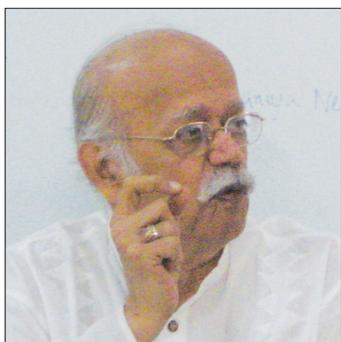


Dr. Ashok DB Vaidya

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Dr. Ashok DB Vaidya

Childhood is the most impressionable period and influences during this period have a deep and long-lasting effect. So was it with Dr. Ashok Vaidya. Born in Jetpur in Saurashtra in the renowned family of Vaidya Mayaram Sundarji, young Ashok came under the spell of Sri Nathalal Joshi, Sri Makarand Dave, and Kaka Kalelkar, who were regular visitors to his house. His ancestral home carried the flavor of both literature and medicine (the family owned a pharmacy - Dhanwantari Aushadhalya, where the famous Raambaan Pills were made), strong enough to turn his mind toward medicine.

In the rich environs of his home, distinguished visitors injected the fervour of nationalism, as much as they introduced music, poetry, and literature. It is little

surprising then that the youngster grew up to love these fine things in life, a love that has endured for the last three quarters of the century. His parents came from rich backgrounds, spiritually, culturally, and educationally rich and he was surrounded by a family, which nurtured the best in him. Other things may change us, but we start and end with the family said Anthony Brandt. Dr. Vaidya's family molded him, and put him on the path to seek the truth, not the metaphysical or philosophical truth, that came later, but the biological truth.

After standing first in all Saurashtra in the Intermediate exam, Dr. Vaidya qualified for entry into the Seth GS Medical College in Bombay, where rank holders had a direct entry. During his years in the college he studied hard, took part in elocutions, debates, and became the General Secretary. In this busy schedule he also found time to meet, become friendly, and fall in love with Rama, who has shared his life for all these long years.

His love for pharmacology blossomed under the guidance of giants such as UK Sheth, RJ Vakil, NK Bhide, RS Satoskar, BB Gaitonde, RD Ganatra, and P Raghavan. It was these people who mentored a generation of scientists, such as Manu Kothari, Ajit Phadke, Rajni Khokhani, Jayant Doshi, Lalit Shah, Madhu Ingle, Mahendra Sheth, KB Bhargava, Ramesh Shah, and even the firebrand Datta Samant, who moved from Medicine to Trade Unionism and changed the face of Bombay forever.

He left the college with an MD in internal medicine, to go across the road to Haffkine Institute as a Typhoid Officer. It was here that he had his first taste of research and it was this experience that along with others drove him to do his PhD in Clinical Pharmacology. Dr. Ashok Vaidya with his wife Dr. Rama moved to Yale with the Merck International Fellowship. The sudden change to the environs of Yale were both invigorating and yet frightening. He had to unlearn a lot that he had learned and method by which he had learned it. The information oriented education system was now replaced with the investigation oriented education. Dr Vaidya took all courses, such as Molecular Biology, Biochemistry, Nuclear Medicine, Biomedical Electronics to sharpen his skills in pharmacology.

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After imbibing a lot, the Vaidyas returned to India, although carrying a bit of Yale in their hearts, and Dr. Vaidya joined the CIBA Research Centre. At CIBA over 20,000 synthetic compounds and plants extracts were studied for their pharmacological activities, before the centre was closed down in the 1990s. The closure of Ciba and Hoechst Research centres, much to the dismay of scientists and delight of real estate developers, signalled the end of an era of research. Dr. Vaidya continued at Ciba as its Medical Director. At the Research centre Dr. Vaidya had the good fortune to work under visionaries like Prof TR Govindachari and Prof RS Grewal with a team of scientists that included Dr. TG Rajagopalan, Dr. MD Nair, Dr. S Rajappa, Dr. CL Kaul, Dr. Joy David, Dr. RR Rao, Dr. Niranjan Mankodi, Dr. Arun Bhatt, and others.

His daughter Vidita credits both her father and mother for the love of biology that she inherited. The beautiful environs of the Ciba campus-lush greenery, old-world bungalows, and above all witnessing often the enthusiastic scientific debates-left an indelible impression on her mind, that she carries even today while she works to understand the impact of life experiences on brain and neurobiology of emotions at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.

Like old soldiers, scientists too do not retire, neither do they fade away. Dr. Vaidya moved from CIBA to more socially relevant fields. In fact, retirement provided Dr. Vaidya with a unique opportunity to pursue his increasing interests in the field of complementary medicine. He joined hands with one of the leading Ayurveda specialists Vd. Antarkar and began exploring the possibility of using complimentary medicine along with modern medicine to alleviate the suffering of patients. The two of them undertook the first double-blind Ayurveda clinical trial on Arogyavardhini. With this trial he embarked on a new journey, a foray in the world of reverse pharmacology and holistic medicine.

Dr. Vaidya has been a strong supporter of integrative medicine, yet he realizes the challenges of integrating these two sciences, one based on holism and one on reductionism. He has a positive opinion suggesting utilization of strengths of both these approaches. He always iterates that there is

no question of superiority or inferiority of any science, but avers that one should only think of their deployment in larger interest of mankind.

Dr. Vaidya is presently the Research Director, Kasturba Health Society, Medical Research Centre, Mumbai. He along with his brother Akhil who is very distinguished scientist from Drexel University, conceived a pioneering and promising concept of reverse pharmacology. This has been greatly accepted globally and several articles have been published in national and international journals highlighting its importance in future drug discovery. The Maharashtra University of Health Sciences is beginning a fellowship program in this specialty. Dr. Vaidya has widespread interests, interests which in his own words extend from Hollywood to Holy Geeta. Dr. Vaidya has been working in areas of medicine as diverse as aging, malaria, and regeneration. His belief in *kayakalpa*, in the philosophies of Darshana and Pramana endear him to leading thinkers in this field. Dr. Vaidya has made innumerable contributions to science in the form of research articles and also a number of books which he has co-authored with prominent men in the field. He pioneered the concept of Vaidya-scientist, on the lines of the concept of '*Ayurvediya*' proposed by *Lokmanya* Tilak.

Dr. Vaidya now enters the fourth quarter of his century, another milestone that most of us look forward to. During this period he has won awards too numerous to enumerate, his list of publications is also too long to print herein. This is despite he preferred to remain away from any popularity and limelight. We also hope that the fourth quarter of his century is as eventful and satisfying to him as the previous ones have been. There are a few people of such a caliber to come by, and we treasure them and their association with us. J-AIM family wishes a long healthy life to him, Dr. Rama, and the whole family. We continue to remain blessed with his guidance and mentorship.

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