

## Interview with Dr. Triratna Bhakta Manandhar

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**Dr. Triratna Bhakta  
Manandhar**

Born in July 21, 1948 in a Newar family with business background, Prof. Dr. Triratna Bhakta Manandhar is the first specialist of Operative Dentistry in Nepal. He has a long standing career in dentistry; ranging from government health service, private practice, dental service in foreign country and academia. At the later period of his career, he worked as the faculty at College of Dental Surgery, BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan. At BPKIHS, he served as the Chief of the dental college and started post-graduate program in Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics.

Prof. Manandhar mentions about an interesting coincidence of 'Tri' in many facts of his life; which starts from his name 'Triratna', schooling at 'Tribhuvan Adarsha Vidhyalaya', intermediate education at 'Trichandra College', dentistry in 'Trivandrum' and born during the regime of King Tribhuvan.

**Q. Sir, would you highlight on your family background?**

**A.** My antecedents are from Basantapur, Kathmandu; who were involved in trading business. They were contractors of merchandize for royal palace.

**Q. As you are from business-related family; wasn't your family forcing you to join the business?**

**A.** Yes, it was very difficult for me to get into the government job as a dentist because of my family background. But there were many educated people in the family; all my maternal uncles were educated. To name few; Ram Prasad Manandhar was Ambassador to UK, Ram Bhakta Manandhar was Professor in Kritipur Campus. They were all supportive to me.

**Q. Where were your initial educations accomplished?**

**A.** I did my schooling from Tribhuvan Adarsha Vidhyalaya, Pharping; I secured 11th position in SLC. I have always stood first during the school. I completed ISc and BSc from Trichandra College; however I could not appear in the final exam of BSc, I opted to join BDS in India.

**Q. Where did you complete your dentistry?**

**A.** I completed Dentistry from University of Kerala, Trivandrum in 1970 and MDS from King George Medical College, Lucknow, India in 1985.

**Q. How did you apply for the dentistry seat? Was there any competition?**

**A.** During that time, there was no competition at all; it was easy for Nepalese. I saw the notice of cultural seat of India in bulletin and applied for it. The application form used to get checked from Government of India in Delhi. I studied BDS in self-finance. My father invested the money for fees and living, my sister used to send extra money. I used to spend about IRs. 100 per month; out of which, tuition fee was IRs. 15 per month.

**Q. How did you get the opportunity to study MDS?**

**A.** While working as a dental surgeon at Bir Hospital, once a professor from Chandigarh, Dr. Amrit Tiwari came; she had suggested me to study MDS. Subsequently, I got selected to study MDS in Operative Dentistry through WHO scholarship in KGMC, Lucknow. I used to get the stipend of Rs. 5000 during that time.

**Q. Sir, you acquired the degree of ‘Operative Dentistry’. Is it different from ‘Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics’?**

**A.** It was just started in Lucknow at that time, nobody knew it that well. We used to do root canal treatment, crown, bridge, inlay, onlay, gold restorations as well. KGMC was the only place in India where gold foil was done.

**Q. There was a long gap between the time periods of your BDS and MDS studies, didn’t you have problem because of the long gap?**

**A.** Yes, I had difficulties in studying MDS after fifteen years. I was selected for Diploma in Public Health Dentistry in Israel and London; which I rejected because I wanted to study clinical subject. For which I waited a long. Meanwhile, I studied Diploma in Interior Decorations in Bombay through a correspondence course.

**Q. Did you work as an Interior Decorator?**

**A.** There wasn’t any professional benefit but, it was good to the patients. When I was posted in Nepalgunj Hospital, I illuminated and arranged the wards. This course gave me idea about making a good ambience of my clinic and home.

**Q. How did you start the government job?**

**A.** For one year I worked as a volunteer or honorary job. May be there was no vacancy, so I did not get the job. Later, Dr. Bharat Raj Baidya managed for me.

**Q. During the government job, which places in Nepal did you serve?**

**A.** My first posting was in Biratnagar, then to Butwal for five years, then in Bir Hospital, Kathmandu for ten years. Likewise, I had also worked in Kanti Children’s Hospital, Kathmandu, Pokhara and Nepalgunj. Once I was sent to Nepalgunj during the time of King’s visit. There was a trend of deputing the doctors in places of King’s visit.

**Q. Is it true, you had connections with royal family?**

**A.** Late King Birendra was my childhood friend. After the Crown Prince Birendra returned from England, my father suggested me to go behind and stay beside him. I had a bicycle at that time which my maternal uncle brought for me from London. I used to ride the bicycle with the Prince in palace premise. I

used to play with all royal princes including Birendra, Gyanendra and Dhirendra. In fact, they were very friendly.

**Q. After you came back as a dentist, didn’t you get recognition from the palace?**

**A.** Actually, I didn’t meet them personally after I became the dentist. Once, they came to meet me in Butwal.

**Q. Did not get any medal or reward from the royal family or from the government?**

**A.** I never got any padak (medal) from the government. But once I received Rs 200 from Prince Birendra during childhood on the order of the Queen Mother. It was gifted to all who were playing with the Prince.

**Q. That time a sum of Rs 200 was a huge amount, what did you do with that money?**

**A.** I used to ride taxi with that money. We used to reach airport from Pharping in taxi, I liked to show-off the Princes that we ride taxi. They were beautiful and good to us. Sometimes, they used to go with us for a ride then we used to leave them back.

**Q. Did you have private practice?**

**A.** I had a clinic near Newroad gate, for which I had brought dental chair from Lucknow for fifteen thousand rupees. The clinic ran for two-three years, then I went to foreign country.

**Q. Which foreign country did you stay for a long time?**

**A.** Initially I went Australia, New Zealand for visit, then I stayed in Vanuatu Island for 7-8 years. It is a pacific island between Australia and New Zealand. I went to Vanuatu through my wife Kamala Manandhar, who is presently Campus Chief at GPM Nursing College, Kathmandu. She went there in UNDP project through government service. She was a community health officer. She also served in Solomon Island to implement community health project.

**Q. What did you do in Vanuatu Island?**

**A.** I did government dental service there. There is an interesting incident regarding my appointment to dental surgeon. Once the project manager saw my photo of a dental camp from my wife, and asked if I am a dentist. In fact, they were in need of a dentist;



*Felicitation of Dr Manandhar by Nepal Dental Association (NDA) on Sept 12, 2009*

so they wrote a letter to UNDP. Then they arranged for our two children and myself to come to Vanuatu in the year 1993. All the allowances were provided by UNDP.

**Q. Sir, how was the health system in Pacific island country different from Nepal?**

A. I worked in capital. There was minimal access to basic health services. In other places, the services were still poor. That time it was so under developed that they didn't even get food to eat. The place was not known much, I knew it by seeing in map only.

**Q. Were you in Nepal government service at that time?**

A. Yes, I took leave from the government job and left private practice to go to Vanuatu. We went there for 2 years but got renewed for 8 years. Later due to family problem, we returned back home. Then I resigned from government job after 21 years of service; still I am getting pension from the government.

**Q. What did you do after you returned back from foreign services?**

A. After we returned in 1998; BPKIHS College of Dental Surgery was just established in Dharan. It attracted me by its beautiful infrastructure. The institute was built by spending 3 billion Indian Rupees from the Government of India. Another choice was People's Dental College, but I opted to join BPKIHS.

**Q. How was the situation of dental college in Dharan during that time?**

A. When I joined BPKIHS, Dharan In 1999; I was the only Nepali faculty. There were few dental surgeons including Supravat, Jaganath, Shivalal, Shailendra Kumar etc. I was amazed how they started dental college with only few faculties. The college was started in old buildings. As I remember, Dr. George was there; his wife used to teach Oral Anatomy. I was the head of the college. Later in 2004, new dental college building was inaugurated.

**Q. Sir, was it difficult for you to join academia from general practice?**

A. I joined BPKIHS directly as Additional Professor. After 5 years of service, I became Professor during the tenure of Vice Chancellor Lok Bikram Thapa. I had brought lots of notes and photocopies from the library in Lucknow, which made me easy to teach. I used to teach operative dentistry; what is retention and resistance form. The dentistry syllabus is too old now; I think, the scientific research that we follow are too old.

**Q. What were the developments in BPKIHS in dental field?**

A. Now, we have a very good infrastructure and faculty position in Dharan. We started MDS program in 2012, we opened it so that many Nepali students need not go abroad for studies. Dr. Purna Chandra Karmacharya; VC at that time called a meeting where I supported to conduct the PG program. Once Dr. Anil Kohli from DCI came to Dharan, he was very impressed with the college seeing at the international standard.

**Q. What has been your contribution towards Nepal Dental Association?**

A. Long back we were among the first few founders to attend the meeting at Hotel Shankar to establish the dental association. But I do not know why my name is not in the initial members' list.

**Q. Who were other dentists graduated from Kerala, during that time?**

A. I was the first one to join Kerala University dental college. Then in around 1967, Dr. Meera Joshi joined, she is now in UK. In 1969, Dr. Iswari Aryal and Dr. Basu Bishta joined. Dr. Iswari was in government

service for long time, later she retired. In 1970, Dr. Shambu Man Singh and Dr. Damdu Tenzing joined. I think, Dr. Prakash Lal Shrestha; was the last one to come to Trivandrum in 1971, later he settled in USA; he is practicing there. Unfortunately, Dr. Basu Bishta and Dr. Damdu Tenzing expired in early age. They were both working in government health service.

**Q. Sir, why do many dentists die in the earlier age?**

**A.** May be because of the stress...

**Q. Could you recall other dentists of earlier times?**

**A.** As I remember, Dr. Basanta Bahadur Shrestha, Dr. Dwarika Man Rajbhandari, Dr. Krishna Gopal Baidya were among the first league of Nepali dentists. Then Dr. Mesh Bahadur Shrestha, Dr. Rajbhai Shrestha, Dr. Buddhi Man Shrestha, Dr. Manik Ratna Bajracharya, Dr. KK Pradhan, Dr. Bina Kansakar came ahead of me. Dr. Mesh Bahadur used to call me for impaction cases in Bir Hospital. He was very particular about disinfection that he used to sterilize instruments by himself. Dr. Rajbhai was a good friend; he used to work more on Periodontics and Prosthodontics. He had a clinic in Newroad gate just opposite to mine. Dr. KK Pradhan and Dr. Manik used to work more in surgery; as they did FDSRCS. Dr. Girvan Kumar Sharma was Pedodontist from Lucknow, he was in Bir Hospital but just to sign the attendance register. Dr. Buddhi Man Shrestha settled in USA. Later, Dr. Surendra Bahadur Rajbhandari; son of late Dr. Basanta Bahadur Rajbhandari also settled in USA, Dr. Mira Malla graduated from Patna.

Still earlier, there used to be a friend Dibyashori Shrestha at Pharping school, his father was a dentist, named Ganga Lal Shrestha. He had a clinic in Newroad on the way to Indrachowk. But I do not know his qualification, probably LDS. Principal of Pharping school Satyanarayan Bahadur Shrestha used to call him 'doctor'. I have also heard of Dr. Mesh Bahadur Shrestha's father Nem Bahadur, an optician; also used to do dentistry; many people knew him as dentist also.

**Q. Who used to do orthodontics during that time?**

**A.** I think KK Pradhan used to work orthodontics also. Later, Dr. Shambhu Man Singh came as an



*Felicitations of Dr. Manandhar by Conservative Dentistry & Endodontic Association of Nepal (CDEAN) on February 4, 2017*

Orthodontist. I also did few removable cases. I left those instruments in Apollo Hospital, where I worked for a brief period before joining BPKIHS. I found orthodontics as a difficult subject, mainly in making appliances.

**Q. What is the difference between the life of a dentist and other profession?**

**A.** I know only about dental profession, don't know much about other professions. Still it is good to be a dentist. BPKIHS has paid me well.....anyway there is no life without money.

**Q. What is the next mission, Sir?**

**A.** I worked in BPKIHS, Dharan for more than 15 years. I felt sick while serving for dentistry as External Examiner in Kathmandu in 2016; then after I have retired and improving my health.

**Q. Lastly, how are the dentists of new generation?**

**A.** I think they are better. The new generation is mainly good with the computer skills. Their leadership quality is good. Moreover, I feel that my students give me huge respect.