

SUPRIYO ROY

SUSMITA ROY

The economic geology class in Jadavpur University would be starting any moment. The students were all in their places. The professor had a formidable reputation of always being five minutes early for his lecture. There was only one day that he had come to class five minutes late with a suitcase in hand. He had excused himself saying that he was coming from Salt Lake (not his residence which was about one km away from the university). Then he launched himself into the usual captivating lecture in his sonorous voice. At the end of the class, one boy, unable to contain his curiosity asked him why travelling from Salt Lake necessitated carrying a suitcase or being late for class. After all it was a place well within the city and connected by efficient public transport. The professor replied, "Its Salt Lake City, Utah, USA". Such was Supriyo Roy.

A geo-scientist, researcher and academician of international repute, Prof. Roy passed away on 22nd August 2013 at the age of 82, after a period of brief illness. In the post Renaissance era of Bengal, a galaxy of scholars, mainly from Presidency College, Calcutta, spread across the country and even crossed international

boundaries and nucleated several small intellectual centres, glowing like isolated stars in different pools – academic or otherwise.

Popularly known as "Manganese Man", Professor Roy focused his research mainly on different aspects of manganese ore deposits, a subject that would remain the greatest passion of his life till the end. His main objective was to understand the genetic features of these, keeping in mind the pristine depositional environments of synsedimentary deposits controlled largely by the effects of tectonically related sea level and climate changes. He wanted to establish cause and effect relationship between the evolution of the atmosphere-hydrosphere system and the global metallogeny of synsedimentary manganese deposits in different stages of geological history. Making a little digression from his studies on terrestrial deposits, he also successfully determined the post-depositional changes in deep sea transition metal-bearing ferro-manganese modules of the Indian Ocean to explain the growth history of the modular manganese deposits.

Born in an enlightened Brahmo family on June 10, 1931, Professor

Roy completed his matriculation from Ballygunge Government High School in 1946. His father Prof. Naresh Chandra Roy was a retired Centenary Professor and head of the department of Political science, University of Calcutta. His mother Shanti Roy was a professor of English at Victoria Institution, Calcutta. He is survived by his wife Chitra Roy who taught English at Lady Brabourne College and daughter Sucharita, who teaches Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, son-in-law and grand-daughters.

Prof. Roy completed his D.Phil in 1957 and D.Sc in 1963. He was chosen as a National Research Council post doctoral fellow in Mineralogy division of Geological Survey of Canada, Ottawa in 1958-59. Here he was associated with Dr. R. W. Boyle. He worked on the Pb-Zn-Ag-Cu deposits of New Brunswick. This was published by Geological Survey of Canada in 1961. He was awarded the S. L. Biswas medal of Asiatic Society Calcutta, P. N. Bose Medal by the same society, National Mineral Award by Government of India, L. L. Fermor Lecturer by Geological society of London and D. N. Wadia medal by INSA.

He had a long association with Presidency College and Calcutta University (1946-52) – I.Sc to M.Sc. During his college days, the teachings of his professors Nirmal Chatterjee and Saurindra Nath Sen moulded his thinking. Like so many of his contemporaries he was influenced by the independence movement, the famine of the 50s, partition, communal tension, riots, Marxist ideology, IPTA and Peace Congress. He was as much a cricket and soccer enthusiast

as he was a literature, art and architecture aficionado.

At the time when Roy joined Jadavpur University, the geoscience centre was yet to evolve into a well-structured department. His efforts led to the development of a complete academic department, equipped with advanced laboratories, course curricula and a good research ambience. He was the first Indian geologist who initiated a research school of economic geology with an analytical approach.

The final contribution of Prof. Roy ("Earth Science Reviews") was delivered in 2006 where he correlated sedimentary manganese deposition with the evolution of the Earth System – a target set by him in the 1950s and achieved nearly five decades later, documenting an unparalleled resolution of an insightful scientist. His meticulous collection of field data and investigating relationships with host and associated rocks and integrating all to develop genetic models were done under

such inadequate infrastructural conditions available at that time in India which today's students would find hard to comprehend.

As the curtain comes down on a life well led and the music fades away – one is left with the impression of a unusual intellect, with a keen sense of humour, rapier wit, affectionate nature and the joy in making friends without benefits of the passing of a generation.

Alumnus (Economics/1981-83)