

## Obituary

### DR M. S. NILAKANTA RAO, 1927–1998

Dr M. S. Nilakanta Rao, former Director, Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation, passed away in February 1998.

Born on April 5, 1927, Dr Nilakanta Rao had his education in the erstwhile Mysore State. Having obtained a BSc degree from Central College Bangalore, he joined the Medical College in Mysore in 1946. As an undergraduate in the Medical College, he had a bright academic record. After obtaining a medical degree, he worked for about 3 years as a lecturer in Kasturba Medical College, Manipal. In 1957, he left for the UK for postgraduate studies and specialized in chest diseases. On his return from the UK in 1961, he joined Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation (GMLF) and worked as a Medical Officer for 3 years. He was later drawn into administrative work as Joint Director and subsequently as Director of GMLF. During his tenure as Director of GMLF, he was involved in the National Leprosy Eradication Programme, as an expert consultant. He played an active role in the National Leprosy Organization (NLO), a confederation of voluntary organizations in the field of leprosy. As the President of NLO, he was able to co-ordinate the work of various voluntary organizations. In appreciation of his valuable contribution to leprosy work, Dr Nilakanta Rao was awarded the title 'Padmashri' by the Government of India.

Retiring from GMLF, Dr Nilakanta Rao settled in Bangalore, carrying out private practice in tuberculosis and leprosy. The Government of the State of Karnataka utilized his services as a member of the Expert Committee on Leprosy. He was thus able to guide the leprosy programme in Karnataka and also to co-ordinate the work of voluntary organization in the State. By his death, India has lost a prominent leprologist.

K. V. DESIKAN