

Dr Rangachari Krishnan (1935 - 2021)

With the passing away of Dr Rangachari Krishnan our community has lost a distinguished metallurgist and administrator, and I've lost a mentor, a colleague, and friend.

First a few brief professional facts: Dr Krishnan was born in 1935, obtained his BSc and MSc degrees in Physics from Madras University. He joined the Department of Atomic Energy in 1957 as a trainee in the first batch of its training school. He obtained his PhD from Bombay University in 1967. He was the Head of Metallurgy at BARC in 1982, joined DRDO as the Director of NMRL and then served as a Chief Controller Research and Development in 1988-90. He was the Director of GTRE from 1990-1995 when he retired.

He was a fellow of all our academies, a former president of the Indian Institute of Metals and has been recognized by the National Metallurgist Award of IIM and the INSA Brahm Prakash Memorial Medal.

Was he a physicist or a metallurgist? He described the circumstances that led to this transition in his own words in the archives of INAE. After his MSc he was asked by Prof. GN Ramachandran to continue for his PhD in Madras University but then Prof. Ramachandran had a breakdown so Dr. Krishnan joined DAE which had just started its training school and was placed by Dr Ramanna in the Physics Division but then he moved to work with Dr Brahm Prakash on uranium metallurgy. During that time Dr Arunachalam, Doctor Asundi and he formed a triumvirate that virtually established the Metallurgy Division at BARC and also formed a lasting friendship. As Dr Arunachalam humorously described to me last evening, Dr Krishnan took it upon himself to make sure that Dr VSA and Dr Asundi met their partners and got married. During this time he also worked with the famous Dr Guinier on small angle X-ray scattering. He established the electron microscopy group of which Dr Srikumar Banerjee, former Director, BARC and Chairman, DAE is a product.

Dr Arunachalam persuaded him to move to DRDO in 1985. As Dr Krishnan notes, this was accomplished with all approvals from DAE and DRDO in just 2 days. After a stint as Director of the Naval Materials Research Laboratory during which he transformed the laboratory culture, and provided directions to the materials program of our nuclear submarine effort. He was Chief Controller R&D at DRDO headquarters for two years. Not particularly happy with what he regarded as a purely administrative function, he took over the directorship of GTRE at a critical time. The first prototype of the Kaveri engine was run under his leadership in 1994. He describes in his monograph some of the background for the successes and failures of Kaveri.

He has since retirement worked briefly as the CEO of Shiva analytics, with the Augusta foundation and with the Center for Science Technology and Energy Policy.

He is survived by his wife Mrs. Mythili Krishnan and his daughter Jayshree and his son Seenu. We offer them our heartfelt condolences. May his soul rest in peace

Prof. Dipankar Banerjee,
Former President IIM