



Letter to the Editor: Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, Hydroxychloroquine and COVID-19

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Received: 24 May 2020 / Accepted: 29 May 2020 / Published online: 8 June 2020
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Dear Editor,

Hydroxychloroquine drug has gained lot of fame in COVID-19 pandemic era, but its role in prevention/ treatment of COVID-19 patients is still under clouds. US president Mr. Trump has labelled it as ‘game changer’ and requested India to provide a good supply of this drug to his country which India gracefully accepted on humanitarian grounds.

Recently, the name of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray (Fig. 1) is being linked with discovery/invention of this drug on various social media platforms which is not true. First, we should know, who was he and why such confusion is there? He is one of the great chemists India has produced and has been christened as the ‘Father of Indian Chemistry’. He was a great researcher, entrepreneur and philanthropist. He was born in 1861 in the eastern portion of the Bengal Presidency of British India (now in present-day Bangladesh). He received his DSc degree from Edinburgh University in 1887 and taught chemistry at Presidency College for few years. In 1892, he set up Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals as an individual initiative and transformed it into Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceutical Works Pvt. Ltd. by 1901. He authored many books; the most famous one is *History of Hindu chemistry-from the earliest times to the middle of the sixteenth century AD*. He died on June 16, 1944, at the age of 82. He is the first non-European to receive coveted

Chemical Landmark plaque by The Royal Society of Chemistry, in 2011 on his 150th birth anniversary.

Contrary to what has been claimed in some social media posts, Ray, despite his immense contributions to chemistry and chemical science, had no direct connection with the discovery or manufacture of hydroxychloroquine. The compound he was associated with is clioquinol (iodochlorhydroxyquin) which is an antifungal drug and antiprotozoal drug. Hydroxychloroquine is a less toxic derivative of chloroquine and was discovered in 1945 and was a part of the efforts to lessen the toxic effects of chloroquine. It was approved for use in the USA in 1955 and since has been used for the treatment of a wide variety of diseases [1, 2].

Regards

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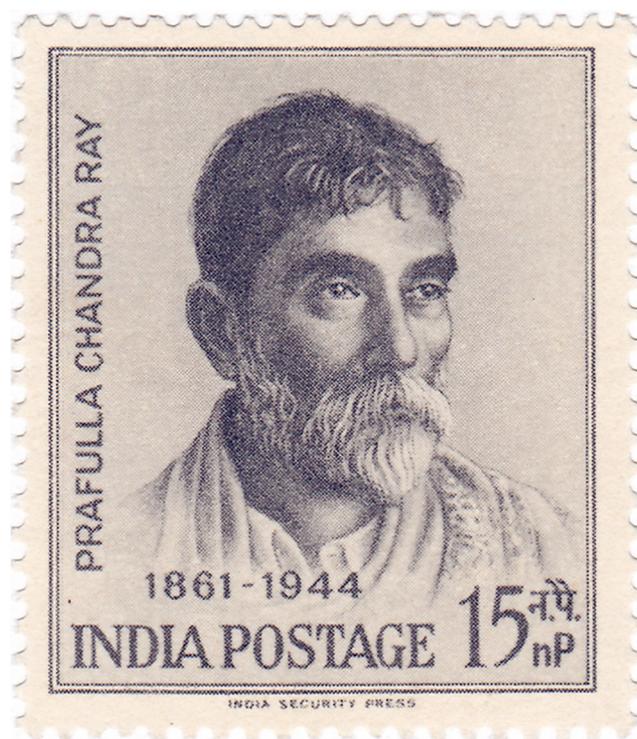


Fig. 1 Prafulla Chandra ray (1861–1944)

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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