OBITUARY

J.S. Venugopal
(1935-2006)

Prof. J.S. Venugopal passed away on the 29th May 2006 at Mysore due to cardiac arrest. Only about five months back I had spoken to him over the phone. Though he was not his usual jovial self, he was happy that I called him up. I never thought his end was so near.

Venu, as we used to call him, was born on the 5th January 1935. He had his school and undergraduate education at Bangalore. Venu and myself were classmates in the three year B.Sc. (Hons.) course in Geology at the Central College, Bangalore. As I observed he had a cheerful disposition and was always friendly. We obtained our B.Sc. (Hons.) degree in 1956. He joined the M.Sc. (by Research Course) of Karnataka University at Dharwad and I joined the M.Sc. course at the same place, and that is how we continued our contacts till 1959. During the 1959-1960 period he was also a Post-Graduate lecturer in the Karnataka University. After I joined GSI, I used to meet him whenever I visited Dharwad for holidays. He obtained his M.Sc. Research Degree in 1960. During this period Venu developed a great aptitude for research work which took him to great heights. He was in the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) as a Research scholar during 1960-1961 and became an Associate. Later I lost touch with him. It was revived only after I was posted at Bangalore in 1981.

Venu started his illustrious scientific career as a J.R.F. in the Central Food Technology and Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore. Perhaps he was the first geologist on the roll of the CFTRI, where he ploughed a lone furrow and carved a niche for himself. He remained in the R&D throughout his career. For his research on Clay Mineralogy, he obtained Doctorate Degree in the year 1962 as a C.S.I.R. scholar. In 1963 he completed an advanced course from the IISc. As a Senior Fellow he specialised in Mineral Technology, NMR and ICP. He continued his scientific and academic career in the CFTRI, Mysore and became a Deputy Director during the period 1993-1995.

The list of Prof. Venugopal’s scientific work is so long and the constraints of space would not permit full elaboration of the same. For his original research in Material Science he was awarded D.Sc. Degree by the Cambridge University, England in 1995. For his Post Doctoral Research in Surface Science he was awarded D.Sc. Degree by the Cambridge University, England in 1995. For his Post Doctoral Research in Surface Science, Environment Science and HRSEM, he received D.Sern from California University, L.A., Santa Monica, U.S.A., Cambridge, New Market Suffolk, U.K. and Imperial College of Science, London, in 1980, and for his work on EDS/WDS Systems, Analysis and Cryodetectors, he received D.EMA from Princeton, N.J., Rochester, Minnesota U.S.A. in 1983.

From 1997 till the time of his demise, he was Research Advisor and Consultant Scientist of SR.Instt. Human development, Bio Synth Pesticide, Aries Biotech, Mysore, Instrument industries and several Universities in India. He was also Advisor on the Research Board of the American Biographic Institute, Raleigh, NC, USA. He was the Founder President of Centre for Neo Eco friendly Studies & Training, Mysore.

Venugopal received numerous International Awards and only recently he received a communication from the Director General, International Biographic Centre, Cambridge, England (10th Feb. 2006) regarding the ratification of his name as a recipient of “The Archimedes Award” by the International Biographic Centre in recognition of his scientific contributions. He received numerous International and National awards. The significant among them are: Sawell International Award for best contribution to Anticorrosion of Materials by Ultra scanning U.K.(1979), Citation for Iron Amphibole Sequencing (Specimens and Slides), Cambridge University Museum, England (1961), Medallion of Honour

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for outstanding work in Electron Microscope at International Microscopy Conference, UCLA, in USA (1981), Princeton Medal and Citation for Topten Micrograph of meta-H-Halloyste of ultramorphology by HRSEM, U.S.A. (1982), 20th Century Outstanding Achievement in Science Medalion, England (1996). He was honoured with felicitation by the Solvent Extractors Association of India in their Annual Convention, Bombay (1989), he was elected Honorary President – CFTRI Photophiles, Mysore (1991-92) and was UGC Visiting Professor, Senior Fellow at Karnataka, Delhi, Bombay and Roorkee Universities and Research Institutions (1984-93) However, the geological fraternity of India failed to recognise his contribution to research on clay minerals, silicate minerals and optical mineralogy.

Venugopal had over four and half decades of experience in fields of research and technology development activities. He made distinct contribution in the basic, frontier and applied areas of solid state mineral reactions, physico-chemical, optical, thermal characteristics of clay minerals, graphite, amphiboles, feldspars etc. In the applied side his contribution covered HCL isomers, characterization and processing of high grade calcium orthophosphate for processed food preservation, remote sensing of rodent behaviour, biophysical toxicity of pesticides, food and plant corrosion, flavour oil migration and varietal detection in caradamom, internal infestation detection in packaged and processed food. The list of his scientific contribution is too long for enumeration in this note. It suffices to say that his work has an immense applied value in the Indian conditions particularly in food industry, grain storage, infestation control, also in development of instrumentation and fabrication, and his basic research work has received international recognition. He published over 120 papers, edited and published 5 technical books, 9 monographs and manuals.

Venugopal was associated with many national and international learned societies. To name a few he was a Fellow of the Geological Society of India, Bangalore, Life Fellow of the Geological Mining and Metallurgic Society, Calcutta, Mineralogical Society of India, Royal Microscopic Society, London, Life Member of the Association of Food Scientists and Technologists (India), Member Clay Mineral Society (India), Life Member Scanning Microscopy International, Chicago, USA, and many others.

In recent years he evinced great interest in environmental aspects which was an offshoot of his research on many eco-friendly products. He was a Founder Member of Mysore Tree Lovers Guild. He had varied interests in literature, art, philosophy, film and photography. He remained a bachelor and is survived by his two sisters and a brother.

Venu was modest about his achievements. His involvement in the pursuit of science was total. He was always looking for innovations. He wanted to do more. When he lost his mother in January 2006, to whom he was greatly attached, the shock was too much for him to bear and he was somewhat lost. Though Venu is no more he lives through his work

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