Indian Biophysical Society (IBS)

Naranamangalam Jagannathan¹

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Sir J. C. Bose, a great visionary scientist, realized the importance of physics in biology as early as in 1900, and later scientists like N. N. Dasgupta, R. K. Poddar, and A. R. Gopala Ayengar played a major role in various activities of biophysics research and teaching in India. In the 1950s, G. N. Ramachandran started a laboratory for studying structures of biologically important molecules using x-ray crystallography at the University of Madras. The triple helical structure of collagen and the famous Ramachandran plot (used by all protein crystallographers for predicting the protein secondary structures) were discovered from his laboratory at Madras (Chennai as it is now called), which put India on the world map on Biophysics. At the same time, biophysical research in several other parts of the country, involving physicists and biologists, started to address diverse problems of biophysics.

The Indian Biophysical Society (IBS) was formed in 1965 and registered under Act XXVI of 1961 at Kolkata with its office at Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics (SINP). Since then, the Society became very active and grew in strength year by year. As of the present time, IBS is now one of the healthiest and most active scientific societies of India and is a platform where youngsters are given ample opportunity to present their work and discuss freely with others. The objective is to advocate the cause of biophysics in India and to provide expert advice for biophysics teaching in various parts of the country. Further, its main activity is to organize the annual Indian Biophysical Society meeting, in the spring of every year, in different locations in India. The biophysics research in India during the last two decades has spread to all parts of the country

and many laboratories have facilities that are of international standard for carrying out advanced biophysical research.

The society functions and important decisions of the IBS are taken by the Executive Council (EC) and are later discussed at the Annual General Body (AGB) meetings. The IBS annual symposia are held at various centers across India with all biophysical disciplines well represented. The Society has expanded considerably and at present, there are over 1200 life members from all over the country. The IBS president has a 2-year term and presently, Prof Madan Rao of National Center for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bangalore is the president and Prof. A.S.R. Koti of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai is the secretary.

Promotion of young students and researchers is one of the major objectives of IBS and in this connection, many awards for youngsters were instituted by IBS for oral and poster presentations at the national symposium every year. The IBS also gives travel awards to cover partial expenses for attending the IUPAB International Biophysics Congress held abroad once every 3 years and the Asian Biophysics Association (ABA) meeting, which is held once in 2 years.

In the year 2002, IBS also instituted a prestigious Prof. G. N. Ramachandran (GNR) Memorial Lecture to be given by renowned biophysicists at each annual IBS meeting. The first GNR Memorial Lecture was held at the IBS-2002 National Symposium in January 2002 at the University of Madras, where GNR started his pioneering work. This lecture was delivered by Prof. V. Ramakrishnan from UK. The others who gave subsequent GNR Memorial Lectures so far include the Nobel Laureates like Prof. Hartmut Michel, Prof. Kurt Wuthrich, Prof. Richard R. Ernst, Prof. Martin Karplus, and Prof. Ada E. Yonath. All the GNR awardees are made honorary fellows of the Indian Biophysical Society.

IBS fosters active association and interaction with the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and the International Union of Pure & Applied Physics (IUPAB). The President of IBS is a member of the INSA National Committee for IUPAB, which helps the process of continuing cooperation between these three important bodies. As a result,

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✉ Naranamangalam Jagannathan
jagan1954@hotmail.com

¹ Department of NMR & MRI Facility, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, Delhi, India

the 13th International Biophysics Congress was successfully organized by IBS, INSA, and IUPAB at New Delhi in September 1999. This was followed by three satellite symposia in Mumbai, Kolkata, and Hyderabad. In 2003, IUPAB International Workshop on “Education and Capacity Building in Biophysics: Needs of the Asian African Region” was held at IIT, Roorkee, which was attended by many participants from Asian and African countries. In 2009, an International Workshop on NMR in Biological Systems held at TIFR Mumbai, under the aegis of IUPAB.

India is represented well in various committees and task forces of IUPAB. Working in these task forces, the Indian scientists have made significant contributions in the formulation and steering of task force programs. IBS is proud that Prof. G. Govil served as member of the IUPAB council and also as vice president while Profs. M. Vijayan, T. P. Singh, and N. R. Jagannathan served as elected members of the Council of IUPAB, each for a 6-year term. Presently India is represented by Dr. Ch. Mohan Rao in the Council for IUPAB. IUPAB along with the publisher Springer launched the journal *Biophysical Reviews* in 2009, with Prof. N. R. Jagannathan from India being one of the executive editors.

The Indian Biophysical Society also has very close association with the Asian Biophysics Association (ABA) which facilitates a platform for cooperation between the scientists belonging to different countries in the Asian region. India hosted the 7th ABA Conference at New Delhi in January

2011. Prof. N. R. Jagannathan served as the president of ABA from 2011 to 2013. Presently, the ABA steering committee members from India includes the IBS president (ex-officio), Prof. K.V.R. Chary and Prof. N. R. Jagannathan (honorary member).

Prof. Ada Yonath, NL, and the participants of the 7th ABA at New Delhi in 2011

This write up is not exhaustive but gives some glimpses of the growth of IBS and very briefly the biophysics research activities in India in the last 60 years. One may visit the IBS website at “indianbiophysicalsociety.org” for more information on the current council members, list of life members, upcoming symposia, and other academic programs of the society.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest N. R. Jagannathan declares that he has no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by the author.

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