

Prof. Sam C. Bose: A Charismatic Luminary and a Pioneering Plastic Surgeon

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Prof. Sam Chandra Bose (→ **Fig. 1**) was born on April 4, 1928, at Neyoor, Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. He was the third of four sons to Dr. M.V.M. Samuel and Mrs. Theodora Williams. His father was the first surgical assistant of Dr. Thomas Harvard Samuel, and his mother was a teacher. Education was highly valued in Prof. Sam C. Bose's family, leading his siblings to pursue distinguished careers as doctors, engineers, and lawyers. He attended Nagercoil and Intermediate (F.A.) at St. Joseph's College, Trichy.

Inspired by his father's dedication to the profession, Prof. Sam C. Bose aspired to become a doctor from the young age of 7 years. He joined the prestigious Madras Medical College in 1946 and completed MBBS in 1952. He went on to complete his postgraduate degree in M.S. General Surgery in the same college between 1957 and 1959. His calling for plastic surgery emerged in 1957 during his first year of general surgery postgraduation at Madras Medical College when he attended a lecture by Sir Harold Gillies, the father of modern plastic surgery.

At that time, there were no established teaching centers for plastic surgery in India. Under the leadership of Captain Dr. C. Balakrishnan (father of Indian plastic surgery), the first teaching center for plastic surgery was established in Nagpur in 1960. Prof. Sam C. Bose studied plastic surgery between 1961 and 1963 under his mentor Prof. C. Balakrishnan. In Nagpur, he learnt the markings for cleft lip repair by the triple wedge method designed by Prof. C. Balakrishnan and passed on the technique to the later generations. Although he wished to remain at Madras Medical College after completing his M.Ch., he was sent to Madurai Medical College to establish a plastic surgery department there, a responsibility he embraced as a blessing.

He started his work at Madurai Medical College on December 16, 1963. However, a proper plastic surgery department was established only on January 26, 1964, at



Fig. 1 Prof. Sam C. Bose.

the then Erskine Hospital, Madurai. He initiated the department with just the essentials and diligently worked to address the needs of the patients. Initially, the department had only four beds, but it has since expanded significantly now to accommodate up to 100 patients with a separate Burns Unit Block (→ **Fig. 2**).

In July 1956, he married Dr. P.U. Saroja from Coorg, and they were blessed with four children: two sons and two daughters. With his dedication to the patients and passion for the subject, he became a highly esteemed individual in

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Fig. 2 Golden Jubilee Celebration, 1964–2014, at Madurai Medical College Plastic Surgery Department: with Prof. Veerasekar, Prof. Sridhar, Prof. Mathangi, and Prof. Prabha Yadav.

Madurai and was in the government service for 21 years, until his retirement in 1987.

Even after retirement, he remained active as a senior consultant in plastic surgery at Apollo Hospitals, Madurai. He also held numerous honorable positions in various colleges and schools throughout Madurai. He was a member of the advisory committee of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry Association of Plastic Surgeons (TANPAPS) (→ Fig. 3) and Association of Plastic Surgeons of India (APSI). His etiquette and diplomacy were commendable wherever he went. He was the President of the Association of Plastic Surgeons of India in 1979.

Those who had closely journeyed with him had countless stories to share about him. He consistently met the needs of his patients and others, offering practical solutions. He was known for his attentive listening, a trait that was greatly admired. He also took great pleasure in mentoring new recruits in the plastic surgery department, guiding them with enthusiasm into their new roles (→ Fig. 4).

Prof. Sam C. Bose was always the first to arrive at conferences and nearly the last to leave. He thoroughly enjoyed the discussions, adapted effortlessly to the flow of conversation, asked insightful questions, and took great pleasure in being among his fellow plastic surgeons (→ Fig. 5). He diligently captured notes during such conferences and actively engaged with the junior PGs by discussing the key highlights afterward. He created a printout of cleft lip markings using the

Prof. CBK method (triple wedge repair), which he then distributed to the PGs, enhancing their learning experience.

Prof. Bose, in addition to his remarkable contributions to the plastic surgery department, was also known for his affable presence at gala dinners (→ Fig. 6). He spoke from the heart, encouraging shy youngsters to open up and blend into the vibrant atmosphere. His presence brought laughter wherever he went as he effortlessly regaled everyone with his anecdotes and impeccable memory. Drawing from his own experiences, he offered practical solutions to complex problems, making them seem simple and manageable. He used to insist that the younger generation sing the National Anthem, instead of playing the audio, with patriotism and in the correct stature at the end of the program.

Postgraduates revered him for his invaluable guidance and congenial company (→ Fig. 7). His innate ability to strike the right chord with individuals at the opportune moment is exceptional. Known for his perpetually cheerful temperament, he exuded positivity wherever he went. His impeccable sense of dressing, graceful walk, and polished speech reflect his diplomatic demeanor. Punctuality was a hallmark of his character, recognized globally. Remarkably, his penchant for taking notes transcends beyond conferences, extending to all facets of life even at home. His dining table is a testament to his dedication, adorned with notebooks, pens, papers, and reading materials, a constant reminder of his commitment to continuous learning and meticulous organization.



Fig. 3 With Prof. James Pandian at the first TANPAPS, 2002.



Fig. 4 With postgraduates taught by him after retirement.

He has a proactive approach to planning sessions, consistently emphasizing the importance of knowing about the cases in advance. He meticulously gathered all relevant information pertaining to each case, documenting it on paper. He then provided this comprehensive overview to the PG presenting

the case, facilitating a thorough discussion of key points and ensuring effective preparation for the session.

He led a modest life, preferring simple food and deep contemplation. Neither strictly god-fearing nor avowedly atheist, he embodied righteousness, perceiving the divine within



Fig. 5 Professor chairing a session at APSI Conference.



Fig. 6 With Prof. Balasubramanian, Prof. Narayanan, and Prof. Radhakrishnan.

humanity itself. His devotion to plastic surgery is unparalleled, evident in his unwavering commitment to attending Saturday planning sessions, even if it meant arriving in a wheelchair.

Prof. Bose passed away on April 5, 2024. His legacy as a charismatic luminary in plastic surgery is defined by his

pioneering contributions, dedication to education, compassionate patient care, and leadership within the medical community.

He consistently attended these sessions until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Fig. 7 With his students at the Golden Jubilee Celebration of Madurai Plastic Surgery Department in 2014.

His courtesy toward the patients attending the planning sessions was truly commendable. He consistently demonstrated respect and empathy toward them, ensuring that they felt valued and heard throughout the process. His genuine consideration for their well-being fostered a positive and supportive environment, enhancing the overall patient experience.

Whenever a new concept was introduced, he consistently expressed his gratitude by saying, "Thank you! I am educated." This simple yet profound acknowledgment reflects his genuine appreciation for learning and underscores his commitment to continuous growth and development. His approach of breaking down complex or complicated problems into smaller, manageable ones, and then seeking simple solutions applies not just to patient care; it also resonates with our personal lives.

In his characteristic manner, he gracefully upheld the principle of "ladies first" whenever food was served during discussions, a small yet meaningful gesture that reflected his respect for equality and courtesy. Despite physical limitations, he maintained his impeccable appearance and always dressed with the utmost neatness, a testament to his professionalism and dedication. He attended the last CME in May 2023 in Madurai Medical College, New Academic Block.

He was an excellent commentator for most of the sports events conducted at Madurai Medical College, especially hockey and cricket matches, keeping the audience spell-bound. All India Radio has aired his commentary for hockey matches. Similarly, in live operative workshops, he coordinated the events exceptionally well and fostered lively interaction, encouraging questions from the audience.

He generously donated his extensive collection of books and notes to the library at Madurai Medical College. This contribution has significantly enriched the library's resources, providing valuable study materials for current and future students. His donation reflected his commitment to supporting the academic growth and success of his peers and successors. He has trained almost five generations of plastic surgeons in his lifetime.

Prof. Sam C. Bose is a beacon of uniqueness, and we are privileged to follow in his footsteps and carry forward his legacy.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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