

Are We Really Proud of Our Institutions?

The American Geophysical Union is in its 75th year. A recent article in EOS, the official mouthpiece of the Union has recalled with pride some of its achievements. The theory of transient groundwater flow was first published in 1935 in EOS. The magnetic sea-floor stripes confirming the theory of plate tectonics was first reported in 1965 at a meeting of the AGU, in Washington. When Apollo astronauts recovered moon rocks, the findings were reported at a meeting of the AGU. When hydrothermal vents were discovered in the early 1980s at Mid-Oceanic Ridge, the discovery was announced with video tapes at the AGU meeting in Toronto. When ice cores from Greenland and Antarctica revealed changes in climate of the past in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the data were presented at AGU meetings in Baltimore and San Francisco.

What an enviable record of achievements for a scientific society! While feeling proud of the accomplishments of Earth Scientists elsewhere, I could not help reflecting on the lack of pride in our own institutions. We have allowed most of our prestigious institutions to become degraded with the passage of time.

A glaring instance which comes to my mind is the Mysore Geological Department (now the Department of Mines and Geology, Karnataka) which is just completing its hundred years of existence. This occasion should have been heralded with pride and jubilation. Instead we see total indifference and lack of enthusiasm in celebrating the event. Do we not feel proud of our institutions? Should it not be our endeavour to so conduct ourselves to see that our institutions grow in stature, and that those who come after us feel proud of serving in such prestigious institutions?

Another regrettable instance of such indifference which has come to our notice is that of a minister of the union Government, invited to deliver the convocation address for the year not turning up for the occasion. To add insult to the injury the state minister for education arrived forty five minutes late! Is this the way we respect our institutions?

We have developed this Geological Society of India which is now 35 years old. The Society has tried to serve the earth science community in this country in its own limited way. Members are drawn from all parts of India and from the interest they are showing, we have a feeling that they are proud of the Society. This pride, however, has to be translated into action. Discoveries, that our members are making, may not be spectacular and breath-taking. Nevertheless they are significant, adding to our knowledge of the geology and mineral resources of the country.

Unfortunately, there is a growing tendency especially among the senior scientists to seek outside journals and international fora to announce the results of their research. Hardly any thought is given to the building up of our own institutions.

Papers are sent to local journals, as a last resort, when all avenues at getting them published outside have been exhausted. I want to ask, "If we do not respect ourselves, how can we expect others to respect us?" Members should not always be aiming at international readership. They have a duty to inform and educate our own countrymen first and this can be best achieved by communicating their best work in the Journal of the Society.

In recent years, the Society has been holding annual meetings in different parts of the country. Our fellows should consider these annual conferences as important events and make it a point to communicate their more important findings at such conferences and thus bring them to the notice of fellow earth scientists. This will be possible only when our members feel proud of the Society and strive their utmost to see that it grows in stature.

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