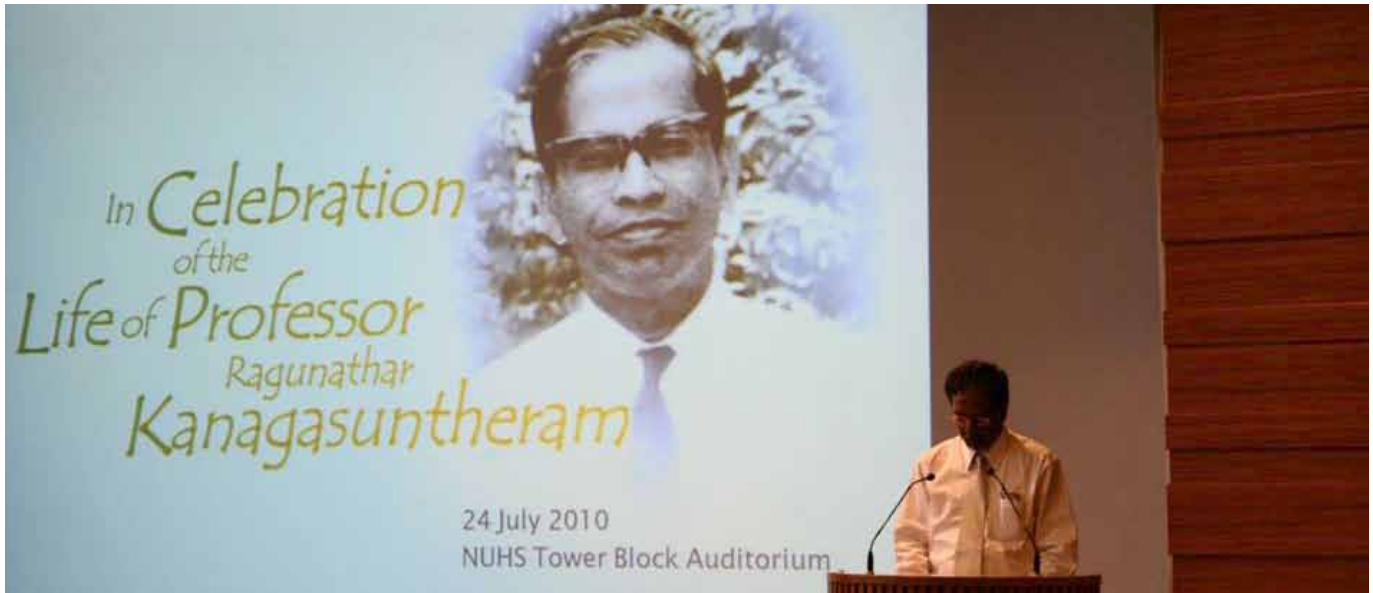


“In Celebration of the Life of Professor Rangunathar Kanagasuntheram”

By A/Prof Samuel Tay



After a month of planning at regular weekly meetings, the programme for the event “In Celebration of the Life of Professor Rangunathar Kanagasuntheram” was finalised for 24 July 2010.

At 2.00 pm, guests started to stroll in at the concourse of the NUHS Tower Block, next to the Kent Ridge Wing, National University Hospital. By 2.55 pm, more than 100 guests were ushered into the Auditorium for the ceremony. With all guests seated, the ceremony commenced with a slide presentation, capturing the life and times of Professor R Kanagasuntheram. This candid presentation was initiated by the Committee, headed by Professor P Gopalakrishnakone and edited by Associate Professor K Rajendran. It related the life and times of Professor Kanagasuntheram from his PhD days in Cambridge University, his term as an Anatomy lecturer at the University of Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), subsequently at the University of Khartoum, Sudan, Africa, followed by his days at the then-University of Singapore. The other side of Professor Kanagasuntheram lesser seen or heard about (such as his social/leisure life) was also well-documented by members of his family.

The slide presentation was followed by the observance of one minute of silence as a mark of respect for the great teacher, researcher and mentor. This observance was followed by messages from Dr Vivian Balakrishnan (Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports) and Professor Tan Chorh Chuan

Professor Rangunathar Kanagasuntheram, 1919 –2010

Professor Kanagasuntheram, Emeritus Professor of Anatomy at the National University of Singapore, passed away peacefully on 19 June 2010 at the age of 91 years in Adelaide, Australia. He was a respected and inspirational teacher and mentor at the Department of Anatomy to thousands of medical, dental, pharmacy and science students. He also had the honour of being the first Asian to occupy the Chair of Anatomy in 1962.

Professor Kanagasuntheram retired from the Headship of the Anatomy Department in 1979, when he attained the age of 60 years. He continued to serve the department upon retirement for another year before leaving for good to take up the Headship of the Anatomy Department at Jaffna Medical College, Sri Lanka. He later became the Dean of the same college.

Professor Kanagasuntheram was conferred Emeritus Professorship by the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 1981, the first of its kind at NUS, and he is the only anatomist to date to have been awarded this title. He was a man with character, and was steadfast in the way he loved and lived his life. He was one who believed not only in the succession of leadership but also in seeing his successor and his staff enjoy the flexibility and freedom to bring the Department of Anatomy to greater heights.

(President, NUS).

The sharing session commenced with the Chief Executive of NUHS, Associate Professor Benjamin Ong, followed by the Dean, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, Professor John Wong. Others sharing their memories of and experiences with Professor Kanagasuntheram were Associate Professor Grace Ong (Dean, Faculty of Dentistry, NUHS), Professor Tan Ser Kiat, (CEO, SingHealth Group), Dr Chong Yeh Woei (President, Singapore Medical Association), Professor P B Chacha (former Head, Orthopaedic Surgery, NUS), Professor Robert Pho (Emeritus Professor, Orthopaedic Surgery, NUHS), Professor Yong Eu Leong (Head, Obstetrics and Gynaecology,

NUHS), and Professor Wong Hee Kit (Head, Orthopaedic Surgery, NUHS), and Professor Ling Eng Ang (former Head, Anatomy, NUS). Five more messages were read to the guests; these were from Professor Lee Chuen Neng (Head, Surgery, NUHS), Professor Loh Hong Sai (Former Dean, Faculty of Dentistry, NUS), Professor Lee Tat Leang (former Head, Anaesthesia, NUS), Associate Professor Chen Fun Gee (Head, Anaesthesia, NUHS), followed by a message from Professor Gillian Morris-Kay (Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Anatomy*, UK).

The grandson of Professor Kanagasuntheram, Mr N Ramana delivered an eloquent speech honoring his grandfather whom he addressed as “Thatha”. This was

followed by the sharing of Professor Bay Boon Huat (Head, Anatomy, NUHS) who announced that the Department of Anatomy is launching a “Professor Ragnunathar Kanagasuntheram Bursary”, whereby a Committee has already been formed (chaired by Associate Professor S S W Tay) to oversee the fundraising drive. One to three bursary awards will be allocated annually to needy students in Medicine/Dentistry, who have excelled in their examinations and shown promise of becoming good doctors/dental surgeons.

Associate Professor K Rajendran was presented with a portrait of his father drawn

by Ms Madhuvika Murugan, a PhD student from the Department of Anatomy, NUHS using the “stippling method”. Associate Professor K Rajendran took over the stage at this point to thank the guests, family members and the working committee members for remembering and recognising his father’s achievements and contributions to the medical fraternity as an exceptional educator and mentor. The ceremony’s highlight was the lighting of candles by all guests present. These lighted candles were lined upon the edges of a rectangular black-tiled fountain, thereby forming a rectangular perimeter of lights surrounding a lighted cylindrical float (with a

photo of Professor Kanagasuntheram) in the middle of the fountain. It was a spectacular sight to behold and brought back fond memories of the late doyen of Anatomy in Singapore.

Guests were then ushered to the foyer of the NUHS Tower Block for a reception. Amidst the flickering candlelight, each guest was flooded with the warm memory of Professor Kanagasuntheram. Whether one was an ex-student, colleague, or associate, etched deeply upon each was the remembrance of Professor Kanagasuntheram’s achievements, affable persona, and a life led full of grace. **SMA**




Professor Ragnunathar Kanagasuntheram Bursary

Past students of Professor Kanagasuntheram and well wishers who would like to come alongside for this worthy cause can send a cheque to the Anatomy Department, NUS payable to “National University of Singapore”, with the words “Professor R Kanagasuntheram Bursary” written behind.

Mailing address:

Ms Violet Teo
 Department of Anatomy
 NUS Yong Loo Lin School of
 Medicine
 #4 Medical Drive, Blk MD10
 Singapore 117597

