

## Prafulla Kumar Jena (1931–2023)

Professor Prafulla Kumar Jena passed away on 7 March 2023 at his residence in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, aged 91. He was a renowned metallurgist and an extraordinary human being, who made significant contributions to society, human dignity and scientific development in India. He dedicated his career to metallurgical engineering, materials science and minerals processing research.

Jena was born on 27 December 1931 in Jajpur, Odisha. He completed his undergraduate degree in Chemistry with honours and a Master's degree in Physical Chemistry from Utkal University. He remained at the university for his doctoral research to secure a Ph.D. and shifted his studies to the University of British Columbia where he completed his M.S. in Metallurgical Engineering. Throughout his career, Jena held distinguished positions such as Metallurgist at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Mumbai, Professor of Metallurgical Engineering at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, Director of Regional Research Laboratory in Bhubaneswar, Senior Visiting Professor at Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan. He was also the Tata Chair of Distinguished Professor in Metallurgical Engineering at IIT Kharagpur, Director General at CSIR in New Delhi, President of the National Resource Development Foundation, and Founder Chairman of the Institute of Advanced Technology and Environmental Studies in Bhubaneswar.

The Government of India conferred on him the Padma Shri in 1977 for his distinguished national contributions to science and research. For his pioneering research contributions spanning minerals processing,

materials science, extractive metallurgy, special materials and composites, industrial waste management and environmental control, he has been honoured with several awards, among them, the National Metallurgist Award by the Indian Institute of Metals, FICCI Award, Lifetime Achievement Awards, Distinguished Service Award as well as Odisha Leadership Award, to name a few.



I had very personal and scientific interactions with Jena for over 30 years. For over 18 years, he served as the Director of the Regional Research Laboratory (RRL), Bhubaneswar, and developed excellent research and pilot research facilities in diversified areas such as natural and mineral resources, recovery of metal values from earth deposits, treatment of wastes, environmental protection, special materials design and development.

Jena's keen interest in promoting scientific talents and undertakings won him laurels. He was personally keen to promote human relationships among scientists and staff alike. He played a key role in the establishment of the 'Pathani Samanta' planetarium, Institute of Physics, and the Science Park in Bhubaneswar. In 1999, the Institute of Advanced Technology and Environmental Studies (IATES) was established by him as a charitable trust to offer technical services to various industries and further research and specialized training in intensified areas of environment, conservation, mineral resources, and wastes, water resource management and afforestation.

Jena's humane personality was further projected in various social initiatives such as a community health survey in some mining sites in Odisha, educating neo-literate on the scope of utilizing natural resources, and publication of books in local languages on various topics of human development.

As the director of the erstwhile RRL, Bhubaneswar, I have witnessed his close interaction with fellow scientists and staff as one among equals. His humane personality excelled side by side with his infectious scientific spirit. Indeed, he was tireless both in work output and spirit. The country has lost one of her precious jewels in the sad demise of Jena.

K. A. NATARAJAN

*Department of Materials Engineering,  
Indian Institute of Science,  
Bengaluru 560 012, India  
e-mail: kanmetalg@yahoo.co.in*