

# INTERVIEW



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Dr. Basanta Bahadur Rajbhandari

*We are happy to welcome one of the pioneers in dental practice in Nepal, the legendary Dr. Basanta Bahadur Rajbhandari who was born in 13/2/1916 A.D. and was one of the founder members and also the first president of Nepal Dental Association to the very first issue of the Journal of the Nepal Dental Association.*

**Question:** Would you please highlight your views regarding historical aspects of dental service in Nepal ?

**Answer:** In olden days, before dental practice began in Nepal, people suffering from serious toothache used to worship and pin a nail in a wooden log at Bangemudha to get relief from pain, this practice still continues to some extent.

The dental practice in Nepal started during the reign of Rana Prime minister Chandra Shamsher, who ruled Nepal for 28 years from June 26, 1901 to November 25, 1929. In his time Asta Man Rajbhandari of Nagal Tole started his dental practice doing simple tooth extraction of loose teeth, replacing with vulcanite partial, full dentures & also simple amalgam fillings using foot engines. Later, Bajir Man Pradhan of Thamel and Ghana Man Rajbhandari of Nagal Tole did the same kind of dental practice. These are the few names I can mention.

**Question:** How did you start Dental practice that time ?

**Answer:** In May 1941, after passing the L.D.S. (Licentiate in Dental Surgery) from the state Medical Faculty of Bengal, India. I started private practice in Dentistry by opening a clinic at Juddha Sadak, Kathmandu. I happened to be the first Nepali to obtain a Diploma for a recognized course in Dentistry.

In Feb 20, 1953, I was appointed as senior Dental Surgeon in newly inaugurated Dental Department at Bir Hospital.

**Question:** What are the obstacles you faced during your time of dental practice & how could you overcome it ?

**Answer:** Public awareness about the health was lacking at that time & it was very difficult to convince a patient for dental treatment. When I started working, there were hardly 4-5 patients a day in Bir Hospital. Also the people could not afford treatment cost.



even if the awareness was there. I can say, the situation is same even now.

But for Ranas, they could pay any amount. I had my private practise all belonged to them, especially Babar Shamsher, his large family and his servicemen were sufficient for my practice.

I started practice with mere foot engine & kerosene stove, with which I used to make Inlays, Crowns, Gold inlays. That time there were no dental technicians, dentist himself had to do every job. I used to send Dental Art, Bombay for Vitallium cast partial denture to replace gold work which was getting costlier that time.

**Question: What changes do you find in dental service from your days and today ?**

**Answer:** There is a great change and definitely its better now. Different filling materials have come like light cure composites. You have now a variety of filling materials, equipments and also there is better patient awareness. About the new materials, I appreciate light cure filling material the best.

**Question: What are the reasons for such change ?**

**Answer:** His Majesty the King & the Royal family have great contributions . The first Dental Department in Bir Hospital was inaugurated by his Late Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, then His Royal Highness the Crown Prince on 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 1953. I was appointed as senior dental surgeon & since then oral health services became available to the people. After that I had the privilege to impress the Government to have more Dental Surgens by offering few scholars every year for B.D.S. & postgraduate studies abroad under the Colombo Plan. I also submitted a

detailed dental program for the second five year plan to the Ministry of Health to create one dental departments in every fifty bedded hospital and also to run the mobile dental camps at remote places to give the oral health services to the people.

**Question: What change do you expect at present and are these sufficiently available today ?**

**Answer:** We should increase dental manpower and we should have a dental college, whatever be in a small scale, start with a small thing, why expect for a large one. Then go to every corner of the country. In America, Australia, U.K., Germany I have seen very large, advanced dental units, everything is computerised which would not be possible for our country at present. But in the whole world, there has not been like this before, here we some dentists have come forward to make a dental hospital in Kathmandu. It is a good beginning but actually not sufficient for the whole nation. We should be able to avail such service in every corner of the country.

My aim of having a dental hospital is fulfilled, now I want Dental Council for which I have always fought for. Everywhere I have raised my voice for this but many medical personnels opposed, they were all good at speaking but never let a dental profession a separate entity.

**Question: Are you happy with the dentists of the new generation ?**

**Answer:** Not all but many are doing well. There is great change between dentist of my time and today. To my best knowledge, now-a-days BDS course do not comprise sufficient of clinical practice & knowledge. We used to have sufficient practice in inlays, gold foil restorations.



Also I want to say is, after graduation a student has to complete internship then only he should start practising. In my time there was 2 years of clinical training, but now..... I don't know. I think even a practitioner should be learning everytime. "Learning is never an ending process."

**Question: What is your comment about availability of dental speciality or different disciplines of dental service in Nepal ?**

**Answer:** General dentists should go to every corner, village of the country and avail themselves for basic oral health treatment, then comes the question of speciality.

**Question: How do you think we can make availability of Dental Services to every corner of the country ?**

**Answer:** First increase manpower at dental surgeon's level, also increase number of dental assistants as helping hands. Make funds available for establishment of dental hospital in different parts of the country, like National Dental Hospital has been established in Kathmandu. Pay the professionals well, so that he can work in the villages. Form different Non-Govt. Organizations which can work for people's oral health. First show (do) work then raise the fund, but it has been observed that many people try to raise fund before doing work. For that you have to impress donors. I have seen a good example of Japanese donors assisting in establishing dental unit in Kathmandu Model Hospital, I am impressed. Also you can take Teaching Hospital as an example where the donors have co-operated with the Govt. I also think that donors should establish the thing, they should not donate money.

My motto has always been "Good

health, Good Education, Honesty in Dealings."



**Question: What role do you expect from NDA ?**

**Answer:** All fellow members' co-operation should be there for NDA. Its high time NDA should act to form Dental Council of Nepal. Also NDA should help to make a dental college. Above all NDA should help build a professionalism in dental practice.

**Question: Lastly, would you like to give a message to the younger generation of Dental Surgeons ?**

**Answer:** Actually it depends on individual dentists but one should not work for personal interest, only one should be honest and work for the profession.

Jai Nepal !

