

A Chronicle of the Department of Anatomy

*Anatomy is to Medicine as Geography is to History;
it describes the theatre of events*

J. Fernel

The department of Anatomy began functioning from June 1, 1926 with Dr. G. M. Kurulkar at the helm of affairs as Assistant Professor. The first batch had 46 students - 40 males and 6 females. The number of students has, since, grown to a hundred and eighty, with roughly an equal number of male and female students.

The department has been headed by a succession of multi-faceted & multi-talented 'Renaissance-men' who lived, worked and taught with great passion; each one leaving his distinctive and indelible mark on the working and philosophy of the department, which is today the synthesis of the efforts of these dedicated men.

What all of them shared was a firm belief, passed on to us, that is best expressed in the caption on the painting of the 'Thinking skeleton' which adorns the wall over theatre 3 (Socrates) -

*Vivtr in Genio. Cetera mortis Ervnt
- Genius alone lives, all else is mortal.*

But, more importantly, what they all shared was humility, tolerance, compassion and an unassuming demeanor, with none of the flamboyance of the anglican intellectuals of the day.

These here are brief sketches of the leaders who shaped the department.

Dr. R P Koppikar (Head: 1926 to 1952) was largely responsible for the fine collection of specimens in Comparative Anatomy and Human Anatomy that adorn the departmental museum. He visited medical institutions abroad in 1932-33. He served as Dean of Seth GS Medical College and KEM Hospital from 1942 to 1945.

Dr. G.M. Kurulkar (Head: 1952 to 1958) was a Sanskrit scholar, with a keen interest in Ayurved. He was well known for his studies in Physical anthropology of Indian Subjects, especially the tribal people of western India. He had the distinction of being President of the Anthropology section of the Indian Science Congress. Dr. G.M. Kurulkar died in 1970. His family, through a generous donation established the Dr. G.M. Kurulkar memorial oration in 1971 which to date, has brought forth several eminent personalities from varied fields to the department, to share with us their thoughts and ideas. The departmental museum was refurbished, following his death, with a generous donation from his wife, and is today, named after him.

Dr. K.D. Desai (Head: 1958 to 1976) was selected Rockefeller fellow for the year 1958 and visited Denver, Colorado for a year. His fields of interest included embryology, teratology, tissue culture and medical education. He was Chairman Board of Studies in Anatomy & Physiology, University of Bombay from 1971 to 1976. He was chairman of the committee appointed by the Government of Maharashtra for preparing a Marathi lexicon of Anatomical terms. Several of the present members of faculty have been tutored by Dr. Desai and still vivid in their memory, is a portly, affable, grey-haired gentleman, pouting his lips over a particularly vexing problem. Dr. Desai was, nevertheless, a tough task-master when it came to students' dissections - which he supervised with great interest.

Dr. S. M. Bhatnagar (Head: 1976 to 1981) was revered for his keen intellect and mastery over English language and the art of expression. In fact he was a linguist, being fluent in Sanskrit, Urdu, Bengali. He authored 'Essentials of Human Embryology' and 'Essentials of Human Genetics'. He was a very popular teacher of Anatomy, being able to come down to the level of

the students and make the study of Anatomy enjoyable. Dr. Bhatnagar's restless, searching intellect led him also to a study of law which resulted in an LL.B. from the University of Bombay.

Dr. M.L. Kothari (Head: 1981 to 1993), a general surgeon by profession, on joining the department took to Anatomy full time. Dr. Kothari, through his vast reading, was able to incorporate varied subjects into the understanding of Anatomical concepts - ranging from vedanta to quantum mechanics. He used his awesome oratory to great effect, to mould and shape a whole generation of medical students into men and women who sought excellence, pursued their goals with great enthusiasm, yet were always able to see the 'other' point of view.

Dr. Lopa Mehta (Head: 1994 to 2002) contributed towards the growth of the department through her vision, long-term planning, administrative qualities and devotion. She has also brought about trend setting innovations in teaching, learning and evaluation in the subject of Anatomy. She has authored many renowned textbooks of Anatomy, which are of national and international repute. Her services towards the welfare of the staff and the students have directly and indirectly helped the institution.

It is the bounden duty of the present department to carry out the good work done by our predecessors. The department has set up a Central Computer laboratory and Upgraded Microanatomy laboratory funded by FIST, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, Ministry of Science and Technology. This is probably the first of its kind in an anatomy department, in our country. The department also has become the hub of the activity of the Medical Education Technology Unit and FAIMER (Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research) institute. Clinical departments are queuing up to utilize the services of the flowering Laboratory for Clinical Skills and Research (C.R.L). With the toppers joining this institution year after year, the department positively hopes to remain as one amongst the best departments of Anatomy in this country.

We should also like to place on record the meritorious services rendered to the department by Dr. CF Pereira, Dr. PM Mehta, Dr. R Rege, Dr. IM Mehta, Dr.MK Kadam, Dr. JL Shah, Dr. TS Ahuja and Dr. GN Hoskeri.