



**LOOKING BACK**  
**(A journey through the past six decades)**  
**Part 2**

**Dr. K. Vasu**



# **Looking Back**

**(A Journey through the Past Six Decades)**

## **Part 2**



**Second Edition**

**Author**

Dr. K. Vasu



**Title of the Book:** Looking Back (A Journey through the Past Six Decades)  
Part 2

**Second Edition - 2024**

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No. 22/530, CHANDRIKA'  
Kunnamangalam (PO)  
Kozhikode- 673 571. Kerala State. India.  
Tel: 0495- 2800078  
Mob: 91-9847702512.

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**E - ISBN: 978-93-6252-118-7**

**MRP Rs. 460/-**


### **Publisher, Printed at & Distribution by:**

Selfypage Developers Pvt Ltd.,  
Pushpagiri Complex,  
Beside SBI Housing Board,  
K.M. Road Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka.  
Tel.: +91-8861518868  
E-mail:innfo@iipbooks.com

**IMPRINT: I I P Iterative International Publishers**

### **For Sales Enquiries:**

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***Dedicated to  
My Parents  
Teachers  
and  
My Family***

# FOREWORD

The book *Looking Back* is the memoirs of an Indian born with silver spoon of Independent India. His travails and tribulations amply reflect the ambitions and dreams of a citizen in free India. He was born in a downtrodden family but that did not deter him in pursuing higher studies despite umpteen obstacles all the way. He was all the times yearning to learning and believed in the dictum of lifelong learning. He was lured with lucrative jobs in green pastures other than the green and glorious Kerala, his mother State but was steadfast to be fastened to his native State so that he could be with his parents and siblings.

He has graphed several anecdotes which, perhaps unwittingly, reveal his stellar character. He would not apply for a deserving higher post as he thought that he would deprive his less qualified colleague serving for a longer period than him at the CWRDM, Kozhikode.

He brought the CWRDM to the global map by creating the state of art ***STABLE ISOTOPE FACILITY*** at CWRDM, Kozhikode. It was a herculean task considering the fact that he was not even heading the Centre. His selfless sorties to Mumbai and Delhi in coordinating with the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai and the Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi were for convincing the authorities on the viability of the project. A lesser man would not have dared to dream this big.

His life is dotted with various places of study and work. If graphed, it would represent India from Ooty to Roorkee via New Delhi within India and connect to Mumbai and Vienna in nuclear research and advanced training.

His memoirs are a storehouse of various anecdotes and episodes of human endeavour, and anthologies of human pursuits. It is a mirror through which the readers will see them a part of their life and will give ample opportunities to reflect and deflect the intellectual and scientific author's actions and thoughts.

I feel privileged to be associated with Dr K Vasu, the author of this book for over four decades and a witness to his perseverance in pursuing Ph.D. at the premier Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi in late seventies.

Aug 04, 2023  
New Delhi-12

Dr. C. Devakumar  
Former Assistant Director General  
Indian Council of Agricultural Research

# Preface

Millions had passed through this way. Some had their birth in palaces or big mansions and left the world leaving their foot prints on their path. A great many were born in small huts but over the years of their journey, reached somewhere and left their marks in the history of mankind. But millions and millions had their beginnings in humble surroundings, lived and perished. Nobody knows where they started their journeys from, where they were heading to and from where they disappeared. But everyone has a history of their own. Even the smallest creation of the nature like an ant which the human eye can see and follow has its life history which might enthuse everyone who can appreciate it.

The majority might not have left their imprints and marks on the paths they followed but they form the path themselves, perishing on the way. In my work, I have made an attempt to narrate my journey of sixty years and tried to share my experiences with the readers. It was a journey I underwent with a strong belief that ‘nothing is impossible under the sun ...’ and ‘a man would do nothing if he waited until he could do it so well that no one would find fault with what he has done’ as said by Cardinal Newman. I am aware that there was nothing extraordinary in my journey but was like the one of those of millions who passed this way.

Those I met during my long journey appear in the text by their names wherever it is absolutely necessary except one, the name of my childhood friend who left me in between. The name is changed which is deliberate.

I took utmost care not to hurt anyone personally while narrating certain events in which my colleagues were involved by avoiding quoting their names.

Place: Kunnamangalam, Kerala.

The Author

Date: 16-08-2023.

# **Looking Back**

## **(A Journey through the Past Six Decades)**

### **Part -2**

### **In Brief**

Born in a small village in the Malabar region of the Madras Province in the pre-reorganized Kerala State, I had to leave my village at a very young age and settled in the Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu State after moving from place to place with my parents, carrying in me a thick flame of interest for schooling and higher education.

A tiny village, Muthorai in the Nilgiris on the Ooty-Emerald Road was where we finally settled after a long journey. It was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 1959. It appeared as if all the festivals - the Pongal, Deepavali, Ugadi and Onam fell on the same day. The native Badagas along with the settlers from the neighbouring Districts of Tamil Nadu and, the States of Kerala and Karnataka were all in the festive mood, anxiously waiting for the arrival of the VVIP except me, a young boy who was fuming in his mind and silently cursing the VVIP. The reason?

It was the reception to the first Prime Minister of the nation who was passing that way and was to receive the reception arranged by the villagers. A local holiday was declared by the District authorities for the day. For me, who had already 'visited' four elementary schools in my native State, and another two, in Tamil Nadu, before reaching Muthorai, it was intolerable to wait even for a day to reach Ooty to attend the first day at the St Joseph's High School. The VVIP blocked my way, was my thinking, and so was abusing him in my mind. When I could realize the greatness of the VVIP in another five years, Pandit Ji was no more, died of heart attack.

I reached tenth class at St. Joseph's in Ooty, but had to face my life's worst failure, a childhood friend left me, the destiny forced us to part ways, I was so much infatuated to higher education than to my girl friend and sacrificing her; the girl was forcefully taken away about 600 kms, to Chennai. I managed to get through the matriculation of Tamil Nadu Higher Secondary Board Examination under a tense situation prevailing in those days all over Tamil Nadu due to the agitation which started against the imposition of Hindi as a national language on January 26, 1965 and onwards.

My four years at the Government Arts College in Ooty did not give me an easy walk; I struggled with a sole aim of going up in my education, could come out

with not too bad a position, one of the three first classes, the other two were girl students. My dream of going further up in my studies met with an unexpected roadblock. An attempt to get into a teaching job, my other dream also ended in failure; the socio-political condition prevailing in the State at that time was not helpful to the poor settlers from other States, especially from Kerala to get into higher education or a government job which stood on my way. It was not that easy unless one was extremely brilliant and was highly influential. I did not qualify in both.

I managed to get into a junior position in a Government of India organisation, not without difficulty but only after a struggle against the local Employment Exchange. Eight years gone, many changes took place in my personal life, now a family man and a father of two baby girls as I yielded to the pressure of my mother on an assurance of permission and support for higher education. After eight years, I could break the clutches of the family life, leaving my two daughters, baby girls, under the protection of my parents and set out for Roorkee, almost 3000 kms away. The university days were not smooth; still I managed to get through. A poor youth as I was, wanted to continue for research with barely Rs.500/ in my bank account.

The impossibility was looming large in front of me but I marched forward, managed to get into the prestigious Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi as a research scholar, the Senior Research Fellowship was there to meet my minimum needs plus some amount to spare to my mother to support my family of two kids. I came out successful with a big degree, the Doctor of Philosophy from the premier institute. I could not dream of going any further, had to return and so returned.

After about thirty-five years, I reached my native State, Kerala. I had big dreams to do something to the land of my birth but things were not that easy and simple. Though became a part of an excellent organisation of R&D on water, I had to face stiff opposition always from my colleagues, mainly from the staff unions divided on major political philosophy. I moved forward with confidence, courage and conviction, spent twenty four years there but before stepping out on retirement, I could realise a facility; of course, not as an individual contribution but with the assistance of a small group of workers in the Division which I was heading and my other colleagues in the organisation. One of the only six such laboratories in the country at that time, as part of a R&D setup on water, 'A Stable Isotope Facility for Research in Basic and Applied Sciences'.

The memoirs, written in two parts, deal with my struggles to get the higher education in the first part. The second part is just an historical development of the radioactive and stable isotope facility in the organisation which I was



associated with, for twenty-four years. A brief account of my interaction with some of the outstanding scientists of the nation as well as the opportunities I had, to come across some of the VIPs in close range during my long journey are also presented in brief.

# Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks are due to:

Dr C Devakumar, Assistant Director General (Retd.), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi for patiently going through the entire material penned by me and suggesting corrections for the mistakes in my writings and offering a foreword to the publication.

Mr S D Ezakiel, Principal (Retd.), Teachers' Training College, Thudiyalur, Coimbatore, Dr B Saradha, Head (Retd.), Department of Chemistry, Nirmala College for Women, Coimbatore who were my classmates at Government Arts College, Ooty, The Nilgiris,

Dr K E Sreedharan, Dr K Madhavan Komath and Mr K T Velayudhan who were my colleagues at CWRDM, Kozhikode and retired from service,

For going through the entire material and offering critical comments and correcting the mistakes committed by me in my writings.

My sincere thanks are also due to Dr P Sreedharan (Retd. from ONGC), Dr Ranjana Rastogi (Professor, Retd.), Department of Chemistry, Hansraj College, New Delhi who were my classmates at the University of Roorkee and to Dr A B Anitha, Executive Director (Retd.), and Ms P A Padmini, Assistant Registrar (Retd.), of CWRDM, Kozhikode for going through certain parts of the material in spite of their busy schedule and, appreciating my effort.

Dr. K. Vasu

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Dr. K. Vasu** (09.09.1947-) was born in Puthur, a remote village near Thalassery in the Malabar region of Kerala and migrated at a young age to the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu. He had an elementary education at Kilkavatti, near Muthorai, close to Ooty, under the Gell Memorial High School Management in Fern hill. His high schooling was at St. Joseph's, Ooty (1959-65), continued for graduation at Government Arts College affiliated to the University of Madras (1965-69). He entered into service as a Senior Scientific Assistant (Laboratory) at Central Soil Conservation Research Demonstration and Training - Regional Centre, Ooty under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR, 1970-77). He did postgraduation in chemistry at the University of Roorkee (1977-79) and a doctoral programme at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) New Delhi (1979-83). He joined the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM), Kozhikode, Kerala, an R&D Centre on water under the Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE) in 1983 and continued there till his retirement in 2007. He had training visits to Utah State University in Logan, USA and Wallac in Turku, Finland. He also travelled to the IAEA as part of the IAEA's RCA programme to attend the Research Committee Meetings. He coordinated with a few universities in South India under a Department of Science and Technology (DST of the Government of India) project on the application of stable and radioactive isotopes-based techniques to water resource programmes. As a leader of a small group of scientists, technical and other supporting staff, he assisted CWRDM Management to establish a Stable and Radioactive Isotope Facility at the Centre with the support of DST (Government of India) and the technical support of experts at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Mumbai. He made efforts to popularise nuclear techniques applicable to water resources programmes among the faculty and research scholars working in the leading technical institutes in the country. He also represented CWRDM as a Member of a few Expert Committees constituted to address the soil, water and environmental issues.



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E-ISBN: 978-93-6252-118-7



MRP Rs. 460/-