

Prof. Kodagoda's Contribution and Services to Ayurveda and Traditional Medicine.

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It was a bright and sunny day in the 3rd week of June in the year 1996. A black board placed near the main hall (which has now been named in honour of Dr. R. B. Lenora) of the College of Ayurvedic Medicine, displayed a simple notice in white chalk announcing that at 11.00 a.m. on that day, Dr. Nandadasa Kodagoda, Lecturer, Faculty of Medicine will deliver a lecture on Forensic Medicine in that hall. The invitation was to all the students and the staff. I was at that time, a first year student. Keen to see the lecturer, all of us were gathered there at the scheduled time. Nearly six hundred students belonging to all five academic years and many in the staff were present. Sharp at 10.55 a dark complexioned stout gentleman with a pleasant face entered preceded by the Commissioner of Ayurveda who functioned as the Principal of the College. This was my first encounter with Professor Kodagoda who passed away in the early hours of 2nd August 1997.

The Professor without the help of a note delivered his lecture on the "Identification of a Corpse" non-stop for one and a half hours. Although I could not grasp any of the scientific matter contained in his lecture, being merely a student in my first year at the college,

I was quick and sensitive enough to gather some salient points in relation to the discourse.

I realized that there was at least one admirer of the Ayurvedic system outside the domain of Ayurveda. How a recently qualified graduate in Medicine and a lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine, could handle the Sinhala language with such competence was surprising. It was my first experience in listening to a western qualified doctor, a lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine who spoke fluently and with technical accuracy in Sinhala - a very rare occurrence in that era.

From that very sunny day, till he breathed his last, after 31 very fruitful eventful years, he remained deeply, and at times emotionally, attached to the field of Ayurveda and to the Institute of Ayurveda.

His attachment, understanding and devotion to this domain which we could presume was alien to him had sprung from a very deep corner of his intellectuality. He was very young at the time he built up this rapport. In spite of his stupendous academic and personal achievements the love he nurtured for Ayurveda and the traditional system of

Medicine never even wavered. Prof. Kodagoda was always the first to volunteer to air his views when and where his invaluable advice was sought. His advice was impartial, well thought out and to the point. He exhibited an uninhibited perception of facts, which carried much weight in resolving many a conflict.

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It is no wonder that he could not brush Ayurveda off, since he was a person deeply committed to everything that is National. He was of the opinion that, Ayurveda, above all was a valuable and living factor of our ancient and glorious civilization and it should be uplifted in every possible manner.



IOGT Regional Award for Services to Youth in the Region.

From 1965 the courses that were conducted in respect of Ayurvedic Medicine included lectures in Forensic Medicine. Prof. Kodagoda took the initiative in starting the series of lectures on Forensic Medicine, a totally new subject to us, the final year students. He proved his ability of teaching the subject in Sinhala, a very bold attempt, where no such endeavour had been made earlier, fearing that the lack of Sinhala terms would be an insurmountable obstacle. He overcame the problem by creating hundreds of technical words of his own, an attempt, which at a later date, paid him dividends where he successfully translated the text book “Forensic Medicine” by Sir Sydney Smith. He continued to teach the subject for more than 25 years, after which he gave the responsibility over to the younger members of the Faculty. **By then, he had created a tradition of teaching Forensic Medicine, in Sinhala. A good 98% of the Ayurvedic doctors who passed out from the College of Ayurveda had learnt this subject under his tutelage.**

His attachment to Ayurveda was not confined to academic activities. He was a person much sought-after as a resource person in many facets of Ayurveda Education as well. He was kind enough to get himself involved with student welfare activities and resolve students’ dead-lock situations. The student community, in return respected him much. He was interested enough to air his views and at times he took special pain to delve deep into his personal experiences to find solutions to settle conflict situations. He managed to acquire skills in the field of Administration, and tried to inculcate in others his, way of handling difficult situations at the institute. In most instances, he was successful. Prof. Kodagoda was a permanent and indispensable member of various committees set up to study

very different aspects of this field. His vision of the education and training in oriental Universities was unique because, he had the opportunity to be associated with both the Campuses, viz occidental and oriental. He was able to draw inspiration from both these streams and within him a philosophy sprouted and matured with which he worked through out his association with Ayurveda. It gave him a simple insight to steer matters at the institute during his short tenure as Acting Director. His concern with the Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurvedic College was also commendable. He was a member of the Committee which ultimately overcame the difficult situation that the College faced, in obtaining the University status. He rendered his services as a consultant to a Committee appointed to look into the standards of teaching and training at that College, while a few years earlier he participated in a similar task for the Borella Institute of Ayurveda.

His long spell as a member of the Board of Management of the Institute of Indigenous Medicine, from 1988 to 1995 proved to be a period of irreplaceable service. Even after that, until his death, he invariably attended the same as an appointee of the University Grants Commission. The records of the Board explicitly illustrates Prof. Kodagoda's views, concepts and ideology towards Ayurveda and Traditional system of Medicine. Although his association with this field was almost life-long he never became authoritative. On many occasions he exhibited modesty as well as his broad-mindedness while answering queries about Ayurveda. In such situations he maintained that, such views should be sought from the persons of that discipline and not from anybody else.

As his last contribution to the Institute, his

guidance and stewardship was sought to resolve a very difficult situation the institute ever faced since its inception in 1929, that is to resolve and to find ways and means to bring reconciliation between two animated groups of students. This task was given to him when he was at the last stages of his life, although, many of the persons concerned were unaware of the fact. His last energies were spent to bring peace and harmony, though we did not know that, Prof. Nandadasa Kodagoda himself had obtained from his creator, an assurance that he himself will be given rest, peace and happiness which he sought through out his life.

Sir, we appreciate your services to us rendered without malice and hatred. We appreciated your yet impartial and humane instincts. We lost a true friend.

May you attain Nibbana !!

