

Editorial

N Mukunda, Chief Editor

Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin was a remarkable scientist and an even more remarkable human being. Born in Cairo, she was brought up in Sudan till age 16. Her subsequent education, training in research and life long career in science were all in England, briefly at Cambridge and then at Oxford. She is one of the depressingly few women scientists to have won the Nobel Prize, which came to her in 1964. Others that come to mind are Marie Curie, her daughter Irene-Joliot Curie, Maria Goeppert-Mayer, Barbara McClintock, Rita Levi-Montalcini and Rosalind Yallow. The situation in literature may be only marginally better. Trained by the legendary James Bernal in Cambridge in the early 1930's in using the then new physical tool of X-ray crystallography to determine the structures of biologically important molecules, Dorothy 'solved the structures' of insulin, cholesterol, penicillin and vitamin B₁₂ – a veritable wish list of any ardent molecular biologist! Influenced by her early experiences, Dorothy had a truly international outlook, and had many friends in India as well as in China. She provided generous guidance and opportunities to several leading Indian crystallographers. In a warmly written and personal appreciation of her life and achievements, M Vijayan describes her splendid combination of scientific gifts and human qualities, which allowed her to enjoy both an illustrious career and a close family life. In the Reflections Section we present the text of a 1973 lecture she gave in Delhi in memory of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Here is what she had to say about excessive competition in research, so much more fierce today than in her times:

“All our old enemies became our old friends. ... All those who have taken part share in some measure in the happiness of success.”

It is our privilege to be able to pay tribute to such a great person.



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