deformities and disabilities for worthwhile Community Based Rehabilitation.

His soul will be at rest and in eternal peace, only when, Leprosy workers will toil hard to achieve DPMR in our country on CBR basis!