

OBITUARY

Professor Marcus S. Devanandan (1937-1997)

Prof. Devanandan, "Marcus" to his friends and colleagues, started his career in Physiology with his work on conduction velocities of the aortic nerve fibers in the cat at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, in 1962 under Prof. A. S. Paintal. He obtained his Ph.D from the Australian National University, Canberra, under the guidance of Prof. J. C. Eccles. He demonstrated presynaptic inhibition in motoneurons with muscle stretch, a natural stimulus unlike a volley of impulses induced by electrical stimulation of the sensory nerves. His further significant achievements were the elaboration of the 'J' reflex at the V.P. Chest Institute, Delhi. Later, not having adequate facilities for electrophysiology of motor nervous system which was his forte, he undertook work on the sensorimotor organisation of the hand. He pursued this essentially anatomical work with characteristic rigour and soon published papers in *Brain*, *Experimental Brain Research*, *Journal of Anatomy* and other flagstaff journals in neurosciences. He continued the work till his retirement in February 1997 as a Professor of Neurophysiology at the Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore. All this work of fundamental importance is quoted in various text books, including 'Gray's Anatomy'.



He was awarded the Shakuntala Amir Chand Prize in 1964, the Lakshmiapati award in 1988, and the Air Marshall Subroto Dey Oration and medal in 1991. He was elected to the Fellowship of the National Academy of Medical Sciences in 1980 and to the Fellowship of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1991.

He is remembered by friends and colleagues as much for his qualities as a scientist as for his decency, humility and personal principles. He refused to obtain an M. D. degree out of his work on the aortic nerve because he always believed it a mistake to make a distinction between non-medical and medical physiology. He was a devout Christian and had deep respect for the religious sentiments of others. Like his mentor, Sir John Eccles, he believed in the existence of an immortal soul.

He died of polyarteritis nodosa which he had developed some years earlier. He is survived by his wife Saro and two daughters, Krishna and Malini.

IJPP prays for peace to the departed soul.