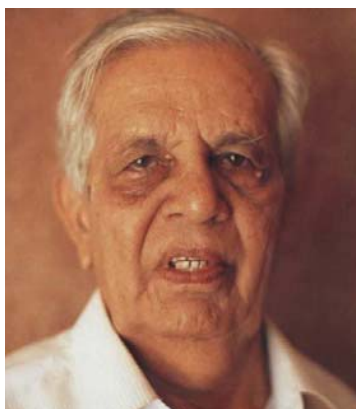


OBITUARY



S.R. Rao
(1922-2013)

One of the most celebrated archaeologists of the Independent India Dr. Shikaripur Ranganatha Rao (Dr. S.R. Rao) was born on the 1st July, 1922 at Anandapuram in Sagar taluka, Shimoga district of Karnataka. His father Shikaripur Hucha Rao worked for State Government and retired as Revenue Inspector. In 1936 Rao completed his SSLC from the Government High School, Shimoga and then Rao's father found it extremely difficult to send his son to Mysore for higher studies, however, Rao was fortunate to get admission in a free boarding institution known as the *Anathalaya* maintained by late M. Venkatakrishnaiah, the greatest Philanthropist of Mysore. The institution was known for helping the poor and at the same time maintained discipline. Rao secured a first class, stood first in B.A. Hons. Examination in 1941 and won the Sir Hugh Candy Gold Medal. There was a short break in Rao's studies as he had to take up a job to meet the needs of the family but he did pass MA from Nagpur University and later he was awarded D.Litt. degree for his book *Lothal and the Indus Civilization*.

Before joining the Department of Archaeology as Assistant Director, Baroda State, in March 1948, Rao worked for a short period as lecturer in one of the college and also as an Asst. manager and sub-editor in a newspaper at Nagpur. After joining the Archaeological Department in Baroda he underwent training in archaeological excavation at Sisupalgarh in Orissa, under Sir Mortimer Wheeler's supervision. This training gave him confidence to undertake independent excavation on a small scale at Amreli in Gujarat after he returned from Sisupalgarh. After Sisupalgarh, Rao underwent training in river valley survey under Prof. F.E. Zeuner of the Institute of Archaeology, London and joined Gujarat Prehistory Expedition, in the course of which the

Palaeolithic sites in the Sabarmati and Narmada valleys were explored. From 1949 to 1996 Rao excavated large number archaeological sites of great importance every year continuously, without any break. He spent nearly 47 years of his life in unearthing the mysteries of the ancient civilizations and was never tired of excavating, conserving, interpreting and publishing the archaeological finds before he met with a road accident in May 1996 which led him to tone down his active field work, however, he continued to attend various committees and conferences. Miss Tee Loftin, Asst. Editor, National Geographic Society, writes in *Mysteries of the Ancient World*, "Nearly all his life he (Rao) has patiently picked away the puzzles of the Harappans".

Rao underwent training in conservation of monuments under Shankar Das at Delhi and Agra and learnt Architecture, drawing and surveying under Prof. Bhagya in Baroda Kalabhavan (College of Engineering). He learnt Epigraphy and Numismatics under the guidance of Dr. A.S. Gadre.

Rao's major work began in 1953 when he selected to re-excavate Rangpur, a Harappan site in Gujarat which was considered as a late phase of the Harappan culture. However, his excavation yielded a long cultural sequence and the site is considered as an index site for Gujarat Harappan archaeology. For the first time he disapproved the sudden disappearance of Harappan, a hypothesis proposed by Sir Mortimer Wheeler. Rangpur gave evidence on the survival of the Indus Civilization for 300 years more after its disappearance from the Indus valley. The next site 'Lothal' set the tone for major research on the Harappan Archaeology in India. Though, the site is smaller in size compared to Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, gave astonishing evidences on external trade and commerce particularly with Mesopotamia

and other Gulf nations. The site was excavated for 7 seasons and a detailed report is published by the Archaeological Survey of India in two volumes besides several other publications on this site. He had extensively explored several parts of Gujarat and discovered as many as 40 sites of various phases of Harappan Civilization. He also attempted to decipher Indus Script and proposed that the language of the people of Indus Civilization may be proto-Sanskrit and presently there are large amount of data suggesting contemporaneous of Vedic culture.

After retirement from the Archaeological Survey of India in 1980 as Superintending Archaeologist Dr. Rao joined the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa and established a small unit of Marine Archaeology in 1981. He is called as the 'father of Marine Archaeology in India'. While excavation of Lothal during early years of his carrier he conceived the idea of marine archaeology as he believed that India had a 5000 years old history of overseas trade and commerce and in the process several shipwrecks must have occurred and to unravel the mystery, the discipline of Maritime Archaeology is compulsory. He established a small team of archaeologists who were trained in diving namely,

P. Gudigar (left NIO in 2002 to develop his traditional art), Shri Sundaresh, Sila Tripathi, A.S. Gaur besides S.N. Bandodker (underwater-photographer). He successfully led several Marine Archaeological expeditions to Dwarka, Bet Dwarka, Somnath, Lakshadweep and Poompuhar.

He is a recipient of several awards and few of them include Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow (1977-78), World Ship Trust International Award for Individual Achievement in Maritime Archaeology (1991), F.I.E Foundation National award for excellence in Science and Technology, (1989). He published several books and hundreds of articles on various aspects of the Indian Archaeology in English, Hindi and Kannada. He has been one of the greatest Archaeologists of Modern India whose contributions will enrich to the scholars and students for several decades to come. Although, the deep void in our lives can never be filled, his memories are immortal in our hearts. He is survived by his two daughters, a son and 6 grandchildren, all well settled in their professional life.

*CSIR-National Institute of
Oceanography, Goa*

A.S. GAUR

LAKSHMESWAR RAMA RAO BIRTH CENTENARY RESEARCH GRANTS

A sum of Rs.10,000/- shall be made available during the financial year 2013-14 to young research scholars for carrying out laboratory and field work in Palaeontology and Stratigraphy.

Those interested in seeking assistance are requested to apply to the Society furnishing full particulars of academic qualifications, synopsis of the research project they are engaged in and the extent of assistance required. The application should be supported by their Research Guide and the Head of the Institution and reach the Secretary, Geological Society of India, No.63, 12th Cross, Basappa Layout, Gavipuram PO, P.B. No.1922, Bangalore - 560 019. **Telefax:** 080-2661 3352; **Phone:** 080-2242 2943; 09886028190; **Email:** gsocind@gmail.com on or before **31st March 2013.**