



Obituary

Dr. P. U. Asokan (1940–2022)

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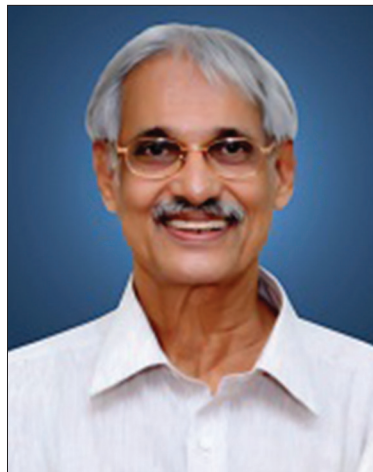


Figure 1: Dr. P. U. Asokan (1940–2022).

The passing away of Dr. P. U. Asokan [Figure 1] on May 24, 2022, has left a void very difficult to fill. He was a fine human being, a source of strength to many, young and old alike; the likes of whom is very difficult to find.

He was born on June 2, 1940, to Mr. Unnisankaran and Mrs. Paru at Thrithalloor near Vadanapally in Kerala. He was very attached to his family, particularly his mother. He secured his MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) from Stanley Medical College and MD (Doctor of Medicine) Dermatology (1973) from Medical College, Amritsar. He joined the Department of Dermatology, Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram in 1967, after a stint as Tutor in physiology department for a year. Apart from his tenure at Thiruvananthapuram, he worked at the Calicut Medical College (1984–1988) before moving on to the Government Medical College, Thrissur as the Head of the Department. He was one of the most approachable Superintendents of the Medical College Chest Hospital, Thrissur, where the dermatology department was based till 2013. He had also served as the President (1984) and the Honorary Secretary of Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists Kerala (1977–1978).

He retired from service in 1996. Post-retirement, he maintained an informal relationship with the department and did not choose to join any institution, but entered into full-fledged practice at home the whole day, as patients thronged his house. Clinical practice was relaxation for him. He abruptly stopped his practice in 2019 due to ill health.

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He married Dr. Suneethy in 1976. She retired as the Professor of Ophthalmology from Medical College, Thrissur. They were blessed with two children-Gayathri, the noted playback singer, and Ganesh, a software engineer.

He was closely associated with the Theosophical Society right from his undergraduate days at Stanley, enabled by his frequent visits to “Adyar.” He was a life member of the Theosophical Society from 1970. He was an ardent theosophist and his knowledge of esoteric philosophy was unparalleled. He was the Vice President of the Kerala Theosophical Federation, a part of the worldwide theosophical movement with its international Headquarters in Adyar, Chennai and President of the Thrissur Theosophical Society Lodge for many years. He had several other interests too. He studied Yoga in depth and was the President of the Thrissur Yoga Association for seven long years. He was also actively involved with the Sai Samithi and the Art of Living. He was extremely well-read and a scholar in spiritual matters. Dr. Suneethy describes him as “a spiritual hunter.”

As a teacher, he had a unique way of encouraging students and junior colleagues by posing questions as though he needed to clarify doubts. He would encourage them to think rationally and delve deeper into the subject, seeking answers to a particular aspect of a particular disease. He would emphasize the importance of research, and the need for an in-depth ongoing study of a disease or one aspect of a disease. Dr. S. Criton (Professor and Head, Department of Dermatology, Amala Institute of Medical Sciences, Thrissur) fondly recalls that as the Head of the Department he gave freedom to the staff members to carry out their duties

without any interference. He considered everyone as his equal and was respectful toward both the teaching and the non-teaching staff. He was a man who never made enemies. He was a role model for everyone who came in contact with him. He was sincerity at its best. He was an extremely broadminded, generous, and amiable person.

I came to know him very closely during his tenure at Calicut Medical College. Always cool and complacent, and never perturbed, he was humility personified. Occasionally, in his free time, he would discuss the elements of spirituality, theosophy, the power of Reiki, the aura - the invisible energy field that surrounds all living beings, the power of the Gayathri Mantra, etc. It was a wonderful journey for me with small packets of knowledge comprehensively delivered by a such an exuberant, unassuming, and multifaceted, always at ease personality with an ever-winning smile. His humility and compassion toward the patients irrespective of their social status left a deep impression. His patients simply adored him. He was always ready to help the poor and needy, be it with cash or medicines, a Good Samaritan detached from worldly gains.

Service with a smile was his motto. It has been said that humility comes naturally to the one who has control over his senses, akin to a paddy field wherein the plants bend down when the crop is ready for harvesting. He will forever live in the hearts of people who knew him closely. May he find eternal peace in his heavenly abode.

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