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Dr.L.P.Shah Oration 2010: Introspection of a Psychiatrist – Dreams Realized: Dr. K P. Dave

🕒 January 13, 2012 📁 L.P.SHAH ORATION



Good Morning.

Respected President of the IPS – West Zonal Branch, Dr. Suwalka; Dr. Vankar and the entire Executive Committee; and the Chairpersons. Let me take this opportunity to thank all of you for being here today

morning. Let me also thank the IPS –West Zonal Branch for awarding the prestigious Dr. L P. Shah Oration for the year 2010 to me.

I have been in the field of Psychiatry since the last 4 decades and have been witness to tremendous changes in the field. These changes have always made me wonder about the art and science of Psychiatry. Hence I have decided to call my speech “**INTROSPECTION OF A PSYCHIATRIST – DREAMS REALIZED**”.

The history of Psychiatry in Mumbai is a chronicle of individual endeavor. Stalwarts like Dr. N S. Vahia, Dr. V N. Bagadia and Dr. L P. Shah started and set up comprehensive services in the city in public hospitals. The Department of Psychiatry in KEM Hospital bears testimony to the same. These great teachers have been responsible for encouraging and nurturing the skills and talent of dynamic psychiatrists not only in Mumbai, but also the whole of India. I remember Dr. V N. Bagadia telling me, after I had finished MD, “Keep your expenses low and charge reasonably from your patients, and you will do well.” This has always motivated me in my practice. I have learnt not to be fussy about my fees and I take whatever my patients give me.

Over the years, I have seen many Departments coming up. I have also seen numbers of Psychiatrists being trained in them and going into full time academics or private practice, here and abroad. Most of the Departments, now, are very ably run by women, in all academic posts – Assistant Professors to Professors and Heads of Departments. In my opinion, they have been excellent in their leadership.

In the field of private practice, too, there have been individuals who have done good work and have been advocates of their specialized work. In addition to General Psychiatry, now we have specialized setups viz. Deaddiction Centers, Learning Disability Clinics, Autism Services and Geriatric Clinics available in our Institutes. In spite of these services being available, there are many lacunae in the care being provided to the Mentally Ill. We do not have enough Rehabilitation Centers and Day Care Centers in our city. The ones that are present are not easily accessible or affordable.

The teaching of Psychiatry in the Undergraduate level is limited to a few lectures in the curriculum and a couple of weeks posting in the Departments. It is insufficient to inculcate or develop an interest in the field. Hence we have very few undergraduates who take up Psychiatry as a Post graduate Specialty.

After finishing post graduation, most students enter into private practice since few full time academic positions are available in the institutes. Setting up a private practice is a difficult option in a metropolitan

city like Mumbai. There is, already, a large number of practicing psychiatrists to contend with. There is cut throat competition too. There is also the presence of consultants of other specialties, those who merrily eat away into the practice of the General Psychiatrist.

If setting up a Clinic based practice is not difficult enough, then setting up a Nursing Home practice is extremely tough. The high cost of property and maintenance, and labor issues notwithstanding, there are the special provisions of the National Mental Health Act to contend with. Satisfying the terms and conditions laid down by the law, especially the ratio of trained professionals to patients, is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

The attitude of general public towards psychiatric problems, in general, and psychiatric nursing homes, in particular, doesn't seem to be favorable. I started a Rehabilitation service along with residential facilities, a few years ago, in a suburb in Mumbai in a residential area. The place belonged to a dear friend of mine, who, after his death, had wanted his place to be utilized for the good of the mentally ill. I had started this service in accordance with the wishes of my friend, only to counter the hostility and the unfavorable attitude of the residents in that locality. They complained to the authorities, and after a legal battle I had to relocate these services elsewhere.

As for General Psychiatric patients, we also need to have good inpatient or residential services for those suffering from Dementia. A trend, nowadays, is to start practice in a group. A group of like-minded individuals come together and start various kinds of services – inpatient or rehabilitation and daycare. The foremost example that comes to mind is the endeavor of young psychiatrists like Dr. Vishal Sawant, Dr. Prasanna Tendolkar, Dr. Karthik Rao and Dr. Malik Merchant. These dynamic psychiatrists have pooled together resources to start inpatient services on the outskirts of Mumbai. We need to have another look at the provisions and implementation of the National Mental Health Act.

There have been a number of incidents that highlight unethical practices and abuse of the rights of the Mentally Ill. A study in 1999 showed that the rights of the mentally ill were blatantly disregarded in many mental asylums of our country. Thus we need to be extremely alert so that such incidents are not repeated.

These were some of my thoughts that I felt should be put across to you. Thank you for your kind attention.

Dr.K.P.Dave

Consultant Psychiatrist in Private Practice since 4 decades.

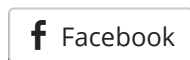
Retired Honorary Professor & Head, Department of Psychiatry, L T M Medical College & Hospital, Sion, Mumbai. (2001)

Professor of Psychiatry, K J Somaiya Medical College & Hospital, Sion, Mumbai.

Past Secretary & President of Bombay Psychiatric Society

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