

## **PROF. K. JAGANNATHAN**

When I asked Prof. K. Jagannathan to send me his autobiographical write up, what I got was a write up in third person singular manner. In a way a lot of people have difficulty to write about themselves. Hence what Dr. K. J, as he is popularly known, has done is understandable.

He was the head of the Institute of Neurology for a long time. I met him initially at an interview some time in 1970 when he selected me for the DM course in his Institute, though I did not join there. Later in the various NSI meetings I have seen him quite active, presenting papers, chairing sessions, giving orations and dancing at the parties. But since 1982 we were together at various meetings, conferences, examinations etc. He is very much friendly and has a very wide circle of admirers and well wishers. After his retirement he continued as Emeritus Professor at Institute of Neurology Madras.

It was during the DM (Neurology), MD (Psychiatry) examinations wd used to enjoy Prof K. J.' s comments. We used to be aggressive and ask all sorts of questions to the candidates. He would sit there smiling at the answers of the students and making pencil sketches. Madras University used to have at times 10 to 12 candidates taking the examination as the examination was conducted at 2 different centres- Vellore and Madras. During board meetings it was difficult to remember who was who to decide regarding the final result. It was then Prof. K. J. 's drawings would become quite handy. He has an uncanny ability to draw the faces of people and that was an easy way by which we could identify the candidates. I have still some of his sketches.

Prof. K. J. is still active in Apollo Hospital, Madras.

**K. R. Nair**

**Dr. K Jagannathan**

**MD, DTM,FRCB FAMS, FIAN, FIMSA.**

**President, Neurological Society of India, 1980.**

Dr. K. Jagannathan (Kanthimathynathan Jagannathan) was born on 11th April 1928 at Sivakasi. Tamil Nadu and had his early education in more than one school, since his father was an Assistant Surgeon, in Madras Medical Service liable for frequent transfers. He had his collegiate education at the American College, Madurai and had his medical education at Stanley Medical College, Madras where he also did the postgraduate course in General Medicine completing the same in 1958. He joined Tamil Nadu Medical Service as an assistant surgeon in 1955 and was working as a tutor in Medicine and dermatology when he qualified for M. D. of the Madras University. Soon after post graduate qualification he was appointed Medical Registrar of the Govt. General Hospital, and Assistant Professor of Medicine as one of the youngest to hold such a post at that time. He was selected as a Colombo Plan Scholar and sent to United Kingdom for training in Neurology and Hospital for Nervous disease, Queen Square, London and Maudsley Hospital, Stoke Mandeville Hospital for paraplegia and Maida Vale Hospital for Nervous diseases, London. When he returned to Madras, he was appointed a tutor in Neurology to work with the Professor Neurosurgery, Madras Medical College and the Professor of Medicine of the same college. He was 'elevated to be the Reader in Neurology in 1964 and Professor of Neurology in 1966 which post he held until his retirement in 1986.

The Department of Neurological Surgery and Neurology was a combined one and he had a long association with the Neurosurgeons of repute like Dr. B. Ramamurthi, Dr. V. Balasubramaniam and Dr. S. Kalyanaraman and had many

projects and research carried out at the Institute of Neurology of Govt. General Hospital (the department of Neurosurgery was transformed and called Institute of Neurology in 1970). The early years of neurology were naturally tied up with the neurosurgeons who came into the speciality in 1950 and had developed a very good awareness of neurological disorders among the doctors in Madras and the country, though the accent was on neurosurgery. There were three centres at the time, one each at Madras, Vellore and Bangalore and these centres were interacting academically having regional meetings with periodic visits to one another. Young doctors were motivated to take up the speciality with very well planned activities in the department of which the Journal Club should be mentioned as a special activity, giving the then current information in the literature in a nutshell with handouts' to the participants.

Medical Neurology was encouraged as a distinct speciality by Dr. B. Ramamurthi the then Professor of Neurosurgery, and Dr. R. Subramaniam Professor of Medicine of the same college. There used to be a regular presentation of neurological cases in the weekly physician's conference on Fridays. This had really put the speciality on firm basis with the medical faculty and the students accepting Neurology as a speciality in Medicine worth practising and not an academic exercise in clinical Medicine as a means to pass examinations alone. The academic activity was grown up gradually and the University started a D. M. course in Neurology in 1965. The first set of specialists came out in 1967. The centre in Madras General Hospital had by then was well known all over the country and attracted patients from all corners of India. The real boost to the development and eminence came in 1961. A British team headed by Dr. Dennis Williams and Mr. Walsh came to Madras sponsored by the British Council, bringing with them the expertise and scope of neurological practice in India. By their visit, stereotaxic surgery became an established sub-speciality in Neurosurgery and the same was actively practised jointly by the neurosurgeons and the neurologists. We started depth recordings from the cerebral hemispheres and later from the cerebellum as well. Many papers were presented both in National and International fora and the centre came to be known as a specialised centre in Neurosciences by W. H. O. It was at this time that the concept of an institute was accepted and through a munificent donation from private Trust in the name of Dr. Lakshminarayanaiah and grant from the Government, the Institute of Neurology came into existence. It was formally declared open by the then President Dr. V. V. Giri. in 1970.

The department of medical neurology was actively engaged in many research Projects, the chief among them being the study of Epilepsy (under a scheme called PL-480 Funds as a part of multicentre study in India,) the Cerebro Vascular Accidents, Peripheral Neuropathy, Motor Neurone Diseases, Tuberculous Meningitis, Behaviour Neurology', Neurological and neuropsychological changes in Head Injury etc. In the course of these projects. the centre acquired EEG, EMG and CT-scan besides authorised departments of neuroradiology, neuropsychology, neuro-ophthalmology, and neurochemistry. The demand for seats in DM (Neurology) became quite high. The State came to have a specialist in practically every Medical College and later practically in every district head-quarters.

One of the major contributions of Medical Neurology from this Institute is the intense clinical research leading to description of new clinical entities of which the Madras Motor Neuron disease gained international recognition. It has been presented and documented at regional, national and international conferences and now accepted as a variant of Motor Neurone Disease. The centre enjoyed the visits of many foreign neurologists neurosurgeons almost round the year and this was a wonderful exposure of Indian Neurology mutually beneficial to the visitors and the local fraternity.

Dr. K. Jagannathan as the Professor of Neurology during this period helped the Institute on a firm footing and the centre and the faculty enjoyed the appreciation and respect of others in the field. Sub-speciality of paediatric neurology was established at this period and the state now boasts of the largest number of paediatric neurologists in the country. Dr. Jagannathan retired in 1986.

### **Social and Medical Milieu in the Period 1950 - 1986.**

Medical Neurology may be considered in its infancy when I took over as Tutor in Neurology under the Professor of Neurosurgery. Pre medical neurological problems were referred to Neurosurgeon at that time even by, Professors and Senior consultants in Medicine. It took some time to make the presence of neurologists felt and took even a little longer to impress them that the speciality, is a viable independent speciality and not an appendage of neurosurgery. Over the next few years in the late sixties, it established and attracted references from all branches of medicine.

The development of medical neurology was well planned and guided by senior physicians and surgeons of whom one should mention the names of Dr. B. Ramamurthi and Dr. R. Subramaniam. Their constant encouragement and their stature in the service made a very important contribution to this development.

Acute Medical neurological problems met in clinical practice were admitted to Special Intensive Care Unit in medical neurology under the neurologists ever since the ICU was created. Work and services done at this Unit under medical neurology was the genesis of a monograph on Cerebrovascular disorders published and well reviewed in Medical Literature.