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My father was a member of the South Indian Teachers' Union and even as a student, I used to accompany him to the Annual Conferences of the Union. I was fairly familiar with leading personalities. At one gathering, Shri G.Krishnamurthi of Trichirappalli made a fiery speech attacking the office-bearers on several counts. His oratory fascinated the entire gathering. Then S.Natarajan, General Secretary rose to answer the accusations made. For an hour the members were spell-bound not only by his arguments, but his diction and fluency of speech. No wonder I became his instant disciple. I became a member of SITU the very

day I became a teacher.

S.Natarajan started his career as Science teacher in St Gabriel's High School, Broadway, Chennai. As was the wont, he also took classes in English. He was a devoted teacher, much loved by his students, colleagues and the Headmasters. His involvement in Teachers' Union in no way affected his school duties. In a rarest of rare happenings, the catholic management made a non-catholic S.Natarajan Headmaster in the twilight of his career. It was a recognition and appreciation of the dedication of Natarajan to the school.

Natarajan was synonymous with SITU. M.S.Sabesan of the Madras Christian College was the President when Natarajan was elected the Secretary. It was a wonderful team. The South Indian Teacher, the official organ of the Union was edited by Natarajan for many years. It was published monthly without any break. In addition to Union affairs, it used to contain matter to improve the professionalism of teachers. Natarajan firmly believed that teaching should be as good a profession as medical. He developed close contact with teachers' unions in other countries. On exchange basis, he was getting the magazines published by the National Union of Teachers (NUT), UK, National Education Association (NEA), US and the American Union of Teachers (AUT). He was surprised to find that the Unions there went far to address to the other needs of teachers, in addition to their pay and rights. Though Madras Teachers' Guild, the first Teachers' Union in India started a Housing scheme exclusively for teachers called Teachers' Colony, it was Natarajan to take it to higher levels. The Union promoted a life insurance company in the name of SITU Teachers' Protection Fund. When insurance was nationalized, SITU Protection Fund was adjudged as the best managed insurance company and for every Rs 1000 insured, it was converted into Rs 1600 of LIC. It was a bonanza for the teachers. A model school named after Sabesan was started to cater to children in the area.

He was basically an academician. He had close contact with the Education ministers, both at the State and Union levels. He was so much respected that in the erstwhile Madras Presidency, no important decision would be taken without involving him. He

had direct access to the first Education Minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, It was on Natarajan's persuasion that the Directorate of Educational Projects(DEPSE) was formed to encourage action research by teachers. SITU Council of Educational Research, founded as an adjunct to the Union made the fullest use of DEPSE. Natarajan served as Honorary Director of DEPSE. No wonder that DEPSE blossomed into NCERT.He also founded SITU Publications as a public limited company to publish books for students for extra reading. Shares were taken mostly by teachers. Teachers were encouraged to write books on themes not generally found in the traditional syllabuses. It is sad that it was not continued after the demise of Natarajan who used to travel to all parts of Tamilnadu carrying the publications all alone.

Natarajan's opinions were crucial to decision-making on issues. He tendered evidence before the Secondary Education Commission headed by Dr A.L.Mudaliar and the Kothari Commission. Actually he was a member of several sub-committees formed by the Kothari Commission. No wonder he was the convenor of the Sub-committee on teachers' service conditions. He was an active member of the World Confederation of the organizations of Teaching Profession. He rose to become its Vice-President. But for his demise, he would have been the first and only Indian to be its President.

Natarajan was dismayed that most teachers stopped reading the day they completed their teacher education course. Even schools did not subscribe to educational journals. A look at the visitors to the school library showed that very few teachers used it. At the same time during his interaction with teachers he found every teacher faced some problem or other in their professional life. His interaction with the National Union of Teachers, UK prompted him to provide help to teachers in their classroom problems. He first founded the Society for promotion of Education. Under its auspices several subject teachers' associations were started. Their main objective was to improve the classroom teaching. Of them, only two are alive. One is the Association for Mathematics Teachers of India and the other is the English Teachers Association of India. Though primarily intended to cater to the needs of school teachers, over the years the associations have lost track of their objectives.

Natarajan was a fearless fighter for the rights of teachers but he was against any direct action. When the Association of non-gazetted officers of Madras Presidency went on a strike in 1947 to demand pay revision, many teachers wanted to join the strike. Natarajan vehemently opposed the strike move and he had his way to keep teachers away from it.

Natarajan was selected to the Madras Legislative Council representing the teachers' constituency. The membership gave him a status which he used to promote teachers' causes. He was highly respected for his sedate comments. It was unfortunate he lost the reflection. After independence a large number of schools were opened in rural areas and a new crop of young teachers who joined the profession had no acquaintance with the SITU. But Natarajan continued to serve the teachers and their profession.

The crowning contribution in his illustrious professional career was his deep involvement in the drafting of the UNESCO document on the Rights, duties and responsibilities of the Teaching Profession. He represented WCOTP on the drafting committee.