

Tribute to Mr Tukaram Pandurang Mirajkar – a true ‘Karmayogi’!

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Mr TP Mirajkar was born on 8th February 1930 in Mumbai, Maharashtra, spent more than six decades of professional life in the field of physical rehabilitation, mostly in Mumbai. He passed away on 26th December 2023 at the age of 94 in Pune, Maharashtra due to age related illness.

Mr Mirajkar after obtaining his academic qualifications of Biomedical Engineer from New York University, New York, USA received specialized training on Prosthetics and Orthotics (P&O) under United Nations Expert from UK. He then started his modest career as a Prosthetic Engineer at King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital, Mumbai in 1950. He was instrumental in planning and establishing All India Institute of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (AIIPMR),

Mumbai, an Apex Institute of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India in 1995 along with Late Dr M V Sant, a renowned orthopaedic surgeon and rehabilitation expert.

Later, he started a full-fledged P&O Department and training programs at AIIPMR in 1957 for creating young professionals in area of P&O, the first of its kind in entire South-East Asia. Over the period, he could treat more than 25,000 physically challenged people with P&O appliances which is a great achievement. He was also instrumental in designing the low-cost calliper, which was used by people affected with Poliomyelitis in India. He served this prestigious Institute for more than three decades and the retired as Head of P&O Department from AIIPMR on 28th February 1988.

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We believe that generally it would have been the time to hang one's boots and to live a life of retirement, especially when one has a well settled personal family life. But even after the retirement, he continued to work with his passion and principles in pursuit towards providing a holistic rehabilitation. Post retirement from AIPMR, he relentlessly devoted his time to the well-being of physically challenged, and worked as a Manager at the Fellowship for Physically Handicapped, an NGO working for the physically challenged people in Mumbai till 1991.

Mr Mirajkar was a very kind hearted person and had a great compassion for sports and won several medals in Badminton, Table tennis and Cricket. He then along with the ace Indian cricketer, Padmashri Mr Ajit Wadekar, set up the All-India Cricket Association for the Physically Challenged (AICAPC) in 1988, the first formal NGO to promote sports among physically challenged and giving them a platform to express their talent in the field of Cricket and to draw the attention of the society to the cause.

Given his unparalleled experience in the field of rehabilitation, he served Bombay Leprosy Project (BLP), an NGO relentlessly working in the field of leprosy as a Rehabilitation Officer from 1992 till 2005. During his tenure at BLP, he played a key role in implementing several integrated rehabilitation programs for the people with disabilities due to

leprosy along with other disabilities, one of the pioneering steps of BLP, envisioned by Late Padma Shri Dr R Ganapati, Founder Director of BLP. He created a strong network and coordination between the rehabilitation experts, institutions and philanthropists to build a sustainable professional relation for providing integrated rehabilitation services in Mumbai.

He displayed incredible energy and commitment to help and guide the people with leprosy to provide vocational training towards the socio-economic rehabilitation to live a dignified life. Since 13.02.2016, he supported BLP in the capacity as Board Member of BLP and helped BLP to overcome several challenges to guide the organization in its efforts and always ensured the interest of organization as more important than of personal one.

We always admired his determination and truly fortunate to have worked with him during his association with BLP. His consistent efforts and lifetime achievements made during his entire professional career will be remembered and an inspiration to several leprosy and rehabilitation workers as well as thousands of people with disabilities due to leprosy and other diseases.

Mr Mirajkar leaves behind a son and a daughter, both married and with grandchildren. All the staff at BLP and the people affected by leprosy offer heartfelt tributes and sincerely reiterate to carry on his ardent rehabilitation and social work.

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We join Dr VV Pai and his colleagues in paying our tributes to Shri TP Mirajkar for a life truly lived. His life will continue to inspire coming generation of individuals to work tirelessly and contribute to innovations and access in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation, an area not only important for leprosy but for so many other disabilities impacting human life

– VM Katoch, Hon. Editor, Indian Journal of Leprosy