

Legends of Indian Orthopedics

Prof. B Mukhopadhaya

Dr. B Mukhopadhaya was born on January 1, 1916, in Bangladesh. His father was a teacher, from whom he inherited all the good qualities of a teacher. His uncle suffered from tuberculosis (TB) and he served him day in and day out, but he could not be saved. This incident made such an impact on his mind that he decided to become a doctor. He passed all examinations with distinctions from Patna University. He had done MBBS from Prince of Wales Medical College, Patna, FRCS from London, and MCH in orthopedics from Liverpool.

He was the first Indian doctor to be made Hunterian professor of the Royal College of Surgeons, London. While in England for his training as an orthopedic surgeon, he was very much influenced by Sir Robert Jones and Sir Harry Platt. On his return from England, he played the lead and crucial role in forming the Indian Orthopaedic Association (IOA). He was the founder secretary of the association and later became the president. He was also one of the first two editors of Indian Journal of Orthopaedics. He started the third course in India of MS orthopedics in Patna. (The first two were in Lucknow and Bombay.)

He was very much concerned about the poorer section of the society and, with the help of the Red Cross Society, he established polyclinic in Patna, Gaya, and Muzafarpur. Single handedly against much resistance from general surgeons, he established excellent departments of orthopedics, physiotherapy as well as an orthotic and prosthetic workshop in his Alma Mater. Not only about orthopedics, but also he was equally concerned about the state of medical education in the country. He was elected as the Vice President of Medical Council of India and, during his tenure, he saw to it that orthopedics finds its due place in the medical education. Soon after his retirement, the Government of Bihar appointed him as Director of Health Services (he did not take any salary) and later the Government of India requested him to take up the Chairmanship of ALIMCO. As soon as he was free from this responsibility in 1983, he established Orthopaedic Research and Education Foundation – India – and conducted courses all over the country for the orthopedic surgeons who wanted to update themselves. It was amazing to see him sit through the course from 8 am to 6 pm interacting with the faculty and students and later in the evening analyzing the performance of the faculty on the dinner. All those who visited his clinic at Saidpur Road, Patna, which used to be overcrowded and where patients will line up in the early morning to see him, were surprised to see the way meticulous records used to be maintained.



**Prof. B Mukhopadhaya
(1916–2003)**

For the services rendered, he got many awards and honors, notably Padma Bhushan, Dr. B. C. Roy Award, Hunterian lecturer of the Royal College of Surgeons of England (first from India), Eminent Ortho Surgeon of SAARC Countries, and Lifetime Achievement Award of IOA (first recipient). For his contribution in the field of orthopedics, he is also known as the ‘Robert Jones of India’. He also served as the president of Association of Surgeons of India. He was also associated with the National Board of Examinations.

He had a unique quality of recognizing the talent and then encouraging him/her to come forward. He will guide him/her throughout his career. Many of his students and his followers will testify this. He was a voracious reader and he could talk with authority on politics, history, philosophy, science, technology, etc. He was an excellent orator. I have many a times seen audience listening to him spellbound as he spoke as authority with facts and figures. He was a dexterous and a meticulous surgeon indeed. I saw him operating at the age of 75 years, during his visit to Indore as a visiting professor. It was a pleasure indeed to watch him operate – Patna Procedure for Club Foot and anterolateral decompression for TB spine.

Prof. Mukhopadhaya was an encyclopedia of orthopedics, perfect planner and organizer, academician, clinician par excellence, fine conversationalist, and a talent hunter – such was the multifaceted personality of Prof. Mukhopadhaya whom we all used to call as “Bisthu Da” in reverence.

He died peacefully on November 2003 at the age of 88.

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