

Obituary



Professor K. Sita
(1931 - 2017)

Dr. Kasibhatla Sita, popularly known as Dr. K. Sita, Retired Faculty, Department of Geography, University of Mumbai, passed away on December 16, 2017.

Born in 1931, she completed her B.Sc. (Hons) from the University of Madras in 1951 and then earned an M.Sc. Degree of Andhra University two years later. She was a recipient of the Fulbright Scholarship and went to Kansas State University to get her M.Sc. by research. After returning, she settled in Mumbai and joined St. Xavier's College in the late 1950s and was teaching there up to 1963. She took a break of five years, between 1963-68, to bring up her sons, and again became active academically to teach in various colleges of Mumbai such as Somaiya, SIES, Ruia and Podar. While teaching in colleges at undergraduate level, she was the visiting faculty and engaged

PG classes in Parle College (now Sathye College). She joined the Department of Geography, University of Mumbai, in the year 1973 and continued to be the faculty there till her retirement in the year 1991 on superannuation.

As a teacher she excelled and was very widely held in esteem for her meticulously structured lectures and humanly approach. Students had no difficulty in following her because her articulate lectures used to be full of illustrations in the form of diagrams, maps and some statistics. She had a smooth flow and sequential exposition of the subject which was not only easy to follow in the class but also to retain thereafter. Appropriate illustrations was her main weapon to make the theme appealing. She was always approachable and entertained questions from the students. Students liked

her the most. She was very cordial among the faculty and had many friends even outside the Department.

Dr. Sita was a born researcher and added considerable strength to the research wing of the Department. After joining the Department, she completed her own Doctoral Research on “Towns of South Konkan”. She had guided many M.A./M.Sc. and M.Phil. students in their dissertations. She successfully guided seven students who were awarded Doctoral Degree of the University of Bombay. Besides, contributing over hundred research papers in various national and international journals in Geography and related social science disciplines, she had completed three research projects, viz. “The Declining City-core of an Indian Metropolis: A Case Study of Bombay”, “The Koyna Catchment: An Environmental Perspective” and “Cores of the Indian Cities”. She worked at Rutgers University with Prof. John E. Brush for her post-doctoral work on “Factorial Ecology of Bombay” in 1984. She was ICSSR Research Fellow for three years attached to IIPS, Mumbai where she completed a project on “Investment Pattern in the Districts of Maharashtra”. On completion of the tenure of her fellowship, she was invited to join TISS as a Tata Chair Professor for some time. Even after that she continued her research and guidance at personal level. Several students have taken inspiration from her to complete their Ph.D. Degree. Researchers all over India and abroad talk very highly about the quality of her research work.

Dr. Sita was a very soft spoken research guide and I had the fortune to be with her for my doctoral work. She used to imbibe on the minds of the students four conditions

of success. One has to toil awhile, endure a little bit, believe always and never think of going back on the path. This used to prepare the students mentally to take up the work diligently and patiently in the days when much of the work was to be carried out manually. Occasionally, under extremely difficult situations, she used to arrange the computational work from some academic institutions to make it cost effective for the students. She used to complete most of the guidance in the Department and rarely ever called the students home. She believed that family life is as important as the academics for both the guide and the student.

She encouraged students to present their work in seminars and conferences and accompanied them on such occasions. She used to sit with the students during other presentations and indicated to them the mistakes often committed by those who presented the papers. This helped the students to take adequate precaution during their presentations. Later, she encouraged students to bring out publications in standard research journals even before completion of the thesis. This helped the students to get maximum papers to their credit before data got obsolete. She never insisted on her name as a co-author and whenever it was done by the students out of respect, her name was not the first because she felt that it was after all the work of the students. She never created any obstacle if any student wanted to change the guide nor did she prevent the students from getting their work published.

Basically, she had a spiritual bent of mind and hence could remain alone in her house even after her husband’s passing away. She liked visitors and called her

students and former colleagues to visit her Vashi house when she stopped travelling over long distances. Although there were other talks, the main focus used to be on the academics. She used to share several of her then current experiences with them. Unfortunately, final stage of her life was very painful because of the fall when she got her hand badly fractured. The last we met her was sometime in June 2012 after which it was really difficult for her to remain alone

in Mumbai and she shifted to London to stay with her younger son. She passed away on 16th December, 2017.

May her soul rest in peace!

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