

History

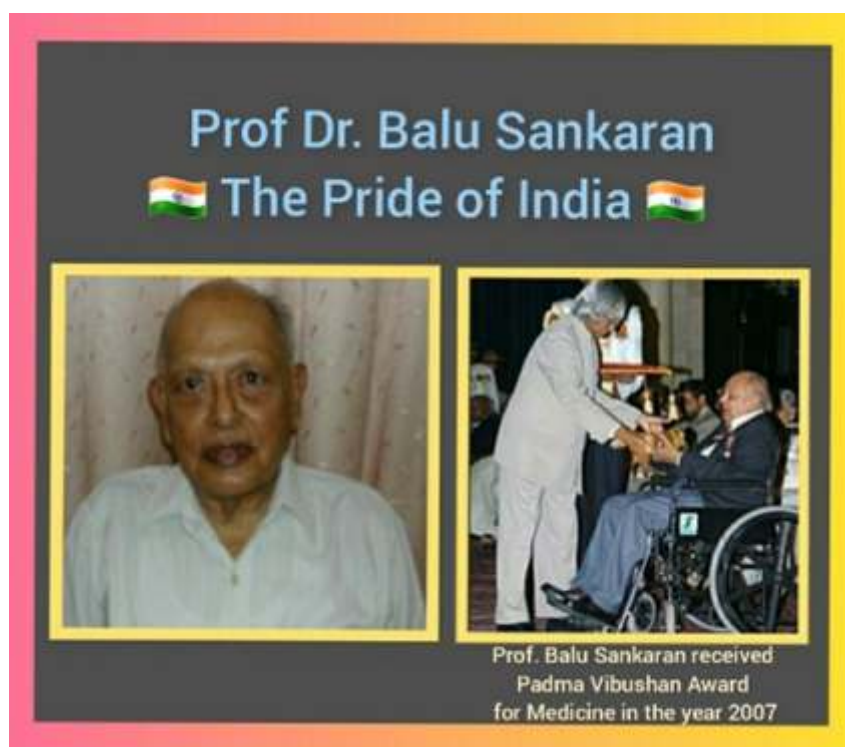
A Tribute to the Vibrant Orthopaedic Surgeon of India & A Passionate Teacher

Prof.Dr. BALU SANKARAN

Sept 4, 1926 - June 20, 2012

Indian Orthopedician

Pioneer in Artificial limbs & Rehabilitation



His Contributions...

- Balu Sankaran was born in a Physician's family in Chennai, Tamil Nadu by the year 1926.
- He studied medicine and got graduated from Stanley Medical College, Chennai in 1948. He was the recipient of 17 medals while studying and holds many firsts in University.
- Alike his uncle, Dr Sankaran also wanted to study his postgraduation abroad. So he travelled to the United States and got trained in orthopaedic surgery at the prestigious Columbia Presbyterian Medical Centre, USA. Moreover, he was the first Indian who passed his FRCS (Canada) in orthopaedics.
- Immediately, he was been offered a job at US\$ 10,000 per year, by acknowledging his depth of knowledge in orthopaedics.
- But Dr Sankaran was very keen to serve his people in India because there were only 14 orthopaedic surgeons in our country at that time.



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- He further got trained at Manchester Royal Infirmary, UK and fortunately worked with world-famous Prof. Sir. John Charley (the founder of modern hip replacement).
- In fact, his passion to serve his people had brought him back to India. Initially, he joined as an Assistant Professor of orthopaedic surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in 1956.
- During that time, there was no such exclusive ortho ward in AIIMS, which was running in Safdarjung Hospital.
- The height of his career was VVIPs and VIPs used to come to his OPD for treatment. Even, the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had visited his outpatient block for consultation and respected Dr Sankaran's time. Because, Dr Sankaran was well known as a poor man's physician, rendering yeomen service to the underprivileged.
- Apart from that, he was a wonderful teacher who used to take daily classes for his students at his home in the early morning at 4.30 am.
- Ultimately, he became a giant in the field of orthopaedics through his work on reconstruction surgery for leprosy patients and polio-affected children, which changed the lives of innumerable patients.
- In 1967, he joined as a Professor in Maulana Azad Medical College. Then he moved as a Director of Central Institute of Orthopedics in 1970.
- While, there was a war going on in Bangladesh. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sought the advice of Dr Sankaran for the rehabilitation of war victims. He witnessed several amputees and realized the need for good orthotics and prosthetics.
- Thereby, he became instrumental in setting up the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) at Kanpur in 1972 and subsequently established the rehabilitation training centre, Institute of Rehabilitation Training and Research at Olaipur, Odhisha.
- Furthermore, he established 17 other peripheral rehabilitation centres in the country, which are a testimony to his vision to serve the poor.
- Moreover, the WHO appointed him as the Regional Director in Geneva by recognizing his extraordinary contribution. Then he became the Director of WHO in Geneva from 1981-1987.
- After his retirement, he joined St Stephen Hospital, New Delhi, a mission hospital taking care of poor patients and rendered free service for more than a decade. Here he established the wards for paralytic poliomyelitis and cerebral palsy.
- Eventually, he was honoured with various awards including Padma Shri Award in 1972 and the Padma Vibushan Award in the year 2007 by the Government of India.



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- While he was leaving from New Delhi to Tamil Nadu, he was been given farewell tea at Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's house, which is considered a great recognition for his service.
- Dr. Sankaran was recognized as a born clinical teacher because throughout his life he involved himself in teaching students.
- His passion for teaching is evident, even on the last days of his life, when his health deteriorated, losing consciousness, he kept on repeating "Take me to the class, Where are the students."
- Dr. Sankaran is well recognized as a great human being with hard work, simplicity and dynamicity. He ultimately achieved his vision by serving as a teacher, a surgeon, a clinician, a scientist and an administrator.

***Dr. Gowri Shankar
Coimbatore***