Music Maestro Ilayaraja composed one music album and named it as ‘How to name it’. Similarly, how to name a stalwart who had no matches for him in his life and afterlife? It will only be abundantly appropriate to call our respected mentor as ‘The MN’. The temple city (Madurai) would never have seen the dawn of neurosurgery without him. He never kept his neurosurgery to himself, but shared it with his students whole heartedly who ramified not only into the whole of Tamil Nadu but also India and the world.

He was born in Kumbakonam, Tanjore district, Tamil Nadu, and had his schooling at Government School, Banadurai, Kumbakonam, following which he completed his intermediate college education at Government Arts College, Kumbakonam. His illustrious medical carrier started when he joined MBBS at Stanley Medical College and completed the course in 1951. Then he joined Tamil Nadu service and underwent MS (general surgery) at Madras Medical College. His sojourn in neurosurgery started when he joined Professor B Ramamoorthi and subsequently underwent MS (neurosurgery) course at Madras Medical College. He was one of the first privileged students of Professor B Ramamoorthi. Having seen his capability, the Government of Tamil Nadu sent him to UK, to train under Professor Rowbotham of Newcastle upon Tyne.

He returned from UK and started our Alma mater, the Department of Neurosurgery at Madurai Medical College and what was then known as Government Erskine Hospital (at present known as Government Rajaji Hospital). He headed and ruled the department with passion until his retirement in February 1986. During his tenure at the department, with his relentless efforts he made, the department grow from a single man show to a three independent units show with three professors, eight assistant professors and an intake of three MCh neurosurgery postgraduates every year. He expanded the empire with 46 beds for elective neurosurgery and 27 beds for an exclusive head injury unit. This department has the distinction of having an exclusive head injury unit, one of the first in the country.

The MCh Neurosurgery course was started in the year 1968, thus, becoming one of the first few neurosurgical training centers in the country.

His areas of interest included: head injury, lumbar canal stenosis, spinal granulomas, parasitic infestations of the central nervous system, especially, hydatidosis of the brain.

He was a voracious reader. I had seen him read the same neurosurgery textbooks repeatedly (as there were only limited textbooks available at that time). I have seen him reading other specialty journals also! He had particular interest in writing articles for journals. He used to call his postgraduates who had good handwriting and dictate the articles for the postgraduate to write it on paper which later went for typing after repeated corrections! We must know that he had only a typewriter and a steno typist and not a computer to generate his scientific articles. He had published a lot of articles in various medical journals. His series of intraspinal granulomas is one of the largest to be reported in the literature. Some of his publications on spine are as below:


He was a PhD Guide to several students. He was actively involved in many Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) projects in head injury. He also organized the annual conference of the Neurological Society of India (NSI) at Madurai in 1983, for which I had the privilege to be his personal assistant to organize the conference.

It was decided during this conference at Madurai to start the publication of the Newsletter of the Society. The first issue of the Newsletter was published in January 1984. He was instrumental in starting Madurai Neuro Association which offered two annual awards for the best poster presented at the annual conference of the NSI and the top scorer in the multiple choice question examination held during the Annual Conference of the Society.

We, who emerged as neurosurgeons from our Alma mater formed Madurai Neurosurgical Academy (MNA) in 2009 and celebrated the 50th anniversary of our department in 2013. This academy has grown in leaps and bounds with the support of the students of our icon—‘The MN’. We conduct a scientific meeting of the MNA once in 2 years as an alumni initiative.

Whatever you have read is written as ‘less is more’ basis. There is ‘enough and more’ about our beloved icon. It will fall very much short of what I really want to convey. What he conveyed to me when I met him last ‘Keep teaching and keep writing’. I am sure he is doing the same in his ‘happy hunting grounds’.

He was fascinated when I designed an emblem for him which can be read as Madurai Neurosurgery also! Well, He was certainly Madurai Neurosurgery.