Obituary

Dr. R. Ganapatidied on 13th November 2011, and was undertaking anti-leprosy work until the very end of his life. He started his career in the Acworth Leprosy Hospital, Wadala, Mumbai from 1st October 1963 as an Assistant Medical Officer and within an year he became a Research Officer. He had to face many 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 the Bombay Leprosy Project (BLP) in September 1976 with the help of the ginger group. He demonstrated effectively the importance of field work in leprosy control. He paved the way of investigating the root causes of leprosy in urban situations.

The Government of India took cognizance of his great work and bestowed upon him the coveted title of ‘Padmasree’ in January 1983. Thereafter, he was showered with awards for his yeoman’s service to leprosy patients. He was a research minded scientist and published more than 100 research papers on different aspects of leprosy in medical and scientific journals throughout 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 leprosy control in Greater Mumbai City.

He took an 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), the Bombay Leprosy Project (BLP), the Maharashtra Branch of Indian Association of Leprologists (IAL-MB), and rejuvenated Organizations like the Maharashtra Branch of Hind Kushtha Nivaran Sangh (HKNS-MB) and the Indian Association of Leprologists (IAL). By his close association with the Executives of those Organizations he played a Samaritan’s role in helping them to achieve their aims and objectives.

But his ultimate motive was the welfare of patients and their rehabilitation back into mainstream of society. People remember his role in inculcating interest in leprosy among skin specialists all over the country. The Government of India valued his help in assessing anti-leprosy work in the country, including the work of training centres for leprosy. His knowledge of leprosy was legendary. Patients from all over the country knew him because wherever he visited for conferences or workshops, he made it a point to keep rapport with local leprosy patients in their colonies. There is a resurgence of the leprosy problem now, but unfortunately there is not going to be resurgence of Dr. R. Ganapati!

He was very much concerned about the situation, and wanted to draw attention of the authorities to the subject of care after cure of those with leprosy who had deformities and disabilities, urging worthwhile community-based rehabilitation.
His soul will be at rest and in eternal peace only when Leprosy workers achieve his dream for a “World Without Leprosy”!

Dr. V.V. Dongre

Hon. Secretary,
The Society for Eradication of Leprosy,
Mumbai