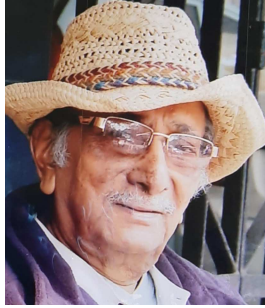


OBITUARY



Sekhar Chandra Ghosh
(1939 – 2021)

Sekhar Chandra Ghosh, DSc, retired Director, Geological Survey of India, and an authority on Gondwana Geology of India breathed his last on 4th February 2021 at his Kolkata residence after prolonged illness, deeply mourned by his bereaved family, – wife Bharati, son Sanjoy, daughter Dia, son-in-law, daughter-in-law and grandchildren, and a wide circle of admiring friends, colleagues, leaving behind an illustrious career and a void in geoscience arena.

Born on August 8, 1939 in an elite family in Dhaka (now the capital of Bangladesh) Sekhar (alt. sp. Shekhar) Chandra Ghosh migrated with his family to West Bengal. He did his graduation (BSc. Geology Hons.) from Presidency College, Calcutta in 1959, and Masters (MSc) in Geology from Science College, University of Calcutta in 1961. After a short stint in mineral exploration in private companies, he joined the Geological Survey of India (GSI) in 1963 as Assistant Geologist and was posted in the Coal Division where he worked for about a decade till his transfer to Paleontology Division in 1972. Thus started a glorious innings in GSI spanning thirty-four years with several pioneering studies. He rose through the ranks, became a Director in 1992, and retired on superannuation in 1997.

In his 34 years of service in GSI, he worked principally in the Gondwana basins but found his true niche in the Paleontology Division. In 1977, Dr. Ghosh installed the first Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) in GSI after undergoing a short training in Cambridge Instruments (manufacturers), UK, and also in British Museum, Imperial College, and Cambridge University. He also rendered his expertise in installing SEMs to the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science and several other Departments/Organizations in the country. In 1995 he was given the reins of Central SEM- EDS Laboratory of GSI as Director and was entrusted with installation of the 2-generation SEM, too, in replacement of the older one.

The installation of SEM in GSI opened a floodgate of new research in GSI especially on paleontology. He was pioneer in SEM studies of geological material in India. “*Estheriids* (fossil *Conchostraca*) of Indian Gondwana” (Palaeontologia Indica, New Series, No. 54, 2011; ISSN 0970-0528) is a monumental contribution by Dr. Ghosh, and a comprehensively annotated taxonomic compendium that includes 49 newly discovered species. The discovery of five genera of *Leaiidae* provides a strong basis for transcontinental correlations. Dr. Ghosh used their global distribution for reconstruction of Gondwana landmasses and deducing their dispersal paths through time. He had established a definitive scheme of *Estheriid* zonation of Indian Gondwana (Paleobotanist, 1988, 36:143-153). He also processed and submitted about 200 type specimens to the Paleontological Repository of Curatorial Division of GSI.

Another path-breaking discovery of Ghosh was defining the Permo-Triassic boundary in continental deposits. He established a type section of the boundary in the Raniganj basin on the basis of lithology, biozone, and geochemistry (Ghosh et al., 1996, Proc. 9th Int. Gond. Symp., 10:179-193). Ghosh jointly with his fellow workers discovered the first Jurassic turtle, Permo-Triassic aquatic beetle larva, sexual dimorphism in *Estheriids*, and many other fossil species in India (Paleontology, 43:99-109; 50:1335-1340.). In course of his studies he came in contact with several eminent paleontologists like Paul Tasch of USA, Prof. Asama of Japan, Prof J. Schneider of Germany etc.

Even after his superannuation Ghosh continued his research on Gondwana Geology/ stratigraphy/ fossils with undiminished zeal. He related the multiple fault systems to extensional tectonics and rifting to understand the origin and evolution of Gondwana basins in India using Raniganj as the prototype (Sed. Geol., 2002,147:155-176). He published his magnum opus on fossil Conchostraca in 2011.

Ghosh had sixty scientific publications to his credit, singly or jointly, which highlight his untiring research activities. In appreciation of his meritorious contributions to coal exploration and biostratigraphy of the Gondwana formations through innovative application of “Scanning Electron Microscope”, Ghosh was awarded coveted “National Mineral Award” in Applied Geology in 1996. He was conferred DSc in Geology by Calcutta University in the year 2018.

An excellent photographer, his close-ups of morning flowers lilted *Bhairavi*, and *Pissarroesque* mist filled his skyline in Kolkata’s smog. And, who can forget his whistling to the tunes of popular songs? Jolly and jovial in nature, he could laugh out all ups and downs in life with his spirited wife Bharati by his side. The duo was known for their famed hospitality in field camps which helped to ease tensions of field life of many visiting them at even odd hours. In his post-retirement years, too, they used to host multiple gatherings of friends in their South Calcutta home.

Sadly, the illustrious career of this talented, versatile scientist came to an abrupt end with his demise, but he etched an indelible imprint in Gondwana geology of the country.

Geological Society pays its homage to this peer of Gondwana geology in India.

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(On behalf of 61 MSc Geology batch of Calcutta University).

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