

FOREWORD

A poet once said that history is only a bucket of ashes. I do not agree with this statement. Unless written down, the trials and tribulations of the pioneers in any field will be forgotten. The founders of neuro- sciences in India started their small departments more than half a century ago. Historians will blame us for not making an attempt to record the evolution of their ideas, institutions and investigations at least now.

Indians have always been reluctant to record anything. With the result the Indian history which we know of is the history written by the scribes of the British empire. We seem to get a vicarious pleasure to quote these ad nauseam. even when lone voices in isolated corners of India protest against this It is not only in the social, political and cultural history this phenomenon is existing, but in medical history also-(inci- dentally this is a comparatively new field)-the same problem is seen.

I am interested in history of medicine. Though my colleagues particularly Dr. Krishnamoorthi Srinivas of Madras used to present papers on history of Medicine in the annual conferences of the Neurological Society of India (NSI) earlier than me, I was responsible to start a separate session for such papers in NSI - Thanks to Dr. Mathew Chandy who was then the Secretary of NSI IT was instant success right from the first session onwards. It became the only session where both neurologists and neurosurgeons participated in large numbers giving major orations and guest lectures. Not surprisingly almost all papers read in those sessions were about European or American history of medicine.

But I presented a paper on the pathography of the greatest musician-King of India, Sri. Swathi Thirunal Maharaja in 1995 ar Calcutta session and the response was ove5-whelming. It created so much of interest in the cultural scene of Kerala as till then Sri. Swathi Thirunal was supposed to have committed suicide by starvation. It was the first time when such a critical medical analysis of the symptoms of such a historical personality in India was done.

I have been requesting my colleagues to present papers about our heritage in these sessions. The only person who supports me right from the beginning is Prof. B. Ramamurthi. Even now in the NSI historical session, most of the historical papers are on either British or American

Neurology. I have no grumbling about it as I too have studied and published books and papers of similar nature. But I feel time has now come that we learn about our own heritage. I am sure that there will be fairly severe criticism against my attempts as we have a great aversion to anything Indian. We need another Mahatma Gandhi to teach us self esteem.

I am indeed happy that I could enthuse my colleagues in the Indian Academy of Neurology and the Association of Physicians of India also to start history of medicine sessions in their annual conferences.

Some time in 1995 or 1996 when we were toying with the idea of inviting the 1998 Annual Conference of NSI at Trivandrum, I was en-trusted with the work of bringing out a souvenir. (At that time I had not even thought of competing for the election as President of the NSI). We agreed that it was good idea to focus our attention on the past history of our society and the pioneers in the field. Dr. Sunil Pandya and others have brought out a remarkable volume on the evolution of neuro-sciences in India (*Neuro-sciences in India: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Sunil Pandya, Published by the Neurological society of India, Trivandrum and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. New Delhi. 1989) But personal details of the stalwarts were lacking in that volume. Prof. Sunil Pandya and Prof. S. Kalyanaraman tried to get some information in this field (CME Volume of the NSI. Edited by Prof. S. Kalyanaraman, Sunil Pandya, Sambasivan et al. 1982 and 1983). I was surprised to see that I had no idea who Dr. Menino de Souza or Dr. Grillmyr was, though both of them were Presidents of NSI long back. Perhaps in couple of decades almost every one who initiated this subject in India will be forgotten.

Even now when we ask the postgraduate students in neurosciences about the humble beginnings of our centres, most of them look dazed. In a DM examination at one of the National Centres where a lot of studies on muscle and nerve disorders are still done, I asked a good candidate about the work done in their own centre. He looked perplexed and to the chagrin of the internal examiner, his answer was that nothing much was done there. One of my co-examiners was happy to hear that answer but I felt bad.

This was the reason why I thought that I should collect the bio-graphical details and published works done at various centres. What I wanted to bring out was the history of the evolution of neurosciences in India. Some of the founders in neurosciences in India had to face very

hostile attitudes when they tried to organise their departments. Fortunately for some others, the socio-political set up was quite congenial it was only a pleasantly challenging job. Even in 1970's it was difficult for most of us in small centres to bring up the departments. Each region had its own peculiar problems, interpersonal difficulties, stiff opposition and unkind attitude from the administrators and colleagues. We thanked our stars for the meager support we got amidst these problems. I thought that these stories could be brought out if I asked the pioneers to write about their experiences.

Naturally I was faced with another problem. In 1995 when we toyed with this idea, the question was to whom we should ask to write. It was my colleague Dr. Sambasivan who suggested that if I tried to compile a volume containing either the biographical write-ups or the autobiographical notes of the Presidents of our society akin to what Prof. Kalyanaraman did in early 1980's; it would be useful for the historians later on. All the senior colleagues elected as the Presidents of our society have had long association in the field. Most of them had to start their departments from nothing. So we decided rather arbitrarily that we would ask the Presidents of our Society to write their autobiographical details giving stress to the evolution of their department in their geographical region. In this respect this volume is only a continuation of the excellent work started by Prof. Sunil Pandya and Prof. Kalyanaraman. I thank both of them for kindly permitting me to reproduce the material they published in the CME volumes of NSI in 1982, 1983. But for these books I would not have got any information about some past Presidents like Prof. Guinde. There are a few confusions in the dates - given in their publications (in the succession list of Presidents of NSI and the biographical notes) and I have chosen the dates given in the succession list. Quite likely this may be because the election results of NSI are usually declared in the last week December and the actual year of the term of the President happens to be in the next year.

I wrote to all the past Presidents and the incumbent President of our society. Naturally I thought that I would be getting excellent write ups like the autobiography of Wilder Penfield (No man alone: A Neurosurgeon's life, Boston, Little Brown and Co. 1977) from every one of them. Doctors are usually poor writers. exceptions only prove the rule. Many of them had to be coaxed many times (minimum reminders sent to every one of them were three). I have talked to some either directly or over telephone. Every one of them who contacted me promised to send the script as soon as possible. The last date was kept as March 1998. Only two readily agreed and sent their scripts in time.

Due to the excellent postal service we have, perhaps a few of them might have missed some of my letters. Many obliged but others did not even bother to reply. Despite so much of effort I could get only a few write-ups. There were moments when I thought why I should take this unnecessary burden among a host of pending up academic work which still I have to do. But then I knew that no one else will willingly do this sort of a thankless job.

I have taken the liberty of reproducing some of the articles from different sources when I could not get the desired write ups. The late Dr. T. K. Ghosh was an eminent personality whose memoirs were taken from the Souvenir published by Dr. Ramesh Chandra during the 35th Annual Conference of NSI at Patna in 1985. Prof. Kalyanaraman and Prof. Sunil Pandya gave me permission to use the materials published in the CME volumes where they gave the biographical details of some of the past Presidents. Prof. P. N. Tandon gave permission to reproduce his reminiscences about Prof. Baldev Singh which appeared in Neurology India (Neurology Ind 1998; 46: 1). I have reproduced the obituary of Prof. Bachawat written by Prof. Tyagi in National Medical Journal.

I have included the biographies of two really important persons who were pioneers in the field of neuroradiology and Electroencephalography- Dr. Narasimhan and Dr. Mahadevan Pillai. They were not elected Presidents of NSI. I had almost an impossible task to get any detail about Prof. Mahadevan Pillai, the first ever neuroradiologist of India. I am more or less certain that the present generation of neuroradiologists has not even heard about this great doctor. I had a communication recently that they are going to form a new Society named Indian Society of Neuroradiology (First Annual Symposium on 17th Sept 1998 at New Delhi). I do hope that they would at least remember about the contributions of this pioneer neuroradiologist. I am indeed happy that Prof. Ramamurthi has written about these two people in his

autobiography. I have already published a biographical sketch about Prof. Mahadevan Pillai from the materials collected from different sources.

Autobiographies have an inherent problem. Without our knowledge we tend to have selective memoirs to forget unpleasant incidents.

Successes are remembered, failures are forgotten. When climbing up in the ladder of life we must have pushed off many of our competitors. Those who fell out of grace and position would be naturally hurt angry. Hence there may be different versions of the same story. After all history is nothing but fables agreed on. Probably I will have to face some criticism for this publication. I can always quote Bhavabhuti, one of the great Sanskrit poets in my defence.

"Those who denigrate me,
Do they know what I am doing?
My work is not for them anyway,
There will be a person
Who will recognize the inherent value of this,
Because time is endless, the World is so large.

I had no idea how to publish this costly book till I decided that I would ask only one or two of my friends in the Pharmaceutical sector. Fortunately the very first person with whom I discussed this readily agreed. I thank IWS Hoechst Marion Roussel for their generosity to publish this book in a nice way.

I am indeed grateful to, IWS St. Joseph's Press, Thiruvananthapuram who underlook the printing of this book. Obviously they have proved their excellence in printing this publication also.

19 Nov. 1998.

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