

OBITUARY



Vavilala Vasudeva Sastri
(1926-1997)

The sad demise of Sri. V.V. Sastri has left a void in Indian Earth Science. Sastri as I know him since 1965 was a perfect gentlemen and punctilious for the cause of science. Science was not a job for him or a profession it was an obsession. During the three long decades of association with him I have never found him discussing anything other than science. He not only built a team of scientific professionals in ONGC during his long association with the organisation but also encouraged them to diversify into associated desciplines of Earth Sciences. He stands out as an example of an ideal palaeontologist, who combined and utilised biotic data in basin interpretation and evaluation.

Sastri started as a pioneering Petroleum Palaeontologist in 1947 with the erstwhile Assam Oil Co. (Now Oil India Ltd.) at Digboi, Assam. He moved to the Geological Survey of India, with headquarters in Calcutta as a micropalaeonotologist in 1949. Later in 1959, he was called to take up the position of Senior palaeontologist in the Oil and Natural Gas Commission. His carrear spanning for 50 years was directly connected with micropalaeontology, stratigraphy, basin analysis and evaluation and geotectonics of India and Asia.

Sastri established a stratigraphic correlation between Upper Assam and Surma Valley based on microforaminiferal studies. He extended the study to Mesozoic planktonic foraminifera of Sind - Baluchistan region. He continued his studies in the Jaisalmer area and constructed palaeogeographical maps. His studies on Krishna - Godavari Basin and Palar Basin are well known. His classical studies of the Orbitolines of Burma, Tibet and India published as a memoir in Geological Survey of India in 1957 is a valuable reference work.

His indepth studies of the geological configuration and geotectonics led the ONGC to discover oil and gas in the Krishna - Godavari Basin. His major hypothesis on the extension of Pranhita - Godavari Graben into the Godavari delta both onland and offshore has been proved right. He also predicted the high hydrothermal gradient at the SE end of the exposed graben due to the occurrence of a hot spot.

He led a team to prepare the oil and gas map of Asia on 1:5 million scale which was published by the UN in 1978. Subsequently the map was revised by him in 1985 and 1989. He along with his colleagues in ONGC and GSI authored the Sedimentary Basin Map of India. Sastri worked on the geothermal steam reserves of Puga Valley in Ladakh and the geotectonics of the valley in association with Dr. V.S. Krishnaswamy. He studied in detail the geotectonics and evolution of the east coast basins of India (Mahanadi, Krishna, Godavari, Palar and Cauvery basins) in detail and published a series of landmark papers.

During his long span of scientific life he served as Director, Research and Development,

Keshav Dev Malviya Institute of Petroleum and Exploration and was the Director of the Institute. Before superannuation he was General Manager, exploration ONGC. He continued as consultant to UN on Petroleum and Geotectonics of Asia; Economic affairs officer in U.N., Bangkok; Geol. Adviser to Petronas, Malaysia. He served on the board of several petroleum concerns and scientific and educational institutions.

He was conferred several honours and distinctions which he accepted in all humility. Sastri will be remembered by his colleagues, friends and admirers for a long time to come. He is survived by his wife Mrs. Kamala Sastri, a son and two daughters and a large number of colleagues and friends.

May his soul rest in peace.

Dehra Dun

B.S. VENKATACHALA

**Ranjeet K. Banerjee
(1941-1997)**

Palaeontologists all over India are deeply grieved at the sad and untimely demise of Prof. Ranjeet K. Banerjee on August 22, 1997. Ranjeet was born on 9th June, 1941. He passed M.Sc. (Geology) in 1960, at a tender age of only 19, from Lucknow University. He obtained his Ph.D. in 1965 from IIT, Kharagpur. Thereafter he joined Palaeontology Laboratory, Institute of Petroleum Exploration, a premier research institute of ONGC. Soon he was elevated to the post of Senior Scientific Officer and posted as In-charge of Palaeontology Laboratory, Eastern Region, ONGC, Sibsagar.

Since teaching and research was greater obsession for him, he joined IIT Bombay in 1978. He remained attached to IIT Bombay till his demise.

Prof. Banerjee actively guided several Ph.D. students. Three decades of sustained work in the field of micropalaeontology culminated in over 50 publications in reputed Indian and International journals. His main research interests include study of Recent foraminifera from the Bombay Coast, their taxonomy, stratigraphy and environmental significance. He extended his research area to study pollution effects on the Recent foraminiferal populations. He studied Cretaceous of Cauvery Basin in detail, with emphasis on the stratigraphy, in the western part of Aryalur Area, to resolve specific problems concerning the depositional history of a complex association of rocks underlying Garudamangalam Formation. He proposed a redefinition of Utatur Group, providing comprehensive field relationship data and a geological model. In addition he took several projects sponsored by ONGC, DST and Department of Environment.

He took his D.Sc. in 1987 from Lucknow University. In spite of his diverse research activities, teaching never became a secondary importance to him. He was a life fellow of the Geological Society of India and Palaeontological Society of India.

The palaeontological fraternity has lost not only an eminent scholar but a gentleman with tender heart, who was equally liked both by elder and younger colleagues alike. A simple unassuming man of strict principles, he set his own standards and abided by them himself.

*KDMIPE, ONGC
Dehra Dun*

S.K. BISWAS