

... It was towards the end of 1945. I had been married about six months and was working as a senior house surgeon in the surgical department of the General Hospital of Madras, having registered for my Master of Surgery degree. A vague idea had crept in that I must earn some money myself and stand on my own feet, even though we were getting Rs. 100 every month from my father to run the family. It was Prof. A. Srinivasan, honorary Professor of Medicine who accosted me one day in the hospital and proclaimed. "Hey, Come here. Why don't you see S. T. Narasimhan who wants to sell his practice?,,. I was taken aback as I was not aware that anybody could "sell" his practice. In those days you answered your Professors only with an yes or no and most often with a "Yes sir". I did exactly that, not daring to ask him what he meant by selling one's practice. I found out what this meant from my colleagues also learned where this Narasimhan lived. It was in Singarachari's street in Triplicane and I found myself one evening facing a jovial flamboyant man in a bow tie who greeted me effusively and asked what I wanted. I mentioned about Professor A. Srinivasan's advice and asked about his plans.

Dr. Narasimhan told me that he was going to USA to learn some orthopedics in New York and that he wanted somebody to look after his practice. It was quite attractive but my father and wife did not agree and suggested that I must concentrate on my postgraduate studies and not get diverted in any general practice. This acquaintance ripened into friendship. Dr. S. T. Narasimhan returned three years later in 1948 and announced that he had specialized in neurology and neurosurgery and was setting up a neurosurgical nursing home and an EEG lab.

By that time I had got my MS degree in General Surgery and had applied for a scholarship in neurosurgery. Hence Narasimhan's announcement was a welcome surprise and I used to visit his lab and operating rooms. Later when I returned in 1950 and set up a department in Madras General Hospital (GH) it was but natural that I should welcome this gentleman to be an honorary assistant in the Dept.

### **Pioneer neurosurgeon and electroencephalographer.**

As there was no EEG in GH at that time Dr. S T N. kindly agreed to do the EEG on some poor patients referred by me from the GH. In those far off days EEG was an important diagnostic tool, the other alternative being ventriculogram with its mortality. With the EEG it was possible to lateralise the lesion and later in 1953 when angiography was introduced one could do an angiogram on the side lateralised by the EEG. Before angiogram was established for almost three years we used the EEG as an essential diagnostic step. It was possible to make the arrangement for doing EEG with STN officially the Govt agreeing to pay Rs. 30 for each EEG.

### **The Big Doctor**

In the outpatients and in the wards and the operating rooms Dr. STN was of immense help. With his bow tie and large and forceful personality he made a big impression on the patients and often the patients would confuse him for the 'big doctor, Dr. Ramamurthi'. I used to keep up the joke. When I made the rounds in the wards some patients used to tell me that the senior doctor Dr. BRM had already examined them and they had told their story to him and hence why worry them again.

### **Inspiration to the young.**

Dr. STN was also an inspiration to the young doctors who rotated in the neurosurgery unit as house surgeons. He used to encourage them and extract work out of them with a simile. Though he was holding only an honorary post, Dr. STN used to work long hours and the house surgeons did not grumble. The days were long for the house surgeons

and the nights had often many head injury emergencies. STN was a great factor in inducing a spirit of one family in the unit.

### **Soma Juice and Yenpongal.**

In December 1948 on New Year eve I tasted some port wine in London in the house Prof. M. S. Sundaram who was then the educational

advisor in the United Kingdom to the young Government of India. Indira's cousin Sarojini Rajan was working in the Education Dept of the High Commissioner for India in Aldwych London and we had been invited to the Professor's house for the New Year eve. Tasting alcohol for the first time, I felt I had done a brave and new deal. Later during training in neurosurgery in UK and in Canada I did not take alcohol. After starting neurosurgery in Madras, occasionally STN used to invite me to his house and offer me some whisky which I found I could enjoy. This was once in a month or two. Later on when I could socially and financially afford alcohol, I rarely got drunk. Luckily for me if I took more than two pegs of alcohol, I felt extremely sleepy and could take no more. If at all I took a little more I got a splitting headache a few hours later. This effectively prevented my getting addicted to alcohol. I was never garrulous under the influence of alcohol. Those evenings on the upstairs veranda of the house of STN in Landon's Road in Kilpauk were most enjoyable. Mrs. STN a soft spoken and gentle lady was very hospitable and often I had dinner in their house. Her venpongal ( a dish made of rice, ghee and dhal) was indeed delectable.

Dr. STN had so endeared himself to all of us in the Department and had become such a large and integral part of the set up that his sudden death in Bangalore in 1959 resulted in a deep personal anguish for me and cast a gloom over the department. In the nine years he served the department he had contributed a great deal to the art of EEG and to neurosurgery. He was appointed the Honorary Professor of EEG only a few months before his death.

Dr. STN was only an LMP when he joined the department and was 37 at that time. With determination he finished the condensed MBBS course and got his MBBS degree.

### **The Neurological Society.**

Dr. STN was a founder member of the Neurological Society of India and was its Treasurer for five years. The society was founded in his house in the upstairs veranda with Dr. Jacob Chandy, Dr. Baldev Singh and I being the other members.

It is rather sad that the present generation of neuro-scientists do not remember him often.