

# Professor P. K. Kelkar.....in Memorium

It would be altogether fitting and proper that we, on this occasion specially convened to pay our respects and homage to the founding director of IITK, recall his philosophy, his value systems and the tenets on the basis of which the very foundations for IITK were laid, and in addition, re-dedicate ourselves to the cause he has nobly advanced and endeavour to take up the many unfinished and continuing challenges that lie ahead.

When he came on that bleak day in December 1959, there was little room for optimism. Yet he chose to light the candle rather than curse the darkness and to-day, it is a source of great satisfaction to all of us to perceive that from the flickering and fragile flame that he lit in the very late fifties an impressive number of minds were made luminous and they distributed all over the world to emit their radiance, thus attesting to the monumental dedication and commitment of a single human being.

Radiant above the world of men

Blazing and luminous like fires...(RIG VEDA 1.50.3)

Breaking out from the dark clouds of traditional systems in technical education, he brought forth a new and daring concept that would cast the engineer in a new mould, one with a multifaceted capability, a maveric, who could above all become adaptable to the needs, be that be related to scientific theories, innovation, design or even the traditional shop floor practice. He perceived above all, that the best intellectual young minds that flow into IITs would like to be cast into such a mould. He proceeded with the conviction that nothing would be more practical for an engineer than to have a thorough working knowledge of science in its theoretical and empirical base. He argued that problems come in many guises, some pretty mundane and others that require the application of the rigours of scientific thinking. He linked the fortunes of IITK to a faculty having a highly elitist profile and who by their own professional stature would be able to protect the system from equilibrating tendencies that prey on any educational system. He gathered a band of pioneers most with unusual spur of ideas, innovation and adventure, occasionally bordering on recklessness. He progressed with the firm conviction that IITK was a historical

necessity and that it should be the guiding spirit in technical education in our country for a long time to come. He crafted an academic senate with a progressive profile that had the stature to analyse with vigour and candour academic problems.

Directors exert their personalities in many ways; some terrorize their wards to meek submission, others create an inferiority complex by incessantly telling their frailties, yet others by their sheer power of love, affection, concern and dedication. Professor Kelkar most definitely belonged to the last category. No one could say that they were afraid of him; indeed almost every one shared with him their very personal problems with the certainty that it would be heard sympathetically and that the best possible solution would be forthcoming. He was a deeply religious person and yet totally secular. He was able to blend our heritage and culture with the state of the art technology.

The bulwark of the edifice that he has built with firm conviction, that the goals of an educational institute would be for the pursuit of academic excellence, the teachers must have the freedom to decide what to teach, whom to teach and who will teach and that IITK should totally remain autonomous, have witnessed cracks and is continually buffeted by strong equilibrating forces. If we today dedicate to do our utmost to withstand these tendencies and to work for an IITK of Kelkar's dreams and to leave behind us a rich legacy, that would perhaps be the best tribute this esteemed senate can pay to this stalwart amongst men!

— Prof. S. Ranganathan, Chem.

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- \* A computer system based on Panian grammar that translates from Hindi to Telugu was demonstrated at the Annual Convention of Computer Society of India held recently at Calcutta. The prototype system which has been developed as part of Machine Translation and Artificial Intelligence Projects over the last four years drew large crowds and received accolades.