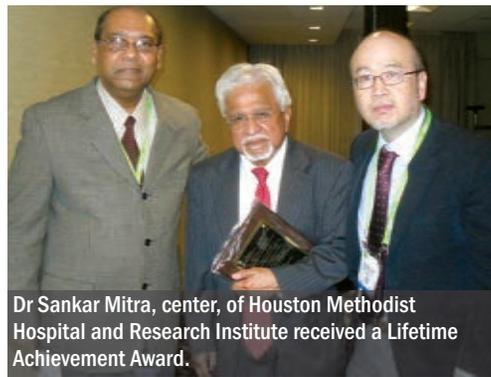


They have dedicated their lives to cancer research

P RAJENDRAN

Eight researchers, two of them veterans, were honored at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Indian Scientists in Cancer Research in New Orleans.

Dr Aniruddha Ganguly, founder and current president, said that AAISCR supports cancer researchers by connecting scientists to help them pursue common goals, network, share knowledge and expertise, and by mentoring par-



Dr Sankar Mitra, center, of Houston Methodist Hospital and Research Institute received a Lifetime Achievement Award.

ticularly young investigators.

Dr Sankar Mitra, professor at the Houston Methodist Hospital and Research Institute, received a Lifetime Achievement Award for many of his fundamental discoveries in the area of repair of DNA damage.

Dr Raju S K Chaganti, professor at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York, received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his studies on the genetics of human cancer, focusing on leukemia, B-cell lymphoma, and adult male granulose cell tumors.

These awards are given to scientists who've made fundamental contributions to cancer research either through a single scientific discovery or a body of work, and must have had a lasting

impact on cancer research and demonstrated a lifetime commitment to progress against cancer.

Two researchers won the AAISCR Outstanding Scientist Award, which recognizes novel and significant biomedical research that has led to important contributions in basic and translational cancer research, cancer diagnosis, cancer prevention, or treatment of patients with cancer.

Dr Adhip P N Majumdar, professor at Wayne State University School of Medicine, Michigan, was awarded for his contributions in elucidating the pathophysiology of age-related changes in the gut, specifically those which lead to the development of cancer.

Dr Shivendra Singh, professor at University of Pittsburgh, was awarded for his contributions in prostate cancer prevention research.

In the Postdoctoral Fellow/Junior Faculty category, Dr Girijesh K Patel of University of South Alabama was awarded for his research presentation on how pancreatic cancer cells develop resistance to chemotherapy, and Dr Suryavathi Viswanadhapalli of University of Texas Health Sciences Center at San Antonio for her research presentation on the role PELP1, a gene that if mutated can cause cancer, plays in breast cancer and in therapy resistance.

AAISCR also rewards young investigators' (junior faculty, postdoctoral fellow and graduate student) excellence in research. This year's Young Investigator Awards were presented to two graduate students for research presented at the American Association for Cancer Research annual meeting in New Orleans.

Saswati Karmakar was recognized for her work on how interacting proteins associated with cell differentiation can feed the self-renewal of ovarian cancer stem cells. Suprit Gupta was recognized for his work on changes seen in some peptides that are usually associated with blood pressure — and the receptors they link to — in pancreatic cancer. Both are graduate students at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha.

Dada Vaswani's special advice: Stay true to your roots

RITU JHA

Spiritual leader 'Dada' J P Vaswani's visit to Santa Clara, California May 1 was attended by hundreds who gathered at the Santa Clara Convention Center to hear him speak and seek his blessing.

The 97-year-old head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission gave a discourse on 'Empower yourself,' discussing topics ranging from terrorism and India to the younger generation and animal sacrifice. He offered advice like: 'With freedom comes responsibility. Empower the *shakti* within you. Our destiny is made by us, take charge and be in the driver seat. Start a new chapter in your life today.'

Vaswani, who has spoken at the United Nations, the World Parliament of Religions and the British House of Commons, spent over an hour addressing Silicon Valley folks, followed by an interactive session moderated by Nipun Mehta, founder, Service Space.

When an audience member asked what brings him the most joy in life, he said, 'I am always full of joy and happiness. And when people say they have not killed an animal that gives me joy.'

Asked for his view on growing intolerance and about India as an emerging world power, Vaswani said, 'I don't want that. I want India to serve the world. India should serve every nation, with sincere and loving intention. India should be true to high ideals. I am afraid it fails sometimes.'

And on terrorism he offered, 'Evil has no legs to walk with. It has come and will do its work and will disappear.'



Devotees seek blessings from 'Dada' J P Vaswani.

When someone asked about ending terrorism, he stressed the importance of stopping the killing the animals.

The spiritual leader was visiting the Bay Area after nine years. Speaking to *India Abroad* on the sidelines of the event, he said his message to the community was: "Stay true to your roots."

"(Most of the world) has forgotten god," he added. "They have thrown gods from their homes and from educational institutions. These are the two centers of character building." He felt the new generation was growing without character and the consequences would be difficult to manage.

M R Rangaswami, founder, Indiaspora, who invited Vaswani to the Bay Area, told *India Abroad* that he decided to do so after he saw the impact the leader had at the Indiaspora retreat in Virginia last year: "Dada is a radiant, beautiful soul, who likes to give to others selflessly. His smile is infectious and his words simple but profound."

"He is humble and modest beyond belief. Who else would have a biography titled *Guru of None, Disciple of All*," Rangaswami added.

Dancing for a cause

The Natyamani School of Dance in Westborough, Massachusetts, an institution for Bharata Natyam in New England, is hosting its annual festival of music and dance, Naada Nritya Sammelana, in Ashland, MA, May 22 as a fundraiser for Akshaya Patra.

The day-long festival will feature a Carnatic vocal recital by students of the Anubhava School of Music, Framingham, MA, followed by a Bharata Natyam performance, *Shivapriya* and directed by Natyamani's artistic director Sridevi Ajai Thirumalai. The funds raised from the ticket sales will go towards Akshaya Patra's cause of feeding 1.4 million school children in India every day.

Earlier, Rubashruti Kanna, a sophomore at Edgemont high school in Westchester County, New York, used the platform of her *arangetram* to raise money for Animal Rahat (an animal welfare organization in India), Smile Train and American Forests.

Rubashruti, who is a member of the zero waste initiative team at the Greenburgh Nature Center in Scarsdale, NY, and the Edgemont Green Team which is spearheading the compost initiative in the high school, feels passionately about the concept of reducing trash and increasing composting, and she made efforts to make her *arangetram* a sustainable event.

The Sringeri Vidya Bharati Foundation, Inc performed a ground breaking ceremony in San Diego, California, this month, to establish its Western Center, which will house a traditional Sringeri Shankara Mutt and a Sri Sharadamba temple.

Like Sri Adi Shankaracharya (in the 8th century AD) established four centers of Vedic wisdom (Amnaya Peethas) in India, the chairman of SVBF, Dr Yegnasubramanian took on the task of establishing Amnaya Mathas on four sides of the US. SVBF had already established its Eastern

NEWS IN BRIEF

A Sringeri Shankara Mutt in San Diego



Center near the Grand Poconos in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania.

Work on the other three mutts is in progress in Detroit (Northern Center), Houston (Southern Center) and San Diego (Western Center).

The land in San Diego, a 19.5-acre site near the San Diego Safari Park, was acquired on Vijaya Dasami last year. Located in the picturesque San Pasqual Valley, it is surrounded by mountains and orange groves, vineyards and avocado farms. The location of the proposed temple is close to all parts of San Diego, Carlsbad, Los Angeles, Irvine and Riverside.