

Prof. M. N. Ghosh: A Pharmacologist Beyond Compare

Prof. Manindra Nath Ghosh (b. 1924), one of the greatest Indian pharmacologists of the last generation, breathed his last on October 28, 2021, at his residence in Kolkata. He was born into a family of pharmacologists.^[1] His grandfather, Dr. Rakhaldas Ghosh (1851–1902), was the Professor and Head of the Department of Materia Medica (now Pharmacology), Calcutta Medical College, and had authored and edited “R Ghosh’s Pharmacology, Materia Medica and Therapeutics” in 1901.^[2] His father, Prof. Birendra Nath Ghosh (1882–1957), was also closely connected with

pharmacology for more than 50 years and was the author of the famous “Textbook of Pharmacology and Therapeutics” that first appeared in 1956.^[3] It was perhaps inevitable that pharmacology became the natural choice of specialty for young Manindra Nath.

Dr. M. N. Ghosh, like his father and grandfather before him, became an eminent teacher and internationally famed researcher in medical pharmacology. After graduation in medicine from R. G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata, in 1948, he joined as a PhD candidate in pharmacology at the University of London, where he worked with the eminent pharmacologist Prof. Heinz Otto Schild (1906–1984). Prof. Schild was himself a student of famous pharmacologists of England, Sir Henry Dale and Sir John Gaddum.

After his return from England, Dr. Ghosh played a significant role in establishing the pharmacology departments of two well-known medical colleges in India. First, he was appointed as Professor and Head of Pharmacology at Medical College, Pondicherry (now Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, better known as [JIPMER]) in 1963. He raised the standard of the pharmacology department at JIPMER as one of the best in India for postgraduate teaching and research. During his stint in JIPMER, he was requested to supervise and establish the Department of Pharmacology at the Himachal Pradesh Medical College (now Indira Gandhi Medical College) at Shimla in 1966, where he remained as the founder head of the Department of Pharmacology in Shimla for 2 years from 1966 to 1968. After resuming his services in



JIPMER, he was later appointed as the Director of the Institute from July 1978 to July 1982. In the same period, he was elected to serve as the chief editor of the Indian Journal of Pharmacology from 1978 to 1980 and then the President of the Indian Pharmacology Society (IPS) in 1982. During his tenure as President of IPS, he donated a corpus fund to the Society and instituted “Prof. B. N. Ghosh Oration” in memory of his late father. After retirement from the JIPMER in 1982, he joined the Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (Kolkata) as a consultant in pharmacological research. In all these three institutes, he

established departments of pharmacology that excelled in research.

As a teacher, Prof. Ghosh guided and inspired many research scholars and medical students by his scholarly grip in pharmacology. His ability to make students understand the basic concepts of the mechanism by which drugs act, as well as his uncompromising stand on the quality of research and training are fondly remembered and cherished by his former students who have gone on to become stalwarts in their fields.

His textbook “Fundamentals of Experimental Pharmacology” is the outcome of his deep understanding and love for experimental pharmacology, coupled with his hands-on knowledge of the subject and an identified need for a book to guide students through the rudiments of experimental pharmacology. The first edition, published in 1971, has been the *sine qua non* for young researchers and postgraduate students in pharmacology for more than five decades. The book reflects his grasp of the subject, his love for animal experimentation, and his ability to explain complicated concepts in a simple manner so that beginners in pharmacology do not get discouraged by the intricacies of experimentation. Prof. H. O. Schild, the renowned pharmacologist from the University of London, wrote the introduction to the first edition, in which he observed, “books of this sort are rare and by no means easy to write because pharmacology, more than most natural sciences, lacks a well-established theoretical foundation. Yet, without theory, a subject, however rich in facts and observation, cannot truly advance and will eventually get bogged down.” In the second edition brought out in 1984, Dr. Ghosh further updated the book^[4] based on the progress in biological techniques in the

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field of pharmacology incorporating newer topics and the help of other pharmacologists (who were his students) to write a few chapters. He kept updating the book with the help of his former students and colleagues until the last edition, the sixth, which came out in 2008.

Prof. Ghosh was the recipient of many prizes and orations including the prestigious Dr. B. C. Roy Award of the Medical Council of India and was elected as Fellow of the National Academy of Medical Science. He will be greatly missed by his innumerable students and scholars, and his legacy will be fondly remembered by one and all. May his soul rest in peace!

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Conflicts of interest

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