

Random Harvest: An Anthology of Editorials

Rasoul Sorkhabi



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B P Radhakrishna

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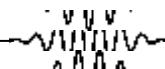
Whenever a copy of *Journal of Geological Society of India* reaches my hand, the first thing I do is read the editorial. No matter what their topics are, these essays are never dull but lively and precise presentations of various earth science issues in India (and oftentimes in the world as well). Coming from the pen of B P Radhakrishna, a doyen of Indian geology, these editorials introduce profound matters in a plain language; therefore, the professional as well as the novice in geoscience benefits from them.

It is a good fortune of the scientific community that 86 pieces of Radhakrishna's editorials are now available in a single volume, *Random Harvest*, published as Memoir 51 of the Geological Society of India. This is a valuable resource for earth science teachers, managers, researchers, and writers as well as an insightful and inspiring reading material for young generations of Indian geoscience.

Radhakrishna is not merely an experienced geologist. As one of the founders of the

Geological Society of India in 1958, as editor of the Society's Journal during 1974-1992, and as President of the Society, Radhakrishna represents a world and a history of geoscience. This Memoir was published to honor his 85th birthday.

Random Harvest comprises a selection of the editorials published from 1984 through 2002. What is the value of geoscience if it does not help a part of the humanity and a part of this planet? Is there a bright future for geoscience if it does not discipline, standardize, and strengthen its community, its research practices and its services? These appear to be the fundamental questions that give impetus to Radhakrishna's choice and writing of the editorials, whether he is discussing philosophical issues (essays such as 'creativity in geoscience', and 'earth system science'), archaeological/historical issues (for example, 'Holocene chronology and Indian prehistory', 'River Saraswati in Rig Veda', and 'Ancient geography of India'), and geoscience community issues ('Indian palaeontology under a cloud', 'In defence of field-work and mapping', 'What is rationale in withholding geological maps?', 'Whither Earth science research in India?', and 'Declining interest in geology'), or introducing new books ('The Awakening Earth' by Peter Russel, 1983; 'The Great Arc' by John Keay, 2000; 'Undeworld' by Graham Hancock, 2000) and evaluating institutions (for instance, 'Twenty-five years of service (of Geological Society of India)' which happens to be the first essay in the volume).



Radhakrishna's writings on groundwater and mineral (especially gold) geology and on the conservation of the environment and natural resources are recurring themes in the volume. And rightly so. No country can afford to ignore them: Geo-resources and Geo-environment are the very foundation of life and wealth. Radhakrishna considers them at the top of 'priorities in earth science research' (essay #59) and at the core of his 'vision for a new Indian geoscience' (essay #75). Of course, he does not play down the significance of basic research. For instance, he welcomes 'interest in Deccan flood basalts' (essay #4). But he challenges (essay #59) earth research strategies in which 'Earth science application for societal needs' comes at the tail of a five-

component programme suggested by the government.

These editorials not only enlighten the geologist's mind, but also speak for the geologist in a politicized society in which voices influence policies and public decisions. Earth science teachers and managers will find numerous useful ideas and food for thought. I pray that Radhakrishna will continue to write for years to come, and to give geoscientists the warmth to practice geology and the voice to express what is best in them.

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Information and Announcements

Short Course on Seismic Design of Bridges

Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur 208 016
November 22-26, 2004

The short course is meant for engineers engaged in design and construction of bridges and for senior engineers engaged in directing these activities. The course contents include: earthquake engineering basics, concepts of seismic design, difference between seismic design philosophy of bridges and buildings, review of codal provisions in different countries, ductile detailing, and seismic retrofitting. Brochure of the course is available at www.nicee.org/brochure.pdf. For further information, please contact:

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