

Foreword

Prof. Bhamidipati Lakshmidhara Kanakadri Somayajulu or "Soma" as known among his colleagues and friends has been associated with researches in Earth Sciences for nearly four decades. After being a demonstrator for a year in the Chemistry Department of AVM College at Vishakapatnam, his home town, Soma joined the Geophysics Group at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay in 1959. He moved, along with the group, to the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad in 1973.

Soma is a geochemist, relentlessly working to develop ideas and collect data for a better understanding of natural phenomena occurring on the Earth. His research interests are quite diverse, covering disciplines of oceanography, limnology, hydrology, paleoenvironment and cosmic ray pre-history, emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature and true meaning of "geochemistry". Soma's researches in many of these areas have been original and dealt with key problems. He was introduced to the field of cosmic ray produced isotopes by his mentor, Prof. Devendra Lal, during early 1960's. Over the years, Soma has been actively pursuing the applications of these isotopes, particularly those of Be-10 and Si-32 to Earth Sciences. He was the first to suggest and successfully demonstrate the application of Be-10 to determine the chronology of manganese deposits on the ocean floor and extensively use Si-32 to characterize deep water circulation. These studies and his commitment to explore newer application of these isotopes would have definitely earned him the title "Be-10 man" or "Si-32 man" if geochemists were to be identified by the methods they develop.

Soma's interests were not limited to Be-10 and Si-32; he was equally at home with the applications of U-Th series nuclides in Earth Sciences. He along with his colleagues, pioneered the studies of radioactive disequilibrium among the U-Th series nuclides that later led to a better understanding of particle dynamics and trace metal scavenging in the oceans. In recent years, Soma has been focusing on problems in and around India, such as the deposition history of miliolites in Saurashtra and their relation to tectonics and sea level changes, evolution of laterites in southern India

and the circulation of water in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. All these research have taken Soma far and wide from Alaska to Australia, over the seven seas and to the remotest villages in India which have resulted in his developing scientific collaborations and friends from within and outside India. Field work is something Soma really enjoyed, be it on land or at sea. He is always keen to get the program under way, as he believes that investigating a good problem with a bit of faith and luck would lead to interesting and significant results.

On a personal level, Soma has been a great friend and colleague. He is easily accessible to one and all in the laboratory as he maintains that constant interactions and discussions would not only advance the frontiers of Science but also encourage the development of an atmosphere conducive for good research. Soma enjoys the role of an advisor and is always happy to see his students and colleagues succeed in their endeavor.

Both in his scientific interests and personal traits, Soma is living up to what is said of Him in the Rig-Veda "He creates the worlds, rules over mountains and rivers. He rules over mind and activates speech".

Soma had his sixtieth birthday on March 5, 1997. To commemorate this auspicious occasion, we have put together a collection of Soma's scientific papers in two volumes. Soma through all these contributions, has played a key role in fostering researches in Isotope Geochemistry in India and putting the group at PRL on the global map.

This write-up would be very incomplete if we do not mention about Vasanti, Soma's wife, who has provided great strength and support to him all these years. Vasanti, in many ways, has contributed to Soma's achievements and success.

All of Soma's friends and colleagues from PRL and elsewhere, wish him and his family a very joyous "Shastibdi" and many more years of happy, healthy and active life.

- PRL colleagues