

## History : Remembering the Stalwarts

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Dr Sambhu Nath De (1915-1985) was an alumnus of Calcutta Medical College, whence he passed his M.B. in 1939 and DTMH in 1942. He started working as a demonstrator of Pathology in the same college. In 1947, he went to London to pursue a PhD course in Pathology. After returning, he remained in the same institution till his retirement in 1973.

Dr De was one of the foremost experts on the pathogenesis of Cholera in the world. His research publications garnered widespread citation. His monograph on cholera, "**Cholera: its pathology and pathogenesis**" Published by Oliver and Boyd, London, 1961 was once considered a seminal text by academics all over the world. Dr De was the first in the world to demonstrate that vibrio cholera secretes an enterotoxin and also demonstrated its mechanism of action.



**Dr Sambhu Nath De**

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Various eminent scientists all over the world, including Nobel Laureate Dr Joshua Lederberg have labelled his publications as "classic"s in the history of cholera and bacteriology research. Perhaps Dr De is the only medical scientist from India with noteworthy contribution in the global field of bacteriology in the last century.

Dr De never received any state or central government award or other recognition. He was nominated for Nobel prize twice but today, remains totally forgotten in his country. Unfortunately, there is not even a laboratory or a lecture theatre hall named after him in any medical college of Calcutta.

His most famous paper is cited below:

**De SN — Enterotoxicity of bacteria-free culture filtrate of *Vibrio cholerae*. *Nature* 1959; 183: 1533-4**

**The practice of medicine is an art, not a trade;  
a calling, not a business; a calling in which your  
heart will be exercised equally with your head.**

**— William Osler : 1914 Quote**