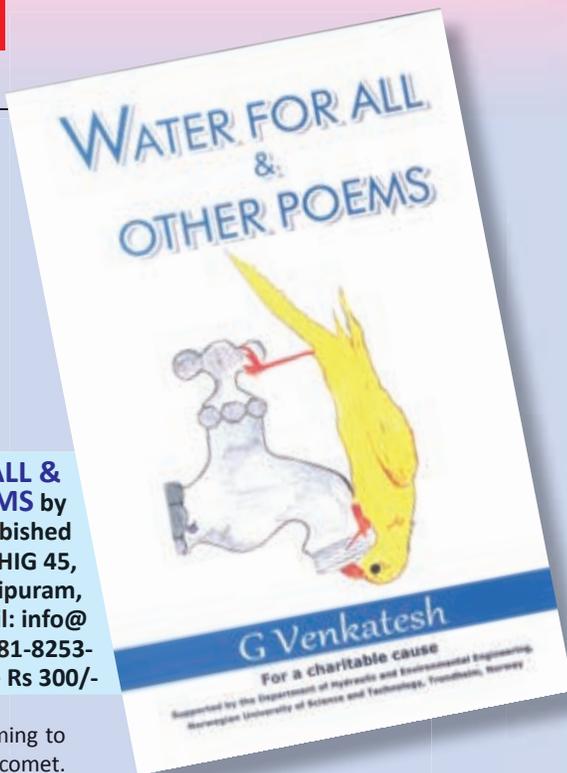


VAINU BAPPU – THE MAN WHO KNEW THE STARS by M.S.S Murthy, published by Prism Books Pvt. Ltd., #1865, 32nd Cross, 10th Main, BSK, II Stage, Bengaluru-560070; Email: info@prismbooks.com; ISBN:978-81-7286-721-8; Pages 144; Price Rs 125/-

WATER FOR ALL & OTHER POEMS by G. Venkatesh, published by Cyberwit.net, HIG 45, Kaushambi Kunj, Kalindipuram, Allahabad-211011; Email: info@cyberwit.net; ISBN: 978-81-8253-562-6; Pages 54; Price Rs 300/-



ON the first day that Manali Kallat Vainu Bappu, the father of modern Indian astronomy, landed in Boston in 1949 for his research in astronomy at Harvard, he was invited to a party that night by Prof. Harlow Shapley. During the party, at which students and faculty of the Harvard College had been invited, Prof. Shapley suddenly asked Bappu to give a talk after the dinner. Barely managing to scribble a few notes hurriedly, Bappu nevertheless delivered a sterling speech to great applause and congratulations from the gathered professors. His maiden speech would become a favourite talking point among the professors for a long time to come.

Prof. Shapley, renowned for his discovery of the centre of our Galaxy and of our position within it, played a huge part in the making of the phenomenon that Vainu Bappu would later become. When Prof. Harlow Shapley came visiting India, with great difficulty Bappu managed to get an appointment with him for a short period. However, the meeting went on for one and a half hours. So impressed was Prof. Shapley with Vainu Bappu that he made all efforts to get Bappu to the Harvard University.

There are many such interesting events that dot the life and times of one of the greatest astronomers that India has produced. Vainu Bappu is credited with a lot that India can be truly proud

of. Within a few months of coming to Harvard, Vainu discovered a comet. After his PhD in 1951, Bappu was the first Indian to be offered the prestigious Carnegie Mellon Fellowship in astronomy.

Vainu Bappu also played a big role in establishing astronomy as a modern discipline in the country. In 1960, at the behest of the Government of India, Bappu became the youngest director of the 170-year old Kodaikanal Observatory. He is also credited with establishing observatories in Nainital and Kavalur. Bappu strove hard to make the Indian Institute of Astrophysics a world-class research centre.

In the book *Vainu Bappu – The Man Who Knew The Stars*, Dr. M.S.S. Murthy, a PhD in Biophysics from the University of Kansas, USA, who retired from BARC as a senior scientist, provides a deep insight into the life and achievements of this great Indian astronomer. In his Foreword to the book, Prof. M.G.K. Menon, who needs no introduction, says, “If it (the book) serves to excite young minds to take to the field of astronomy and that is the spirit in which it has been written, the effort would be well worthwhile.”

One only wishes that the photographs had been presented as well as the text.

ISN'T it ironic that we contaminate, choke and waste our precious water resources and then lament, quarrel and even kill for water? In recent times, the battle for water resources is getting worse – between neighbours, between communities, between states, and even between countries.

Water is the key element for life to survive. There's still lots on the Earth. But the instances of plummeting water tables, drying up lakes, contamination of water resources, encroachment of land sharks on local water bodies point to a bleak future. Unless, of course, authorities and citizens round the world realize the importance of nurturing water resources. The awareness needs to spread to all levels.

Water For All & Other Poems is definitely a creative endeavour in this direction. The poems, thirty-five in all, have been penned by G. Venkatesh, a researcher based in Trondheim, Norway. A PhD from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Venkatesh is also a freelance writer for several magazines of various genres.

The poems deal with a range of topics and emotions, raising issues related to water from acid rain to water wastage, from loss of aquatic habitat to fights over water, from water lost to runoff to rainwater harvesting, from plummeting water tables to global warming, from the luxury of possessing a swimming pool to trudging miles to fetch drinking water, and even a tap lamenting its inability to close itself so that water is not wasted.

Indeed, a very laudable and innovative approach to spreading awareness through poems about a problem that promises not to go away soon. The creative illustrations and cartoons further add to the depth of the message.

Hasan Jawaid Khan