

Bijoy Krushna Mohanty (1933- 2023)

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One of the tallest figure among the veteran earth scientists of Odisha, Bijoy Krushna Mohanty left for heavenly abode on 19th January, 2024. He was born on 15th February, 1933 in Baripada, of erstwhile Mayurbhanj State. He had a brilliant academic career. He did his I.Sc. from Ravenshaw College in 1950 and B.Sc. from Calcutta University in 1952. He graduated in 1956 from IIT, Kharagpur in Geology and Geophysics with First Class honours. He joined the Directorate of Mining and Geology, Odisha and rose to the rank of Director. The opportunity to study the mineral development projects, port and railway facilities of Australia under the Colombo Plan fellowship during 1971-72 was instrumental for him to lay down new directions to mineral exploration, mining, infrastructure development and logistics in the state. As a pioneering geologist B.K. Mohanty proved resources of Dungri limestone deposit paving the way for establishment of a cement plant at Bargarh. His assessment of Daitari iron ore deposit also led to the establishment of a deep draft port at Paradip, construction of an expressway connecting Daitari with Paradip Port and construction of the Daitari – Jakhapura Railway line. He coordinated execution of East Coast Bauxite investigation project, the largest exploration project in the country which resulted in the manifold augmentation of bauxite resources and the creation of Nalco. While implementing the programme of proving coal reserves in Ib and Talcher Coalfields supported by CMPDI he strengthened his Directorate's drilling set up as the best drilling outfit amongst all the State DMGs of the country. He coordinated an integrated programme of detailed assessment of chromite resources in Sukinda valley jointly with GSI and MECL resulting in an almost 10-fold increase in chromite reserves of the State.

Beyond mineral exploration, Mohanty played a pivotal role in establishing country's first 100% export-oriented charge chrome plant in the public sector (OMC) at Bamanipal right from the conceptual stage. As Officer on Special Duty in the erstwhile Ministry of Mines, Steel & Coal, Government of India, he coordinated and monitored the country's first pilot plant study for extraction of nickel from nickeliferous overburden in the chromite mines in Sukinda Valley.

As Director of DMG, Odisha, he championed the first ever Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies and formulation of Environmental Management Plan (EMP) in two major mining belts of the state, namely Barbil-Joda and Sukinda valley during 1980s. He initiated action for the High Resolution Aeromagnetic and Radiometric

Survey of hard rock terrain of Odisha with the aid of Australian Government leading to the establishment of a Data Processing Centre (DPC) in the premises of the Directorate of Geology.

Considering his immense contribution to the mineral development of the state he was honoured by Honourable Governor of Odisha, Professor Ganeshi Lal on behalf of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Centre for Communication and Management, Bhubaneswar. A trailblazer in interdisciplinary collaboration, Mohanty along with few leading scientists, and technocrats founded the Society of Geoscientists and Allied Technologists (SGAT), a vibrant body of professionals dedicated for the promotion of mineral development in the country in 1980.

While nurturing and guiding SGAT to greater heights in various capacities including as its President, he also showed his academic brilliance by editing the first ever treatise on Geology and Mineral Resources of Odisha in 1995 which saw its fourth edition in 2020. He authored a book titled *History of Mining in Odisha*. He conceived and scripted a documentary film on "Mining and Environment" covering the major mining areas of Odisha.

B.K. Mohanty's visionary foresight of creating awareness on minerals and environment amongst the younger generations led to the formulation of two unique programs: one for students of High Schools in different mining areas and industrial belts of the state- **Environment cum Mineral Awareness Programme (EMAP)** and the other for students pursuing PG/Degree courses in Geoscience, Mining, Metallurgy, Materials Science and Mineral Engineering- **Mineral Development Awareness Programme (MDAP)** running for the last 32 years on annual basis. These programmes have catapulted SGAT into national limelight. SGAT has flourished from strength to strength under his personal guidance and mentorship since 43 years. His leadership and persuasive abilities garnered industry support, culminating in the construction of a state-of-the-art SGAT office building in Bhubaneswar. For his extraordinary contribution to SGAT since its inception he was made a Patron for life.

As a patron and founder member of SGAT, Mohanty's influence persists even after his lifetime. B.K. Mohanty, a luminary in the realms of geology and mining in Odisha emerges as a visionary figure whose multifaceted contributions have left an enduring legacy. The state of Odisha and platform of SGAT will remain a timeless symbol of one man's visionary idea to nurture boundless potential for the younger generation.