OBITUARY

Malay Bhushan Chakrabarti
(1938-2016)

Professor Malay Bhushan Chakrabarti breathed his last on 21st December, 2016 at Santiniketan (Bolpur), the seat of Viswabharati University near Kolkata, mourned by his wife, daughter, and extended family of friends, colleagues, students and admirers, and leaving behind an illustrious academic career spanning over 52 years.

Born in October 1938 at Noakhali of Bangladesh (erstwhile Bengal) he moved along with his family to Kolkata and then Nabagram in South 24 Parganas of West Bengal. Following completion of his school education in Nabagram High School he studied in Presidency College, Kolkata. A brilliant student all through, Chakrabarti had bright academic records from Intermediate of Science to Master of Science (M.Sc). He secured a First Class in M.Sc (Geology) in 1961.

His professional career commenced in Hindusthan Steel Ltd, where he served as a geologist from 1963 to 1965. But his career was disrupted by a road accident, though not for long. Beckoned by the academia he joined the Faculty of Presidency College, Kolkata where he served as a teacher in the Geology Department, for nearly 34 years from 1965 to 1998 with a brief stint in Durgapur Government College from 1976 to 1983. In 1998 he retired as Reader in Presidency College. Post superannuation, he was called upon by the Vice Chancellor, Netaji Subhash Open University at Kolkata to serve as an Associate Professor, School of Sciences for teaching geology in the IAS Training Centre. He also acted as Honorary Station Director of Durgapur Sampling Station for CSME Research Project on Air pollution in Southern Bengal from 1978 to 1981.

Chakrabarti's fields of special interest were Mineralogy, Economic Geology, Physical Geology and Mineral economics which he used to teach in the undergraduate and post-graduate courses. His arena of research and study covered geological problems relating to the Banded Iron Ore Formations of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, as also Mossbauer studies of Iron minerals. He had a rare ability and fluency in communicative skill with the students. He infused his experience of field geology in his lectures to the students. The touch of field geology not only made his classes highly interesting to the students, but also earned him awe, respect and popularity.

A committed teacher as he was, he did not believe in confining himself within the four walls of the classrooms and laboratories, but his passion also extended to the dissemination of knowledge to the society at large through popular science articles on frontiers of earth science which agitate the minds of young researchers and public alike such as planetary science including Mars expedition, Fossil Magnetism of rocks, and Groundwater. His articles published in Science Reporter and other popular science magazines are highly informative and thought

– provoking. Writing in both English and Bengali, his mother tongue, with ease and elan he distinguished himself as an outstanding science writer and communicator. He was a firm believer in making science a way of life.

Chakrabarti showed his extraordinary merit and skill in academic administration and management, too. He was credited with initiating Post Graduate Studies in Durgapur Government College leading to establishment of PG Department in Geology in the college under Burdwan University, the only one in the University so far. He was also instrumental in setting up and running Thermal Ionisation Mass Spectrometer at the Advanced Analytical Laboratory of Presidency College with the help of UGC and DST, Government of India, and in association with legendary Prof. Late Dr. A.K. Saha and Prof. Late G.S. Ghatak. In 1988 he attended training in Mass Spectrometry (operation, maintenance and application) at Finnigan Mat Institute in Bremen (West Germany) and at Z.W.O. Laboratorium voor Isotopen – Geologie in Amsterdam (Holland). In the Netaji Open University, apart from teaching he was also entrusted with preparation and circulation of Self Study materials for the students in six basic science subjects, and also with coordination of activities of all the IAS Training Centers of the University scattered across West Bengal, which he performed with remarkable efficiency.

His deep interest and versatility in widely divergent earth science disciplines were amazing. Chakrabarti was a Member of Planetary Society, the world's largest space group and a recipient of participation certificate in 'Messages from Earth: Phoenix Mission in exploring Martian arctic'. He was also a votary of water conservation, the only course to water security as groundwater plays a key element in the managed water cycle. All the groundwater related publications of Geological Society of India interested him. He was also a voracious reader of English and Bengali literature.

Ablly supported by his inspiring wife Jayasri Chakrabarti, also an academic, Malay braved many adversities and health setbacks in life to climb the pinnacle of academic excellence. He was fountainhead of undying spirit, energy, enthusiasm and hope. Humility and amiable disposition, endearing and infectious smile famously marked his persona. With his demise academia has lost a dedicated teacher in earth science, and society a popular science writer or educator. His contributions to earth science education will be ever remembered.

(With inputs from Prof. Ananda Chakraborty).

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