



Professor P. R. Sharma

(1950 – 2020)

An eminent geographer and regional planner from the Banaras School of Geography (India), Prof. Parasu Ram Sharma, passed away due to a massive heart attack at the wee hours of 29 July 2020. It was a shocking piece of news as he was not suffering from any serious ailment. In the mid-night, he felt uneasy and called his student and colleague, Akhilendra Tiwari, to take him to the hospital. Unfortunately, after reaching Heritage Hospital, Lanka, Varanasi he had his last breath before doctors could extend any medical help. His body was kept in the mortuary; his cremation was performed on 30 July 2020 at 11:30 AM at Harishchandra Ghat (Varanasi), and the ‘Mukhagni’ ritual was offered by his son software-Engineer Amit Sharma (Bengaluru) and his biochemistry-researcher daughter Dr. Ms. Soma Sharma (Kolkata); his wife Smt. Savita Sharma was also present there.

Webinar condolence was held in his alma mater, the Department of Geography, Banaras Hindu University, on 31 July 2020 at 04:30 PM in the presence of several colleagues and students. On behalf of the department, the Head of the Department Prof. R.S. Yadava presented a deeply touching message of grief, followed by Prof. V.N. Sharma (Prof. P.R. Sharma’s first Ph.D. student) who narrated experiences with his Guru and his life sketch. Prof. Rana P.B. Singh (retired Professor & Head, Dept. of Geography, B.H.U., and his closest friend since 1968 and colleague for the longest period) told about Prof. P.R. Sharma’s contributions to geography, his role in the initiation of ‘new traditions in geography’, his leading role in publishing festschrift volumes honouring the retired teachers (already released in honour of Prof. N.K.P. Sinha, and Prof. Kashi N. Singh), promotion of Indo-Polish collaboration, structuring the outline of fresh

and innovative courses etc., and also about his personal friendship, help and support. For all of us, this has been a great loss. For me this turned to be a big vacuum in my academic and social life, being the oldest and intimate friend since 1968.

Prof. P.R. Sharma (born: 08 November 1950 in village Karon, Ballia district, state of Uttar Pradesh), was awarded M.A. (1970) and Ph.D. (1977) degrees from Banaras Hindu University, both under the supervision of Prof. R.L. Singh (1917-2001). He joined this department as a lecturer in August 1974, became a reader (associate professor) in April 1985, and was promoted to a professorship in July 1998. He had been the Head of the Department of Geography, B.H.U. from 01 Feb. 2004 to 31 Jan. 2007. He was retired on 30th June 2016, and after living about six months in his university apartment together with his wife he shifted to Bengaluru to live with his son and his family. On 30 January 2020, he returned with his wife to Varanasi, to again join his old community life in Varanasi. Akhilendra Tiwari, once his doctoral student and presently a faculty in Veer Kunwar Singh University (Bihar), was regularly visiting him and taking care of the family.

Prof. Sharma stayed in England (1982-83) as a Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellow in the University of Sussex and attended International Conferences and Seminars at the University of Oxford and Sussex (U.K.). As a token of appreciation for his contributions, he was awarded a Gold Medal from the Chinese Academy of Sciences (1991). He had participated in more than three dozen national and international seminars, including one at Warsaw, Poland. He was the Convenor of an International Seminar on 'Regional Policies and Development in the Third World' held in December 1991, and also of a National Seminar on 'Indian Geography in the 21st

Century': March 2005, both held at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; the proceedings of both the seminars were published under his co-editorship. He had also served as Honorary Editor of the National Geographical Journal of India; President of the National Geographical Society of India; and also, Secretary-General of the South Asian Geographers Association (SAGA) during 1986-1994.

Prof. Sharma has published about seventy research papers, published in India and abroad. He has edited five anthologies. His special interest lies in Regional Planning, Resource Geography, Rural Development and Human Settlements. Twelve students have been awarded Ph.D. degrees under his supervision. He was a life member of NAGI and NGSJ. Two of his early papers dealing with spatial organization model for rural development, and growth centres and regional development, both illustrated with a detailed investigation of Chhatishgarh, published in the internationally acclaimed journal, *Habitat International* (Pergamon, Oxford, vol. 8, 1984), were considered as a benchmark in the studies of regional development. He had further expanded his approach toward population and resource appraisal, the critique of policies and planning strategies, and finally sustainable development. He has also co-edited a volume on *Interdisciplinary Advances in Geography*, based on a multidisciplinary national seminar organised by him.

Prof. Sharma was known as one of the best teachers, who always used the latest data and debate in his teaching and discourses.

Rana P. B. Singh

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