

The Talented Naidu Brothers

Jagapathi Naidu (PRJ) and Seethapathi Naidu (RSN)

The other day I suddenly realized that more than 100 years had rolled by since the birth of the brilliant teacher Purama Rangasayee Jagapathi Naidu (PRJ) and of his artist brother, Rangasayee Seethapathi Naidu, (RSN). Very little is known about them and their achievements, but both were born to Rangaswamy Naidu, a range officer in the Mysore Forest Department and Ranganayaki, whose father was a retired army officer who had settled in Tiruchirapalli. Both were born at Tiruchi, the home of their maternal grandmother, Jagapathi on 3rd October 1903, while Seethapathi arrived two years later on 22 April 1906, an interval of 30 months. Both the children spent their childhood days in Tiruchi.

Migrating to Bangalore with the object of securing higher education they enrolled as students in the Wesleyan Mission School, which had the reputation of being a fine school in those days.

Jagapathi Naidu, the Brilliant Lecturer



Jagapathi proved to be a brilliant, talented student securing first class rank and reckoned to be the best product of that prestigious school. After completing secondary education, he joined, first, the Maharaja College at Mysore but later shifted to the Central College, Bangalore. Proficient in physics and mathematics, it is not clearly known how he landed up in geology.

The student days of Jagapathi in the Central College were of great turbulence and unrest. Gandhiji had launched the non-cooperation movement and had given a call to all students to move out of Government Colleges. Jagapathi became a student leader, delivered fiery speeches and

organized strikes. After graduation, fired with ambition to play a larger role in the freedom movement, he left for Varanasi which was a Nationalist centre of education and came under the influence of Professor Krishna Kumar Mathur. Under his guidance Jagapathi specialized in petrology and mineralogy. He returned to Bangalore and became a demonstrator in geology at the Central College. It was about this time that I had finished my high school studies and entered the College. As to what made me take to geology is not clear. My father had collected many well-illustrated books on popular science and acquaintance with these books may have drawn me towards the subject. The first lecture I heard was that of PRJ and that lecture is still green in my memory even though seventy five years have rolled by – it was pure eloquence and mesmerized me for nearly an hour. The lecture reassured me that I had not made a mistake in selecting geology as my subject. My interest in the subject has continually grown ever since and I must attribute my life-long interest in geology to that first lecture by PRJ.

From then onwards I met him frequently and grew to be intimate with him. Being originally a student of physics, his leanings were more towards mineralogy and the measurement of optic axial angle in minerals and the determination of twinning laws in plagioclase were a passion with him. Consequently he did not evince much interest in other branches of geology. The 4-axes universal stage which till then had been kept as a show-piece, under lock and key, was pulled out and every student of his taught to handle it with ease. Throughout the day, he used to be busy trying to force into the minds of his students the elements of optical mineralogy.

Those were exciting days for me at the college as everyday I was learning something new. Rocks did not merely remain as stones of various shapes and sizes, but, under the guidance of PRJ, we could conceive them as products of an evolutionary process. The library in the Department was always open and easy of access and afforded opportunities for enlarging one's knowledge. My final year at the college was quite successful and I was fortunate in getting an appointment immediately after in the Department of Mines and Geology, Government of Karnataka, as a Field Assistant on a princely salary of Rs.75 per month! The salary was not important as the freedom to see the remotest parts of this picturesque State of Mysore, its geology and mineral resources, compensated for other deficiencies. My connection with the Central College was severed but Jagapathi remained as a jovial companion and friend.

Meanwhile, Jagapathi, ever eager to increase his knowledge in his special field of optical mineralogy proceeded to Switzerland in 1949 to work under Max Reinhard, an authority on the subject. He easily secured his doctorate degree in the subject which was dear to his heart, "Minerals of Charnockites from India". He spent his time usefully with veterans like Paul Niggli, Bruno Sander, and Hans Cloos, ornaments of the German School of Geology. He had no good opinion about American geology and was fond of stating that America was an importer of knowledge and exporter of text books.

Professor of Geology, Madras University

He returned to India, back to Central College as Professor. Leaving India as a nationalist, a disciple of Gandhi, but he now came as a dandy, smartly dressed in a three-piece suit, a felt hat and pipe in his mouth. Not remaining in Central College for very long he was selected first as a Reader and later as Professor in the A.C. College of Technology, Madras. My recollection is that he stayed in Chennai for nearly 10 years, a period which was, perhaps, the finest part of his career. He had several bright students and trained them in petrology and optical mineralogy. In 1958, some of us in Bangalore had taken the initiative to start a Geological Society of India and invited him to become a Fellow of the Society. He, however, refused to join and within a year, organized a Society of his own, the 'Mineralogical Society of India' – with himself as its President and started a journal entitled 'Indian Mineralogist' on the lines of 'American Mineralogist'. The magazine had a successful career so long as he was in charge but became irregular with only a few significant contributions. While in Chennai he wrote a book on '4-axes universal stage' which remains the 'best treatise' on the subject in the English language. He also brought out, with the sole object of helping students, a condensed version of Johannsen's 'Manual of Petrographic Methods'. These two books have remained the best text books for providing good grounding in the subject.

Although highly qualified he never projected himself and remained aloof. It is probably because of the interest taken by Prof. M.R.Sahni at the fag end of his career, he was appointed Director of the newly started Centre of Advanced Studies in Geology at Chandigarh. The work was to his liking and he built a good school of research. A.S. Janardhanan, L.N. Gupta were his students who later distinguished themselves as good petrologists.

'Charnockite – Rock named after a Tombstone'

At about this time Jagapathi was elected as the sectional President of the Geology and Geography Section of the Indian Science Congress in 1963, which was held at Delhi. He chose as the subject of his address – 'Hypersthene-bearing Rocks of the Madras Province'. These rocks had been earlier recognized as members of a remarkable group of hypersthene-bearing rocks ranging in chemical composition from ultrabasic to acid, as the differentiated products of crystallization of a normal plutonic magma for which a new name charnockite had been given. This had long been accepted as a classical contribution and the name charnockite had gained world-wide acceptance and there were many dissenting views but no one had dared to question the advisability of giving a new name to an admittedly metamorphic rock which had developed hypersthene.

Jagapathi during his stay in Madras, had guided several students for their Ph.D. work, had the opportunity of studying thousands of thin sections and felt convinced that there was nothing like a rock called 'charnockite' and there was nothing like an igneous consanguinous series of

rocks called the 'charnockite series' which have differentiated from the ultrabasic to acidic. The wording was provocative as it dared to criticize a person of the stature of Sir Thomas Holland. He prefaced his remarks in his characteristic cynical style – "Rocks are named after various usages. But the tombstone of any one, be he or she, a King, a Queen, a mighty warrior, an astute politician or a founder of a greater city than Calcutta has never formed the component of a rock"

Subsequent work in Mysore, Kerala and many parts of Tamil Nadu has proved that what was earlier designated as charnockite was only a transformed gneiss subjected to granulite grade metamorphism. It is unfortunate that this address of Jagapathi Naidu, a significant contribution to the study on the petrology of granulites has been neglected and not quoted by any of the subsequent workers, including his own students. None of the libraries have a copy of the paper for purpose of reference. It is unfortunate that despite all the controversies, terms like acid charnockite, basic charnockite, charnockitisation, charnockite province continue to be in currency!

Back to Mysore

Jagapathi did not last at Chandigarh for long but chose to return south. He had two choices, one at the Karnatak University, Dharwar and the other at the newly created post-graduate department at *Manasa Gangotri*, Mysore. At both the places, he had his own students holding the position of the Heads of Department of Geology. Karnatak University did not show any interest while Prof. Viswanathiah with the support of the Vice Chancellor, Mysore University extended all help by creating a separate Mineralogical Institute and making him its Honorary Professor. The Mineralogical Institute branched off into newer lines of research and specialized in the growth of crystals. Professors Tareen, Byrappa and Basavalingu are carrying on work initiated by Jagapathi with distinction.

Last Days

Prof. Jagapathi Naidu did not live long enough to take active interest in teaching and research and passed away quietly at Mysore in the early hours of 22 Feb., 1970. He was a great teacher and one of the best exponents in the specialized field of optical mineralogy and crystallography with a unique sense of humour spicing his talks with choice phrases borrowed from several languages he knew. Whatever be his failings, he was a lovable personality, intensely devoted to training his students and making them worthy scholars in their specialised field. He had no other ambitions but died a disappointed man. This was most unfortunate because such persons of outstanding ability, wholly devoted to training students in advanced mineralogy and petrology, were badly needed in the universities.

Seethapathi Naidu, the Artist

R. Seethapathi Naidu, popularly known as R.S. Naidu, was the younger brother of Jagapathi Naidu. A born artist, he was a man of extraordinary talent as a sculptor, and an ardent nationalist who threw himself into the freedom struggle. Like Jagapathi he was also born at Tiruchi and moved to Bangalore for his education. Choosing law as his subject for higher studies, he moved to Dharwar and later to Poona. Restless in spirit, he could not resist the call given by Gandhiji and left college to become an active Satyagrahi and spent the greater part of his time in different prisons of India for indefinite periods as His Majesty's guest. His fellow prisoners were none other than Gandhiji himself, Mahadev Desai, Uma Shankar Dixit, Minoo Masani, Ashok Mehta and others. A defiant prisoner, he was treated cruelly by his jailors and badly beaten. He was continuously forced to do the hardest jobs and condemned to solitary confinement. It is in such inhospitable circumstances that his latent gift of sculpting flowered, bringing forth pieces of rare artistry and beauty. A born artist needing no expert instructor, he developed sculpting as a hobby to drown his sorrow.

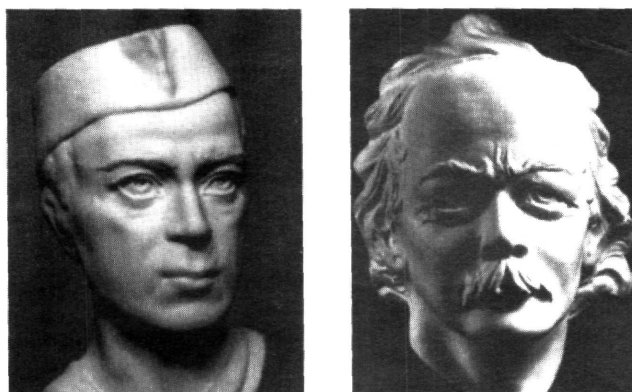
Persecution Phobia

While in jail, he developed leanings towards communism and a keen desire to visit Russia. Somehow managing to reach London he was not able to escape the eagle eyes of the Scotland Yard police. His experience with them was so harrowing that from then onwards he suffered from a persecution phobia, thinking that some one was behind him trying to catch him and torture him and developed a haunted look.

He kept continuously busy with his artistic creations and had he been commercially minded, he could have amassed plenty of money but he did not entertain any such thought and gifted away the artistic pieces to his friends, getting wild when any one asked for its price. At times he became so wild, that in his rage, he would smash the beautiful piece of art by banging it on the ground and breaking it into pieces.

The art of sculpting was an innate ability and under proper guidance from a learned *guru*, he would probably have excelled as a renowned sculptor. But he was content to indulge in it only as a hobby for his own satisfaction. Independence of India, for which he had struggled and endured

the worst hardships in jails, dawned, but it made no difference to his life style. His prison mates became great politicians, occupying positions of high rank, and some even became ministers but he never stooped to exploit his earlier friendship with them and seek any favour. While an admirer of Marx, he did not become a communist. He had good contacts with the editors of journals, supplying them with cartoons and line drawings, but did not become a professional journalist. Unmarried, he cooked his own food and fasted when nothing was available. Taking delight in drawing line sketches, especially those suggestive of grace and movement, he would sketch these on anything which came to hand – scraps of paper, margins of letters written to his friends and on envelopes. Thousands of these sketches, if collected, would have made a priceless treasure. Two illustrations shown below give an idea of RSN's artistic ability.



He troubled no one, wronged no one and loved his country but was moved by the poverty and misery of the poor during a life of nearly eighty years. Suffering from cancer, he was frequently ill, his fellow artists took care of him and secured a small amount from government to cover his medical expenses. His last days were spent in Mysore Mission Hospital, where he passed away, like his brother, quietly.

The relationship between the brothers was not perhaps been cordial and they were seldom seen together. I cannot help wondering what an excellent combination it would have made if the intellectual perceptions of the elder brother had dovetailed with the artistic ability of the younger one. The brilliant cartoonist and sculptor would have developed into a creative artist, illustrating popular accounts of geology and enriching the science of geology. Books on geology published in India suffer from the lack of good illustrations, giving shape to abstract concepts which strike the eye and convey the desired meaning. The intellectual and artistic ability of the Naidu brothers could have filled-up this gap. But this was not to be.

The tale of the two talented brothers makes sorrowful reading. The country of their birth failed to recognize their talent and allowed them to fade away in obscurity. The fine lines of Gray's 'Elegy' comes to mind as I write these lines:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
 Dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear
 Full many a gem is born to blush unseen
 And waste its sweetness in the desert air.

B.P. RADHAKRISHNA