

CORRESPONDENCE

DECLINING INTEREST IN GEOLOGY

Once again the venerated Dr. B.P. Radhakrishna (Jour. Geol. Soc. India, v.55, 2000, pp.585-588) is to be congratulated for bringing into focus the lethargy that has seeped into the profession of geology, both in the academic and government departments. Geology is the last option of most of the students taking up their graduate studies. Instead of lamenting the lack of field work in geology, the real issue is to find why geology is now in a rut.

Nobody but the generation now in their 50s and 60s should take most of the blame. It was they who had come to occupy positions where things could have been changed. But instead, innovations were smirked at and the plain truth that field work in itself is never going to get us anywhere, was not realised. And where is the motivation for young students to undergo the rigours of field work when it is clear as daylight that no jobs are on offer.

One does not have to have a perspicacious mind to understand the disillusionment with geology or earth science (sticking to one name or the other hardly matters to one who is desperate for sustenance!) among the youngsters. A typical profile of a graduate in geology could be traced through his getting a master's degree in geology and subsequently doing his Ph.D. and then his post-doc. During his MSc., he will be witness to his teachers looking at their profession as just another 10 to 4 sinecure. A Ph.D. is obtained, often after a war of wits involving the student, the guide and the head of the department. In between, he will be on the lookout for that elusive job (just any job for that matter and not necessarily in geology). The unsuccessful one goes on to do his coveted CSIR-RA-ship. He becomes an unwelcome addition to the parent department, finds himself perceived as a threat by his erstwhile teachers. And suppose he is lucky to have an opportunity to write and qualify in the 'geologists exam', he is again frustrated by a waiting period that could vary anywhere between 3 and 5 years, before he is allowed to join.

It is in this scenario a student takes up geology. Field work will be the last thing on his mind. There is nothing to be gained out of it except maybe a sense of personal fulfillment after putting in a lot of effort. So it is best that our youngsters take their own path to a career where their skills are valued, and their individuality not compromised by administrators, scientists and professors. Geology doesn't stand a chance before the vibrant professionalism of programmers, physicists, biologists, or even of geographers. So, modernize and give up the feudal mind set or perish!

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ERRATA

DISCUSSION: Two papers on the foraminifera from Rajasthan by K.S. Raghav published in Jour. Geol. Soc. India, v.56(1), 2000, p.110.

In the comment by Dr. P.K. Kathal on the penultimate paragraph, line 1 under (a) should read as "Ranging in age from Middle Miocene" in place of "Reneging in age from Middle Pliocene".