

TWENTY FIVE YEARS OF IFCPAR (CEFIPRA): SOME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

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My first project submitted to IFCPAR was approved in 1990. I recall, I heard about this programme sometime in 1988 and decided to submit a proposal. I had just moved into NCL from industry and begun to assemble a research group. I felt that IFCPAR offered the quickest way to establish bridges with the scientific community of France with whom I have had very little prior contact. We were successful in getting the project approved. I presume that this was one of the earliest of the IFCPAR projects in India. We forged a strong partnership with the group of Professor Jacques Lemaire at the University of Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, and a partnership that lasted for over a decade. This led to creating new experimental facilities and exploring the mechanisms of polymer degradation and stabilization, especially, under the influence of light. Later we established another collaborative programme with the group of Professor Michelle Fontanille at Laboratoire de Chimie des Polymeres Organiques (LCPO), University of Bordeaux in the area of controlled synthesis of polymers. These programmes enabled many of us to build professional relationships as well as personal friendships with many groups in France. I must single out the names of Professor Marechal, Professor Vairon and Professor Fradet, all at the University of Paris, Professor Deffieux and Professor Gnanou at Bordeaux and Professor Lacoste at Clermont-Ferrand with whom I have enjoyed a special friendship for over two decades.

I had the good fortune to organize an IFCPAR sponsored Indo – French symposium on “Tailored Polymers: Science and Engineering” in India in 1993 and lead a delegation of Indian scientists to France for a symposium on “Frontiers in Polymerization Reactions”, hosted by Professor Fontanille in France in September 1995. These interactions led to a large flow of students from India into French institutions and spawned several collaborations under the aegis of IFCPAR in subsequent years.

Apart from an opportunity to do good science, publish co-authored papers and build deep relationships, IFCPAR also helped expose the best of Indian polymer science to France and vice versa.

I am deeply indebted to IFCPAR for catalyzing these interactions. I, must, particularly acknowledge the contributions of Mr. P.G.S. Mony, the first Director of IFCPAR with whom I had the pleasure to work for several years. He was an epitome of efficiency and a great friend of Indian science and scientists. I also recall with profound grief the tragic demise of Professor and Mrs. Clouet from the Institut Charles Sadron, Strassbourg in the crash of an Indian Airlines plane at Aurangabad on April 26, 1993. Both of them were on a visit to Ajanta and Ellora after the Indo French Symposium that I organized that year. Apart from the loss of

a friend, it was painful to see a very promising career in science being nipped in the bud. This will always remain a sad blot in my mind amidst the many happy memories I carry of my association with the French polymer science and IFCPAR (CEFIPRA).