Prof. Salil Kumar Bhattacharya, Emeritus Professor, Indian Council of Medical Research, and pharmacologist par excellence, passed away on Oct 21, 2003, leaving behind a legacy difficult to emulate, a grieving wife and two sons, and countless tearful colleagues, students, disciples and beneficiaries.

Prof. Bhattacharya began life as the sixth son of a highly educated family in Patna. His early days were spent first at Patna and then at Gorakhpur. He completed his matriculation at the young age of 12 at Gorakhpur and his graduation (BSc) at 18 from the University of Calcutta, before embarking on a brilliant undergraduate medical career as a student of R. G. Kar Medical College, Kolkata. He completed his MBBS in 1962 and was the recipient of several medals, honors and scholarships. In 1964 he joined as Demonstrator, the Department of Pharmacology, Institute of Medical Sciences at Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU). It was an unusual choice then but one perhaps preordained by destiny. He did his MD pharmacology in 1967 and PhD in 1977, both from the same Institute. It was during his nearly four decades long career at IMS-BHU that Prof. Bhattacharya, or Salilda as he was fondly called, blossomed as a pharmacologist, reaching heights of academic and professional excellence that few can aspire to.

Prof. Bhattacharya specialized in neuropsycho-pharmacology and psychotropic medicinal plants and has nearly 400 scientific papers in national and international journals to his credit. He spent a year as a visiting professor in neurosciences at the School of Medicine, University of North Dakota, USA, and did several stints as visiting scientist at the Queen Charlotte’s Hospital, London, UK, and at the Paul Flechsig Institute for Brain Research, Leipzig, Germany. Over 30 MD, PhD and MPharm scholars have won their laurels under his inspiring guidance. Many of his students hold prestigious academic, administrative and industrial positions at home and abroad. He served on the research committees of ICMR, CSIR, INSA, IUPHAR, and of late, the Dabur Research Foundation and Drug Research and Development Center, Kolkata. He also edited or reviewed 10 national and international scientific journals, including the Indian Journal of Pharmacology. Throughout his career Salilda was the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards including the Shakuntala Amrichand Prize of ICMR in 1978, Commonwealth Medical Fellowship in 1980-81, the Gulic Prize of the Indian Pharmacological Society (IPS) in 1987 and the unväs Prize of IPS in 1978 and 1988. His research endeavors were also reciprocated as Membership or Fellowship of various renowned national and international academic bodies such as the International Brain Research Organization (1978), Sigma Xi of USA (1984), International Society for Research in Science & Technology of UK (1986), Indian Academy of Neurosciences (1987) and National Academy of Medical Sciences of India (1991). His association with IPS was long and rewarding. He served the IPS as General Secretary (1989-1991) and President (2000).

Beyond all this academic regalia lay a very simple, warm-hearted, perceptive and helpful persona. In the words of Prof. G. Singh, Director, IMS-BHU, Prof. Bhattacharya was one of the best teachers of the Institute and gained the respect, love and admiration of generations of students. His inherent flair for making teaching lucid, interesting and easily understandable, made him a much sought after academician in his own Institute and an orator in various regional, national and international symposia. He never drew a line between himself and his colleagues or students and the humblest person could approach him without apprehension. If he gave his word he was never known to break it.

Following his retirement from IMS-BHU, Prof. Bhattacharya graced the chair of the ICMR Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology at the University College of Medicine of the University of Calcutta from July 1, 2002. His activities remained as prolific as ever till he suffered a stroke followed by an acute myocardial infarction. The end came soon thereafter. The loss is irreparable. As we pray for his soul to rest in peace, we know that Salilda would be as watchful as ever, from his heavenly abode, inspiring us to give our best to the discipline that he so dearly loved.

A. Hazra

Department of Pharmacology, Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education & Research (IPGME&R), 244B Acharya J. C. Bose Road, Kolkata - 700020, India with valuable inputs from Prof. G. Singh, Prof. P. K. Debnath, Prof. S. K. Tripathi and departmental colleagues.

In memory of Salilda