



### **Professor Jasbir Singh**

(15<sup>th</sup> March, 1932 - 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2020)

In a constantly changing world, everyone born would die. But I personally regard and celebrate the life of a person because of whom an entire generation gets benefitted. Professor Jasbir Singh, who passed away in Fresno, California in the USA on June 19, 2020, was a world-renowned agricultural geographer of extraordinary depth and breadth. He was one such person who deeply influenced and illuminated the lives of scores of his students and colleagues over the last 50 years of his life. An astute intellectual, he was a mountain of patience and perseverance. His demise was shocking and brings a vacuum for all those who have been associated with him as students or otherwise. He will be deeply missed and remembered for his honesty, discipline, gentle behaviour and academic excellence.

Prof. Jasbir Singh was born on March 15, 1932, at his maternal-ancestral village

86A6R near Montgomery, now in Pakistan. He completed his graduation and post-graduation from Government College, Ludhiana, where he stood first in the class at PG level. For a period of about 10 years, he worked as a lecturer at the Government Mahindra College, Patiala before he followed his research calling in the field of agricultural geography at the University of Edinburgh in the United Kingdom, mentored by well-known Agricultural Geographers Professor J.T. Coppock and Co-supervisor Dr. D.N. Mac Master, Associate Professor. He set a record of completing his Ph.D. degree in two years (1965-1967) on the topic entitled "The Agricultural Geography of Hissar District".

After completing his doctoral degree, he joined as a Reader and Head in the Department of Geography, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra which was opened

in 1968 and worked there till his retirement in 1992. This heralded the beginning of a golden era for agricultural geography at the Department of Geography, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra. He provided leadership to a large group of researchers in agricultural geography and the Department of Geography, Kurukshetra University came to be widely recognised as a centre of excellence in carrying out research and teaching in agricultural geography not only in India but also on the international map. He established strong and decisive associations with several universities across the country. After serving at Kurukshetra University for 28 years, he settled in Patiala to look after his ailing father and mother.

Prof. Jasbir Singh made fundamental contributions to diverse areas of agricultural geography, nature-man reciprocation, spatial differences in organisation and types of agriculture, irrigation, land capability classification, the productivity of soils, the economics of agriculture, variations in levels of agricultural productivity and methods of agricultural regionalisation (crop diversification, combination, concentration, etc.). His lectures on agricultural geography reflected the kind of scholarship that he carried with him. His method of teaching the most difficult concepts in the simplest way was inimitable. In fact, teaching and research in agricultural geography for him was an infectious passion and made an excellent impression on all his students. All along, he continued his role as a guide and a mentor for the agricultural geographers' community and has inspired a whole new generation of geographers who continue to admire him as the role model.

At a time when funding for research was feeble and sporadic in India, Prof. Singh successfully completed 12 research projects supported by the ICSSR and UGC. His contribution to the academy by way of publications is no less impressive and has only a few parallel among contemporary geographers. He published four very well acclaimed scholarly books namely (i) *An Agricultural Geography of Haryana*, (ii) *The Green Revolution in India: How Green It is?*, (iii) *Agricultural Development in South Asia*, and (iv) *An Agricultural Atlas of India: A Geographical Analysis*. Besides, he also co-authored five books such as (i) *Agricultural Geography*, (ii) *Determinants of Agricultural Productivity: A Sample Study of Operational Holding for Land Use Planning*, (iii) *Dynamics of Agricultural Change*, (iv) *Agro-environmental Units and Agricultural Land Use Planning: Indian Perspective* and (v) *Geo-monitoring of Biophysical Environment and Area Development: Haryana A case Study*. A major landmark among these books is 'Agricultural Geography' an internationally accepted textbook on Agricultural Geography, which has been translated into the Chinese language. Apart from this, he published several research papers in journals of national and international repute. His dedication to academic excellence and focused research made him one of the greatest geographers of India of all time. His sense of punctuality and discipline knew no bounds. All his colleagues and students remember how he used to be the first person to report in the department in the morning and last to leave in the evening.

He was an inspiring advisor and successfully guided seven Ph.D. students. Five of his doctoral students were fortunate to become his colleagues in the same department

at Kurukshetra University. During his long academic career, Prof. Singh visited several countries like United Kingdom, Scotland, France, Italy, Switzerland, USA, Australia, China, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka where he presented his research work. Considering his research and tall standing in the field of Agricultural Geography, he was selected as University Grants Commission (UGC) Professor in Agricultural Geography in 1975. In 1994, he was honoured with a lifetime title of Professor Emeritus at Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

He was not only an internationally acclaimed agricultural geographer but also a practicing ardent agriculturist, thanks to his agricultural background. His love, affection and emotional attachment with his 24 acres of agricultural land at village Mundebar Jampur in tehsil Jagadhari, Yamunanagar District, Haryana did not fade with his academic excellence and professional achievements. Even after his retirement and settlement in Patiala, he tried to time his visits to Mundebar Jampur to monitor his agricultural land.

His love for agriculture and the farmers went far beyond his academic commitments.

Till the last minute, Prof. Jasbir Singh was thinking only of agricultural pursuits. He used to say, 'agriculture is such a beneficial and profitable venture that a farmer can produce everything except salt in his fields and therefore he cannot die due to hunger'. Persons like Prof. Singh traverse this universe once in a millennium. Fortunate I am, his student, who walked this earth at the same time as him.

Prof. Jasbir Singh is survived by his wife Gajinder Kaur; daughter Parveen Singh and son-in-law; son Sukhbir Singh working who is a mechanical engineer at Fresno, California in USA and daughter-in-law plus four grandchildren. The world of geography has lost this jewel, but his legacy will live on in the hearts and minds of everyone he interacted with as well as those he never met. He will be missed not only by his family and loved ones but by everyone else who knew him either personally or through his works.

**Omvir Singh**

Professor, Department of Geography,  
Kurukshetra University,  
Kurukshetra, Haryana