

Prof. M. Sambasivan (1936–2018)

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Prof. M. Sambasivan, one of the stalwarts in neurosurgery in India, passed away on May 19, 2018, at the age of 82 years after a brief illness. He is survived by his wife Mrs. S. Gomathy, two sons, Dr. Mahesh Sambasivan (neurosurgeon) and Mr. S. Kumar (Master of Business Administration), only daughter Mrs. Sreevidya Sivakumar (Master of Arts), and their families and grandchildren.

Dr. Sambasivan was born on May 1, 1936, in a Brahmin family. He had his Sanskrit and Vedic education from his early childhood along with his routine school studies. He was a brilliant student in his student days. He had a very remarkable and illustrious academic career as well. He received the award for best outgoing student in MBBS with six gold medals and was the only person to have passed out MS in neurosurgery with distinction from CMC, Vellore. Dr. Sambasivan was the first to start a neurosurgery department and the postgraduate training program in neurosurgery in Kerala.

He has received many laurels during his illustrious career spanning over four decades, including state award for best doctor. He retired as the vice principal of the Trivandrum Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram, where he was also the director and professor of neurosurgery.

He was a wonderful orator and a good human being. Being from a Brahmin family, he was apt and had mastered Sanskrit, and could properly recite and explain the meaning of Sanskrit slokas during his communications. An excellent orator, he was known for his ability to keep any audience in rapt attention. An erudite Vedic scholar, he had mastered ancient scriptures and four Vedas, in addition to being a tantric to various temples in Kerala, notable among them the Shiva temple in Karaman.

I came to know him during my residency as he used to be very impressive with his deliberation, besides his attractive personality and his unique mustache, which used to draw attention of everyone around him. During pre- and postworld congress of neurosurgery, around late 1980s, when I was an associate professor and was joint secretary of the souvenir committee, I came to know him much more regarding his clarity, knowledge, sincerity, and honesty. He used to exhibit Satwik personality and a highly developed spirituality in his every activity, which was noteworthy. He was a founder member of the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies



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(WFNS, India) Trust and remained so for almost more than two decades. Being involved in WFNS, he rose to the position of Vice President of WFNS.

His contribution to the Neurological Society of India (NSI) is almost unparalleled and so also to the neurotrauma subsection of the NSI, and subsequently to the Neurotrauma Society of India (NTSI) since 1998. Being a founder member of the neurotrauma section of the NSI, I was known to the stalwarts in the NSI, including Prof. B. Ramamurty, Prof. A. K. Banerji, Prof. Kalyan Raman, Prof. Raja Reddy, Prof. I. Dinakar, Prof. V. K. Kak, Prof. P. S. Ramani, Col Madan, Prof. S. Mohanty, Prof. Ramesh Chandra, Dr. A. D Sahgal, among others, and directly involved in the neurotrauma subcommittee. However, Prof. Sambasivan was the star. He was the first chairman of the neurotrauma subcommittee and remained in that decorated position till 1998, when a new society “NTSI” was created and registered in 1998.

Prof. Sambasivan was instrumental in getting Prof. Shetty Rengacherry Oration very early, during the neurotrauma subcommittee stage. By his motivation, other awards like JB Modi gold medal award, P. S. Ramani Oration, and best paper and best poster awards were instituted since 1993–1994, and I am grateful as I received best paper and best poster award on a few occasions.

In one of the executive meetings during the neurotrauma annual conference, which he used to chair as the Chairman of the subcommittee in 1996, he suggested Prof. P. S. Ramani and me to prepare a basic guideline for the management of brain and spinal cord injury. Prof. Ramani was the secretary of the subcommittee and was a devoted, diligent, and sincere person and I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work with him and to be blessed by the stalwarts of the neurotrauma subcommittee. As a Professor of Neurosurgery at All India Institutes of Medical Sciences, I was almost representing the middle order of the Indian neurosurgeons in their 40s. I was only 43 years old then. I think all the members of the neurotrauma subcommittee had the confidence

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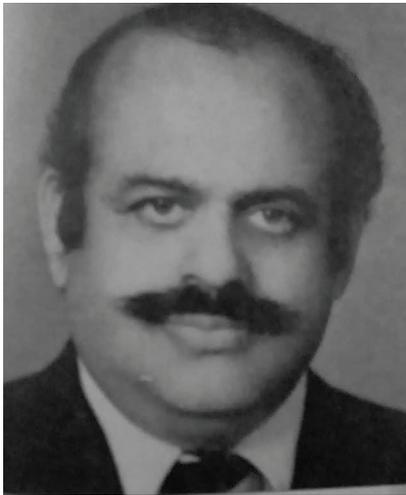


Figure 1 Prof. M. Sambasivan in 1971

on me to be a part, along with Prof. P. S. Ramani, who was so much senior to me. The book was printed in 1997, which was a great achievement for me.

In 1998, NTSI was born. It was Prof. Sambasivan who aptly asked for preparation of a draft of the constitution/by-law of NTSI. At the NTSI conference in 1998 at Indore, the executive committee proposed Col. V. S. Madan and me to draft the constitution under the able supervision of Prof. V. K. Kak, who was at that time the President-Elect of the NSI. He was also present at Indore during the executive

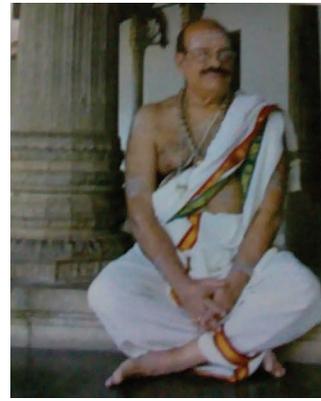


Figure 2 Prof. M. Sambasivan as a Vedic Pundit in 2015

body meeting. We drafted and printed the constitution, which was circulated to over 150 members within a period of 6 months. It was made possible due to the vision, perseverance, guidance, and motivation of Prof. Sambasivan and able guidance of Prof. Kak. The contribution of Prof. Sambasivan to the neurotrauma subcommittee, and later to the NTSI, is unparalleled.

After the divine journey of this noble soul, NTSI has lost the brain and mind of this august body. We pray for his noble soul and expect his divine blessing for the years to come. As a senior member of NTSI, I could proudly proclaim that India, the NSI, and NTSI have lost a stalwart and we will try to follow his principles and live up to his expectation.