

Valedictory Address*

V M Rao**

I went for my first field investigation in 1957 to a fishing village near Palghat, the Satpathi. I still remember that it was a survey connected with the marketing of fresh fish. It was a study sponsored by FAO. I have got quite happy memories of that study. I actually stayed on the beach, in the fisherman's hut and even shared the food because the only way to catch the fishermen for interviews was to catch them at the dead of night, when they would come back with their catch. Early morning they would go again. You would not find them in the houses at all in the main village.

From that point onwards I have now spent nearly 44 years. The village going stopped long time back. But the interest, especially in interaction with younger people remains. I have got some kind of picture in my mind about how this study on the rural economy has been taking place in the last four or five decades. I also have a definite opinion about the themes, which should be given priority.

I must first express my great happiness at the change that has taken place in the so called research industry. When I started in 1957 as a Ph.D. fellow in the department of Economics I was getting a fellowship of Rs. 100 and was very happy with it. However, the infrastructure was primitive, with cyclostyling machines, sorters and punch cards. Getting projects from government was something, which was quite new. The finances were limited. However, inspite of those problems, those were happy days. We had good seniors, who looked after us, who interacted with us and encouraged us.

After 50 years, when I go to the institute today, I find tremendous changes. Some of the changes are obvious. In every room we have computers with the internet facilities. I remember in 1976-77 the first electronic calculator came to the market. At that time in Bangalore its price was about 7000 rupees. We were tired of operating facit manually. When we requested Prof. V. K. R. V. Rao for an electronic calculator he said it was too costly. Compare this to today's situation.

Earlier, because of the department structure, there was a fairly rigid, hierarchy in some universities there were probably difficulties in writing, sending things out and publishing. Today, I find, at least, in my institute, there is complete freedom about writing, publication, and attending seminars and conferences. Very often the institute helps in paying the bills also, though some times the host will help. And most importantly the younger researchers (from GIPE, ICSSR and many of them from my institute in Bangalore) are professionally more self-reliant. They don't rely on the Steno. They can do every thing on their own. There are probably more peer reviews, because one can send soft copies of papers to many people. The contact network has expanded vastly, and people have friends in World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and so on. So I personally think that the Research Industry has expanded tremendously and the financial situation today is much better. When I was looking after the Institute as an acting director

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