

## OBITUARY



**Mylapore Shivashankar Balasundaram  
(1914-1996)**

Mylapore Shivashankar Balasundaram was born on 23rd November 1914 in Madras (Chennai). He took his B.Sc. degree in 1935 from the Presidency College, Madras and followed it up with a B.Sc. (Hon) degree from the Madras University in 1937 and subsequently an M.A degree. For his proficiency in Geology he received the Madras University's "Chromarty Prize" in 1935 and 1937 and also the Rao Bahadur H. Narayana Prize in 1935. As a keen sportsman he was a prominent member of the cricket and hockey teams of the Presidency College, Madras and won many trophies in the collegiate and intercollegiate tournaments.

He served the Assam Oil Company for about an year before joining the Geological Survey of India as an Asst Geologist on 1.12.1940. During his early years in the G.S.I. he carried out systematic mapping and mineral investigations in parts of Andhra Pradesh and was incharge of the investigation for lignite at Nyveli. On his transfer to the Engineering Geology Circle in 1946 he carried out the investigation of the Maithon Dam Site, one of the dam sites of the Damodar Valley Project. Later he was deputed to Australia for post graduate training at the Melbourne University.

On his return, as a member of the Engineering Geology and Ground Water Resources Section, he carried out investigation at various dam sites, road and railway alignments, bridge sites, tubewell sites *etc.* He was a resident Geologist at the Bhakra Dam site in Punjab, examined the dam sites across Narmada and Tapi rivers (Madhya Pradesh), Kyel River in Darjeeling district, West Bengal, Krishna, Pennar, Siddheswaram, Tungabhadra, Sileru and Vamasamudra dam sites in Andhra Pradesh; Lakkavalli in Karnataka; Manimuthar reservoir project, Mallawaram and Walayar damsites; Mangalam reservoir site and Periyar, Kundah hydroelectric schemes and bridge sites across Bhavani River in Madras and various other investigations in Kerala.

The Geological appraisals made by the Geologists of the G.S.I. led the engineers to appreciate the importance of geological evaluation of the various projects so that suitable designs and construction schedules could be drawn up. Mr. Balasundaram contributed in a great measure towards this happy understanding and earned the confidence of eminent engineers like Dr. K.L. Rao.

On promotion, he took over as Regional Director (later designated as Deputy Director General) of the Southern Region on 1.6.96. During his tenure in Hyderabad, mapping and mineral exploration activities were stepped up. Mapping in Goa and the northern districts of Karnataka revealed that the Dharwar metasediments were much more extensively developed in these districts than was known earlier. Exploration of fluxgrade limestone in Andhra Pradesh, bauxite and graphite in Kerala, copper and limestone in Karnataka, molybdenite in Tamil Nadu and iron ore in Goa were taken up in a big way.

In the late sixties interference of politicians in the day to day running of the Department made it difficult to maintain discipline and created difficulties. Under these circumstances Mr. Balasundaram relinquished his post in the Southern Region and took over the Central Region. In the Central Region he investigated the Koyna Earthquake which took place on 11 December 1967 and also encouraged systematic studies of the Deccan Trap, in addition to various mapping and mineral exploration activities in the region.

Mr. Balasundaram took over as Director General, G.S.I., on 26.9.1969 and moved over to Calcutta. In addition to the various mapping and mineral exploration programmes, an expedition was mounted to carry out geological, geomorphological and glaciological studies in the Namkum and Kargil area of Ladakh. He took active interest and offered advice on the various engineering and ground water projects. A special integrated survey of the Brahmaputra Basin was taken up. Exploration of the newly discovered east coast bauxite was started. In August 1972, the monthly Journal of the G.S.I. was introduced to publicise the activities and achievements of the G.S.I.

Mr. Balasundaram was the President of the Geology and Geography Section of the Chandigarh Session of the Indian Science Congress (1973). He attended the seminar on Geologic Research and Ground Water Exploration sponsored by the German foundation for developing countries (1964). He was the Coordinator, Geologic Map of ECAFE; Joint Coordinator, Mineral Map of ECAFE; Member Secretary, Indian National Committee for I.U.G.S., Vice president Mining, Geological and Metallurgical Society of India; Vice president and founder member of the Geological Society of India, President Indian Society of Engineering Geologists; President and Life Member of Indian Association of Geohydrologists and Member, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. He has over one hundred publications to his credit.

Mr. Balasundaram retired on 22.11.72 after serving the department for over thirty two years. During his tenure in Calcutta the city was highly disturbed. The Naxalite upheaval was in full and 'Gheraos' were frequent and the G.S.I. had its share of unrest and political interference. Mr. Balasundaram, despite these upheavals remained steady and steered the Department through the troubled times. In addition to these troubles, serious attempts were made by some officers to unseat him with the support of politicians. He weathered the storm, with the help of some of his friends and the unexpected and sudden changes in the political set up. Despite these traumatic experiences Mr. Balasundaram did not turn a cynic and did not stand in the way of promotion of some of his detractors which he could have done easily. Though austere in approach, Mr. Balasundaram wanted to be fair in his dealings. He was deeply religious and started his day with prayers.

In his death we have lost a just man and an eminent Geologist. His wife preceded him a couple of years ago. He leaves behind his son Mr. Shankar and daughters.

*Bangalore*

S.V.P. IYENGAR