

Obituary



Professor Dr Jaydip Sen
(Dec.12, 1965-Nov.30, 2021)

In the middle of the last week of December 2021, I had received a communication from Professor Subir Biswas, the General Secretary, who was organizing a condolence meeting on the 30th December on behalf of the Indian Anthropological Society, on the demise of Professor Jaydip Sen. As I had an appointment for cataract operation on that day I could not participate in the condolence meeting for the departed soul of Professor Jaydip Sen. However, I paid my homage to the departed soul through a condolence message and that Professor Subir Biswas, being kind enough, communicated to the members who were present at the condolence meeting on that day.

It was just a chance happening that I met Professor Jaydip Sen just 2/3 days before I was to leave for Bangalore on 8th October. That was my last meeting with him in person that happened on a lane leading to the main road of Santoshpur. He was walking on the roadside of the wide lane near his residence at Santoshpur, and seeing him I stopped the rickshaw close to him, and inquired about his well-being while still sitting on rickshaw. It was a surprise for me as I was not aware that he has come to Santoshpur at that time. He informed that he arrived at his Santoshpur residence a couple of days back, and intend to stay and enjoy the Puja days here in Kolkata.

I eyed my good friend with a beaming appreciation. He was looking wonderfully well then since I last saw him a year back or so. While we were talking, I had no inkling in my mind that it is my last meeting with him. We just talked for a few minutes as

I was in a hurry with loads of things to do that day, as I would be proceeding to the South for a long stay.

On 8th November 2021, I inquired through whatsapp about his well-being. On November 9, 2021: Prof. Sen replied — “Down with covid.....admitted to Calcutta Medical College.”

On November 20, 2021, to my inquiry, he had only communicated, “Still in hospital”. I felt his agony through this message. I have still kept with me his last message in whatsapp. The last message from his hospital bed.

And on 1st December, in the early morning hours around 7.30am Dr Amitabha Sarkar of Anthropological Survey of India rang me up to convey the shocking sad news of the demise of Professor Jaydip Sen, that happened on the night of 30th November, sometime around 10 pm or so.

A sad end indeed of an Indian anthropologist who could not sustain any longer and win over the Covid attack, though he had informed me earlier that he has taken the double dose for precaution against Covid-19.

Sometime in the year 2008, I met Dr Jaydip Sen in a seminar organized by the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. At that time he was a Reader in the Department of Anthropology of North Bengal University. This happened eight years after my retirement from Ranchi University. I was more acquainted with his former teachers, his eminent teachers Professors Amulya Ratan Banerjee, and Asit Baran Das Chaudhuri, were following a specific line of investigation, i.e. study on

trace elements that drew my attention. This led me to acquaint myself with him and in course of time that got more strengthened by visiting his department several times as visiting fellow or as examiner.

Editors of anthropology journals in India always feel paucity of good articles in their basket. So they are always in search of good articles from scholars working under senior professors in universities. I was well acquainted with Jaydip's research *guru* Dr A. B. Das Chaudhuri, through Professor Amulya Ratan Banerjee. Professor A. R. Banerjee, my revered senior, and contemporary of late Professor Indera Paul Singh of Delhi and late Professor L. P. Vidyarthi of Ranchi, did pioneering work on genetics of human head hair in his department. His legacy was carried on by his student Dr Das Chaudhuri and later by Dr Jaydip Sen.

So I was inclined to have an article from Dr Jaydip Sen on this uncommon field of study which he was pursuing in Calcutta at that time. I gratefully acknowledged his article, and it appeared in the year 2008, in September issue of *South Asian Anthropologist* under the title "Assessment of human exposure to toxic elements in India: An anthropological approach."

Unfortunately, he could not continue further studies on trace elements in human population groups at North Bengal University because of the lack of well-equipped laboratory at the initial level, so he shifted his focus of interest on growth and nutrition studies among the population groups of North Bengal and contiguous areas. In the field of nutrition and growth studies he and his team of research students did excellent contribution, which will certainly guide and benefit younger researchers interested in this area of research.

It is very unfortunate and distressing to see that Professor Sen could not lay his hand on his last edited volume (2021), *Nutrition and Health among Indian Tribes with Reference to Eastern India*, that came out in print after his demise. This volume he edited jointly with Dr Jyoti Ratan Ghosh.

Jaydip Sen was born at Agartala (1965) and had his schooling from primary to secondary education in Shillong. He did his graduation in Anthropology from Sree Chaitanya College, Habra, West Bengal in 1987, and completed his postgraduate studies in Anthropology in 1991, specializing in Physical

Anthropology and Human Genetics from the University of Calcutta. He received University Grants Commission Fellowship (Jr. & Sr.) for his doctoral research on the topic titled, "*Determination of Essential and Toxic Trace Element Concentrations in Scalp Hair of The Bengalee Population of West Bengal*", and was awarded Ph.D. degree from the University of Calcutta in 1998. Being still a research scholar, Jaydip Sen was appointed as a Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology, Bangabasi College, Calcutta (Kolkata) in August 1996; and later continued in that department in a senior scale till the year 2005 August. Thereafter he left Calcutta and moved to North Bengal. Dr Jaydip Sen was appointed Associate Professor and Head, Department of Anthropology, University of North Bengal in the year 2008, and subsequently became Professor in the same department in the year 2011 August. Professor Jaydip Sen continued in that position till the end of his life on 30 November 2021.

Apart from his numerous academic contributions in the field of human growth and nutrition particularly among the people of North Bengal, and supervising his Ph.D. scholars, Professor Sen was greatly involved in the university administration and academic bodies of the university as chairman and executive member. During his long stay at NBU from 2005 to 2021, he greatly involved himself and took initiative in many development activities in his university.

Professor Sen had successfully supervised four Ph.D. scholars and had completed two large academic projects, (a) Effect of ground-water arsenic contamination on reproductive performance of the affected individuals and their socio-economic status; and (b) Assessment of Nutritional status using anthropometric measurements and determination of trace element in selected body tissues, under the financial support of the University Grants Commission. He was member of editorial board of a number anthropological journals of India and was the editor of the journal *South Asian Anthropologist*, since the year 2020.

He had to his credit more than 50 research publications in reputed journals of India and abroad. Professor Sen as Academic Co-coordinator had organized several Refresher Course in Anthropology sponsored by UGC-Academic Staff College and the

Department of Anthropology. He also took initiative in organizing a number of National Seminars in his department sponsored by University Grants Commission, New Delhi.

During the 16 years of Prof. Sen's active stay in the department, excluding the Covid-19 period, he had developed an excellent team of teachers and researchers, young anthropologists in his department, who are always enthusiastic in academic activities, as I have found them during the departmental seminars and other academic programmes. I am sure and have

great expectation from the present teachers, the professors, that they will further carry forward their aspirations for academic excellence in the anthropological field of North Bengal in near future. There is immense scope and I sincerely believe that they will move forward gradually towards the desired goal.

May the soul of the departed scholar rest in peace.

P. Dash Sharma