



-Dr. Dwarika Man Rajbhandari

INTERVIEW

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Born on 1973 B.S. (1915 A.D.), Dr. Dwarika Man Rajbhandari is one of the pioneer dental surgeons of Nepal. He has served civil as well as military dental service for more than five decades. Still at the age of 83, the senior dentist can be met at his clinic in Naghal tole, seeing the patient or guiding his dentist sons.

Question: How did you start dental practise in Nepal ?

Answer: When I came to Nepal after training, there were hardly 1 or 2 qualified dentists and few traditional practitioners. I started my clinic here later I was appointed as dental surgeon for military & civil personnel and I worked under this department in Bir Hospital from March 1946 to March 1952, after which my service was transferred to organised military hospital.

In 2009 BS (1952 A.D.), I started military service as 2nd lieutenant. I became lieutenant in 2012 B.S., Captain in 2018 B.S. and Major in 2019 B.S. I retired from Royal Nepalese Army Service as a Major in 2027 B.S. I worked in Tri-Chandra Military Hospital, Kathmandu during my military services.

Question: How was the condition of dental practise that time ?

Answer: There used to be dispensary called "Chandra sale Dispensary" run by government. The registered practitioners with authorized signature used to prescribe patent drugs, powder, gargle, mouth wash. There were hardly 2-3 such dispensaries. These days you have medicine shops at every corner.

There were only few dental practitioners but there used to be a big competition among them. Infact there was a sort of cold war between professionals not only in dentistry but in all other fields too. But I don't think anything bad against anybody.

I had privelege to work in Rana's palaces. They used to call me for dental services, I used to carry my instruments to their Durbars. I was the doctor of Maharaja Padma Shamsher, I also had opportunity to extent dental care for king Tribhuvan and then king Mahendra.

Question: Where did you have your dental education ?

Answer: At the time when I joined dental course in India, 2nd world war was going on, hardly there were 5 to 10 students in dentistry, even very few number of students were admitted in medical course. I completed my DDS (Diplomate in Dental Sciences) from Delhi Dental College in 1944. Later at Nair College in Bombay, I had trainings in practicals. I learnt many things from practitioners and private clinics in India.

Question: There used to be Licentiate in Dental Surgery that time

Answer: L.D.S. (Licentiate in Dental Surgery) course was present with the Nair college, Bombay and one or two other colleges that time which I did not join, thinking that my diplomate degree was sufficient for me.

Question: What made you become a dentist & not a medical doctor ?

Answer: Actually I was doing LMS (Licentiate in Medical Sciences) in Homeopathy from Bihar. I discontinued the course after studying for 2 years, thinking that dentistry had better future and need in Nepal. In fact, my mother insisted me to join Dentistry. It was her, who supported me throughout my education in India. I think dentists today have no less opportunity than a medical doctor.

Question: What was the type of practise you did ?

Answer: I used to do every type of dental treatment as you have these days. Like, RCTs, Orthodontics, Dentures, Tomy bridge, mouth bridge, Casting works, etc.

Question: What difference do you find in dental practise between those days and today ?

Answer: Except for some advancement in materials, I don't find any difference in practise between those days and today. Though we used to have only pedal engines to run a hand piece, we did accomplish all types of works, as per the need of a patient.

Question: Don't you find any advancement in Surgical techniques like implants, lasers etc ?

Answer: Yes, there are few to name like implants and other surgical skills. But at my times, I used to do every kind of work like denture by myself. Actually we used to develop skills & new techniques by ourselves. I never referred any patient or laboratory work to India or anywhere else, except for cancer patients. In fact, I trained many dental technicians, many of them started their own practise.

Question: Did you earn lot of money from dental practise, as the dental treatment by itself is an expensive service ?

Answer: See, if you work hard, you are bound to earn some money. I earned not very much but sufficient to lead my life and to support my family. All of my children are highly educated, two of them are dentists and daughter is a medical doctor. From the beginning of profession, I used to ride a car and bike. I had a company with Ranas, we used to gather and used to play wrestling sometimes, it was all for fun.

Question: You have worked for Rana family and for the kings, that too in a Rana regime, did you face any fear or what was you experience ?

Answer: In the beginning definitely there

used to be some fear but later it didn't matter, after all I was treating them as a patient. However you needed to be more cautious working with them. Especially Ranas could not afford to bear pain, I used to do any dental procedure without any pain. They opted to save a tooth at any cost, they never wanted a tooth to be extracted.

Many a times, Ranajis & Royal family called British or American specialists like Bishop, Duncun Bros. for specialised dental treatments. But they insisted me to be with foreign doctors while on treatment procedures. They had a strong belief on me, I too got good opportunity to learn new things from them.

Question: You were a qualified & established dentist that time, then why did you start your clinic at Naghal tole, which has been famous as the traditional practitioner's place ?

Answer: See, Naghal tole is my native place. In fact, after I started my clinic there, others followed me and many of them were trained by me and now you can see this place as a working site of many dentists.

Question: At the age of 83, how do you find the life ?

Answer: Its same for me all the ages throughout, I wake up at 5 a.m., pray, do puja, then do physical exercise, gardening. I watch TV, read Gita & Ramayana. Everyday at 4 o'clock in the evening, I go to my clinic and guide my dentist children, see them working. I am renowned to all fellows here around, many old generation people still visit me, all of them call me Major Doctor. I like discussing old, historical things. I have faith on god, and belief in destiny.

Question: Are you happy with present day dentists ?

Answer: Yes, I am satisfied, they are doing good work.

Question: What role do you think a dentist can play to build a nation ?

Answer: Service to the patient and to alleviate pain. If you have good teeth, you can have good mastication, then good diet and good health. Also the dentist can bring out changes in peoples' consciousness about the oral health.

Question: How do you think the oral health service can be brought to village ?

Answer: I think the government should play the greater role, a dentist alone cannot do anything. There should be right atmosphere to work in village and govt. should create it. A dentist with a copy & pen or with probe & mirror alone can do nothing, he needs apparatus, equipments which needs a lot of money, so the proper budjeting should be there.

Question: At present day context, what could be the right solution for that ?

Answer: For that matter, mobile dentistry could be helpful. It was war time in India, I assisted the military corps to serve villages through mobile dental van. I think we can introduce such for our villages.

Question: What role can NDA play for development in Dentistry ?

Answer: I have good wishes for them, there should be unity and amicable to each other.

