

Obituary

Dibyendu Kanti Bhattacharya
(28 June 1938-25 December 2017)

On 25th December 2017, I had received a message from Delhi, 'Prof. Bhattachaya died in hospital'. I was shocked seeing the message on my mobile. Many memories flashed through my mind at that time seeing the news of the death of Dibyendu *da*, our Nanu *da*, our High School *dada* of Kashmere (also spelt as Kashmiri) Gate, Bengali Boys' High School at Delhi (Bangla School, founded 1899). His father, our *Pandit Moshai* Sir, was Sanskrit teacher in our school. Who took all the patience and explored all the ways to explain and to elaborate to us the meaning of the *sloka* — '*nainang chhindanti sashtrani nainang dahati pabaka*'; but being a self-willed stubborn student, as most of us were at that time, had paid little attention to his philosophical elaboration of the *slokas*. With the news of the death of Dibyendu *da*, all these memories came to my mind, and I mentally repeated the same *sloka* which I had little understood in my school days — *nainang chhindanti sashtrani nainang dahati pabaka; na chainang kledayentapo na shoshayati marutaah*. In those days during 50s and 60s we were staying at Kashmere Gate. Dibyendu *da*'s house was within the walking distance from our house.

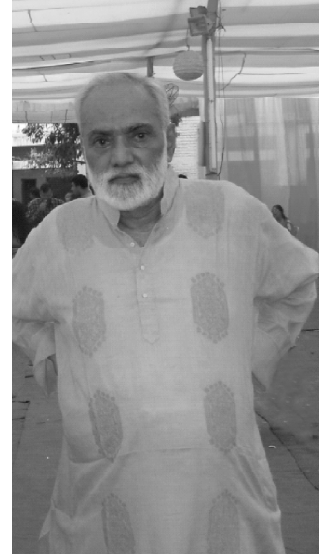
I will never forget the extensive help extended to me by Dibyendu *da* though being very busy in his teaching assignments as lecturer in the department, when I was preparing the draft for my Ph.D. dissertation report at Delhi University during the years 1969-70. I had often visited his house in the evening which was far away from my place at that time. He did lot of language editing of my dissertation draft for Ph.D. slicing off some his valuable time for me; and Pratibha *bowdi* (Pratibha Savarkar, grandniece of Veer Savarkar) as always placed snacks before me as she knew that I am coming traversing a long distance by riding on a motorcycle. Their nuptial knot

was tied in the year 1969. Those were the days with Dibyendu *da* and *bowdi* that I can never ever forget.

My meeting with Professor Dibyendu Kanti Bhattacharya at Ranchi happened after a long time sometime in the second half of the year 2011 when he had visited Ranchi on the invitation of a lecture series at Anthropology Department of Ranchi University. Professor

Bhattacharya and Prathibha *bowdi* had visited us and had spent some hours with us in one evening at our house in Harmu colony. It was a wonderful evening that we had all enjoyed. My last meeting with Dibyendu *da* and Pratibha *bowdi* was in the year 2014 when they were attending the Durga Puja on the *aastami* day at the premises of Bengali Higher Secondary School at Civil Lines of Delhi near Indraprastha College. It is our old school with a higher status at a new place with a new building.

Dr Bhattacharya had specialized in physical anthropology in his post graduation from Delhi University in the year 1960, and received his Ph.D. award from the University of Delhi for his research on serological and some morphological studies among the Anglo-Indians of India in the year 1965. He was lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at Lucknow University for some period during 1965-66. Later in the year 1966 Dr Bhaattacharya joined as a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology of



the University of Delhi. With this change of place he changed his focus of research from physical anthropology to archaeology. Thus began his new found carrier in archaeology.

For three years from 1971 onwards Dr Bhattacharya was a DAAD post doctoral fellow in Germany. This fellowship brought a chance for him to work with Professor Francois Bordes (1919-1981) of the University of Bordeaux, an internationally known French archeologist who was an authority on the culture of Neanderthal man. During his fellowship in Germany he had visited many archaeological research centres of UK, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Norway and Switzerland.

In 1985 he was appointed to the post of Reader, and in 1991 was appointed Professor in the Department of Anthropology of the University of Delhi.

He did extensive archaeological research in many States of India, particularly his interest was concentrated in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand with extension up to West Bengal. Along with his research student Manoj Kumar he conducted an excavation at Kondapeta Lower Paleolithic site in Andhra Pradesh. His most popular book titled *Paleolithic Europe: A Summary of Some Important Finds with Special Reference to Central Europe*, was published in 1977 by Humanities Press. He was awarded D.Litt. degree in 1983 by Ranchi University for his research work in Europe.

Professor Bhattacharya had delivered many invited lectures on palaeoanthropology and prehistoric archaeology in the universities and institutes in India, particular mention may be made of as: Panchanan Mitra Lecture at Asiatic Society in 1993; Dharani Sen Memorial Lecture at Anthropology Department of Calcutta University in 1997; D. N. Majumdar Lecture at Lucknow in 2003, and J. S. Bhandari Memorial

Lecture in 2015 at Lucknow. He was the President of Anthropology and Archaeology Section of the 86th Indian Science Congress Association meeting held at Chennai in the year 1999. In the year 2003 he had visited Indiana University, USA; Frankfurt in Germany and Czech Republic on a sponsored programme of Millennium Ecosystem Assessment for his contribution as coordinating author of 'Cultural Services'. He retired from the university service in the year 2003.

Prof. D. K. Bhattacharya had written the *Introduction* for the title, "A Catalogue of Prehistoric Tools" contributed by Sudipa Saha [xxiii, 120 pages, 20 unnumbered pages of plates: illustrations (some color), 6 maps; 29 cm], a publication of Indian Archaeological Society in 2010. He also took much initiative to reorganize the Indraprastha Museum of Art and Archaeology in New Delhi, under the auspices of Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi, that was opened for public in October 2010.

Professor Bhattacharya was associated with many national organizations and institutes, like University Grants Commission; Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi; Anthropological Survey of India; and was a member in the board of examiners of many Indian universities. He had supervised eight research scholars successfully for their Ph. D. programme at Delhi University.

With his death I have lost a brotherly affectionate person, a school time *dada*, a very good caring friend, who was ever ready to help me when trouble troubled me in the formative period of my career. I can only convey my condolences to *bowdi* and her daughter. And for Dibyendu *da*, I pray for his soul to rest in peace.

P. Dash Sharma