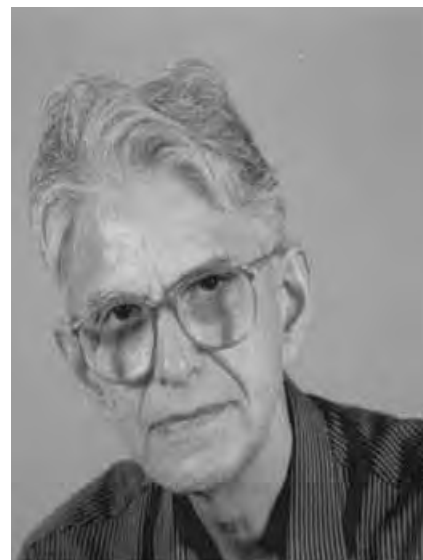


Professor Obaid Siddiqi passes away

Obaid Siddiqi FRS, National Research Professor at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) passed away on 26 July 2013. He is survived by his wife Asiya, sons Imran and Kalim, and daughters Yumna and Diba.



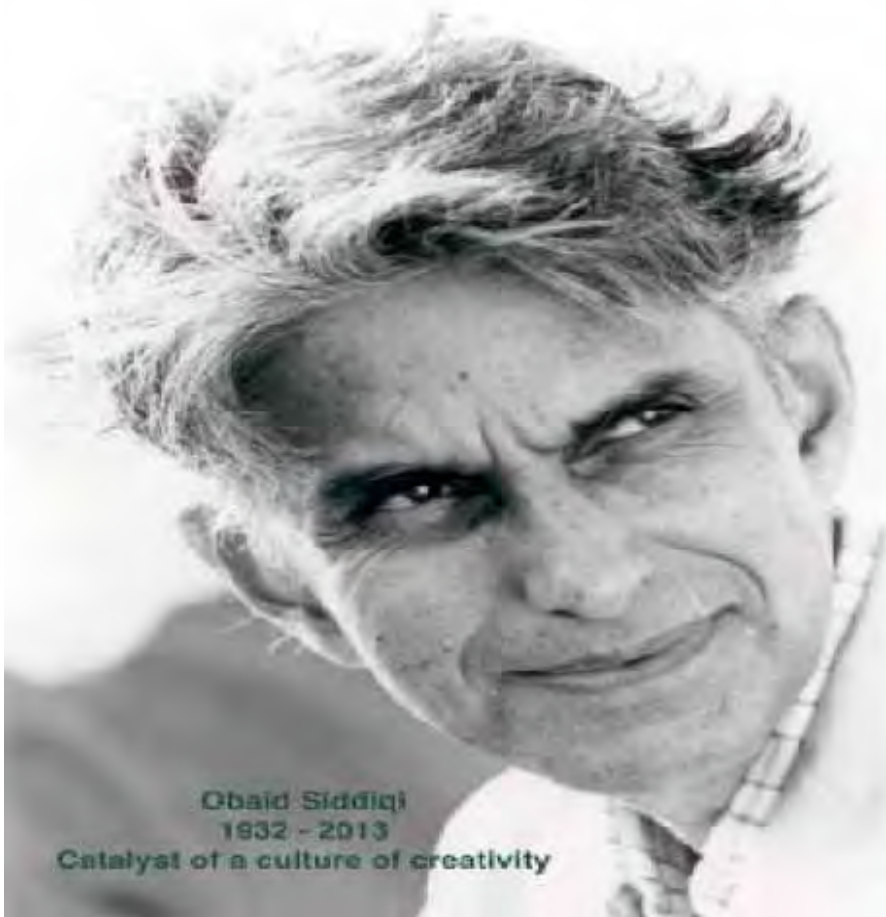
Obaid Siddiqi was born in 1932 in Uttar Pradesh and received his early education at Aligarh Muslim University. He obtained his Phd from the University of Glasgow, working on microbial genetics with Guido Pontecorvo. He carried out post-doctoral research with Alan Garen at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory and University of Pennsylvania. This work led to the discovery of stop codons in the genetic code and the mechanism of chain termination during protein synthesis.

In 1962, at the invitation of Homi Bhabha, he set up the Molecular Biology Unit at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai. The formation of this unit is widely regarded as a transformational event in the landscape of modern biology research in India. Thirty years later, he would become the founding director of the TIFR National Center for Biological Sciences in Bangalore.

In the early seventies, Siddiqi began to study the genetic basis of behaviour using *Drosophila* as a model. Working with Seymour Benzer at Caltech he discovered a set of temperature sensitive paralytic mutants that exhibited defects in the electrical activity of nerves and muscles. This discovery led to a deeper understanding of the mechanistic basis of neuronal function and heralded the dawn of the field of Behavioral Genetics.

In the nineteen eighties, Siddiqi and his students at TIFR, Mumbai carried out pioneering work on the genetic basis of taste and smell in *Drosophila*. These discoveries paved the way for the modern understanding of how senses such as taste and smell are detected and encoded in the brain. He was active in this area of research till the end of his life, maintaining an active laboratory as an Emeritus Professor at NCBS.

Obaid Siddiqi has held visiting professorships at Yale University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the California Institute of Technology and Cambridge University. He was twice Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Scholar at Caltech and was a life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge. Aligarh Muslim University, Banaras Hindu University, Jamia Hamdard, Kalyani University, IIT Bombay, Jamia Millia Islamia and Central University of Hyderabad have conferred upon him the honorary degree of D.Sc.



**K. ULLAS KARANTH, PH.D.,
F.A.Sc. Director for Science-Asia
Wildlife Conservation Society &
Director, Centre for Wildlife Studies**

I am writing to express the deep sadness that all of us in the WCS India team feel at the death of Prof. Obaid Siddiqui. His loss is irreplaceable not just because he was a great biologist and a mentor, but also because of the incredible warmth and old world courtesy that radiated from him.

Kindly share our sincere condolences with all colleagues at NCBS as well as Prof. Siddiqui's family. He not only played a vital role in the formation of NCBS as is well known, when Anindhya and I were trying to find a host for our proposed MSc wildlife program he encouraged us enormously right from the beginning.

On a personal note, many years before NCBS was established in Bangalore, my wife Prathibha had met him in TIFR in Mumbai with her then collaborator computational scientist late Prof. R. Narasimha. I distinctly recall her telling me what an impressive person he was...

In the words of K VijayRaghavan, former director of NCBS: "There are a daring few who define new intellectual quests, and whose courage and leadership create a culture... today, we celebrate Obaid Siddiqui whose foresight, determination and quiet courage has transformed research in molecular biology in India at least twice and whose scientific successes span many fields of biology. While establishing institutional excellence and instilling an iconoclastic culture of independence and freethinking, these pioneering efforts have led to wide appreciation, both of the beauty and value of Obaid's science and of his leadership in institution building, as models to emulate."

According to Satyajit Mayor, current Director of NCBS: "Obaid Sid

diqui was one of the finest biologists India has ever had. His contribution to the growth of Molecular Biology in India is unparalleled. Throughout his career, Obaid always set an example for doing science at its most creative. He pioneered efforts in establishing the field of Behavioral Genetics based on his own research on the genetics of olfactory sensation in *Drosophila*. At the same time in his gentle but persuasive style he motivated a legion of younger colleagues by doing excellent science himself whilst in India. In 1992 he established the National Centre for Biological Sciences as a Centre of TIFR, to achieve excellence and to nurture fundamental curiosity to explore new frontiers in biological research. The realization and embodiment of these core

principles, through the growth of the Centre over twenty years, is yet again a testimony to the foresight of this visionary man. Establishing an institution that promotes enquiry at all scales of Biology is indeed a pioneering experiment in how research in biological sciences may be conducted in the modern era of molecular biology.

It is not a surprise that Obaid Siddiqui was also one of India most decorated scientists. We will miss our friend, philosopher and muse deeply, and hope to cherish his dreams and ambitions in the way we would know he would want us to- by building on the edifice he has left us, and doing even more creative science."