

Indian Contribution to Obstetrics and Gynaecology

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Dr. Subodh Mitra

The founder of “Mitra operation for Cancer Cervix and Mitra operation of Uterus Cancer” Prof. Subodh Mitra was born on 1st November 1896 in Jessore (now in Bangladesh).

Though hailing from a middle class family, he had a dream of becoming a doctor. With zeal and enthusiasm he fulfilled his dream. He got his MBBS degree from Calcutta University in the year 1922. As an undergraduate, he saw the plight and suffering of female patients which made him

take up obstetrics and gynaecology as a career. Those days Germany was considered as one of the best destination for study in medical science and therefore, immediately after completing his MBBS he headed for Germany. His academic brilliance can be judged from the fact that he passed his post graduation in Obstetrics and Gynaecology within 2 years. He got MD from Berlin University in Germany in the year 1924. However, he was not satisfied with this and headed to Edinburgh. He received additional degrees of FRCS in 1925 and FRCOG in 1928.

Germany was his second home but his roots were in India. After completing his study, he returned to India and started working as Assistant Superintendent and Resident Surgeon at R.G. Kar Medical College.

Going through the list of his appointments and attachments gives us an idea how much he was loved and appreciated by his colleagues and seniors.

He became the director of Chittaranjan Seva Sadan, one of the biggest women’s Hospital in Calcutta. He also became the Principal of Chittaranjan Seva Sadan College of Obstetrics, Gynaecology and child health. He was appointed as Dean of the faculty of medicine and member

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of the senate of the academic council of the Calcutta University.

His dedication was appreciated by his first hospital and college. He became the Director-Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at R.G. Kar Medical College Calcutta.

He was a very good orator and had good organising skill. This is reflected in the fact that he became the 9th president of All India Obstetrics and Gynaecology Conference held at Amritsar in the year 1957. He also presided as the president during the 43rd India Science. He was appointed vice chancellor of Calcutta University.

He was a surgeon par excellence. He developed innovative techniques in the surgery of cancer and uterus. His technique was well appreciated world over. The technique developed by Dr. S. Mitra for Cancer Cervix Operation Extended Radical Vaginal Hysterectomy with Extra peritoneal Lymphadenectomy was officially announced in British, America and Germany gynecological conferences.

He demonstrated this technique in Vienna in 1952. As an appreciation, this technique of operation has been embodied in a monograph “Mitra Operation for Cancer of the Cervix”. This was published simultaneously in U.S.A. by Charles C. Thomas, in Canada by the Ryerson Press, Toronto and in London by Blackwell Scientific Publication Ltd. Oxford, England.

Dr. Mitra’s association with Germany was from his M.D. days and was associated with Germany as visiting faculty. He addressed the German Academy of science

which is the oldest Academy of Science in the world. During this trip he demonstrated his “Mitra Operation for Cancer of the Cervix” at the Berlin University. During this trip he was highly appreciated at the German Gynaecological Congress for his contribution in the field of Gynaecological malignancy.

He also received appreciation from Italian counterparts. He was awarded Honoris Causa Memberships of the OB & GYN society of Germany and Italy for his scientific contribution in the field of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

Cancer surgery was at his heart. With his hard earned money and handsome donation from Deshbandhu Memorial Trust he built Chittaranjan Cancer Hospital in Calcutta, one of the most up to date cancer hospital for comprehensive cancer care. It is worth noting that Madam Curie inaugurated this hospital. Teaching was his passion. He built the University college of Medicine for the post graduate studies in basic medical science as well as for higher clinical degrees. Also as a director of Chittaranjan Seva Sadan Hospital he was instrumental in raising the status of the hospital into a post graduate college of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and clinical health.

It is said that the best death for an artist is to die on the stage while performing. Thus the great clinician, surgeon, teacher died on the 5th September, 1961 (Teachers Day) Vienna while attending the 3rd International Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. India will remember his contribution for ever.