

OBITUARY



V.K.S. Varadan
(1924-2000)

It is with profound grief that we record the passing away of Shri V.K.S. Varadan, formerly Director General, Geological Survey of India (GSI) in Goa during the early hours of 12.3.2000. He sustained a head injury due to a fall in Delhi sometime ago and was moved to his elder son's home at Goa, where he breathed his last. The passing away of Shri Varadan marks the end of an era in the post-independence earth science scenario, when formidable efforts were underway in mineral exploration to assure an ample natural resource base for rapid industrialisation of the country through ambitious developmental plans. Who else can better symbolise this era than Shri Varadan, whose principal contributions were in economic geology and mineral exploration. His role in training and motivating a band of enthusiastic exploration geologists, who have done the country proud is memorable. He strived hard for the welfare of geoscientists, for which he started several valuable initiatives.

Shri Velamur Krishnamachary Srinivasa Varadan was born on 2nd January 1924 at Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh. He was a product of the well known Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad, wherefrom he obtained Diploma in Applied Geology with distinction in 1946. He joined the Geological Survey of India in 1947 as Assistant Geologist and in the same year he proceeded to the London School of Mines, Imperial College of Science and Technology on a Government of India scholarship to pursue higher studies. After securing Diploma in Mining Geology and the B.Sc. (Special) Degree from the London University, Shri Varadan resumed his duties in the GSI in 1950 as Assistant Geologist.

He moved to the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) in 1954 as an Assistant Field Officer and rose rapidly to Senior Mining Geologist in 1957 and Superintending Mining Geologist in 1958, where he guided intensive and extensive mineral exploration programmes for basemetals, iron ore, limestone, gypsum etc. in different parts of the country. He displayed great skills in execution of pre-investment mineral exploration exercises in the Khetri-Singhana and Alwar prospects of Rajasthan, Rakha and Surda prospects of Singhbhum belt and the East Coast Bauxite. On the merger of the Exploration Wing of the IBM with GSI in 1966, Shri Varadan acted as Technical Secretary to the Director General and later as Specialist (Mineral Exploration) in the Eastern

Region of GSI at Calcutta. He was on deputation to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir as Director, Geology and Mining during the period 1967 to 1971. He returned to GSI 1971 as Deputy Director General and was elevated to the position of the Director General, GSI in 1976. He superannuated from service in 1982 as Advisor, Department of Mines, Ministry of Steel and Mines.

Shri Varadan made notable and signal contributions in the deliberations of the Law of Sea Conference of the UN held at Caracas (Venezuela) in 1974, Geneva (Switzerland) in 1975 and at New York (USA) in 1976. He was instrumental in safeguarding the interests of the developing nations in the Law of Sea Treaties finalised under the aegis of the United Nations. He was a member of the Indian Geoscientific delegation to the USSR in 1960 and leader of the Indian delegation to the International Geological Congress held at Sydney, Australia in 1976.

Shri Varadan had a scholarly appreciation of English literature and sound understanding of Sanskrit and could lead a lively discussion on the dialectics of Vedanta. Investment financing was his absorbing hobby. His sharp intellect, ready wit, encyclopedic knowledge and pleasant personality left an indelible impression on any one who came in contact with him. He was an eloquent, if loquacious, speaker on a wide variety of subjects and was in great demand to address learned bodies, associations and educational institutions. He was associated with Boards of Studies in Earth Sciences of several Indian Universities and acted as Examiner for post-graduate and doctoral courses. He authored several scores of papers/technical reports covering a wide spectrum of Earth Sciences. •

The events that took place in the last part of 1977 resulting in Shri Varadan's displacement from the helm of affairs of GSI, caused much anguish and dismay among the entire Earth Science community. Shri Varadan maintained his poise and dignity under extreme circumstances displaying his strength of character and equanimity. He neither became bitter nor cynical but carried on unperturbed as before. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan writing about the truly great says "*..... they are determined to do whatever they considered to be right. We may punish their bodies, refuse them comforts, but we cannot buy their souls, we cannot break their spirits. Whoever possesses this invulnerability of spirit even to a little extent deserves our admiration.*" Shri Varadan belonged to such a category of the truly great. In his passing away, Indian Earth Science has lost a great proponent. Shri Varadan leaves behind his two sons and his wife Smt. Rukmaja Varadan to whom we offer the sincere and heart felt condolences of the entire Earth Science Community of India.

Bangalore
14-3-2000

S.K. RAMASWAMY
M.S. RAO

A. Ranga Rao (1930-1999)

A. Ranga Rao was born on 10th October 1930 in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. He studied in Sagar and Varanasi before joining the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation as a geologist in 1957. He was very active in research even after his retirement in 1983. He had an intense fascination for geological mapping and structural analysis of the Himalaya. His love for fossils was legendary. He was keen on establishing a Museum of Palaeontology in Dehra Dun. His spouse Dr. Obergfell is taking active interest in fulfilling his dream. With his death we have lost an outstanding Himalayan geologist and palaeontologist.

JAGDISH PANDEY