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- Designation at retirement : Head, Demersal Fisheries Division 1996-2003
- Joined CMFRI 23-09-1965

Days I cherish

Working in the CMFRI during September 1965 - January 2003, utilising the facilities and expertise was a matter of great pride and immense happiness to me as it is with this association that I derived utmost sense of satisfaction, happiness and achievement. The period of over 37 years I spent working in this mighty Institute, was full of professional successes and career failures - I often used to mention to my friends and some colleagues that "I am professionally very successful but a big failure in the career front". I know that I do not possess certain attributes required for career advancement being a frank, outright and outspoken person. Nevertheless, these failures in career advancement, for which I was never responsible, did not deter me from carrying out my researches to the best of my and the Institute's satisfaction. Hence I initially thought that I did not have any real "Golden Moments" during my career but a critical

rethinking and introspection revealed that I did indeed have such moments some of which deserve to be placed on record.

I first visited CMFRI Mandapam Camp as an undergraduate student and later as a postgraduate student. During my latter visit I had a close look at the laboratories and was impressed so much by the discipline and the working environment that I took an instant decision to join the Institute after completing my education. My father was keen on keeping me near my native place in Andhra Pradesh and therefore suggested to take up teaching in one of the degree colleges close by and indeed I had a couple of offers by then. He did not know of my interest in CMFRI; when he learnt that I was looking forward for a post for which even the advertisement was not released, he laughed at my 'foolish' hope. In about a fortnight, the advertisement from CMFRI appeared and my joy was boundless as I believed that I would get selected for one post and needless to say the wise men had a cynical and hearty laugh at my baseless optimism. After I reached Mandapam Camp to attend the interview, this optimism vanished totally as I learnt that the interviews were going on for three days and over sixty candidates mainly with marine biology degrees were being considered for only five posts. I felt that a simple Zoology degree holder like me could not dream of a posting in the Institute. The greatest happiness, however, was when I received the offer of appointment in two weeks of the interview. My father, elder brother and some of my friends were

pleasantly surprised on my dream coming true and heartily congratulated me and blessed me. Without losing time I proceeded to Mandapam Camp to join the CMFRI and never looked back as the Institute offered me the platform for achieving immense happiness, satisfaction and recognition, the continued frustrations in career advancement notwithstanding.

One day, in early 1967 when I was about one and a half years old in the CMFRI, Dr. Jones, the then Director asked me to prepare "Bibliography of Indian Ocean 1962-1967" within six months; he asked another four colleagues to assist me in this work. I did not know anything about this and was wondering why I was chosen for the task when there were a large number of senior and more efficient Officers in the Institute, but from almost the next moment, as was his usual practice, Dr. Jones was behind me enquiring 4-5 times a day about the progress and I was mortally afraid of telling him that I did not know how to proceed, for, I was aware that all the staff irrespective of their positions and seniority were similarly afraid of him and I dare not tell him of my predicament. Any how, I worked day and night and fulfilled the task successfully though not without heavy hammering every day at least twice. The golden moments were when the hard work resulted in a publication of the first bulletin of CMFRI and when Dr. Jones himself on seeing the copy of the publication, expressed his happiness to me and praised me in the presence of several distinguished and senior scientists. I will never forget those happy moments. What else

is required for an upcoming young scientist!

At the time of my joining at Cochin on transfer from Kakinada in early 1993, the Institute was busy preparing the document "Vision 2020" and several meetings were held and all the necessary material was collated and a draft document was ready. In early 1995 the Director told me that the DG ICAR was very unhappy with the Vision 2020 document of the Institute and asked me to take the responsibility of writing the same afresh as per the format. Though there was fear initially because I was still a very junior person in the hierarchy, I got over the same and spent all the time at my disposal to fulfill this task and started interacting with the Director on the subject. Finally when both of us were satisfied with the outcome, the document was finalised. Later, the ICAR asked the Director to make a presentation in a meeting attended by distinguished personalities in Fisheries. The Director asked me also to attend that meeting. The document received high appreciation from every one in the meeting and the Director told them pointing his finger towards me "he is the architect of this document; the credit should go to him." Ah, I was a very happy person indeed.

When aquaculture research was introduced in CMFRI in early 1970 every one was enamored with this and since then all the Directors gave highest priority and thrust to this area of research. There is no doubt that aquaculture as an alternate method of increasing production is important

but research in capture fisheries cannot be sidelined in view of the volume of production, size of the industry, livelihoods and economy. Sadly however, adequate attention was not paid to this area of research and also to those who were pursuing it. I would even say that this area of science was looked down upon. There was virtually no recognition that research in capture fisheries is essential for policy decisions on marine fisheries development and management. I was one of the very few scientists in the CMFRI who did not switch over to aquaculture research though attempts were made to 'push' me into this showing the "prospects" and a large number of "opportunities" for career advancement and so on. Though I continued in capture fisheries and have been putting arguments in its favour in different high level meetings, I have been nursing the pain for the total lack of appreciation and recognition for it. As a final attempt to get due recognition for this I submitted my work for the most coveted Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Award of the ICAR and ah, finally the work received the due recognition and the ICAR conferred the Award on me. This is the most cherished feeling of achievement for me in CMFRI.