

Obituary



Parimal Kumar Basu
(1939-2002)

Parimal Kumar Basu passed away on 18th October 2002 while on a personal visit to Kolkata, leaving behind his bereaved wife and two daughters.

Basu was one of the select few who had earned the D.Sc. degree from the University of Calcutta on the strength of highly original research, given to him in 1983.

He had passed his M.Sc. (Geol.) from Kolkata in 1961 and served in the then Metal Corporation of India at the Zawar Mines in Rajasthan during 1962-1965; he then joined the Geological Survey of India as Geologist (Jr.) and was posted directly at the Central Petrological Laboratories, Kolkata, where he got an opportunity to continue his studies on Pb-Zn mineralisation in the Zawar area; during his tenure there, he examined the minerals from almost all the major sulphide occurrences of India, as also from the Black Mountains of Bhutan and Ganesh Himal of Nepal.

Around this time, the Geological Survey obtained its first EPMA equipment, well after its arrival, on the basis of an indent with which he had nothing to do, he was chosen to commission it. He did set it up from scratch, for which he had to run from pillar to post and work 20 hour shifts. On this instrument, he could establish that the sphalerites from Zawar Mines which had variable iron contents were not solid solutions but in which iron was distributed through discrete submicro-scopic species of iron-sulphide, questioning the basis of sulphide geothermometry in this case.

Somehow, as the EPMA began to work, personal rapport between him and others began to falter. His experience during this phase of his career left him not only disappointed, but also disenchanted. Gone forever was the Parimal Basu of volcanic laughter and or needle-point single mindedness. Soon he was transferred away to Hyderabad which he adopted as his home.

Basu continued to entertain unorthodox ideas in many of his analyses. His ideas about the origin of the Cuddapah barites and the possible role of biogenic and chemical factors did not prove very popular with his colleagues but he continued to make his notes. In private conversation, he told this correspondent why he thought much of the rocks of the Dharwar belt accepted as grey wakes were in reality acid volcanic rocks, much as was suggested by some pioneers of the MGD, and showed photographs of quarry faces in support, but a combined traverse with him kept on being deferred to a future date.

Basu was promoted to the post of Director (Geology) in the year 1987, and was superannuated in 1997. After retirement, he continued to keep himself in professional company; he was a visiting faculty member in the Allahabad and Osmania Universities. The USGS nominated him in 1997 to its commission on fluorite and barite for the International Association of the Genesis of Ore Deposits.

Dr. Basu was a member of various learned bodies. The Mining, Geological and Metallurgical Institute (MGMI) honoured him with the Dr. J. Coggin Brown Memorial Gold Medal in the year 1995.

Over the last few years, the ever-lengthening shadow of Time began to cover his visage. To all requests to take care of himself such that he might in turn look after those who needed him, he would only smile.

In many ways, he was enigmatic and impulsive, one who would not confide and would not listen. In death, he remained true to type, he just got up and left. His friends did not get the chance to raise a toast one more time, in his honour.

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