

*OBITUARY*

**Dr. Dinkar D. Palande. 1929–2020**

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Dinkar Dattaraya Palande, pioneering leprologist in the field of reconstructive surgery, rehabilitation and disability prevention, passed on in Pondicherry on April 23rd at the age of 90.

His repertoire of expertise ranged from chief surgeon for years at Sacred Heart Leprosy Hospital, Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu state (then highly endemic for leprosy), to teaching and inspiring young surgeons internationally, including multiple visits to Brazil, to his integral role in setting up rehabilitation centres in tribal areas of Odisha state, India, while serving as Surgical Consultant to Lepra India. These just a few of his noble contributions over the decades.

Remembered as a compassionate, perspicacious, and visionary physician and humanitarian, Dr. Palande's career and vocational trajectory was one that can summon to mind: touching, inclusive, dialectic, virtuoso, enthusiasm.

Touching: approaching each patient at a multi-sensory 'see level' posture, sitting close up, very present, within gentle touching reach.

Inclusive: from the very beginning, I felt comfortable and at ease with his signature style, whether individually or in group discourse, such as at the 1993 ILA pre-Congress workshop, 'Management of Physical Disability' where I was among the participants.

Dialectic: always cheerfully encouraged cultivation of critical reasoning during individual and group conversations. No monolithic lectures.

Virtuoso: Dozens of his own published investigative works and acknowledgement of his work by others published in peer reviewed journals bear witness to his pioneering service as a reconstructive surgeon in leprosy, including repair and alternative approaches to peripheral nerve trunk damage.

Enthusiasm: signature style, radiated through his conversation, his gentle smile, his easy laughter.

His expertise embodied a remarkable contrast that evolved over his decades long service in the field of leprosy: he contributed both generously in the sphere of reconstructive surgery and remarkably in the sphere of non-surgical, preventive strategies.

Renowned surgeon that he was – honored as a pioneer by the International Federation of Societies for Surgery of the Hand and a Founder of the Indian Society for Surgery of the Hand – he was able to shift the focus of his vision seamlessly so as to not miss other valuable and expansive perspectives. Illustrating this, from his editorial in a 1994 Leprosy Review editorial, 'Nerve Involvement in Leprosy. Prevention and Management of Deformities: Need for a Paradigm Shift': '...without first achieving the change of perspective, of approach, any number of pamphlets, articles, and books published and distributed is not going to have much practical impact.'

That 4-page editorial written by a maestro surgeon in the field does not once reference the word 'surgery' nor 'surgeon' throughout as he cogently argues his point.

Survived by his loving wife Smita and daughter, Sunaina, blessed by friendships that transcend a range of conventional boundaries, Dr. Palande also cultivated a very rich inner life. He composed poetry, a book of which was published by Sunaina on his 88th birthday. And before the word 'mindfulness' became popularized in recent years, he sought long ago to cultivate an awareness of 'presence'... towards his patients, his students, his colleagues, his friends, the community. And I believe that gift endures within such a large number of life narratives of all those privileged to have been touched by him.