

Milestones

Indian contribution to Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Purandare C N¹, Patel Madhuri²

¹*Ex Prof. of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Grant Medical College, Mumbai, India*

²*Prof. & HOD, ESI-PGIMS, M G M Hospital, Parel, Mumbai, India.*

On 27th April 1877 a male child was born in the family of Vaidis which practiced Aurvedic Medicine for generations. This child was Nilkanth Anand Purandare.

As a child he was very curious about diseases and their treatment showing an early aptitude towards learning. Thus he opted for medicine after passing matriculation.

He joined Grant Medical College in 1896 and graduated in 1900. During his studentship he received many prizes and medals and the important one was Charles Morehead prize in Medicine. With this scholarship he was appointed as an Hon. Asst. Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Bai Motlibai and Petit Hospitals and Tutorship at the Grant Medical College while pursuing his post graduation studies. He passed his M.D. in Obstetrics and Gynaecology with distinction.

In 1911 Dr. N. A. Purandare started his private practice. He knew that obstetric care was exclusively in the hands of 'dais'. With his kindness, sympathy and brilliance he could break the strong hold of 'dais' in obstetric care. Meantime his popularity increased. He became a famous Obstetrician not only in Mumbai and India, but world over.

A few brilliant, dedicated Indian doctors started a hospital and medical college in Parel, Mumbai. They invited Dr. N.A. Purandare to join them. Thus in the year 1926, Dr. N.A. Purandare became Hon. Professor in Midwifery and Gynaecology at the Sheth G.S. Medical College and Hon. Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at the King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital. Later he was appointed as Hon. Obstetrician at the Nowrosjee

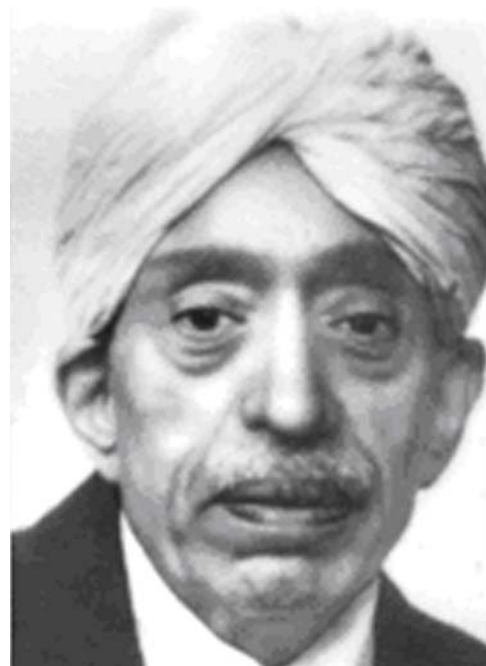


Fig 1. Dr. N. A. Purandare
MD (Bom.), FRCOG

Wadia Maternity Hospital which was across KEM Hospital.

He was a pioneer in establishing the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at KEM and Nowrosjee Wadia Hospitals. He put these Departments not only on the map of India but also got them International recognition. He was a dedicated teacher and a keen clinician. He was loved and respected by students as well as colleagues. He retired in 1940 but continued as an Emeritus Professor till his death.



Fig 2. Purandare Griha

Two very important researches in the field of Obstetrics to his credit are :

(i) Importance of location of anterior shoulder in the progress of labour and its significance in obstructed labour and (ii) A method for detecting cephalopelvic disproportion. These researches were universally accepted and incorporated in International text books.

At the Bombay Obstetrics and Gynaecological Society's Golden Jubilee Year function Dr. Vasant B. Patwardhan commented, "We hail Dr. Purandare for the recognition he earned at an international level for his observations on 'Anterior Shoulder' and his method of accessing cephalo-pelvic disproportion at the pelvic brim. Obstetricians like him come once in a lifetime."

Dr. N.A. Purandare was an avid learner. He visited UK in the early 1930's to update his knowledge and had an interesting encounter with Prof. Victor Boney. During Prof. Boney's visit to India he asked to meet the turbaned Doctor Purandare who had challenged his clinical judgement in a case in UK and had proved him wrong. He applauded this Indian's clinical acumen.

He knew the importance of dais and nurses. He was aware that to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality these dais and nurses should be trained scientifically. Thus he wrote a book in marathi named 'Prasuti Shastra'. This book was not only accepted by the nurses and dais but also many marathi speaking families.

It was back in the 1920s that he perceived the need for an organization that would bring Obstetricians and Gynaecologists together, both in Bombay and India.

Subsequently, he conducted correspondences almost of his own accord with any physician interested in the field of fertility. Thus he founded Bombay Obstetrics and Gynaecology Society (BOGS) in 1936. He was the first founder President of BOGS. He provided BOGS with premises on the top floor of his own Nursing Home.

The growth of BOGS now known as MOGS and the Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India is entirely due to his effort and vision. He presided over the 3rd All India Obstetrician and Gynaecology Congress held in Calcutta in 1941. In his Presidential address he suggested that a Journal should be published by the Federation to report the work of the Indian Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

He was also a member of various medical societies like Indian Medical Association and served as a President of these at various times. Deeply interested in raising the standards of medical education and ethics he worked as a Member of the Senate of Bombay University and College of Physicians and Surgeons of Bombay.

He was honoured as the Hon. Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, London, for his distinguished academic carrier. To top all the honour in the year 1963 he was made an Hon. Founder Fellow of the Indian Academy of Medical science. He was also awarded a scroll at a special convocation. Bombay also honoured him by naming a major road from Wilson College to Chowpatty after him.

Dr. N.A. Purandare had four sons, two Obstetrician and Gynaecologist and two engineers, of national and international repute. They all excelled in their respective fields.

Anna, as he was fondly called, was a very loving but disciplined person. He would appreciate academic excellence from all his children and grand children. A clinician to the last detail he held things together on a tight rein. He was an innovative obstetrician and a benevolent human being.

This giant of an Obstetrician and Gynaecologist and pioneer of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in India left us on 12th December 1964 at the age of 87 years. We all salute him and his vision and hope to continue his legacy further.