

**Dr Suhasini R. Prabhu***(6 August 1936–24 April 2025)*

Dr Suhasini Prabhu hailed from the Vengsarkar family; most of her siblings were also doctors. She was educated at King George English Medium School and passed the Senior School Certificate examination in March 1950. Thereafter, she graduated in Microbiology from St Xavier's College, Mumbai.

Dr Prabhu proceeded to study Medicine at Grant Medical College from 1954 to 1961 and then worked as a clinical assistant at the Royal Infirmary Hospital in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1963. Later, she completed a fellowship in Pathology at Loma Linda University in Los Angeles in 1964 and then worked as a resident in Pathology at St. Joseph's Infirmary in Atlanta in 1965.

Upon returning to India, she joined Nair Hospital, entering the department as a pool officer in 1967, and subsequently cleared her MD in Pathology and Microbiology in 1975. She rose to be Head of Department in 1979, a post she held till her retirement in 1993.

After she departed from Nair, she worked as the Chief of Laboratories at Jaslok Hospital until 1994 and at Bhatia Hospital from 1994 to 2003. She was also a visiting pathologist at the Western Railway Hospital from 2004 to 2006.

I first met her when I joined the Department of Pathology and was informed that Dr Prabhu, or 'SRP' as we referred to her, would be my guide for the MD programme. I still remember going to her chamber in Nair hospital to tell her that I was to be her student and get her signature on the form. She smiled her characteristic smile, her eyes twinkling as she chuckled and informed me that I would be the first student assigned to her for the MD.

She seemed reserved and unassuming in her manner, but was always approachable and helpful. She commanded great respect and ran the department with discipline and fairness.

She was an astute pathologist with a keen interest in gastrointestinal pathology. She co-authored a clutch of publications on the prevalence of *Helicobacter* in India during the 1990s.

During her tenure, the teaching programme was strictly adhered to, with weekly gross pathology meetings and slide discussions attended by all teaching staff members. These were a source of instruction and learning, and were appreciated by the faculty. She assigned us academic research projects and encouraged us to present these at the regional chapter and national pathology conferences. She initiated a journal club in the department, which helped her stay up-to-date with various recent advances in the subject.

If the department lacked expertise in any particular field of Pathology, Dr Prabhu would make arrangements with other institutions to send a doctor or student to study under a proficient teacher in a specific discipline, such as cardiology

or paediatrics. I was sent to Bombay Hospital to learn neuropathology under the mentorship of Dr Darab Dastur, an opportunity for which I will always be grateful to her. Her kindness and excellent stewardship of the department will be acknowledged and remembered with appreciation. Dr SR Prabhu was a great teacher, a wise mentor, and an excellent administrator who will be dearly missed.

Dr Prabhu was married to Dr Raghuvir Prabhu, a urologist, and their two children are Nikhil, a lawyer in the US, and Shreela Lalwani, a dental surgeon in Mumbai.

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**Dr PRABHU AS EXAMINER**

Dr Prabhu was one of the examiners in August 1991 for my MD (Pathology) examination. This was probably the only time I met her. To say that she was a superb examiner and a very fair one would be an understatement. I was never taught formally by her, and therefore do not know if she had a Socratic manner of teaching. But she certainly had a Socratic manner of examining students. I remember two specific instances.

Partly because she was so knowledgeable and in equal part because I was middling-at-best in my concepts in blood banking, I recall that she muddled me up on truly simple things such as antigen and antibody at the blood banking practical and viva voce.

More interestingly, the next day, in one of the cytology slides, I made a diagnosis of metastatic adenocarcinoma in the liver. She discussed the findings with me and raised so many queries and doubts, and logical interjections that she convinced me (or rather, I convinced her!) that it was actually a hepato-cellular carcinoma.

When I came out of the examination hall, I learnt from the others that it was what I had initially labelled it—a metastasis! She had fooled me again!

In both instances, she had a highly amused look on her face (which I can see as I type this). Despite these follies of mine, she (along with Dr Waghlikar and Dr SS Shrikhande) chose to pass me, and I am grateful to her and to them for that.

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