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her science and the strange beauty of her life.

In TIFR and NCBS, Obaid Siddiqi was a constant presence, taken for granted despite his subtle and deep influence. We ask now how the future will unfold without his presence. Will we find within ourselves, and or within others among us, Obaid's ability to simultaneously impart both the inspiration and the security necessary for the flowering of new science? Are there among us others with his ability to effortlessly transmit the spirit and beauty of science, so easily forgotten

in the modern professional world? More worrying, are the days of such science and such scientists over and will we forget the spiritual core of Obaid Siddiqi's legacy even as we write his praise?

1. VijayRaghavan, K., *J. Neurogenet.*, 2012, **26**, 257–259.
2. Krishnan, K. S., Ramaswami, M. and Wu, C.-F., *J. Neurogenet.*, 2012, **26**, 255–256.
3. <http://news.ncbs.res.in/page/professor-obaid-siddiqi-passes-away>

## Obaid Siddiqi (1932–2013)\*

One sign of getting old(er) is to see the heroes of your youth leave this mortal world. I lost three in 2011 – my father in August, 'Tiger' Pataudi in September and Dev Anand in December. Last week I lost another one of my heroes – Obaid Siddiqi or simply Obaid. He passed away in Bangalore after receiving a severe head injury in a freak road accident while on his evening walk.

Obaid was popular with three generations of my family. Being related to my maternal grandfather through his mother, Obaid shared with him the common bonds of leftist ideology and progressive Urdu literature. He and my father had the same last name and were contemporaries at the Aligarh Muslim University, having done their M Sc in the same year in Botany and Chemistry respectively. Both returned to India in 1962 to establish a career in teaching and research.

While growing up in Aligarh, I do not recall meeting Obaid; he made short visits to see his parents. But there was always talk of his genius and even as kids we knew that he was an important scientist. I was friendly with his father, who we called Qadeer Nana. He came frequently to the AMU Lawn Tennis Courts where Obaid's nephews – Salman and Chotu, and I played. There were many tips on the game, admonition for bad shots and endless stories in his inimitable style.

My first interaction with Obaid was in 1978 when I was selected as a National

Science Talent Summer Fellow in his lab at TIFR. This was my first taste of laboratory research and it was so much fun. We rarely left the lab and many nights were spent sleeping on the seminar library table. I worked directly with Krishnan (who is as kind now as he was then), and Obaid appeared occasionally to enquire if all was well. He was quiet but there was an aura around him that made people respect him and be comfortable at the same time.

Much through the 80s, I was in US and lost touch with him, but reconnected again when I returned to India. Obaid was starting NCBS and proudly gave me a personal tour of the interim laboratories on the Indian Institute of Science campus. For the past 25 years, we have been in constant touch and developed a bond that cannot be described, but only felt.

Over the past few years, our link has been Abu, who Obaid took on as a Ph D student on my recommendation. Abu graduated from rearing flies to taking care of Obaid, while trying to understand the biochemical and genetic basis of olfactory memory. Obaid sent him to my lab to use biochemical methods for identifying proteins associated with olfactory learning in *Drosophila*. Having been in a completely different field or research, this was my chance to fulfill a life-long dream to publish a paper with Obaid. But fate had other plans. The paper will be written up, but there will be no Obaid to celebrate it.

Though I never worked with Obaid after that summer in 1978, I have benefited both professionally and personally

from his visionary thinking for Indian science. Around the turn of the century, he played a big role in the Wellcome Trust's decision to start a special International Senior Research Fellowship competition for Indian scientists. In the few years that it ran, the ISRF selected 30 odd Fellows; many are now in leadership positions in the country. I was lucky to be one of the Fellows. He also catalysed the Wellcome Trust-DBT India Alliance, a visionary partnership between the British charity and Government of India that was set up in 2008. I recently started looking after the India Alliance and hope it will produce the next generation of biomedical research leaders for the country.

That will be my tribute to Obaid. In his silent and unassuming ways he has done more for Indian science than many of his vociferous peers.

*dhoondho-gey hameiN Mulko-Mulko  
milney key naheeN, naayaab haiN hum!*

I admired Obaid for many things, but one stands out – his confidence in the next generation. Many people in leadership positions claim to do this, but become large trees under which very little can grow. Obaid, however, was different. He conceived and set up NCBS, but then let his younger colleagues manage it. And they have done full justice to the confidence he reposed in them to make NCBS a world-class institution. This is a legacy we must celebrate and nurture as our best tribute to this visionary.

A few months back Obaid had fallen down at home and had hurt himself. I went to see him on 20 June and was

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## PERSONAL NEWS

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pleasantly surprised to see how well he had bounced back. He himself made me a cup of tea and insisted that I also ate the biscuits. We chatted for over an hour. Little did I know this was to be our last meeting.

I want to remember this gentle genius for the special bond we had and will always imagine him at work in his base-

ment lab in NCBS. To his family and to his numerous friends and admirers at NCBS, TIFR, in Aligarh and elsewhere, I can only say –

*Ujaale apni yaadoN ke humare saath  
rehne do*

*Na jaane kis gali meiN zindagi ki shaam  
ho jaye*

Till we meet again!

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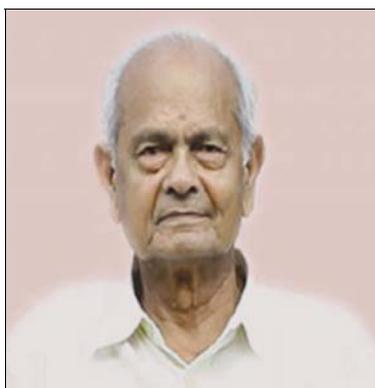
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## N. V. V. J. Swamy (1924–2013)

Nyayapathi Venkata Vykuntha Jagannadha Swamy, popularly known as Professor Swamy, a resident of Stillwater in Oklahoma State, USA and an Emeritus Professor of Physics at Oklahoma State University (OSU), passed away on 13 June 2013 in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. He was teaching physics to M Sc students at the Department of Physics, University of Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram till the 2012–13 academic year.

Swamy lost his parents when he was only 3 and with great difficulty he completed his schooling in Visakhapatnam. As he had no money to continue his further studies, he had to leave his home town to find a job, first as a shorthand typist at Bombay and later as a civilian clerk in the Royal Indian Navy in Bombay. After completing his B Sc (Mathematics) in 1949, B Sc (Physics) in 1950 and M Sc in 1952 from University of Bombay, he joined as a lecturer in the Department of Physics at Sidharth College, Bombay. He then moved to USA for his Ph D in theoretical nuclear physics at Florida State University. Swamy completed his Ph D in 1958 and joined the University of Maryland and the Duke University for post-doctoral research. He returned briefly to India to join the physics faculty at Karnatak University, Dharwad. He returned to USA to join as the first Indian American faculty at the Department of Physics in OSU, in 1963. Until retirement in 1987 Swamy was an active member of the physics faculty at OSU. During his sabbatical he lectured and taught at many universities in India, was a guest scientist in Julich (Germany), Cambridge University (UK) and University of Innsbruck (Austria). Swamy was a mathematical physicist and contributed to the physics of relativistic

harmonic oscillator which found wide applications in atomic, nuclear and high energy physics. He was well known for his theoretical contributions to mathematical physics and co-authored a textbook with Mark Samuel entitled *Group Theory Made Easy for Scientists and Engineers* (1979).



One of his most significant contributions came after his retirement from OSU when he joined the Saurashtra University (Rajkot), where he taught subjects like quantum mechanics, classical mechanics and nuclear physics to M Sc (physics) students and research scholars. Swamy brought some academic culture to the department. When a new postgraduate department in physics was to start at Bhavnagar University, he helped to establish it in 1988 and moved to Bhavnagar in 1988–89. He chose Saurashtra region (Rajkot and Bhavnagar) after his retirement only because of his love for Mahatma Gandhi. I met Swamy when I appeared for the position of a lecturer in physics at Bhavnagar University in 1988. As a fresh Ph D from IIT Madras, I had my own reservations in joining Bhavnagar University as faculty and like many

others, I also wanted to go for a postdoctoral research abroad. It was Swamy who convinced me to take up the lectureship at Bhavnagar. He then went to Mangalore University and finally settled at Oklahoma. Swamy shuttled between USA and India from 1989 until his death in June 2013. During his visits to India, he taught physics at University of Kerala, Pondicherry University, Bangalore University, Visva-Bharati and the Charotar University of Science and Technology. His final stint was at Gayatri University in Visakhapatnam. Swami inspired several young M Sc students from rural background to take up physics as career.

Apart from academic activities, Swamy could talk about contemporary Indian, American or global politics, arts, music and culture. He was an ardent fan of Carnatic music and regularly attended the annual concerts at the Madras Music Academy. One could discuss with him music from Thyagaraja to Ilayaraja. He was also interested in Vedic Astrology. He played tennis, started a Tennis club at Stillwater, and enjoyed watching cricket. He had many friends including E. C. G. Sudarshan and S. P. Pandya.

Swamy remained a bachelor and is survived by his grand niece Subhadra Singh and S. V. Rangarajan. It is a great personal loss not only to me but also to many young physicists who learnt physics from him.

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