

OBITUARY

Dr. Ramamoorthy Gopalakrishnan (1949-2005)



Dr. Ramamoorthy Gopalakrishnan was born on May 1, 1949 at Delhi. He had his education till graduation (1968: DU) at Delhi and thereafter, Masters in Geography from Madras University (1971). His M.Phil (1972) and Ph.D (1979) degrees were from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (the School of International Studies). He was one of the founding members of Department of Geography, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong (a Central University, established in 1973), which he joined in July 1976 and was finally elevated to Chair in Political Geography in 1991. His untimely, sudden and tragic death on the 19th November, 2005 at Shillong at the age of 56 years, while in service has been an irreparable loss to the Department of Geography, NEHU, and the University, the Geography community in the country and to hundreds of his students and the colleagues and especially his family. He has left behind his wife Girija and daughters Manasi (27) and Radhika (22), both educated at JNU, New Delhi, Dr. Gopal's alma mater.

Probably, no body knew Dr.Gopal better than me, except his immediate family. We travelled in the same coach on the same train from Delhi to Guwahati in July 1976; joined on 28th as lecturers. In October 1983 we joined the same day as Readers and on July 12, 1991 we became professors (specialised chairs) in the same department. We developed the department together under the

aegis of Professor R.C. Sharma, the first and founding professor of the department though our academic interests were different, but our journey in the academia was destined together for over 29 years, but for his sudden passing away severed that link.

Dr. Gopal was a simple, unassuming and friendly person and was always a great favourite with students. A typical family man, he would spend most of the time in the department, coming in the early hours at 7.30 in the morning and when his colleagues would arrive, would be the first to offer tea from the small tea stalls around the campus and the department.

Dr. Gopal was a voracious reader and a prolific writer. Starting with his first book his thesis on Afghanistan, he never looked back and had over a dozen books to his credit on the North-Eastern region. He wrote regional geographies of all the seven states of the North East, except Manipur which he expressed his desire to do just a few days prior to his sudden demise. He supervised about 20 M.Phil and 12 Ph.D. theses and published over 50 papers in reputed journals and edited volumes.

Dr. Gopal's sudden and untimely demise has left a void in the department and in the university that is unlikely to be bridged shortly — a great professional loss and a greater personal loss for a colleague and friend.

A.C. Mohapatra