

Obituary

Asesh Kumar Haldar
(May 01, 1943 – May 17, 2018)

On 18 May, thirty minutes past midnight, to be exact at 00.29 hrs, I had received a message, a three word message, ‘Father no more’ from Bapi (Satadru) who was at that time close to his father’s death bed. When I opened the inbox of the phone in the early morning around 6 am, I found the saddening message. A saddening message indeed conveying the demise of Dr Asesh Kumar Haldar, my closest friend and confidant since 1970, when I was at Ranchi. On 10 April 2018, the eldest son Satadru of Professor Haldar had mailed to me a message “Kaku, bapi here. Baba still in ICU on ventilator”. I was shocked receiving the message. I was aware of Dr Haldar’s ailment, he was a cancer patient, and was carrying the dreaded disease for quite some time. The warning bell had already been given and the time was slowly closing in and the end came on 17th May late evening.

In 1970, I was on deputation from Anthropological Survey of India, Mysore, to Ranchi University Anthropology Department, for teaching and a research assignment at Ranchi. I was introduced to Asesh Kumar Haldar through a letter by Dr Jayanta Sarkar who was at Mysore with me for some months in 1970. Asesh and Jayanta were close friends and were students of Professor L. P. Vidyarthi. Thus began my association with Asesh Haldar at Ranchi that ended in May 2018. Asesh, a soft spoken, mild mannered gentle personality had a great perseverance. And I found to my amazement that he was the sole back room writer who assisted late Professor Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi for many long years for his volumes of publications. His load was lessened when Asesh Haldar became Lecturer from the position of Demonstrator. I was much amazed and felt sorry for Asesh at Ranchi as I had never found this in Delhi University where I researched. In India there is much academic exploitation.

Asesh Haldar (fondly called Haldar *da* by his students) was born in a remote village Shyamganj, in

the then undivided Midnapur district. After completing his school and college studies from Midnapur district he left West Bengal to take up further studies in anthropology at the University of Ranchi. In postgraduate studies at Ranchi he topped the list of successful candidates and was awarded B. N. Sahay Gold Medal in Anthropology by Ranchi University in the year 1967. He was appointed as Research Officer for two large scale projects of the department, popularly known as ‘Tribal Leadership Project’ and ‘Indo-Japanese Project’, before he was offered the position of Demonstrator in the department in the year 1969 August. He continued in the post of Demonstrator for quite many years. He was awarded Ph.D. degree of Ranchi University in 1978 for his thesis on ‘Mining Labourers of Chotanagpur’ when he was holding the position as Demonstrator in his department. He got married to Anuva in 1973.

Dr Haldar was promoted to the position of Lecturer in the year 1976, and had continued in that position till the middle of the year 1983. He was elevated to the post of Reader in 1983 and had continued in that position till 1992. He was made Professor of Anthropology in the same department in January 1992 and continued in that position till he retired at the age of superannuation on 30 April 2003. Thus Dr Asesh Kumar Haldar served the department for thirty-five long years from where he got his training in anthropological investigations.



Professor A. K. Halder had carried out anthropological field work in most backward regions of undivided Bihar now known as Jharkhand. His major field of anthropological research studies were on Mining Labourers of Chotanagpur, Impact of Industrialization in Central India, Student Unrest in Chotanagpur; Rise of Anthropology in India; Cultural Pattern of Tribal Bihar; The Primitive Tribes of Jharkhand and West Bengal; among others. His edited book 'Artisan Tribes of Jharkhand and West Bengal' was well received by researchers, and a couple of more books which were published by The Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology, Bidisa, Fulgeria, West Bengal. For some years he remained as President of this well-known institute 'The Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology' at Fulgeria, a social laboratory within an *ashramic* rural fold, which was founded by late Professor Probodh Kumar Bhowmick in 1975. Professor Halder has to his credit some sixty research publications and has edited and authored seven books of anthropological interest. He had successfully supervised more than a dozen research students for their Ph.D. and D.Litt. degrees of Ranchi University.

Dr Asesh K. Halder was on the editorial board of some reputed journals, namely *Man and Life*, *Journal of Social Research*, and *South Asian Anthropologist*. He was the book review editor for *South Asian Anthropologist* since 1994; and continued in that position till he died. The journal was founded in the year 1980. He was also life member of many learned societies in India, and was member of board of studies and examination boards of some Indian universities. He was much loved and respected by his students for his amicable nature and scholarship. In appreciation, his students dedicated a felicitation volume to him on the eve of his superannuation titled *Some Aspects of Indian Society and Culture*.

With the demise of Professor Halder I have lost a great friend, a compeer, who was ever ready to help and advise me whenever I had faced a troubled situation. I convey my condolences to Anuva, and to Satadru and Kaushik, and pray for the departed soul to rest in peace.

P. Dash Sharma

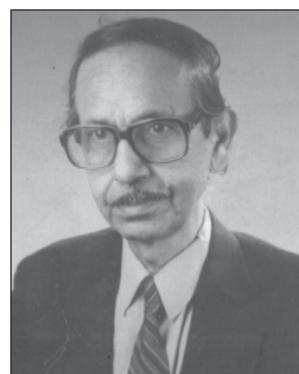
Obituary

*Rebati Mohan Sarkar
(1937-2018)*

I was very shocked when I heard about the death of Dr Rebati Mohan Sarkar under whom I had done my first anthropological field investigation in Bakreswar village in Birbhum district, West Bengal, where lies the Bakreswar Shakti Peeth and the hot spring. Dr Sarkar died on 19th June 2018 at his residence in Kolkata. I was much saddened hearing the news. I had a long association with Dr Sarkar. I still remember the day when in October 1972, I had been asked by Dr. R. M. Sarkar to accompany him and to assist him in his field work in Bakreswar village of Birbhum district in West Bengal. That was my first field exposure among the Santal tribe of Majhipara village near Bakreswar temple village. My deep interest in learning anthropology drew the attention of Dr Sarkar and thus I was given the field work and

data analyses assignments for his projects funded by UGC, ICSSR and other funding agencies. At that time he was a lecturer in anthropology department of Bangabasi College, Calcutta (now Kolkata).

Rebati Mohan Sarkar was born in a small village called Rasa of Birbhum district in 1937. After completing his school education he studied at Siuri College of Birbhum district. During his graduation studies he authored a small book titled



'Birbhum Kahini'. After completing his B.Sc. graduation from Calcutta University, he shifted to Ranchi for taking up a course in anthropology at Ranchi University. In 1961 he joined as a Lecturer in Anthropology at Bangabasi College in Kolkata. He obtained his Ph.D. degree from Patna University under the guidance of late Professor Sachhidananda and also received the D. Litt. degree from the same university. He served at Bangabasi College for a long period and was promoted to the position of Reader in Anthropology and served his department till he retired from the college at the age of superannuation.

Dr Sarkar was associated with many national organizations and institutes like University Grants Commission, Anthropological Survey of India, and with a number of regional societies of West Bengal.

Dr R. M. Sarkar has to his credit many books which are immensely popular among the students of anthropology in West Bengal. He specially developed these books for his students written in English and Bengali. Some of his popular books are: Fundamentals

of Physical Anthropology, *Jaibik Nrivigyan* (Biological Anthropology), *Samajik-Sanskritik Nrivigyan* (Social-Cultural Anthropology), *Falito-Karmik-Vikasmulak Nrivigyan* (Applied-Action-Development Anthropology), and *Byaboharik Nrivigyan* (Practical Anthropology), Fundamental of Biological Anthropology, and his last publication in 1980 was 'Anthropology of Development—An Integrated Appraisal'. He has published more than 150 research articles in social science journals of India and abroad, and has written many popular essays on various topics of anthropological interest in Bengali. In the year 1987 after the demise of Dr Surajit Chandra Sinha, the editorship of the internationally reputed journal *Man in India* was entrusted to Dr Rebati Mohan Sarkar by the Man in India Trust at Ranchi. He carried with him this task of editing the journal with great diligence for thirty long years till he died in 2018.

I pray for his soul to rest in peace.

Prodyot Gangopadhyay