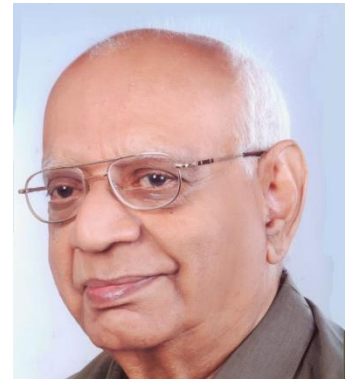


*Dr. K RajasekharanNair MD DM*

Seldom does one get a chance to rewrite or add on what has been written about oneself . Here is one which came to my way in the most unexpected time. Way back in 1997-1998 when I planned to compile the book ‘The Evolution of Neurosciences in India’, the initial response was lukewarm at best. But the after the publication of the book the historical relevance of the same gradually dawned to all. Indeed I am happy that Dr. Ganapathy has brought out a sequel to my



book titled ‘Past Presidents of NSI 2000-2016 ’. The same example has been replicated by Indian Academy of Neurology and Indian Epilepsy Association. It is heartening to see that medical fraternity in India gradually learns the great relevance of history of medicine. I am happy that this trend which a few of us like Drs. Sunil Pandya, S. Kalyanaraman and I started in Neurological society of India has gradually spread to other societies also.

**A Post Script.**

The continuation of the script I wrote for my book in 1998 may need some traversing back and forth from my active teaching service period to the present time. I have recounted some of these tales in one of my papers in Neurology India recently <sup>1</sup> . I am sure that my generation of Indian neuroscientists who opted out to start specialty services in the mofussil centers of India had almost the same sort of stories to tell about the small victories we won, failures we endured, the chances we missed and unexpected help we got.

There are many friends who still say that I should have joined AIIMS, New Delhi after my DM course, when there was an acute dearth of teachers there. But I rejoined in my Kerala state service knowing fully well that I would never again get the type of academic atmosphere I had in New Delhi. But had I remained in New Delhi I would have been miserable through out my life as an uprooted person.

Life in the Kerala Medical College service was no way easy and I had my own share of disagreements. I may quote one of my favorite poets Yevgeny Yevtushenko here.

‘I disagree with a lot of things  
and cannot possibly agree with them.

It will go hard for me at times

And they will say:

"He'd better hold his tongue!"

**Not holding my tongue.**

When every one in my generation would speak of their very big centers of their learning, the big centers they built up, their big achievements, their big contributions, some one like me who took up a job in a small town should also tell very pertinent though mundane small things of our small places, our small achievements and our small contributions which are in fact comparable to those of the big achievers. With all humility, I may add that I could rise on my own and stand shoulder to shoulder with the big achievers of neurosciences of big towns. I am happy that I could accomplish that with the work I did in my small towns, Calicut and Trivandrum.

When I chose to return to a ‘mofussil’ place to live and work in 1973, naturally I accepted all its limitations but knew its quiet virtues, beauties, kindness and all time solace. I agree we had so much financial constraints, so many problems related to its geographical position of being the southernmost state of India and its inaccessibility to the centers of power and the strain of overcoming the language barriers.

Incidentally the word ‘mofussil’ has an interesting beginning. It originated in the East India company days when places other than their company capitals, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras were considered rural or mofussil.

The place which I chose initially was the northern most region of Kerala- Calicut, the headquarters of Malabar. Calicut Medical College was started in 1957, six years after the first Medical College of Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram. Being far away from the capital of Kerala, Calicut Medical College had so much of teething trouble which continued even to 1990s.

The general financial status of Kerala even in late 1900s was certainly not bright. (The enviable changes which started becoming evident from 2000 onwards are so remarkable, we old timers, stand awestruck). Most of our initial tales would appear unbelievable now. The salary which we got on entry to the teaching service in late 1960s was around Rs. 300 +. Nothing much changed even after three decades. When I retired from the senior most post of Director Professor of Neurology in 1996, my take home salary was less than Rs. 10,000/-. Surprisingly we did not think that we were badly paid as we didn't have a chance to think about ourselves when we were building our departments with all the resourcefulness and mental strength we could muster.

There was a provision for restricted private practice for us in the clinical side. In the non-clinical side, teachers were given 'non-practicing allowance'. The private practice gave us at least some amount of financial independence. Kerala with its high literacy rate and very critical view on everything and almost militant approach in public matters did not (and would not) allow any unethical practice.

There was a very widespread notion among many of our colleagues who took up jobs in non-practicing set ups in India that medical research would be highly compromised by private practice and research publications could come only from their institutions. In reality it was a terrible misunderstanding as we, who were allowed private practice, had taken up research projects and published papers in Indian and foreign journals as often as they did.

Ironically there was no need for us to do any such work officially as our promotions were not linked to publications, conferences attended or academic achievements. I do not remember anyone in our official circle who ever encouraged or gave any support to us for our research work. But it is with pride and happiness we remember we still could bring out excellent papers on hereditary sensory neuropathies, multiple sclerosis and cognitive neurology. 138 research papers and 12 books to be precise! I may very politely add that there was hardly anything in the way of research from teachers in preclinical subjects in our own set ups in those days. They had non-practicing full time jobs with better pay also. Perhaps I may quote Dr. B Ramamurthi here as the

research output from his Institute of Neurology, Madras which allowed private practice was in fact far superior to that of many other non-practicing institutes<sup>2</sup>. We were really happy to be busy with all our work and being happy at work really made us more productive. The situation has changed further with many of the premium private hospitals encouraging research also competing with the academic institutions as a part of their development plan in therapeutics and surgery.

(Now it is interesting to note that now all Medical College jobs all over India are made 'strictly' non-practicing. I don't dare to say anything about the present practices by many, as it would invite unnecessary criticism. The publication of research papers has been made compulsory for promotions etc for those in service. In the place of only reputed journals available in India in the past, now there are many journals with quite quaint practices. As one who was on the editorial board of a few journals, I am quite perturbed to see the arrival of many so called 'indexed' journals showing their 'Index Copernicus value' etc inviting articles for publication within 3 or 4 working days! I am told that they flourish very well. Perhaps we may require another Abraham Flexnor (1866- 1959) to bring in reforms so badly needed in our medical education sector.

### **Conferences and publication of books**

Going to conferences was another hustle which we had to face every year. Our colleagues and officials considered this as an unnecessary extravaganza by which we evaded routine hospital duties. Requesting leave for attending conferences was futile and so the only way was to take our 'casual leaves' and / or 'earned' or 'accumulated' leave. All the expenses were met from our personal savings. Despite all these supposedly 'insurmountable' difficulties, we used to be regular attendees not only in the annual conferences of our society but also other such societies. Certainly I could rise up in those organizations and could come upto the very top as well.

But going abroad for conferences was another matter altogether as 'proper Governmental Sanction' was mandatory for getting the precious 'foreign exchange money' from the Customs Department. For all the four medical colleges of the our

state then, some money was allotted each year, of which more often than not, almost the entire sum was given to applicants from Trivandrum Medical College. Requesting and getting the grant was a tiresome job and perhaps I was the very first to get such a sanction in Calicut Medical College. Many times I have ruefully viewed when many of my colleagues from other institutes given all the help for presenting their papers in International conferences.

### **Back to my Alma Mater.**

Moving back to Trivandrum in 1982 after my Commonwealth scholarship program and a short sojourn abroad, I had to do a tiresome job of replicating all the work I did for Calicut Medical College to re- start a neurology department in Trivandrum which was in total disarray when I took over. Equipping my new department with all new electronic gadgets for our post graduate course (started in 1983) was a Herculean task but truly rewarding. I was all alone as a consultant in the first ten years or so even in Trivandrum. Scores of postgraduate students were trained by me for both DM Neurology and Dip NB Neurology.

Though not prescribed as a mandatory requisite by the Kerala University, I insisted that those who appeared for DM Neurology from Trivandrum Medical College should have at least three or four published papers in peer reviewed journals and should have presented their research data in at least one national conference before their examination. These could be implemented without too much of resistance as the students were also eager to get involved in advanced research in their subjects. Indeed it was really pleasing that we could organize pediatric neurology section also and the students passed out from our center started Pediatric Neurology service in different Medical Colleges in the state.

Even in those impoverished days we could organize CMEs and conferences fairly regularly- at least two or three an year- a total of 35 over a period of 14 years. Some were national conferences on Strokes, Epilepsy and Movement Disorders too. Looking back, it still was a wonder how we could organize them with so much limited resources and virtually no financial help from the College.

In order to function in an organized manner, I started a small group which we called as TAN (Trivandrum Association of Neurologists), membership restricted to the students who got trained by me. The books we brought out during these conferences were of very good standard and I have had the pleasure of seeing them as reference books in the libraries of some major institutions also. I sincerely wish that we too had the facility as is available now to bring out our books in better get up by professional publishers. In order to keep high standards in the books published from my Department (Recent Advances in Stroke -2 Volumes, Recent Advances in epileptology, Selected Topics in Extrapyrimal syndromes etc) I kept half the number of papers from my center, a quarter from my Indian colleagues outside the State and the rest from my friends and colleagues abroad working on the respective fields. Since all these publications were made on behalf of TAN, naturally all these had only limited circulation.

Our dedicated work had not gone unnoticed as I was invited as a orator, teacher, examiner, inspector for DM, MCh and Dip NB examinations and as member of selection committee for the post of professor of neurology in various centers in India. Though I was promoted as Principal of a Medical College in our state some time in 1991, I did not take up the post as I cherished my teaching post more than any administrative post. By refusing to take up that post, I lost my opportunity to get any further senior administrative jobs like Director of Medical Education. Somehow even now I do not think much about it.

### **Organizational activities.**

I feel proud that we in Trivandrum could organize two annual conferences of Neurological society of India in Trivandrum- in 1978 and again after two decades in 1998. The organizational skill of our neurosurgery colleague Dr. M. Sambasivan is quite praiseworthy. The 1998 conference was a very high point in my career. It was during this session I assumed the office of the President of Neurological society of India for the year 1999. During my President elect period I decided to bring out the book 'Evolution of Neurosciences in India'. We were happy to have both Dr. Jacob

Chandy and Dr. B. Ramamurthi in the book releasing function during that Conference.

During my period as President of Neurological society of India, I could sort out some odd issues with the Indian Academy of Neurology which were left unsolved for a long time like the subscription to the World Federation of Neurology. Certainly I could improve the camaraderie between the neurologists and neurosurgeons.

I was one of the founding members of Indian Academy of Neurology started in 1991 and was its elected President in 1996. As luck would have it I had to function as President Elect of IAN in 1995 at Chandigarh as the person elected for that year didn't attend the session. My term as President of IAN was in 1996. I had the fortune to be elected as the Vice President of Indian Epilepsy Association also.

Most of the neurologists of our generation had our ties with Association of Physicians of India (API) and most of neurosurgeons had ties with Association of Surgeons of India (ASI). We really did enjoy the friendship we had with these organizations too and indeed they acknowledged and respected our continued support. The API had conferred many honors on me including "Outstanding Referee Award" of the Journal of the Association of Physicians of India, "Honored Guest Lecture" of the Association of Physicians of India, Guwahati, Jan 1994, "Sarabhai Oration" of the Association of Physicians of India, Katmandu, Nepal. Jan 1996.

### **Awards and Honors**

It is pleasing to note that the work I did for the Government of Kerala was applauded as I was given the 'Best Doctor Award' of the Government of Kerala in 1998. More than 30 nationally acclaimed awards were also given to me by different Institutes/organization from different parts of India and few from abroad. I thank particularly KG Medical College Lucknow, Institute of Neurology Madras, Association of Neuroscientists of Eastern India, AKMG (All Kerala Medical Graduates Association. Muscat,Oman) and others. I had the pleasure to be invited as Visiting professor of Neurology in some Universities in USA also.

More than half a dozen Life time Achievement Awards were given to me by various associations including Kerala Chapter of Neurological society of India, IndianAcademy of Neurology, Kerala Association of Neurologists, Maharaja Sri. ChitraThirunal Award etc.

As I was born in family of writers and artists I started writing stories, poems and skits both in Malayalam and English from my early school days onwards. I had to stop writing as I entered medical college. I could resume it only after my retirement. It was such a pleasing surprise for me that I became a very wanted writer in Malayalam. So far I have published more than ten books – all very well received by Keralites. In 2005 and again in 2006 my books were selected in the category of Best Book published in those respective years. They have had rave reviews also in Malayalam literature. The Sahitya Academy has bestowed the great Award for Scholarly Literature for 2014 for one of my books. I am only one medical doctor in Kerala so far who bagged such a prestigious literary Award.

### **Epilogue.**

It is a pleasure to acknowledge all the love, support and help I received from my wife Mrs. Indira Nair. She resigned her teaching job when I married her in 1966 for helping me through out my postgraduate studies and my entire life. I am sure that I would not have ventured to take my specialty studies but for her, when such an attempt was considered unnecessary for practical success in life for a practicing doctor in Kerala. My son is a MBA who runs his own business and is quite keen in agriculture. My daughter has taken up Medicine as her career in life and has become an endocrinologist. Now she is the Director of Osteoposis Department in a major hospital abroad.

I will be 78 years old in this December 2018. To say the least I am contended in my life and that is the best one can hope in life.

Though there is some overlap one of the editors Dr Ganapathy felt that this version should also be included as it does contain many historical
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facts.

It was in 1998, I was elected President of the Neurological Society of India for the year 1999. I decided that I should contribute something substantial for our society during my President-Elect period too. Having read excellent volumes like Paul Bucy's 'Neurosurgical Giants- the feet of Clay and Iron' and Haymaker's 'Founders in Neurology' <sup>1, 2</sup>, I had planned even in the early 1990s to bring out such a book on the evolution of neurosciences in India. I knew that if such an attempt was not begun at least then, it would be impossible to compile such a volume later. There were no written records of anything in neurosciences in India till the laudable write-ups of Prof Sunil Pandya <sup>3</sup> and brief skits in the CME Volumes edited by Prof. Kalayaraman and Prof. Sunil Pandya <sup>4</sup> were published

It was fortunate that we, the old timers, lived and worked during those interesting times. The neurosciences in India began in 1949 and practically all pioneers like Prof. Jacob Chandy, Prof. Ramamurthi, Prof. Asoke Bagchi, Prof. N. H. Wadia, and Prof Baldev Singh were still very much active during our early professional period. Further, I had the unique luck to have had personal contact with almost everyone in neurosciences in India when our society, The Neurological Society of India, was small and neuroscientists of all disciplines knew each other very well. I had the privilege to have worked in AIIMS, New Delhi also in Institute of Neurology Madras in their heydays when people like Prof. B. K Anand, Prof. G.S. Chhina, Prof. Baldev Singh, Prof. P N Tandon and Prof. B Ramamurthi were quite in power. Fortunately, I used to travel all over India for various purposes, as a teacher, examiner, orator to all major neurological centers in India for my

professional work and also for the various academic activities and hence could befriend both senior and junior members of our fraternity.

But the only way by which I could get the salient information in the evolution of neurosciences in different parts of India was to request the pioneers to write down their lives and times so that their own personal stories would bring out the relevant historical data. It was a rude shock for me that some of my colleagues initially flatly refused to cooperate with my suggestion. But I persisted with my work in an assiduous manner which by today's account would be considered a Herculean task as the communication facilities were postal snail mail and the miserable and very costly telephonic conversations would require STD dialing and sometimes by even 'Trunk Telephone' for which you need to wait for hours!

The first person who applauded my attempt was Prof. B Ramamurthi who sent his write up in time. Gradually others followed. I gave a cut off time limit for submitting their write-ups. Even those who initially refused, by then, recognized the historical importance and they too chipped in. Some of them requested me to give them a few more days than the cut off time. The book I brought out 'Evolution of Neurosciences in India' during the 1998 Annual Conference of the Neurological Society of India in Trivandrum is still the very exhaustive publication about the origin and early development of neurosciences in India<sup>5</sup>. I am indeed glad that it is being republished as an e-book with some additional data. It is a matter of pride that the Indian Academy of Neurology and the Indian Epilepsy Association have followed our steps and brought similar publications.

Though I could collect quite a large data, write up of some really important persons were conspicuously missing. Some were quite sad too. I used to ask all my Bombay friends about Dr. Menino D'Souza and Dr. Grillmeyer. I was told that Dr. Menino D'Souza (1904- 1996) passed away decades ago when he was actually living in Bombay itself. He died on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1996. Just before the finalization of my book Prof. SaroshKatrak gave me the details of Prof. Menino D'Souza which I could, fortunately, incorporate in the book. But his photograph was made available by Prof H.V. Srinivas.

Dr. Grillmeyer was an elusive subject to me even now. The only person who gave me some information about him was Prof. K S Mani of Bangalore who gave me a script of his lecture in the seventh Annual Conference of the NSI and showed me a printed book containing a group photo and pointed out a figure as Dr. Grillmeyer. My visual memory is good and now after failing to get any further information I doodled his figure from my memory which is included here. If and when his photograph is obtained this can be changed.

(In fact, I did a similar work for another great pioneer, one of the foursome who started the Neurological Society of India. Dr. S. T Narasimhan. He was Prof Ramamoorthi's colleague. I have written about him in details elsewhere <sup>6</sup> . Ramamurthi gave me permission to use the picture of Dr. S. T Narasimhan and Prof. K. Mahadevan Pillai from his autobiography 'Uphill All the Way' but the picture clarity was inadequate <sup>7</sup> . Fortunately, I got a good quality picture of Prof. Mahadevan Pillai, the first neuroradiologist of India, and published his detailed biography elsewhere <sup>8</sup> . Incidentally, Dr. S. T Narasimhan was the one who started Neurosciences in India almost and year before even Prof. Jacob Chandy. But Dr. S. T Narasimhan's picture

as given in Ramamurthi's book could not be used because of its poor quality. The only option I had was to do his pencil sketch myself. That is the picture which is used by NSI also officially now. I could gather a few more information about Dr. Narasimhan which was elaborated in my previous paper <sup>6</sup>.

But in the case of Dr. Grillmeyer, there is no written record available. All I gathered from Dr. K S Mani was that he was an (East) European by birth and after having had his medical and neuropsychiatric training he left his home country during War years and settled in British India in 1940' (?). In one of his publications (Script of his lecture at the seventh conference of NSI in Trivandrum 1958) his address was given as Neuropsychiatrist, General Hospital Colombo and Mental hospital Angoda, Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

Dr. Mahendra Singh was another person about whom I obtained very little information. He was from Army, I am told, and was in CMC Vellore for his neurosurgical training. He was a contemporary of Dr. Jacob Abraham and Dr. K V Mathai. Further details and photographs are not available to me though I tried at some possible places.

During the initial phases of NSI the presidency was rotated among neurosurgeons, neurologists, and allied specialists. That is how Dr. C.G.S Iyyer (Pathologist, Director of Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute (CLTRI) Chengalpattu), Dr. BK Anand (Professor of Neurophysiology, AIIMS, New Delhi) Dr. NS Wahia (Professor Psychiatry, Bombay) and others became President of NSI.

Dr. Chokkanathauram Ganapathy SubramanyIyyer (1921- 1984) was a great pathologist-scientist who was noted for his seminal publications in many foreign and Indian Journals. Though he was born in Tamil Nadu his education was in Bombay. He graduated from GS Medical College, Bombay and took FCPS and MD from Bombay in 1947. On the basis of his publications, he was awarded Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians (London). He was the first Indian to get trained to Neuropathology at the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune and got an appointment as a research officer in the Neuropathology Unit of ICMR. There were two phases of his contribution- the first being in neuropathology when he studied cerebral malaria, lathyrism, various encephalitidae including Kaysaur Forest Disease and polio. The second phase was in Leprosy from 1961- 1982 and became the Director of Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute (CLTRI) Chengalpattu. He was elected President of NSI on the basis of his work done on neuropathology. I thank Dr. G Arjundas of Madras and Dr. Sunil Pandya of Bombay who kindly sent me the relevant obituary notes of Dr. Iyyer from where I collected all these data.

I have seen many times Prof B.K Anand (1917-2007) during my AIIMSonian days as a close friend of Prof Baldev Singh, the then Emeritus Professor of Neurology there. Dr. Anand was an internationally acclaimed neurophysiologist and his publications include many related to Yoga, Hypothalamus, feedingcenter etc. I have picked up some of his publications <sup>9-12</sup> .

Dr. N.S.Wahia (1916-2007) was a great psychiatry professor in Bombay. He was the founder head of the Department of Psychiatry at the Seth G. S. Medical College and K.E.M. Hospital Mumbai and head of the Department of Psychiatry at the Lokmanya Tilak Medical College and Sion Hospital, Mumbai. In those days psychiatrists did not have their separate society and hence a few of them joined in NSI. But I did not get any relevant information about him from my senior friends in neurosciences.

There were two other persons whose pictures or write-ups could not include in my previous book. Dr. Dayanada Rao (Dr. Bodapatti Dayananda Rao 1916-1997) was a pioneer neurosurgeon in Andhra Pradesh. He died before I planned my book. Though I included Prof. Sunil Pandya's write up about him I collected further details about him from Prof Raja Reddy and published it in one of the journals. That is still available on the net. But I got his photograph only now, Thanks to Prof. Arjundas who kindly sent it to me.

I had seen Prof. Sriramachari (1925- 2009) a few times while I was in New Delhi. By then he became one of the recognized neuropathologists of India. I had written to him many times to give his write up but for some reason or other I didn't get his script. Thanks to his daughter Dr. Sandyamani who is a Professor of Pathology, I got his photograph now.

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