

BAL DATTATREYA TILAK

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B. D. Ghosh



BAL DATTATREYA TILAK

(1918–1999)

(Elected 1962)

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

BAL DATTATREYA TILAK (BDT) was born on the 26th of September, 1918 in Karanja, Yevatmal District of Maharashtra. He graduated in Chemistry from SP College, Pune in the year 1933 and subsequently in Chemical Technology from the Department of Chemical Technology, Bombay University (UDCT) in the year 1939. Later on he took his Ph D in Textile Chemistry in 1943 under the guidance of Professor Venkatraman. He has also taken a D Phil in Organic Chemistry in 1946 and a D Sc in 1960 both from Oxford University in England. Professor Tilak carried out post doctoral Research under Professor Robert Robinson (Nobel Laureate and President, Royal Society between 1944 and 1946 and under Professor RB Woodward (Nobel Laureate) at Harvard University between 1960 and 1961.

HIS FAMILY

Professor BDT married Shashikala in the year 1941. They were blessed with two daughters and one son. The eldest daughter Sadana, is a gold medallist in Medicine. She did her Ph D from Columbia University in the US. The second daughter, Vidya, is a graduate in political Science. She is a house wife. Their son, Mr Shripad Tilak, did his Bachelor's degree from BDUCT in Mumbai. Subsequently, he took his MS from Cornell. All the three children are now settled in the US.

POSITIONS HELD

Professor BDT held various teaching positions in the Department of Chemical Technology, Bombay University between 1946 and 1965. He was a Professor of Dyestuff Technology, BUDCT between the years 1950 and 1965. He shifted to the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune as Joint Director in 1965. A year later he became the Director and headed NCL till 1978. On retirement from NCL he kept himself active as Chief Coordinator, Centre for Applications of Science and Technology for Rural Development (CASTFORD) and Honorary Advisor, Science and Technology, Government of Maharashtra from 1981.



VISITS ABROAD

Professor Tilak had the opportunity to work with two Nobel Laureates Professor Robert Robinson in Oxford, England (1944-46) and Professor RB Woodward Harvard University, US (1960-61). He visited several countries for giving lectures on his research contributions and as a leader and member of Government of India's delegations.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

On returning from Oxford in 1946, Professor Tilak took to research and teaching at the Department of Chemical Technology, Bombay. He established the School of Research in dyestuff and heterocyclic chemistry, chemical technology and synthetic organic chemistry. Professor Tilak did outstanding basic research in the chemistry of heterocyclic compounds, heterocyclic steroids and synthetic dyes. He was interested in Industrial research and development. He contributed significantly to applied research which led to the establishment of several small, medium and large scale chemical Industries. He published nearly 200 papers in Indian and International scientific journals and supervised around 32 Ph D students.

Professor Tilak has one patent and coauthored around 25 research papers with his teacher Late Professor K Venkatraman, FNA who hailed from an illustrious family. Professor Venkatraman was the Director of UDCT between 1938 and 1957. He was a legendary figure in Chemical Technology. The two brothers of Professor Venkatraman were great. His elder brother Professor K Swaminathan was Professor of English in Madras University and later on Chief Editor of the collected works of Mahatma Gandhi. His younger brother Dr KS Sanjeevi, was Professor of Medicine, Madras Medical College and later on, Founder of the Voluntary Health Services, Adyar, Chennai. Professor Venkatraman took over as the first Indian Director of the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune in 1957 and retired in 1966. Professor Tilak succeeded his teacher and mentor, Professor Venkatraman as the Director of NCL, Pune. It was no surprise that both Professors received Padma awards. UDCT can take pride in having nourished several brilliant men who became well known subsequently in National and International scenes. Professor K Venkatraman, Professor BD Tilak, Professor MM Sharma and Professor RA Mashelkar are a few names to be mentioned.

PROFESSIONAL STANDING

Professor Tilak was elected Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences in 1951, the Indian National Science Academy in 1962 and Maharashtra Academy of Sciences in 1976. In recognition of his contribution to Industrial Research, the Government appointed him as Chairman of Hindustan Organic Chemicals in 1969 and he served in that capacity till 1976. He was in the Board of several public sector and



sector undertakings. Besides he had served in several committees of central and Maharashtra State Governments.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Professor Tilak received the KG Naik Gold Medal of MS University, Baroda in 1959, Basudev Baneerjee Gold Medal of the Indian Chemical Society in 1960 and SS Bhatnagar Prize in 1963. The following lectureships were awarded to him: K Venkatraman Lectureship (1968), KH Kabbur Memorial lecture of Bombay University (1973), Amin Memorial Lecture of Indian Chemical Manufacturer's Association (1976) and Acharya PC Ray Memorial lecture and medal of the Indian Chemical Society (1979). He was a distinguished alumnus of UDCT, Bombay. In recognition of his outstanding contribution he was conferred Padma Bhushan in 1972.

INSA has instituted an award in honour of Professor BD Tilak in the year 1982 from the funds donated by the BD Tilak Scientific Research and Educational Trust of the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune. Professor Tilak passed away on the 25th of May 1999. The country will remember him as an outstanding teacher, researcher and leader in Industrial chemistry.

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