



*B. Sanjiva Rao*





## **BASRUR SANJIVA RAO**

**(1895 - 1975)**

**(Elected Fellow 1944)**

BASRUR SANJIVA RAO was born on 23rd February 1895 in Coondapur located in the Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka as the fourth son of B Subba Rao, a pleader who practised at the local Bar. He received his education up to Matric (equivalent to the present 11th standard) in Coondapur. In those days, the teachers took great interest in the studies and welfare of their students. Buntwal Raghunathaiah, who was the Head of the school coached the students personally and accompanied them to Mangalore to write the Matriculation Examination, as there was no centre at Coondapur. Sanjiva Rao passed the Matriculation examination in 1911 with a 1st class. He proceeded to Bangalore and joined the BA Science Course at Central College. In those days, even the science course was designated as a BA course. Sanjiva Rao was a highly studious and motivated student and took a first class in the BA examination. He was a scholarship holder throughout his studentship in Central College. After taking his BA degree, Sanjiva Rao applied for a seat in the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and got a seat in the then General and Organic Chemistry Department (now this department has been split into two). However, his Professor Dr Usher of the Department of Chemistry persuaded him to take up demonstratorship in Central College; and he was appointed as a demonstrator on a pay of Rs. 75/- pm in 1915. He was made a senior demonstrator a couple of years later, and subsequently an Asst Professor. Sanjiva Rao's scholastic attainments and dedication to duty enabled him to secure the Damodardas scholarship awarded by the Government of Mysore. With this scholarship he proceeded for higher studies in England to study at the Imperial College, London from where he obtained his PhD degree in 1924 and returned to Central College. He succeeded Professor FL Usher in 1926 as Professor of Physical Chemistry and later when Prof MG Srinivas Rao passed away in 1928, he was made the Head of the Department of Chemistry in Central College. He was appointed as Principal of the college in 1946 and served the institution in this capacity for a year. During this period several eminent persons were working in different science departments of Central College and the College was well known for its research activities. Sanjiva Rao contributed to a great measure towards this recognition of Central College as an institution known for research. Professor Sanjiva Rao trained a large number of students in research methodology and several of them obtained their doctorate degrees under his guidance. Quite a few of his former students have risen to great heights in their research accomplishments and have been able to occupy important positions in the scientific institutions of the country.





Dr Sanjiva Rao's research activities have been very varied. He has carried out extensive work on natural products especially of essential oils. He has also considerable work to his credit in the area of adsorption. His work on the Oxides of Sulphur monoxide and other sulphur compounds is quite unique and established him as a worker of repute and earned for him the DSc degree of London University. In later years Professor Rao was much interested in the area of soil chemistry and has made significant contributions in this area as well.

A list of his important research publications is enclosed at the end. Some of his junior research collaborators are listed below :

1. Prof KSG Doss, 2. Prof MRA Rao, 3. Prof K Subbarao 4. Prof RS Subramanya, 5. Prof AR Vasudeva Murthy, 6. Dr GN Subba Rao, 7. Prof G Narayan 8. Shri T Krishnappa 9. Dr Sharada Gulvadi 10. Shri HM Channabasappa 11. Dr NG Chokanna 12. Shri MA Wazid 13. Prof SN Venkatachala 14. Shri KS Subramanian

Dr Sanjiva Rao was also responsible for the re-organisation of the teaching programmes in Chemistry in Central College leading to BSc, BSc (Hons) and MSc degrees of the Mysore University. The science departments at Central College constituted the university departments of the Mysore University during these years. A large number of undergraduate and post-graduate students have received instruction from Prof Sanjiva Rao as students of the above courses and have risen to occupy important positions as administrators in civil services and as technocrats in industry.

After retiring from Mysore University in 1947, Prof Sanjiva Rao joined the department of Inorganic and Mineral Chemistry of Indian Institute of Science to be the HEH Nizam Professor of Inorganic and Mineral Chemistry. Dr Sanjiva Rao later shifted to the University of Gauhati in Assam to organise the Department of Chemistry and retired from service of the Gauhati University in 1961. Even after retirement, Professor Sanjiva Rao continued to take interest in both fundamental and applied research problems and worked at the Indian Institute of Science under the retired scientists scheme sponsored by the UGC. Even during later years he kept abreast of the developments in his areas of interest by regular visits to the Library at Indian Institute of Science.

Dr Sanjiva Rao was actively associated with several scientific and educational organisations and institutions of the country. He was an active member of the Society of Biological Chemists and also its president in 1955. He was General Secretary and President of the Chemistry Section of Indian Science Congress Association held in 1947. He was fellow and treasurer of Indian Academy of Sciences, Fellow of the National Institute of Sciences, President of South Indian Science Association and Scientific Film Society of India. He took keen interest in educational programmes at all levels starting from primary school up to university level.

Professor Sanjiva Rao had three sons and two daughters. All the sons are happily settled abroad. He was an active Scout and also Superintendent of St John's Ambulance Brigade for some time. His hobbies were gardening and cookery.





The Scientific community suffered a serious loss in the demise of Dr B Sanjiva Rao who passed away on March 3rd, 1975 when he was just 80 years old.

Some of his former students have raised some money and instituted the following in the Bangalore University (Central College is now a part of Bangalore University) to perpetuate the memory of Prof Sanjiva Rao.

1. A gold medal to be awarded annually at the Convocation to a student who secures the highest marks in Inorganic Chemistry at the Master's degree examination of the Bangalore University.
2. Two or three prizes to be awarded to the best speakers at an annual lecture contest conducted by the Chemical Society of the Bangalore University.

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