A Free Discussion session was the last event of the conference followed by vote of thanks by Professor Valentina Yano-Hombach.

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P.K. KATHAL

CORRESPONDENCE

DECLINING INTEREST IN GEOLOGY

The weathering of the geological sciences in India cannot hurt anybody more than Dr. B.P. Radhakrishna of Geological Society of India, whose total dedication to geology is legendary. While the lack of awareness of the earth sciences in the average public is unfortunate, we the earth scientists have none else to blame except ourselves for the degradation. If fieldwork alone does not take us anywhere as Pradeepkumar feels (Jour. Geol. Soc. India, 2000, v.56, p.342), armchair geology will not take us anywhere either. Further, it is not that the revival plans of Jaikiran (Jour. Geol. Soc. India, 2000, v.56, pp.106-107) are new to anybody, but it is the indifference of those who can do something but could not care less. In my perception the causes for the decline and degradation in geology can perhaps be summed up as follows:

1. After glorious work by the British and Indian geologists for a century, which has seen nothing but high quality fieldwork and high fidelity map making, the geological work culture in India has started sliding slowly but steadily.
2. With the introduction of drilling, the exploration geologist involved in supervising drilling and logging, found it more comfortable and glamorous to be attached to exploration, where one may go to the work site once or twice a week or a fortnight, to log the boreholes, thus avoiding strenuous daily fieldwork.
3. Sophistication in the form of introduction of computers, use of satellite imagery, GIS, etc. has created a new breed of white-collar geologists, who consider themselves of to be a privileged class and feel that field work is only for lesser mortals.
4. While the introduction of exploration and drilling marked the first downfall for field geology, the introduction of sophisticated branches, has marked the second downfall.
5. Meanwhile, developments in geology have made it a more complex science where almost every problem needed a multi-disciplinary approach. This 'incursion' of the allied sciences has never been accepted wholeheartedly, but was only tolerated as a necessary evil. This has led to the clash of egos and apprehensions, superceding science and its objectives.
6. In the exploration sector, the ancient Indian civilization has exhausted all shallow resources and easy finds. A stage has now reached where success in mineral exploration is possible only with the collective wisdom of highest standards and commitment, which is nowhere in sight. The outlook of geologists and geophysicists in an integrated exploration programme
has remained more as a competitive rather complimentary effort. They work independently with hardly any timely exchange of data with one another.

7. The bulk of the geophysical research is related to phenomena at unverifiable depths and therefore the day-to-day problems of drilling during mineral exploration remain unattended to or unresolved. Hence there is no incentive to strive for excellence in geophysical exploration.

8. Basic geological mapping has been completed for almost the entire country. New refinements in the form of second generation mapping or thematic mapping require, besides aerial photos and satellite imagery, a lot of geophysical inputs from ground as well as from the air. This again calls for collective wisdom, which apparently is a detestable word.

9. In the teaching institutions, the irresistible charm of the research projects, grants, committee meetings etc. may be responsible to a large extent for the decline in quality of teaching, which is unable to inspire an unenthusiastic or reluctant student, whose career prospects are apparently dismal. While information technology is taking a big toll of even conventional engineering streams, poor earth sciences are returning to the Earth.

10. Priority for down-to-earth problems and their effective solutions will not only save us from the present crisis, but will also make us popular. Unless a day comes when both the visible and invisible boundaries between the allied branches vanish and all of them work as if their life is in peril, one cannot expect a better future for earth sciences.

"The Anomaly"
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T.S. RAMAKRISHNA

DISCUSSION

ANCIENT GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA by B.P. Radhakrishna.

D.N. Avasthi, C-190, Sarita Vihar, New Delhi - 110 044 comments:

This is with reference to the comment by Dr. B.P. Radhakrishna against the use of the word “Ghat” while referring to the magnificent mountain range of Sahyadri in the leader of the September issue of your prestigious journal. “Ghat” literally means “reduction”, from which is derived the Hindi word for the arithmetical operation of subtraction. Reference to the down slope of any land leading to the lower level is made by the word “ghat” (i.e. reduction in the elevation), and it may or may not lead to any river or sea. The slopes on the sides of the Vindhyan or Satpura mountains are also described as Ghats, and while travelling along roads at the beginning and at the end of these slopes, one often sees the signs of the local highway department putting up warning boards for the drivers with words “Ghat section begins” and “Ghat section ends”.

“Ghat” is, therefore, neither any landing place nor steps. And many people often mistake the steps constructed to facilitate reaching the banks of holy rivers in India with “ghats”. Places of cremation or burning dead bodies is known as “Shmashan Bhumi”. Only when it happens to be