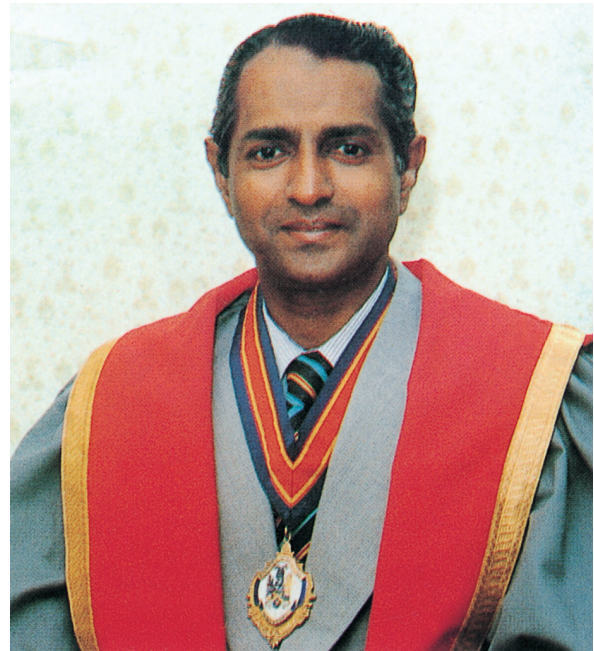


Professor Vettiveloo Kandasamy Pillay (1929 – 2016)

Professor “Kanda” Pillay, the 11th Master of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore (1978-1980), originally hailed from Seremban, Malaysia,¹ and was admitted to the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore in 1948.² He graduated from the renamed Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya in 1954. In 1958, he became one of the first 3 Orthopaedic Trainees with the Department of Orthopaedics together with William Fung (the first local head of the Government Department of Orthopaedics – the ‘O’ unit) and Yeoh Kean Hong. The trio obtained their Final Fellowship in Surgery in 1960 and MCh (Orth) Liverpool (Masters of Surgery in Orthopaedics) in 1961 together.^{1,2} Thereafter, they joined the orthopaedic service. He had a keen interest in genetic, congenital and developmental deformities in orthopaedics, as was demonstrated by his publications.

Between 1967 and 1974, he became head of the ‘C’ unit – the University Department of Orthopaedics (renamed as the University of Singapore), succeeding Professor Donald Gunn as the first Local Professor of Orthopaedics.³ During this period, he built the foundation for the local postgraduate programme in Orthopaedics and was instrumental in getting the local Master of Medicine in Surgery degree recognised as equivalent to that of the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in the United Kingdom.¹ Together with P Chacha, N Balachandran and KH Yeoh, he was involved in postgraduate orthopaedic training programmes in Indonesia in the 1970s.² He was conferred the title of Honourable Academician of Makassar University in 2002 in recognition of his efforts to establish postgraduate orthopaedic training in Jakarta and Makassar.⁴

In 1967, he was involved in the formation of the Singapore Orthopaedic Association (SOA) and elected as the first vice-president of the association.⁵ He established the SOA Donald Gunn Gold Medal in 1989 in honour of his teacher and mentor.¹ The same year, he was also elected as a founding committee member of the Singapore Surgical Society. He was a founding member of the World Orthopaedic Concern which was established in Singapore in 1975. This international organisation, mooted in 1973 at Oxford, was focused on improving the healthcare of



orthopaedic patients in developing countries. In 1976, through his strong association with the Chairmen of the Lee and the Shaw Foundations, he established the Lee-Shaw Foundation Fellowship which allowed regional orthopaedic surgeons to do orthopaedic fellowships in Singapore, which continues on to this day.^{2,6}

VK Pillay became a fellow of the Academy of Medicine in 1963 and was selected as the Galloway Lecturer (The Galloway Lecture is in memory of Sir David Galloway, an eminent physician and teacher of the Singapore Medical School, instituted in 1959 after a gift of \$2000 from Lady Galloway)⁶ the same year, which he delivered on the topic of ‘Congenital (Developmental) Deformities of the Elbow Joint’.⁷ He became the Chairman of the Chapter of Surgeons (which was founded in 1966 and eventually led to the disbandment of the Singapore Surgical Society) between 1971 and 1973.⁸ During his leadership as the 11th Master between 1978 and 1980, the building fund was initiated. As Master, he obtained commitments from Shaw

Foundation and Lee Foundation to donate \$2m each over a period of several years.^{9,10} The donations were contingent upon the Academy members collecting/contributing at least \$0.5m first. These donations and funds led to the eventual purchase by the Academy of the Runme Shaw Building at 142, Neil Road in June 1999.

He was honoured by the then Chapter of Surgeons (which became the College of Surgeons in 2004)⁸ and awarded the Chapter of Surgeons Lectureship which he delivered on the topic of ‘Dilemmas in Surgery’ in 1995.^{8,11} In 1997, he set up the Chapter of Surgeons Travelling Fellowship (now known as the College of Surgeons Travelling Fellowship). It provides funding to members of the College for their participation at conferences/seminars/workshops/teaching programmes to have further understanding of the surgical problems in the developing world and gain knowledge on the development/advancement of the surgical specialties.

Besides those of the Academy and Chapter, he was similarly honoured by the Singapore Medical Association (SMA) as the 19th SMA Lecturer in 1986 which he delivered on the topic ‘Excellence in Medicine’.¹² The SOA honoured him in 1990 as the Donald Gunn Lecturer.¹ The University Department of Orthopaedics honoured him as one of the pioneers in Singapore orthopaedic academics by establishing the VK Pillay Lectureship at the National University of Singapore in 2004.⁴ Renowned orthopaedic surgeons from abroad are invited every year to spend about a week to deliver lectures, teach postgraduates and orthopaedic trainees and exchange scientific advancements in orthopaedics with staff members.

Kanda Pillay was both a spiritual and a family man. He is acknowledged as one of the pioneers who helped to set up the Hindu Centre in Singapore in 1978.¹³ A devotee of Satya Sai Baba, he spent a lot of his spare time in providing orthopaedic expertise to the Satya Sai Baba Hospital in Puttaparthi in India. He was also involved in setting up the Sai Centre in Singapore in the 1980s.¹⁴

Professor Pillay was a faithful proponent of the art of Orthopaedics as oft quoted by him – “At one time, it was considered that to be an orthopaedic surgeon you needed more brawn than brain. I kept telling my colleagues that in orthopaedic, things are done not with Force but with Art — Non Vis Sed Arte.”

His contributions to the Academy and to the art, practice and teaching of Orthopaedics in Singapore serve as inspiration to generations of orthopaedic surgeons and academicians to come.

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