

Obituary

Ganesh Dutt Shukla

(10 December 1948–22 January 2019)



Professor G.D. Shukla, former Head of the Department of Psychiatry, Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College and Hospital, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, breathed his last on 22 January 2019 at 9.55 a.m. A renowned psychiatrist in the region, Professor Shukla was a towering personality in his institution. His sudden demise was a shock to many. Besides his family members, those particularly sad were his students, friends,

colleagues and his close acquaintances. His demise was deeply unsettling.

Till the last minute of his life, Professor Shukla looked healthy. On his last day, he got ready as usual, to attend his clinic at 10.00 a.m. Around 9.30 a.m., his wife noticed that he had not reached the breakfast table. She went to the bedroom and found him almost dead. He died of cardiorespiratory arrest. He was 70. He left behind his wife and only daughter, both doctors.

He was born on 10 December 1948 in village Mubarakpur of District Ambedkar Nagar in Uttar Pradesh. Professor Shukla's father died before reaching 40 years of age; his mother passed away in 2018. Of his two brothers, the elder one (an alumni of IIT Kharagpur) was an engineer in the Army and after taking voluntary retirement is now settled at Pune, Maharashtra. His younger brother is a senior general manager in JP Cements at Churk in District Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh. His sister is settled in the USA. His wife, Dr Asha Shukla is a senior obstetrician and gynaecologist and his daughter Dr Pragya Shukla is an assistant professor in clinical oncology in the Delhi Government Cancer Hospital, Shahdara (located in G.T.B. Hospital Campus), Delhi. Dr Pragya is married to Dr Vinoy Upadhyay, an orthopaedic surgeon, now running a multispecialty hospital at Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh.

Professor Shukla had his medical education from the Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi. He completed his MBBS in 1970 and MD (Psychiatry) in 1976 and his doctorate in 1987 (while in government service). He always held the second position in his MBBS batch. He received 'Certificates of Proficiency' for standing second in order of merit in his first and final MBBS examinations. He was awarded the Best Student of the Year Prize for his commendable academic and extracurricular activities by BHU in 1969. He was awarded the Tilak Venkoba Rao Oration Award of the Indian Psychiatry Society in 1984, Indian Psychiatry Society's Central Zone Oration Award in 1988 and the Manasa Hospital Rajahmundry Oration Award in 1988.

After obtaining his postgraduate degree, he started his career at Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College and Hospital, Jhansi, in 1977 as an Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Psychiatry, and remained there for around two decades.

When the Government of Uttar Pradesh implemented its ban on private medical practice in state-run medical colleges, he took voluntary retirement in 1996 and started medical practice at home—fully conscious of medical ethics, and soon earned a reputation as an honest, dedicated and renowned psychiatric consultant. He also worked as a professor of psychiatry at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sevagram, Wardha, Maharashtra for around 2 years (2003–05) when persuaded by one of his classmates. From 2006 till his death, he remained in practice as a senior consultant psychiatrist at Jhansi.

Professor Shukla was a well-recognized personality in his discipline as a teacher, a researcher as well as a clinician. He was a popular teacher in his institution, who always enjoyed respect from his students. He published 96 papers in high-impact journals with a series of articles in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, on topics such as temporal lobe epilepsy—sexual disturbances, psychiatric manifestations and laterality effect; electroconvulsive therapy; phantom limb; asneezia and Kleine-Levin syndrome. Besides being the co-editor of a national professional medical journal for 5 years, he co-edited three books—one on sexual medicine and two on medical biostatistics. He edited a series of institutional magazines and souvenirs on a variety of programmes that took place in his medical college from time to time. Further, as a clinician in his field, he earned a reputation as the best consultant psychiatrist in this region. Professor Shukla was a fellow of five, a member of seven and the president of three national and regional professional societies in the field of psychiatry.

Professor Shukla's inspiring approach to the teaching of psychiatry has been his biggest contribution to the fraternity. His preparation for teaching was extraordinary. He used to read extensively before imparting wisdom to the students. His command over the subject was tremendous. His seminars and lectures used to have jam-packed audiences. Many of his students have gone on to hold senior positions in India and abroad. His students and colleagues recalled his many qualities, including his exactitude at work and social grace. He was disciplined, punctual, sincere and industrious and instilled the same values in those who came under his fold. As a person, he was affectionate, simple, hospitable and humble.

Professor Shukla had a great love for biostatistics. He always promoted biostatistical applications in medicine and contributed considerably towards development of the specialty while working at Jhansi since the 1980s. He was one of the founders of the Indian Society for Medical Statistics (ISMS) in 1983 at Jhansi and played a key role in its creation. The ISMS has organized 37 national professional conferences in different parts of the country. He and I jointly prepared the initial draft of the Society's constitution in 1983 and revised it in 2015. He contributed immensely to forming the Society's fellowship and awards' rules and extended much support to me in running the Society as its general secretary—particularly in its initial years. He volunteered to meet the Society's initial expenses and donated from his personal funds for strengthening the financial position of the Society. He attended its annual conferences for almost two decades. Though he was not a biostatistician yet,

he had a deep knowledge of biostatistical methods and also had much appreciation for the discipline. He supported the promotion of biostatistics in India and thus improvement in the quality of health research through better application of biostatistical methods. He was the founding treasurer of the ISMS and the recipient of its prestigious fellowship. The Society's prestigious Smt Ramrati Lalima Sahai Award was also conferred on him. Professor Shukla played an active role in strengthening the activities of ISMS and remained closely associated with it till the end of his life.

Professor Shukla had several qualities. Recognized as a literary person, he had good command over three languages—Hindi, Sanskrit and English. A man of great sense of responsibility and commitment, he had a high order of integrity. Always sincere to the cause and loyal to his duties, Professor Shukla was respectful towards his friends and colleagues, particularly his seniors. As regards his punctuality, he most often used to

be the first one to reach any programme, be it an academic event or social gathering.

In the untimely death of Professor Shukla, we lost a good friend, a medical professional who provided enormous support to the specialty of biostatistics and a thorough gentleman with rare qualities. The ISMS will always remember Professor Shukla for his enormous contributions towards its establishment and for his love and appreciation of statistics in medicine. We pay our sincere tributes to him. May his soul rest in peace.

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Many doctors in India practise medicine in difficult areas under trying circumstances and resist the attraction of better prospects in western countries and elsewhere. They die without their contributions to our country being acknowledged.

The National Medical Journal of India wishes to recognize the efforts of these doctors. We invite short accounts of the life and work of a recently deceased colleague by a friend, student or relative. The account in about 500 to 1000 words should describe his or her education and training and highlight the achievements as well as disappointments. A photograph should accompany the obituary.

—*Editor*