

Appreciation

Dr. Sudharma Doluweera

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Sabbe sankhara anicca

"All conditioned things are impermanent."

Some people are remembered not only for what they achieved, but for how they made others feel. Sudharma was one such person.

A cherished colleague, teacher, friend, wife, mother, and daughter, her life and work touched countless individuals within and beyond the field of psychiatry.

Beyond her professional achievements, Sudharma was a devoted wife to Prasanna, a loving mother to Daham, and a cherished daughter and sister. Family was at the heart of her life and a constant source of joy, strength, and purpose.

Sudharma dedicated her professional life to psychiatry and to improving the lives of those affected by mental illness. Her commitment to compassionate, patient-centred care and to strengthening mental health services in the communities she served earned her the respect and affection of colleagues, trainees, patients, and families alike. Her contributions were recognised through several professional honours, including Regional Psychiatrist of the Year in 2024 and her election as a Fellow of the Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists in 2025. To speak of Sudharma merely in terms of qualifications and appointments, however, would be to miss the essence of who she was.

She possessed a rare combination of clinical acumen and deep humanity. Her diagnostic skills were exceptional, and many colleagues admired her ability to identify subtle clinical signs and arrive at accurate diagnoses even in the most challenging situations. Yet what patients and colleagues remembered most was not simply her knowledge, but the kindness and patience with which she practised medicine.

She had a gentle, reassuring presence. Patients felt heard, respected, and understood in her care. Trainees and junior colleagues found in her a patient teacher who was always willing to guide, encourage, and support. There was a

quiet strength about her – a steadiness that brought comfort to those around her, particularly during difficult times.

Sudharma was deeply committed to community psychiatry and to improving access to mental health care for people living outside major urban centres. She believed that good psychiatric care should be available to everyone, regardless of where they lived, and she worked tirelessly to strengthen services for the communities she served.

Beyond psychiatry, Sudharma possessed a creative spirit. She enjoyed painting, needlework, and sewing, often creating beautiful pieces with remarkable skill and patience.

She was also a deeply spiritual person who drew strength and comfort from Buddhist teachings. During times of stress, uncertainty, or disappointment, she would often share a thoughtful Buddhist quotation or reflection with friends and colleagues.

Many of us remember the Wednesday ward rounds we shared with her at Teaching Hospital Peradeniya, often extending well into the afternoon as complex clinical situations were discussed and debated. Those who trained at Peradeniya will no doubt recognise these memorable sessions. Even during demanding periods, Sudharma brought a sense of calm, perspective, and encouragement to those around her. During difficult moments in our own lives, she frequently offered wise counsel, often accompanied by a simple Buddhist reflection that somehow made challenges seem more manageable.

Perhaps nowhere was this resilience more evident than during the illness she faced in the final years of her life. Even when confronted with immense physical and emotional challenges, she remained remarkably hopeful and courageous.

The loss of Sudharma is deeply felt by her family, friends, colleagues, trainees, and patients. Yet her legacy endures in the lives she touched, the services she helped

build, the students she taught, and the countless individuals who found hope and healing through her care.

Though her life was far too short, it was a life lived with purpose, courage, generosity, and grace. Those who had the privilege of knowing her will remember not only an outstanding psychiatrist, but also a genuinely kind human being whose warmth and compassion enriched the lives of so many.

As we reflect on her life and mourn her passing, we do so with gratitude for the time we were fortunate enough to share with her. Her memory remains a source of inspiration, and her example continues to guide us.

May the merits of her many good deeds accompany her onward journey, and may her memory continue to bring comfort, inspiration, and gentle guidance to all who knew and loved her.