

From the Doom of Darkness.....?

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An eminent educationist has once remarked "....In the pharmacy world in India, she is like the first human being born on earth,....built so strong, superior and resistant.... has retained her leadership rather than getting into isolation, culminated higher education and research all through.....".

She had a glorious past since her birth in the year 1932. In all reverence, she now remembers her fondling father, Prof. Schroff, and others who nurtured her all along, adding brilliance to the splendour of her lamp. When I stepped into her portals in the year 1981, I found her affectionate and tender in spite of her age. Nevertheless, I noticed a melancholic sigh on her face at times. Gradually it grew dense..... . Next year, she was fifty. Turbulent and dramatic, but rewarding (she now concedes !) was that birthday. She celebrated, firm and consistent. With a maternal smile, she welcomed all her children under her arms. She felt content and happy at the reunion. Unfortunately, a lull prevailed even after the storm and her days were again cloudy and mournful. Her long-cherished dream for a reformation was yet to materialise,..... And *it did* !

But, does she now feel confident of a smooth sail ahead? Is she off for her second lap with renewed vigour and courage ?

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Pharmaceutical sciences have undergone a radical metamorphosis at lightning speed between the days of late Prof. Mahadev Lal Schroff (1932) and the present day of 'every-minute-change-in-the-knowledge'. Newer dimensions and frontiers have emerged during this era of space technology and specialisation. To keep pace, the academia has itself restructured and adapted in almost all spheres during the recent years. This Department is not an exception to this. It cannot be denied that this Department has provided leadership to the pharmaceutical profession and education in the past.

One of the very few institutions in the country to enroll students from both the mathematics and biology streams, today, there is an equal intake through the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) as well as through the Pharmacy Admission Test (PAT) conducted along with the Pre-Medical Test of the University. Even after the introduction of the 10 + 2 + 3 system, this Department has retained the 4-year integrated undergraduate course, unlike many other institutions which immediately adopted a three-year pattern. This was done with an intention to emphasise upon the basic principles of all aspects of pharmaceutical sciences, so as to frame the pharmacist to meet the challenges more competitively in future. Students are admitted from all parts of the country, truly

representative of the expected national character of this University. Today, it has also the distinction of being the first institution to make drastic changes in the postgraduate and undergraduate curricula in accordance with the current trends.

It cannot be denied, however, that this Department has witnessed an increased upsurge in the academic and administrative spheres during the last two years. At this juncture, it seems pertinent for one to look around, assess and critically dwell upon some of the relevant aspects.

Today, the 8-semester undergraduate course has been updated to offer modern training in all the fundamental streams of pharmaceutical sciences, viz., pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical chemistry, pharmacology, pharmacognosy, pharmaceutical analysis, biochemistry, microbiology, industrial management and pharmaceutical engineering. Compulsory practical training/demonstration, offered at the undergraduate level appears to be of immense help to the student in toning up the industrial needs of the pharmaceutical profession. However, it is felt in many circles, that a similar training at bed side while the patients are administered a broad spectrum of drugs in the hospital, will go a long way in bettering the present standards.

From the current academic year, admission to the postgraduate programs is restricted to those who qualify the Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE). Even though this is a healthy trend, there is considerable speculation regarding its fruitful outcome in the absence of a uniform course content and specialised papers. Unless the student is calibrated for his footing and multidisciplinary background in all areas of pharmaceu-

tical sciences, many feel that this 'gateway approach' is totally impragmatic and even ridiculous. Even after some preliminary relaxations this year, most final year students feel concerned after the recent examinations. A totally reformed pattern, in this regard, is certainly anticipated during the ensuing years.

The postgraduate curricula has been remodelled to a 3-semester program offering specialisation in a single subject from the academic year 1985-86. This change, 'aimed at imparting highly specialised training in the chosen discipline', seems welcome at the outset. Today, such specialised programs are available in pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical chemistry, pharmacology and pharmacognosy. The third semester is wholly devoted to dissertation work. The first semester offers one compulsory course work in pharmaceutical analysis and another in Biostatistics and Spectroscopy, in addition to the subject of specialisation. But, may raise apprehensions regarding the second-combined course work. I, for one, now feel that there are various inter-related fields which are not being explored in a proper fashion today. Presently, every graduate in Pharmacy feels that he/she should receive training in computer science. Then, why not let out an option, at least during the postgraduate level when the facilities are available around? The best suggestion would be to offer elective courses in chosen ancillary branches such as Biostatistics, Computer Programming, Spectroscopy, or even Industrial Management for that matter, from which the student can opt depending on his/her interest relative to the chosen field of specialisation and thus earn the requisite credits during the first semester,

Seminars and group discussions, currently introduced as an integral part of the postgraduate curriculum certainly helps the student to keep abreast of the latest developments in their respective disciplines. While it all seems well, an imperative need is felt, especially at the postgraduate level, to set uniform standards amidst all the four specialisations.

It is a positive development, however, to witness the growing interaction with other sister academia. There appears a considerable interest, especially amongst the alumni, to participate in the faculty exchange programs. It is gratifying to record here those speakers who competently and comprehensively projected their respective frontiers immensely enriching the listeners. The response from the industry, however, should have been more encouraging.

The Pharmaceutical Society continues to grow as a rich forum of expression in both cocurricular and extracurricular activities. Keen interest and cooperation has made the traditional Monday lectures regular, rewarding and lively at present. The Society, now in the 51st year of its existence feels proud in bringing out the 23rd Volume of 'The Pharmstudent' this year. 'The Pharmstudent' has the unique distinction of being the first Indian Journal of the students of pharmacy discipline, and is being abstracted in the *International Pharmaceutical Abstracts*.

The success and failure of a curriculum depends largely on the teacher. A good teacher, for example, can make any curriculum impressive and meaningful. While the increased intake of students and modernisation of coursework appears to be a healthy trend, it should be admitted that suffi-

cient attention is not being paid to the number and quality of teachers. Lately, faculty position in some disciplines has improved. However, leaving aside the examples of few inspired teachers who educate themselves, there has been little effort to organise in a proper fashion the continuous education of teachers. Poorly informed teachers cannot motivate the students. This in turn, reflects on his/her career. This factor is of vital importance and deserves adequate & immediate attention in light of the current restructuring. There has been a widespread interest in the establishment of a Central Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, which could offer highly advanced training in different disciplines. It has already been proposed to house such a Centre in this University. With the active cooperation and assistance of one and all concerned, it is hoped to materialise in the near future. Once established, it shall certainly be a boon and can solve the present day crises. A special assistance from the University Grant Commission, which is already sought for, can further hasten the progress of the Department.

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.....she is not unhappy today.

Back on the rails, she is confident of a smooth sail ahead. She solicits the assistance and creative contribution of one and all. She expects her children, who are now placed high in various walks of pharmaceutical profession to visit her more frequently and sincerely appeals to render a fraction of their expertise for her welfare. With the emerging trends in academic, research, cocurricular and administrative spheres, she feels proud in carrying the torch at the forefront towards the year 2000 A.D.