



Professor Ramesh Dutta Dikshit

(3.11.1939 to 24.12.2019)

A doyen in the field of Political Geography (and my esteemed teacher), Dr. Ramesh Dutta Dikshit passed away on December 24, 2019, at Gurugram (Haryana).

Born on Nov. 3, 1939, in Village Mahuatar (maternal village), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Ramesh Dutta Dikshit was the third of four children of (late) Bal Dev Dikshit and (late) Roopkali Chaube. His paternal village was Gopalpur, district Ghazipur (Uttar Pradesh). His early life was replete with many difficulties which he overcame with grit to reach the stage of academic excellence he was widely known for. He lost his father in March 1941. However, he was fortunate enough to get all possible help from his maternal uncles. At that time his maternal uncles themselves were either pursuing higher studies or beginning their service career at different places, he also had to accompany

them to their places of stay to continue his education. In this process, he was greatly supported by his maternal uncles, especially (late) Prof. S.P. Chaube (conferred doctorate from the University of Indiana, Bloomington, USA) who retired as a Professor and Dean, University of Gorakhpur.

Prof. Dikshit's journey to achieve education, even to begin with, was quite hard. In the absence of any school in his maternal village, he had to go to other places (Sultani Pur Primary School, Varanasi) for his primary education (up to the fourth standard). He got his further education from Mirza Pur (UP); Ghazi Pur (UP), and Gaya (Bihar).

He completed his Intermediate from B.R. College, Agra and then joined the University of Allahabad for his graduate and post-graduate studies. He completed his post graduation in Geography in 1958 with a first class first

position. He began his teaching career as a lecturer in August 1960 at the Department of Geography, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur. He was awarded a Commonwealth Fellowship for further studies at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. There, between 1968-1971, he completed his doctorate under Prof. O.H.K. Spate, and with Prof. A.T.A. Learmonth as his joint-supervisor till 1969, in the Department of Human Geography, Research School of Pacific Studies, Institute of Advanced Studies. The topic of his thesis was *The Political Geography of Federalism: An Inquiry into Origins and Stability*.

Prof. Dikshit's doctoral thesis subsequently appeared as a book under the same title, published by Macmillan (London & New Delhi) and John Wiley, New York, in 1975. It was widely reviewed and is still rated as one of the most valuable contributions to the field of Geography of Federalism. In the words of an all-time great on South Asian studies, Late Prof. Joseph E. Schwartzberg, while writing on "The US Constitution, A Model for Global Government" (*Journal of Geography*, 1987, vol.86, no.6: 251):

So far as I am aware, the only book-length geographical study of federal governments is R.D. Dikshit's *The Political Geography of Federalism*...It provides a good review of the federal experience in most of the world's then extant federations, as well as of a number of federal experiments that failed.

Prof. Dikshit left Gorakhpur in September 1974 to accept an invitation from Punjabi University, Patiala to join as Reader and Head of the Department of Geography. He was subsequently elevated as a Professor in October 1978 and taught a generation of scholars during his decade

long stay at Patiala. In December 1984, he moved to Maharshi Dayanand University (MDU), Rohtak accepting an invitation to join as Professor and Head of the newly formed Department of Geography. He stayed there until his retirement in November 1999. Under his able leadership, the Department of Geography at MDU became one of the most important centres of learning in the country for teaching and research in the field of geography. It was through his academically towering personality that the department's presence was felt at the international level.

As a doctoral supervisor, he mentored four doctoral students (two each at Patiala and Rohtak). It was under his supervision as a trendsetter that one of the most widely referred works on spatial analysis of Indian elections were completed and published. Prof. Dikshit, throughout his career, set high standards for himself, his colleagues and his students. He garnered the reputation of a tough, honest and impartial academician and administrator.

In his own academic endeavours, he displayed rigorous discipline and deep devotion towards his work. Geographers across the world are familiar with his intellectual output. Across the Indian sub-continent, he was the foremost contributor to the field of political geography including electoral geography, and geographical thought. In his brilliant academic life, Prof. Dikshit's defining characteristic was to the first ground in the theory and then seek further insights through time-series quantitative analysis. His outstanding academic life is filled with the publication of numerous books and research articles. His journey as an author began with the book based on his Ph.D. thesis published by Macmillan in 1975. This was

followed by books published by John Wiley (The Political Geography of Federalism), Tata McGraw Hill (Political Geography: The Spatiality of Politics), Sage (Developments in Political Geography), Prentice-Hall (The Art and Science of Geography, Geographical Thought) and Rawat Publications (Geography of Elections: The Indian Context). With his good command of English and Hindi, he was able to write books in both languages and thus could reach out to a very wide audience of scholars and students. His books on Geographical Thought and Political Geography are of special mention for their reach across generations of students. The first edition of his Political Geography was the result of an invitation to him from the University Grants Commission to write a book on the subject.

Prof. Dikshit also authored a number of research articles in national and international journals of high repute. His articles appeared in Annals, Association of American Geographers, Journal of Politics, Professional Geographer, Political Geography Quarterly, Area, Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geographie, Asian Profile, and all leading Indian geography journals. He was active in the world-wide debates on the nature of political geography. When the specialized research journal Political Geography Quarterly (now Political Geography) was initiated by Prof. Peter J Taylor, Prof. Dikshit was the expert from Asia nominated to the editorial board constituted in 1982.

He was an innate scholar who pursued academic interests throughout his life, even after retirement. That he remained academically engaged and productive till the end is poignantly reflected in that on the day of his cremation, the digital edition of the new

and revised edition of his Political Geography (2020) was brought out by Macmillan, who was his first publisher more than four decades ago. The book was thoroughly revised. Geographers and those pursuing their careers as civil servants will find it extremely useful and updated including the sections on India's foreign policy and removal of Article 370.

His death is an irreparable loss to social scientists in the general and geographical fraternity in particular. We all will miss him. His academic excellence will continue to encourage geographers in the honest pursuit of learning for a long time to come.

I am sharing some of the comments by geographers from different parts of the world when they learnt of his passing away:

Prof. Stuart Corbridge (Vice-Chancellor, Durham University):

Very sad news. We all learned from Professor Dikshit and I am very sorry that he has passed away.

Emeritus Prof. Peter J. Taylor (Northumbria University, England):

I appreciated his research on political geography and was delighted when he agreed to join the board when I launched PGQ.

Prof. J. Clark Archer (University of Nebraska):

Professor Dikshit made very important contributions to political geography. He will be missed.

Prof. (retd.) J.C. Sharma (Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla) and former member, Himachal Pradesh Public Service Commission:

I have the honour of being the first research student of Prof. R. D. Dikshit. He was a hard taskmaster who always valued quality over

quantity in research. He was always well informed about new developments in the field of Geography. During my association with him as a research student at Punjabi University, Patiala and his junior colleague at M.D. University, Rohtak, I saw him daily visiting periodical sections of the libraries.

Prof. (retd.) Noor Mohammad (former UGC Emeritus fellow, Dept. of Geography, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi), and a former student of Prof. Dikshit at Gorkahpur.

He was an intelligent, hardworking and sincere teacher... He was my ideal teacher and I have imitated his style of teaching throughout my teaching career of four decades. In the sad demise of Prof. Dikshit, the Geography community has lost a gem, an ideal and a principled teacher. He was an able administrator and a thorough gentleman.

Prof. Sachidanand Sinha (CSRD, JNU, New Delhi)

A genius that he evolved through sheer hard work, he could have chosen to stay like scores of others in the academic wastelands, but he opted to inspire others. He would remain very special to me.

Prof. Dikshit is survived by his wife (Krishna Dikshit) and three children Jaya, Ashutosh and Ila.

May the Almighty give peace to the departed soul and strength to all his family members and friends to bear this loss. May his life be a guiding light in the honest pursuit of learning.

Prof. Sachinder Singh

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(Last Doctorate student of Prof. R.D.
Dikshit)