

A. B. Kulkarni

Anant Balkrishna Kulkarni passed away in Mumbai on 8 March 2003. He is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

He was born on 28 February 1920 in Jangammati, a village in Kolhapur district, Maharashtra. After his matriculation and Inter Science in Belgaum, he joined the Royal Institute of Science, Mumbai and got a B Sc degree in first class with honours in 1942. He carried out a research project on economical preparation of chloramine-T under the guidance of R. C. Shah at the same institute. His thesis was accepted for M Sc degree by the University of Bombay in 1944. Kulkarni won the Meldrum award and a fellowship for further research.

In December 1946, he was offered the 'Akabarnavis scholarship' for higher studies abroad. Kulkarni went to Switzerland and worked in the laboratory of Leopold Ruzicka, Nobel Laureate at the Federal Technical Institute, Zurich. He was the first Indian after the Second World War to have been accepted there as a student. He worked under the guidance of Placidus A. Plattner and Hans Heusser.

Kulkarni was awarded the D Sc (Tech) degree for his thesis 'Beitrag zur synthese von 5-Oxy Steroiden'. He also worked with Heroxy at Prague and returned to India in 1949.

After returning to India, Kulkarni was offered a post by Sahib Singh Sokhey, then Director, Haffkine Institute, Mumbai. There he was involved in the analysis of drugs for a brief period. His induction to the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune was natural since it was the favourite place for young organic chemists. He joined NCL as Senior Scientific Officer in the Organic Chemistry Division in 1950.

In 1955, he was appointed Professor of Organic Chemistry at the Institute of Science, Mumbai, his alma mater. During twelve years, Kulkarni initiated several new areas of research and made outstanding contributions, which gave him international recognition as an organic chemist. In 1961, Kulkarni became the second recipient of the Dr Basudev Banerjee Memorial Award conferred by the Indian Chemical Society. During this phase, there were tempting offers of lucrative jobs in industry and research centers of multinational companies, but Kulkarni preferred an academic career.



He came in close contact with chemical industries which sought his advice and help in solving their problems.

In 1965, the University of Bombay offered Kulkarni a chair in Chemistry and the responsibility of setting-up a full-fledged Department of Chemistry. It was established in 1967 and developed into an establishment offering M Sc and Ph D courses in Organic, Inorganic, Physical and Analytical Chemistry. The department has excellent laboratory facilities for research with access to a number of sophisticated instruments.

Kulkarni investigated a large number of problems in organic chemistry. These

include stereochemistry of hydronaphthalenes, phenyltetralin group of lignans, flavans, steroids, reductive methylation of ketones with nitro functions, fluoronones, dibenzothiophenes. He initiated researches on natural products and sphingolipids making use of modern identification techniques. Some of the work carried out in the laboratory was presented in the form of papers at several international conferences held in USA, USSR, Canada and Japan.

Kulkarni has guided more than 40 students for Ph D and 25 students for M Sc in organic chemistry. Some now occupy important positions in industry and research institutions. He has to his credit more than 140 papers in Indian and international scientific journals. He worked as a member of various bodies at the central, state and university level.

Kulkarni was an excellent teacher not only in organic chemistry but also in other subjects like Mathematics and Sanskrit. He enjoyed reading Kalidasa's original literature in his spare time.

Kulkarni was a warm-hearted and generous person. He was widely admired by his students, colleagues and friends. His simplicity, affability, affectionate love, warm co-operative nature and kind pleasant personality have given him a unique place in the hearts of all who came in contact with him. In his passing away we have lost a person deeply devoted to the cause of organic chemistry and research.

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