

OBITUARIES



Professor V. L. S. Prakash Rao

An important figure in Indian Geography vanished from the Earth's landscape on 18th Dec. 1992. But Rao has left many sweet memories in the minds of his friends, and these many include the present writer paying his tribute to him.

Initially a scholar in Commerce, Rao was attracted to Geography and the hold was consolidated when he went to the Indian Statistical Institute, under the spell of Professor P. C. Mahalanobis. He came back to the University of Madras as Reader in its Department of Geography. From there he was drawn to the I.S.I. Calcutta in its newly created Regional Survey Unit headed by another distinguished geographer and humanist Professor A. T. A. Learmonth. There, he and Dr. L. S. Bhat, another notable colleague, carried out valuable studies in regional survey and planning; first at Bangalore and later at New Delhi where the Unit was shifted to the Planning Commission's organisation.

Thereafter, he joined the Osmania University, Hyderabad and organised the Department and promoted several research projects. Then he served for a short period as Professor of Geography in the Delhi University. Later on he joined the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, and soon shifted to the Indian Institute of Management at the same place. He was invited from time to time, to the Institute of Regional Analysis, Bhopal.

Geography was Rao's passion and Regional Planning and Development, his forte. Apart from post-graduate level teaching programmes, he guided several students for their M.Phil. and Ph.D. degree theses. He was liked and respected by his colleagues and students. How well and far flung was the span of his academic friendship can be seen in the contributions of many scholars, Indian and foreign, in the felicitation volume "Geography and Planning" edited with singular devotion by his student Dr K. V. Sundaram.

Dr. Prakash Rao was elected President of the Indian Geographical Congress of the NAGI, at Rajkot, December 1990; though ill health prevented him from attending, his address contained many valuable directions in research in Indian Geography.

In personal life, Rao was simple, unassuming and had a Gandhian bent of mind. He was totally committed to Geography and in this he was ably helped by the late Mrs Rao, who relieved him of all the household responsibilities and brought up their children well; the eldest, happily, is continuing the father's good work in the National Remote Sensing Agency Hyderabad. And there could be no greater tribute to Rao's memory than for his friends and disciples to pursue in this important aspect of the nation's economic and social development.

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