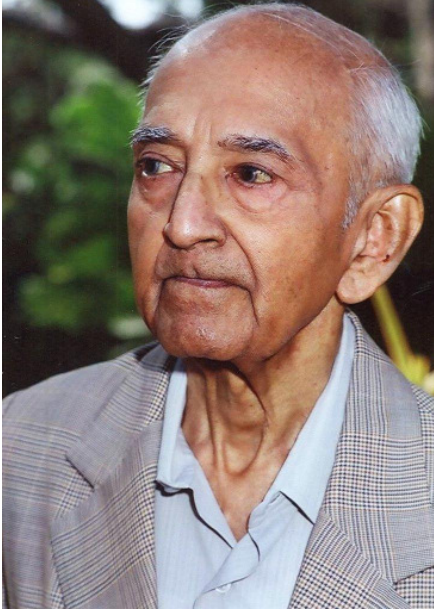


## Dr R. Narasimhan



Dr. R. Narasimhan, a doyen of Indian Computer Science Research, played various major roles in the development of computing in India. He studied telecommunications engineering at the Guindy Engg College, Madras, and earned a B. E. He followed this up with a Master's at Caltech and a Ph D at Indiana.

He returned to India in 1959 to join the fine group of scientists being put together by Homi Bhabha at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR). The first full-scale, general purpose, electronic digital computer designed and built in India, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research Automatic Calculator (TIFRAC), was completed in 1959 and commissioned in February 1960. The computer

was designed by R. Narasimhan and built by a team of six people. TIFRAC was named in 1962, when India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, inaugurated the new buildings of the TIFR.

Narasimhan spent the major part of his academic life at TIFR, building up the institute's Computer Science and Technology Lab. He was instrumental in setting up the Computer Society of India (CSI) and served as its first President. He also played a key role in the setting of the then Computer Maintenance Corporation (CMC), which later became a full-fledged computer company under Narasimhan's Chairmanship.

His work on syntactic pattern recognition, carried out when he was spending a few years at Illinois, was seminal. He worked for over a decade on the modeling of natural language behavior and on the evolution of language behavior. He authored several widely read books.

Prof Narasimhan established contact with IFIP by deputing observers to the IFIP events and also liaised with Prof Kelly Gotlieb, Chairman, Admissions Committee regarding India's admission as a full member of IFIP. After due consideration of the logistical and technological aspects for active participation, approval of membership was accorded to India as the 34th Member of IFIP in 1973 and Prof R. Narasimhan served as the First Indian GA Representative for the years 1974 to 1983. Narasimhan was also elected Trustee on the IFIP Council (1975-1983), Chairman Admissions Committee (1976-78) and elected specially by the General assembly as an Individual Member (1983-87). As Chairman, Admissions Committee, Narasimhan brought into focus drawing the Developing World into

IFIP to broaden benefits of Technology to these countries. It was to the credit of Prof Bennet from Australia and Prof Narasimhan to bring about the SEARCC Conference in Singapore in 1976 with sponsorship from IFIP, UNESCO, IBI, CSI and SCSD. The SEARCC confederation joined IFIP in 1982, and this was the forerunner of entry of other Regional Confederations as CLEI and WARCS in 1984, and African Regional Computer Confederation(1991). Narasimhan as Trustee, organised the IFIP Council Meeting in Bombay in Feb 1978 and the IFIP President, Prof. Bobbilier also joined the CSI Annual Conference at Calcutta. The concept of State of art seminars as an activity for the benefit of the DC's was promoted by Narasimhan through the TCs and the first initiatives with TC-2 with Mason and Meersman (Formal Description of Programming Concepts, 1992), TC-3 (National Issues on Computer Education, 1987), TC-6, TC-8 (Impact of Information Systems in DCs, 1988), TC-9 (Informatics 81), TC-11 are the outcome. Such Seminars enabled a wider participation from Professionals in the DCs and contributed to the National recognition of benefits of participation in IFIP. Another long-term interest of Prof. Narasimhan was in IT policy issues vis a vis developing countries. He raised the question of "how IT can be deployed to serve the bulk of the population?" He encouraged his colleagues to work on nationally relevant problems in the area of computer science and technology. He was an informal advisor to the Govt of India in various aspects of computer science and technology over a couple of decades.

He served as a father figure to his younger colleagues at TIFR who went on to create the National Center for Software Technology (now a part of C-DAC), and served as the Chairman of the NCST Governing Council for a few terms.

His post-retirement years were spent as a Fellow of his beloved CMC, where he carried on his scientific work till the end of his life.

He was seriously ill from August 2007 and passed away peacefully on the morning of September 3, 2007.

S. Ramani / Maj. Gen. A. Balasubramanian (Retd.)