

OBITUARY



Professor A.K. Saha
1925-1997

Professor Ajit Kumar Saha, who passed away on 26th April, 1997 at Calcutta, was an eminent scientist and academician who with a rare blend of scholarship, dedication and sustained effort contributed significantly in advancing the cause of earth sciences in India. He trained generations of students who have made their mark in the geological arena. Born in 1925, he had his high school education at Hindu School, Calcutta. He had a brilliant academic record at the graduate and post graduate levels at the Presidency College, Calcutta. After obtaining his M.Sc. degree in 1947 from the University of Calcutta he served for three years in the Geological Survey of India. Here he worked with J.B. Auden, an association which he treasured throughout his life. But teaching and research was a greater attraction for him and in 1951 he joined the Department of Geology, Presidency College, Calcutta. He served this Department for nearly four decades with utmost devotion and was its Chairman from 1978 to 1985. He remained attached to the Department as Honorary Emeritus Professor till his demise.

Professor Saha continued the trend of petrological research initiated in the Department by his teacher Professor Santoshkumar Ray. His doctoral dissertation at the Calcutta University on Bahalda Road granodiorite is a model of meticulous observation and analysis of petrological and structural features to unravel the magmatic and metasomatic processes in the evolution of the suite. Later he also obtained the Ph.D. degree from the University of Toronto working with Professor W.W. Moorehouse on the emplacement of granite plutons in southeastern Ontario, Canada. After returning from Canada he undertook exhaustive studies on mineralogy, petrology and geochemistry of the Singhbhum Granite, the Bonai Granite, the Mayurbhanj Granite and the granites and pegmatites of the Bihar mica belt, and along with his students built up an active school of research at the Presidency College. Early in his research he recognised the importance of application of quantitative methods in petrology. He was one of the pioneers in producing trend surface and grid deviation maps to represent compositional variation of granite plutons and in India he introduced the application of statistical techniques in petrological research. He was for many years in the Editorial Board of the Journal of Mathematical Geology.

In collaboration with Professor S.N. Sarkar he made seminal contribution on Precambrian stratigraphy and tectonics of Singhbhum. The revised tectono-stratigraphy of this belt proposed by them forms the basis of much of the later research by other workers. Four decades of sustained work in this region culminated in the publication of his Memoir on

"Crustal Evolution of Singhbhum-North Orissa, Eastern India" brought out by the Geological Society of India in 1994.

Later in his career he was attracted to research on environmental problems and along with Professor N.R. Kar founded the Centre for Study of Man and Environment. Starting from a single room at the Department of Geology, Presidency College, Calcutta, it later shifted to its own premises in Salt Lake, Calcutta. Now a large number of scientists and technical personnel are working there. Significant work has been done at the Centre on air pollution in rural and urban areas, ground water quality and management, and arsenic pollution in south Bengal. The Centre will ever remain a monument to the dedication and organizing skill of Professor Saha.

Many accolades came to him including the National Mineral Award, and Fellowships of the Indian National Science Academy, the Indian Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences.

In spite of his diverse research activities teaching never became of secondary importance to him. He would teach with equal seriousness a course on Introduction to Geology to the fresher and Mathematical Geology to the advanced postgraduate students. His class room lectures were rich in content and with up to date references; many of his students continue to refer to his lecture notes throughout their professional career. Scores of students were imbibed with his example of sustained hard work, meticulous observation, systematic approach and rational analysis. He was uncompromisingly critical of slipshod work and negligence. A simple unassuming man of strict principles he set his own standards and abided by them himself. But, no student in need of help, academic or otherwise was turned back by him, no matter how preoccupied he might have been with other duties. The tradition of scholarship, single minded pursuit of excellence, devotion to duty combined with humanity will always remain a beacon to his countless students and admirers.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

INDIAN GEOPHYSICAL UNION: 34TH ANNUAL CONVENTION AND MEETING ON SATELLITE NAVIGATION SYSTEMS - GPS APPLICATIONS, 17-19 DECEMBER, 1997. VENUE: NGRI, HYDERABAD: Papers are invited in the field of GPS for Geodynamics, Space Geophysics, application of GPS for oceanography, ionosphere and atmosphere studies, timing, local and large scale surveys for crustal deformation studies etc. Besides, original research contributions are invited for presentation in the Annual Convention on the following major fields: 1. Solid Earth Geophysics, 2. Geophysical Exploration, 3. Atmospheric Sciences, 4. Geodynamics, 5. Space Sciences and Planetology, 6. Marine Geosciences. Extended Abstracts should be sent in Duplicate by August 31, 1997 to Dr. P.R. Reddy, Hon. Secretary, Indian Geophysical Union, NGRI Campus, Hyderabad - 500 007, India.