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Myuri Parusnath

SCIENCE

Passion pays off in Master's

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A CHILDHOOD passion for science has resulted in Myuri Parusnath obtaining her Master's in Science *cum laude*.

Parusnath, 25, of Westville, graduated on Friday from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

As a child, Parusnath would create her own "potions" by mixing her mother's cosmetics.

After matriculating from Star College in Westville, she registered for a BSc in biological sciences at UKZN. She was awarded certificates of merit for several modules, and was a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society for students who excelled.

"I always wanted to be a scientist. I have always been interested in the science behind medicine," Parusnath said.

She passed a BSc Honours in biological sciences *summa cum laude*, and published a paper in the "South African Journal of Botany".

Parusnath was awarded a National Research Foundation scholarship for her Master's studies. She recently published two other papers.

For her Master's research, Parusnath investigated the biological medicinal properties of a plant known as the velvet bushwillow that was used by traditional healers for the symptomatic treatment of malaria, hookworm, stomach pain, leprosy, diarrhoea, convulsions, and HIV and Aids.

"The aim of my research was to validate these properties. I found these extracts and isolated compounds have antibacterial and oxidative potential. With further research, it can be developed into drugs to combat symptoms of various diseases," she said.

Parusnath won first prize for her flash presentation at the 2022 College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science Postgraduate Research and Innovation Symposium. She also participated in the Microscopy Society of Southern Africa conference.

Parusnath will present her research at an international conference this year. She is currently registered for a PhD in biology.

She is continuing her medicinal plant research and hopes to pursue a career in academia.

"I would like to discover special compounds that can aid in medicine, especially because of poverty in the world and communities that are underprivileged. Plants are cheaper than working with synthetic medicine. My ultimate goal is to help underprivileged people access medication," said Parusnath.

