Editorial*

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It was in 1980 that I first met Professor M. G. K Menon, already a legend. Known for his study of the decay of K-meson (covered in the Classics reproduced in this issue) and recognized globally for his pioneering work in particle physics, Menon was playing an active role as a science administrator in the country by the 1970's. Till then, research fund was generally limited to some contingency and one research scholar. The Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi headed by Menon changed the scenario. A special scheme for young scientists was launched with the assurance that decisions on research proposals would be made in three months. For people used to submitting a research proposal and waiting forever for a decision, such turn around in decision making was unheard of. Clearly, Menon, already a senior scientist, understood the needs of young scientists. Many senior scientists forget the troubles of their initial years and are unmindful of facilitating research career for the younger generation. Menon was different.

In this issue, Naba Mondal, a close collaborator of Menon in the famous Kolar project and his younger colleague in TIFR, Sreerup Raychaudhuri give an account of the life of Professor Menon, highlighting his younger years, Bristol days, TIFR days and the Delhi days as a science administrator at the national level. He played an important role at the international level also. He was the President of the International Council of Scientific Union and was also an active participant in Pugwash Conference. As a young scientist in India, I was hoping that the experiments in the Kolar field would get India a (part of the) Nobel Prize. When the signals were found to be not above the noise, I drew comfort from the fact that the results put the half-life of the proton at $> 10^{32}$ years,

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implying that the material universe will be around for a long time.

Interestingly, Menon was not exactly revving up to doing science in his early years. Initially, he enrolled to study Law, as his father and grandfather had done before him. What he needed was a break which he got when he went to Mumbai (then Bombay) and to Bristol. Then there was no looking back. On his return to India, Menon was active in research in TIFR. It is a moot point whether he would have been more active if Bhabha had not met an untimely death. After becoming the Director of TIFR at a young age, he became active in the National scene. He was the Chairman of the Electronics Commission, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Director General, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, New Delhi. He surprised many people by accepting the role of a Minister for Science and Technology in the Central Government. He was the President of all the science Academies in the country, and he played an important role in nation-building. One policeman seems to have said, "I remain awake so that others can sleep". Menon gave up active research to facilitate many others pursue active research.

It is unusual for this journal to devote so many pages to highlight the career of an individual scientist. The authors of the article on Menon have done a wonderful job in doing justice to Menon. He was a unique scientist turned administrator and his story should be made known to the young people in the country. My colleagues in the editorial board of this journal are very particular that each issue of this journal is balanced. The article by Kumar and Elias traces the history of explosives and illustrates the role of nitrogenous compounds. Jeevitha and Sanjit Das take a relook at Bertrand's theorem, from a pedagogic point of view. Kapil Paranjape presents a problem in probability under the Classroom section. The southern part of India will witness an annular solar eclipse on December 26, 2019. The article on the subject by Kurien, Mani and Virmani prepares the readers for studying the celestial event.

We hope you enjoy reading about Menon and other aspects of science in this issue.