

OBITUARY



Prof. VLS Bhimasankaram
(1931 - 2021)

On 19th November 2021 we lost a great teacher, scholar, scientist and visionary – Prof. Vemu Lakshminarayana Subrahmanya Bhimasankaram, a doyen of Geophysics in India, days after completion of 90 fruitful years. Born in 1931, Bhimasankaram was among the earliest who took a post-graduate degree in Geophysics from the Andhra University in 1951, and the only recipient of a D.Sc. degree too. In 1956, he was appointed as a Lecturer in Geophysics in the Andhra University. Later in 1957 he was invited by the Nobel laureate Prof. P.M.S Blackett from UK to pursue research under the prestigious Nuffield Foundation Fellowship in Rock magnetism of manganese ores, at the Imperial College, London. His research work was highly acclaimed and was awarded the Van Weldeen award of the European Geophysical society.

In 1962 Bhimasankaram was invited to set up the Geophysics department at the Osmania University. Under Indo-Soviet bilateral agreement, he established the Centre of Exploration Geophysics (CEG) at the Osmania University in 1967, where he directed a large number of research projects at a stage when geophysical technology was just emergent with tremendous scope for mineral and ground water exploration. He published over 100 research papers and guided over 23 PhD students. He was awarded the National Lecturership by the UGC in 1972, and was among the first few Geophysicists to be recognized as the Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy.

Exploration Geophysics being a new subject it was very difficult in India to find the requisite text books in the different branches. To fill this gap and to facilitate students and the teaching faculty, Bhimasankaram authored and published a number of text books that have been used extensively till date by various universities. Notable among them are *Introduction to Theory of Fields (1972)*, *Radiometric Methods of Exploration, (1973)*, *Exploration Geophysics - An outline (1977)*, *Integrated Geophysical Approach in Mineral Exploration - A Case Study in Data Processing (1980)* and *Principles and Methods of Nuclear Geophysics (1983)*. Recognizing the need for groundwater exploration as early as in 1970, he evolved geophysical methodologies in both hard and soft rock terrains of India. He was responsible for establishing groundwater departments in AP, Maharashtra and Gujarat states through his expert advice and guidance to the state Governments, following which other states followed suite.

In 1975 Bhimasankaram founded the Association of Exploration Geophysicists (AEG) with the aim of providing a scientific platform for exchange of new ideas in the emerging field of Geophysics. He served as its secretary for over 20 years and also developed the Journal of AEG as its founding Editor. He was also the Editor of Publications

of the Andhra Pradesh Academy of Science for a very long time. In 1981 he received the Decennial Award of the Indian Geophysical Union.

In 1987 the Chief Minister of AP, recognizing his eminence and repute, appointed Bhimasankaram as the Chairman and Managing Director of the AP Mining Corporation to develop mineral based industries in various parts of the state. He successfully transformed it into a profitable corporation. In 1989 he was appointed as Dean Faculty of Sciences, Osmania University which he continued till 1991 when he retired from active service. However, he continued his research work as a CSIR Emeritus Scientist (1991-94) and a UGC Emeritus Fellow (1994-96). In 2007 he received the Millennium Award of the Indian Science Congress from the Prime Minister of India for his lifetime contributions to the field of Geophysics. In 2015 he was honoured with the Hari Narain lifetime achievement award by the Indian Geophysical Union.

At the age of 65, Bhimasankaram revoked his passion for Telugu and Sanskrit literature and wrote an epic in Telugu named *Rasasruvu*, which is regarded highly in recent times. He published several books pertaining to Telugu poetry and mythology. His work on *Ramayan (Bala kand)* in Telugu was published in 2015 by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam. He is considered as one of the greatest poets and scholars of Telugu literature and has received several honours and awards in this field. Some of his books have become reference material for MA Telugu literature students. He started the CEG alumni association (CEGAA) in 2011 to bring old students together and to help students through their experience and knowledge gained from academic institutions and industry. Under his able guidance the CEG and CEGAA successfully organized the Golden jubilee celebration of CEG in 2019.

Bhimasankaram has been a great inspiration and a role model for scores of students for several decades. His contributions to the growth of Geophysics and Geoscientists in India is unparalleled. We acknowledge the immense loss to the geoscience community and pray that peace be upon him.

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