

INTERVIEW BY Mr. MURUGAPPAN, DETROIT, MI
(December 4, 2009)

1. Tell us about yourself (birth place, education, profession, family etc.)
Nattarasankottai, BE (Hons) Annamalai University, M.S. University of Texas, Austin.
Consulting Engineer in Piping, Registered Professional Engineer, Texas
KN.M.N.S. House, Mother Paganeri Kaliyammai Achi, Wife Meenakshi
Children: Ramesh, Ryan, Abirami, Ramakrishnan

2. When did you migrate to the USA? How do you feel being in the USA far from your motherland India?

1968, I feel that I could more from USA than **what** I could have done if stayed in India.

3. Describe your early years in the USA.

Texas is very conservative State. Civil Rights bill was signed only in 1964, four years before I arrived. At that time, India was considered as a poor country with uneducated population. We worked very hard to receive any respect.

4. You are known for many social activities and community volunteer projects and you have done a lot for the community. How did you get involved in social activities? Who was the motivator? What was your first project?

1964 Fundraising Rs. 4000 for Bharathi Library and Road repair work in Nattarasankottai.

1969 Write instructions to assist new **International** students at UT, Austin

1970 Form Patients Hospitality Committee, India Student Association, University of Houston

I want to serve people whom I did not meet before or ever meet again. My satisfaction is to see the smile on the face of the other person.

I saw my mother **Kaliyammai Achi** and elder sister Saroja help others a lot when I was little.

5. What are your other prominent community projects and please describe the results/outcome.

1971 Cremation of Heart Patients who came alone to Houston and died

1974 Starting Bharathi Kalai Manram after many differences in screening Tamil Movies

1977 Starting Sri Meenakshi Temple after working for three years and buying one acre land north of Katy freeway, **Houston**, for the Hindu Worship Society, Houston

2001 Millennium Republic day and Qujارات Earthquake Relief. Building 200 homes in Krishnanagar, Kutch after earthquake **from funds raised in Houston**.

2002 9/11 Relief efforts, Hate crime prevention against Muslims in Houston

2008 Hurricane Ike Relief to American Residents and UTMB Indian students, Galveston

2003 Speech delivered at NRI Conference, New Delhi for linking Indian Rivers

2006 – Present: Vice-President, SNOM Trust USA

2009 Starting Global Organization of People of Indian Origin, Houston Chapter

6. How are you managing these projects amidst your tight schedule?
I ignore insignificant events happening around me. I focus only on “What I am doing and NOT on what others think about my performance. So time spent is always productive.
7. We have heard you have created some software for speech or recognition therapy and Tamil language. Please elaborate about it?

Created Tamil fonts in IBM PC and speech in Tamil with TI voice synthesizer first to assist MGR, who lost his speech due to stroke. When I showed Tamil words “Anna Namam Vazka” on the TV monitor, MGR smiled and held my hands. Then I printed Tamil words for him. That was the first time Tamil words were created, spoken and printed in a computer.

8. What was the most satisfying community work you have been involved with?
In 1974, ten year old boy died in heart operation. Just before cremation, his dad Mr. Ramasamy wanted to place a pair of shoes in the gasket. I trained myself to be unemotional when working with families of people who died. But the action by Mr. Ramasamy was too much even for me. I never met father again.

Serving as Vice-President of SNOM Trust, USA Inc. Dr. S.S. Bhadrinath, Founder of Sankara Nethralaya is very humble and dedicated person. It is indeed a honor to work with him.

The Jaslok Community Ophthalmic Centre at Sankara Nethralaya offers free services to the Economically weaker sections. All our units follow the same policy of providing high quality treatment to the rich and poor alike. Some of the highlights of our Community Ophthalmic services are listed below:

1987-1992-Camps conducted on alternate Sundays in the Hospital premises → 1992-1995- Camps conducted with the help of NGOs especially the Tulsi Trust → →1995-1997-An entire floor in Mahyco block dedicated for community services 1997-1999-With increasing demand, a separate Hospital started for free patients 1999 onwards-Jaslok Community—at Pammal in the outskirts of Chennai. Ophthalmic Center started in the heart of Chennai close to Sankara Nethralaya Main Hospital.

9. During your volunteer work what have you learned and what you want to tell to today’s youngsters.
Do thing which brings inner satisfaction. Do not expect rewards. Reward will come in unexpected ways.
10. It is not an easy task to build a temple. You were the inspiration and the leader behind building the Houston Meenakshi temple. How did you manage to do this being in USA?
Pearland was very conservative. Pearland School District did not admit minority students in 1950s. After paying earnest money to buy 4.9 acres with my own funds, I

visited with temple's neighbors one by one with an American friend and requested their support.

11. Any activities/projects in India

Water Transfer between Indian Rivers in Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh.

Making Nattarasankottai a Tourist Center.

12. Who are the most eminent and admiring personalities you have met in your life time?

Dr. ECG Sudarshan, UT, Austin

Honorable Kamal Nath, Union Minister, Government of India

Pearland Mayor Tom Reid

13. Awards you have received.

Savai Thilakam

American Arul Selvar

Lighting Award and Tiger Team, General Electric, Princeton

Improvement in Earthquake Prediction in measuring earth's movements by Laser

Tracking, NSAS Goddard Center, Greenbelt

Merit Performance, Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville