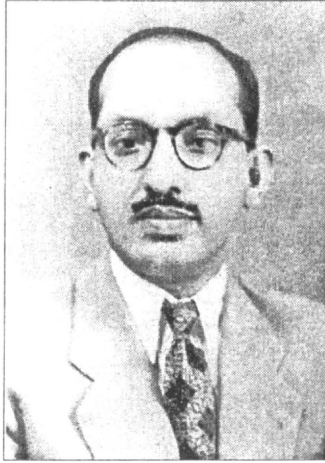


OBITUARY



Shri C. Karunakaran
(1917-1999)

Shri Cheruvari Karunakaran was born in May 1917 at Tellicherry, Kannur district, Kerala. He had his early education up to graduation in Chennai. He obtained his M.Sc. degree in Geology from Banaras Hindu University in 1938. He started his career as a Geologist in the Mineral Survey Department of Uttar Pradesh Government in 1938. He served as a lecturer in Geology, first in Presidency College, Madras, and then in 1941 took the charge of the newly created Geology Department in Andhra University, Waltair.

In 1948 he joined the Geological Survey of India (GSI) with the unique distinction of obtaining first rank amongst the selected Class I officers by the Federal Public Service Commission. He carried out various assignments of geological mapping, prospecting for minerals as well as engineering geology and groundwater investigations. He was promoted as Superintending Geologist in April 1958. In 1959 he took charge of the then Eastern Circle covering the States of West Bengal, Assam, Manipur, Tripura and NEFA and continued as Superintending Geologist in-charge of West Bengal Circle till the later part of 1966. Until January 1968, he was the Petrologist in the Central Headquarters, Calcutta. It was during this time that I came in closer contact with Shri Karunakaran. I had been working on coal belt in North Bengal when he visited my camp. He took me along with him to the Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalaya where our colleagues were working.

Shri Karunakaran was not a person of many words, but the twinkle in his eye and his wry smile were eloquent and communicative of his approval and appreciation. In 1968 he headed the Southern Region as Dy. Director General. During this tenure his field studies resulted in discovery of one of the world's largest deposit of mineral barytes at Mangampeta. He took active interest in establishing several national Geological Monuments, such as the Piliow Lava and Pyroclastic Rocks at Kolar Gold Field, Peninsular Gneiss at Lalbagh, Bangalore and Charnockite at St. Thomas Mount, Chennai. He took charge as Director General on 3rd April, 1974 and, after 27 years of significant service he superannuated on 31st May, 1975. He was then appointed OSD, Oil and Natural Gas Commission, and subsequently headed and established the Centre for Earth Science Studies at Trivandrum. He also headed the Kerala State Planning Board, Kerala Mineral

Development Board, and became the Chairman, Governing Body of Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology.

Shri Karunakaran was the motive force to encourage his younger colleagues for their significant contributions to the Geology of Andaman Nicobar belt. He led first joint Scientific Expedition to the Great Nicobar Island in mid 1965, consisting of 46 scientists from eleven scientific departments of Government of India, and over a hundred technical staff. This attracted wide attention all over the world, particularly in the USA and UK. He also organised a Scientific Expedition to the Zemu Glacier in Sikkim Himalaya where geophysical methods for measuring the thickness of glacier ice were employed for the first time in India.

Shri Karunakaran had an accomplished academic career. He was honoured by the Andhra Pradesh Academy of Sciences as the First Teacher of Geology in 1971. He was awarded Coggin Brown memorial Gold Medal in 1967 for his outstanding work in geology. He was the President of Indian Academy of Geoscience and other recognised scientific societies. Later on he was deputed by Government of India to attend the ECAFE International Conference on Geology and Mineral Resources, at Kuala Lumpur, where he was elected Vice-Chairman. He also presided over the International Conferences on granites in West Africa and South America at the invitation of UNESCO Conference at Montevideo in 1967.

He breathed his last at Chennai at 10.30 pm, on 28th May, 1999, after a cerebral surgery. He leaves behind his wife, a son and four daughters. In his passing the geological community has lost a very senior and dedicated earth scientists and an able administrator.

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