

## My Earth science educator story – Anish Kumar Warriar

### What I did, why I did it and what happened



The monsoon season had just begun in June, 1998 and I, along with my friend, were queuing to submit our application forms for a BSc degree. We wanted to graduate in physics and so had marked chemistry and maths (PCM) as the other two subjects. However, we were told that the seats for the PCM stream were full and the only option left was physics-chemistry-geology (PCG). Geology at that point of time was a completely new subject to us. We hadn't heard about it before and were thinking about the prospects of getting a place for the PCG stream. We were excited as we would be studying an entirely new subject. However, the experience of my first class made me fall in love with the fascinating subject of geology. One of the faculty of our college, Prof. S.M. Ganti, taught this first class on stratigraphy, and from that day onwards, I was amazed to discover so many important things about our planet, which we never learned during in school; right from its origin, to its composition and the different weathering processes and the erosional agents that play an important role in shaping our Earth. Later, I decided that geology was the subject for me, and made up my mind to graduate in geology and not physics.

As I entered my final year of the Bachelor programme, our department office received a letter from Prof. R. Shankar (Mangalore University), which notified us about the MSc Marine Geology course. I wrote to

Prof. Shankar asking about the advantages of this specialized course. He replied to my email with a detailed explanation, including the various job opportunities that were on the horizon for a Marine Geology postgraduate. I then decided to do my masters in Marine Geology, at Mangalore University (2002-2004). However, at that time, my family faced a severe financial crisis and it became difficult to fund my education and my sister's as well. It was then that my aunt, Sr. Celestine Alva (Holy Cross Convent), took the kind step of providing the seed money for our continued education, which helped us to start our courses. Later, my grandfather, the late Shri. N.V. Krishna Warriar (an academican, who won State and National Awards for Excellence in Education) continued funding my MSc course from his pension funds. At the end of the course, I again thought of what to do next. I decided that if I wanted to do a PhD, then it would be only under the guidance of Prof. R. Shankar because of the excellent impression he had left on me during my MSc programme.

The happiest moment of my life was when I received the opportunity to work with Prof. Shankar in a funded research project (2004) and later registered for my PhD under his guidance (2005). During my PhD work, I had excellent lab-mates and colleagues from other departments who went on to become my best friends; I cherish the moments that we spent together. For my PhD, I worked on the lake sediments of southern India to reconstruct the variability of rainfall during the past 3700 cal. years. I adopted a multi-proxy approach in this research. Every day, month and year that I spent for my PhD were memorable, and during that time I became stronger and transformed into a better person. This was not only due to my PhD work, but also because I was involved in many extra-curricular activities like research council and sports etc.

During my PhD work, I won the Young Sedimentologist Award (2006) and made my first-ever presentation at a research conference. I profoundly thank my supervisor for the training and confidence he bestowed on me, allowing me to perform so well during my presentation.

After I completed my PhD in 2011, I worked at the Karnataka State Remote Sensing Applications Centre, Govt. of Karnataka, Bengaluru, as a Project Scientist for the brief period of seven months. I was involved in surveying town-areas of Karnataka and preparing a land-use map using remote sensing data. Although, it was fun, it was quite challenging as I constantly had to be away from home as part of field work, and the long hours spent under the strong sun began to take a toll on my health. However, health issues apart, I had a good time with my colleagues at the Centre.

From the applications centre in Bengaluru, I moved to the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research in Goa, an autonomous body of the Ministry of Earth Sciences. I joined the Centre in 2011 and worked there again as a Project Scientist (on contract) for a tenure of 4 years 7 months. As part of my research activities at the Centre, I visited the frozen continent of Antarctica three times (2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15).



At the Indian Research Base – ‘Bharati’ in Larsemann Hills, East Antarctica.

The journey to Antarctica was amazing and each and every moment spent there will be etched in my memory forever. I was also lucky enough to spend one of my birthdays in Antarctica and that was the best day, when I was dipped into a nearby lake by my friends – at 00.00 am on 9<sup>th</sup> January.



Celebrating my birthday at Larsemann Hills, East Antarctica on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

From Antarctica, I have now moved on to becoming a faculty member, teaching geology at one of the leading private universities in India. I am enjoying my new role of being a teacher and explaining about planet Earth to the students. All in all, I have enjoyed each and every part of becoming a geologist. I never realised when, standing at the crossroads at my college in 1998, that my decision to take geology as one of my subjects would enable me to reach this far. I profoundly thank my parents, my spouse, my sister and all my friends for having trust in me and supporting me in whatever I have done.

I have always believed in this phrase by Ms. Ritu Ghatourey: “...Hard work is like a staircase and luck is like a lift. Lift may fail but staircase is sure to take you to the top...”

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