

Unwithered by age

An obituary of C. Ramaswamy

With the passing away of Chandrasekhara Ramaswamy on 17 August 1991, India has lost one of its distinguished synoptic weather forecasters. In a career in the India Meteorological Department of over 35 years, he spent 25 years as a weather forecaster. After superannuation in 1966, he spent more than 20 years on research on meteorological topics. In all it was a scientific career extending over more than six decades. His elder brother Professor C. V. Raman did it on a much grander scale. That was certainly an inspiration, and perhaps also a handicap for the younger brother.

Ramaswamy's researches were mostly on the various aspects of the Indian monsoon, regional and global. His last contribution, published in 1987, when he was 80, is a hefty monograph, *Meteorological Aspects of Severe Floods in India, 1923-1979*. It is a mine of information. It deals with the different synoptic weather situations that caused the severe floods, the rainfall amounts associated with each flood, and the effects of those floods on the people (gathered from official and newspaper reports).

Ramaswamy was born on 20 August 1907. He was educated at Calcutta and Madras, took the BA (Hons) degree in physics from the University of Madras in 1928, and obtained a titular MA two years later. After a brief period of research as a university scholar, he joined the India Meteorological Department as an assistant meteorologist in 1931.

He was elected a fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences at the early age of 31. It was a rare distinction, justified by his research output on the Raman effect in diamond before the award of the Nobel prize to his brother in 1930. The piece of diamond used for the investigation was the one on his wedding ring.

Ramaswamy was a sincere and devoted weather forecaster. In those days, officers of the India Meteorological Department had to certify that any research work they did was done outside office hours without detriment to their official duties. And a sincere weather forecaster, with the limited staff of those 'depression' days followed by World War II, had really no time 'outside office hours'. There was an occasion in April 1947 when Ramaswamy devoted all his attention to a severe cyclone in the east Arabian Sea and found no time to take care of his



sick child. He lost the child during that period of 'forecast stress'.

In 1954 Professor Carl G. Rossby invited Ramaswamy to participate in research at the Institute of Meteorology in Stockholm for a year. The Government of India was pleased to spare his services in India for one year. His work in Stockholm during that year was on the subtropical jet stream discovered during World War II. Most of his work was published in *Tellus* (1956) under the title 'Subtropical jet stream and its role in the development of large-scale con-

vection'. That publication is recognized as an important contribution to jet-stream meteorology.

On being elevated to the position of a director in 1956, that of a deputy director-general in 1959, and finally director-general in 1965, his administrative responsibilities became very heavy. In spite of them, he published three scientific papers. These were on the interaction between tropical and extratropical weather systems. On the administrative side he was closely associated with the World Meteorological Organization. It was due to his persistent efforts that an international meteorological radio tele-type was established between Delhi and Melbourne in 1966. He represented India at many international conferences, technical and scientific.

Ramaswamy's unquenched thirst for academic research made him register himself as a postgraduate student at the age of 60 after relinquishing his post as director-general of the India Meteorological Department. He was positively happy when he was awarded a doctoral degree a few years later. He did not stop with that. He continued to do good scientific work with some financial assistance from the Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Jointly or singly he published 22 scientific papers after superannuation from government service. As mentioned earlier his last publication was in 1987.

In 1988 Ramaswamy was awarded the C. V. Raman centenary medal. Sincerity, devotion to duty, a sense of justice, and humility were some of the noble personal qualities of C. Ramaswamy.

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