

Obituary



Prof. Vrushali Deosthali
1955-2007

On Saturday, 1st December 2007, early morning, on her way to work, our esteemed colleague Dr. (Mrs.) Vrushali Deosthali met with a fatal road accident. Even today, it is very difficult for many of us to believe and come to terms with the idea that she is not amongst us any more. Particularly for me, who has known her as a student, colleague and friend and someone younger, the very thought that I have to write her obituary, is quite painful.

Born on 29th June 1955, at Pune, Dr. Deosthali had her early education at the *Renuka Swarup* Memorial High School in Pune. After completing her B.A in 1975 from S.P. College, she enrolled at the Pune University for her post-graduate degree in geography.

My association with Mrs. Deosthali goes back to more than 30 years, right from her post-graduation days. After completing M. Phil in 1984, she began her academic career as lecturer in geography, at her alma mater, S.P. College, the following year, in 1985.

Her Ph.D. work in agro-climatology—“Climatological analysis of the suitability of non-irrigated crops at selected stations in dry farming tract of Maharashtra” has been highly appreciated.

On joining the University of Pune, Mrs. Deosthali visited Germany, Israel, the Netherlands and Yemen to participate in International Conferences. She had a large number of projects and research papers to her credit.

However, the turning point in her career came when she decided to pursue a nine month PG Diploma course in Geo-informatics at IIRS Dehradun. At the end of the course she received a medal at the hands of Dr. Abdul Kalam. Later, she also completed her M. Tech. in Geo-informatics and won the distinction of being the first M. Tech. in the Department of geography. After her return from Dehradun, she began in real earnest to apply her knowledge to research in Geo-informatics and to spread awareness about the potential of this newly emerging technology to students of geography.

Here, began a saga of relentless struggle. In 2002, the university gave the nod for the post graduate B. Sc (Applied) course in G.I.S and R.S. This was introduced with strong support from the faculty of the department, and the University authorities. Needless to reiterate, this opened up a flood gate of opportunities for students of geography who otherwise had very few openings outside academics. She received support from ISRO and her immense efforts brought

eminent scientists like *Padma* awardees Dr. George Joseph, Dr. Dikshatulu, Dr. Pramod Kale, Director SAC, as well as Dr. Navalgund, Dr. Virmani, Dr. V.N. Krishna-murthy, Dr. Jayraman and others to Pune, to deliver lectures.

However, Mrs. Deosthali was not one to rest on her laurels. She wanted to start the M.Sc. Geo-informatics programme. With cooperation and strong support from colleagues in the department and the University authorities her dream came true in 2006. In the last six years, through her projects and grants, she generated large funds for Geo-informatics and acquired state of the art software and hardware for the programme. What is heartening to note is that she lived to see the day when reputed companies using GIS & RS technology held campus interviews to select candidates from among our students, offering them very attractive career opportunities. Shortly after, she passed away.

A very strict disciplinarian when it came to work, she was at the same time the most approachable teacher for students when it came to finding solutions to their problems, academic or personal. As a colleague she was always ready

to shoulder any responsibility entrusted to her. Brimming with so many ideas and plans for the development of Geo-informatics which she used to discuss them with me over a cup of tea, but before she could fulfil her vision, the cruel hand of fate snatched her away. Her sad demise is indeed a great loss not only to her family but also to the university of Pune and the department of geography and to the subject. To keep the flag flying high as a tribute to her memory, is indeed a Herculean task. But then a number of her students have already risen to the occasion to carry the torch forward. Mrs. Deosthali will be sorely missed by all the members of the geography fraternity and her contribution to the development to Geo-informatics at the University of Pune will always be remembered for a long time to come.

May her soul rest in peace.

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