



Milestones

Indian contribution to Obstetrics and Gynaecology

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A great visionary, orator, educationist, Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Sir Arcot Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar was one of twins born in the year 1887 on 14th October at Kurnool. His twin brother was the distinguished Sir Arcot Ramaswami Mudaliar and because of their towering personalities they were called as Arcot twins in Madras.

After completing his schooling at Kurnool, he went to Madras for further studies. He obtained B.A. degree with Telugu as second language, at the Madras Christian College. Subsequently he completed his studies in Medicine in Madras and joined the Government Hospital for women and children at Egmore (Madras) where he served in different capacities for over 35 years. It is because of his magnificent skill and knowledge of the speciality that hundreds of students and thousands of patients flocked to the Maternity Hospital, Egmore (Madras).

In 1934, he was appointed as Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Madras Medical College. In the year 1939 he became the first Indian to be Principal of the same college and also superintendent of Govt. Hospital for women and children, Madras.

In the year 1923, he was elected senate member of the Madras University. Thereafter in 1924, he was made Vice Chancellor of Madras University. He remained on this post for a record period of 27 years. By any standards he was the best known, highly respected and even feared vice-chancellor in his time. During his tenure, he made many changes in the University functioning and made the University of an International standard. Students



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from Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, Middle east and all over India came to this University and took training in OBST & GYN from him. He was an excellent teacher, administrator, skilled accoucher in the labour wards, good surgeon in the gynaecological theatres and a brilliant speaker who spellbound his audience with his mastery over the English language as well as the art and science of obstetrics. His book "Clinical Obstetrics" was first printed in Great Britain in 1938 and has gone through eight editions. His text book has guided medical students in our country for over a generation now and even today his book is the basic in Clinical Obstetrics.

He was the founder member and second President of the Obstetrics and Gynaecological Society of South India. He had tremendous organising skill which he utilized while organising the first All Indian Congress at Madras and in 1936 and was elected President for the 5th All India Conference in Obstetrics and Gynaecology held in Bombay in 1947.

He was the President of All India Educational Conference in the year 1946. Later on he became the Chairman of University Board of Education in 1948-49 and Chairman of Education Commission in 1953. In 1959, he was the President of Indian Science Congress and was closely associated with the Government bodies of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, All India Council for Technical Education, All India Institute of Medical Education and Research and Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. He was a founder member of the Indian Medical Council where he served for four decades. He was appointed as a member of Bhor Committee on Medical Relief and Education and Chairman of its Medical Education sub-committee. As a Head of the Health Survey and Planning Committee he brought out the monumental report on the state of health in our country and on its future planning.

He represented India at several international councils. He was Chairman of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). He was also the Deputy Leader of the Indian delegation to the First World Health Assembly in Geneva

in 1948. He was elected as the Chairman of the World Health Organisation (W.H.O.) Executive Board in 1949 and 1950, was Vice-President of the Eighth World Health Assembly in 1955 and President of the Fourteenth World Health Assembly in the year 1961.

He found his metier in medicine and education, which paved the way for 15 honorary doctorates for him. Besides Medicine he was equally interested in politics as well. He was a brilliant speaker and was member of Madras Legislative Council for over 25 years. The usual time limit prescribed for all was waived for him.

For his meritorious services in the field of Medicine and politics he was honoured with Padma Vibhushan in 1965. Internationally he was awarded a Knighthood in 1945. Many honours were conferred on him from all over the world. He was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Laws by the Oxford University. He was founder fellow of the Royal college of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists in 1930 and Honorary Fellow of the American College of Surgeons in 1940.

A simple, kind human being and a well read learned clinician, famous for his " paternal interest in the maternity hospital" and one of the greatest obstetricians and gynaecologists of his time as described by C. Subramaniam, left us after a brief illness on 15th April 1974 at Madras. He left a vacuum in the field of Clinical Obstetrics and Gynaecology and we all salute him for his great deeds.