

Editorial

Arun Grover, Rajesh Kochhar, Guest Editors

It is a matter of delight to us that *Resonance*, published by the Indian Academy of Sciences (IASc) is featuring Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni in this issue. One of us (Arun Grover) became aware of his multifaceted contributions to education, scientific research, popularisation of science, scientific temper, religious reforms, freedom struggle, and national life during a chance meeting with his grandson, Prof. Ashok Sahni, (himself an eminent researcher in paleontology – the study of fossils) during the birth centenary commemoration year (2009–2010) of Dr. Homi Bhabha (*Resonance*, Vol.14, No.5, 2009 and Vol.15, No.5, 2010).

In 1934–35, C V Raman founded the Indian Academy of Sciences and invited a galaxy of eminent scientists to become Foundation Fellows. The list included Ruchi Ram, his two illustrious scientist sons – Birbal Sahni, the paleobotanist (see *Resonance*, Vol.9, No.4, pp.42–49, 2004.) and the geologist, Mulk Raj Sahni, and Ruchi Ram's protégé Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (*Resonance*, Vol.7, No.4, 2002). All four hailed from Bhera (now in Pakistan).

A postal stamp on Ruchi Ram Sahni was released to commemorate his 150th birthday in October 2013. Coincidentally, this overlapped with the commemoration of 150 years of the establishment of two Government Colleges in Lahore and Delhi in January 1864. Prof. Yash Pal, a major figure of science research, education, and popularisation who passed away recently, was a Guest of Honour at the stamp release event. Ruchi Ram Sahni, Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, and Yash Pal were three iconic alumni of Panjab University whose life and work spanned the nucleation, evolution, and impact of science education/higher education in the Indian sub-continent. During his lifetime (1863–1948), Sahni knew and met J C Bose (b.1858), P C Ray (b.1861), Rabindranath Tagore (b.1861), Motilal Nehru (b.1861), Swami Vivekananda (b.1867), Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya (b.1861), Mahatma Hans



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Raj (b.1864), Lala Lajpat Rai (b. 1865), M G Ranade (b.1842), and Dyal Singh Majithia (1848–1898). Dyal Singh Majithia was the founder of *The Tribune*, a major newspaper of Punjab, at Lahore, now published from Chandigarh. Ruchi Ram Sahni remained a Life Trustee of *The Tribune*, after his retirement from the Government College, Lahore in 1918.

A book titled *Memoirs of Ruchi Ram Sahni* was the first publication of Vigyan Prasar (vigyanprasar.gov.in) in 1997. This is the science popularisation unit funded by the Department of Science and Technology. This book was based on extracts from the then unpublished autobiography of Sahni. It was translated into Hindi, Punjabi, and Marathi. This was reprinted by the Panjab University, Chandigarh, in 2013 and also reproduced the article originally written by one of us (Rajesh Kochhar) for *Physics News* (Vol.43, No.1, pp.19–35).

The commemoration year 2013 was also an occasion to disseminate the perceptive inaugural address of Ruchi Ram Sahni delivered on the occasion of initiating Victoria Diamond Jubilee Hindu Technical Institute in Lahore on the lines of VJTI in Bombay in 1887. This address shows that Ruchi Ram Sahni was perhaps the first to articulate the importance of equipping engineering graduates with the knowledge of finance and human resource management to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

It has been widely felt that Ruchi Ram Sahni, a relatively unsung and multifaceted figure of the pre-independence era should be as well known to the scientific and student community as likes of P C Ray and J C Bose (who were his contemporaries), and S N Bose, M N Saha and C V Raman. This issue of *Resonance* is a step towards this end.





Government College, Lahore, as it appeared in the 1880s.

This was where Ruchi Ram Sahni was a Professor of Chemistry.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_College_University_\(Lahore\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_College_University_(Lahore))

