

## IN MEMORIAM

### Dr. H. S. Saksena

Dr. Hari Sahai Saksena, popularly known as 'Saksena Saheb' by his friends and associates at Lucknow, was truly an epitome of work ethics in the so called 'Nawabi Culture' of Lucknow. He passed away on 28<sup>th</sup> August at the age of 86. Born on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1930 in the city of Kannauj, Saksena wanted to become a lawyer, in fact, he did L.L.B. after B.A. from Lucknow University, but then he joined Master's programme in Anthropology and stood first to receive Pandit Jagpal Krishna Gold Medal in 1954. He also received Dr. Indrajeet Singh Gold Medal for his M.A. dissertation which was adjudged as the best. Then he worked as a Research Associate in the Cornell Project led by Prof. S.C. Dube. Subsequently he taught in the Department of Anthropology, Lucknow University in 1956-57 headed by Prof. D.N. Majumdar. After that he joined the Government of India and worked in various capacities in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Welfare and also at the Commission of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. He retired as Director (in 1988), National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and subsequently settled at Lucknow.

His post retirement phase has been amazingly productive, particularly through the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society (EFCS, established by D.N. Majumdar in 1945). He was the Co-Editor (1989-1992) of the journal *The Eastern Anthropologist*, established in 1947 by D. N. Majumdar. He became the Editor with Prof. J. S. Bhandari and Dr. Hari Mohan Mathur (1997-2000), with Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava and Prof. Peter van der Veer (2001-2004) and with Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava and Nadeem Hasnain (2005-2016). I was associated with him very closely as Assistant Editor, Associated Editor and Co-Editor of the journal from 1997-2016 and from 2017 onwards I became the Editor along with Prof. P. Venkata Rao. I would rather say that the concerted efforts of Dr. Saksena made the journal very popular and it continued its uninterrupted publication. His commitment for editing and proof reading has been tremendous which I have witnessed myself. Frankly speaking his heart was engaged while doing the journal's work. He would be doing untiring efforts to produce the special issues of the journal such as the one on Rehabilitation, then the Golden Jubilee number and so on. Dr. Saksena was also associated with D. N. Majumdar Museum of Folk Life and Culture of the Society for about 25 years.

He has authored 4 books: (i) *Safeguards For Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes – Founding Fathers' Views* (New Delhi, 1980), (ii) *Putting*

*PeopleLast: Tribal Displacement and Rehabilitation* (New Delhi: Inter India Publications, 1999), (iii) *Atrocities on Scheduled Castes: The Law and The Realities* (New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2010) and (iv) *Tribal Studies and Beyond: Contributions of D.N. Majumdar to Indian Anthropology* (Jaipur: Rawat publication, 2017). Out of the above, the second and the third books were the outcome of the projects undertaken by him through the Society. In fact, Dr. Saksena undertook seven projects during his about 29 years of association with the Society. The Society was a full-fledged work place for him particularly in the evening for 2-3 hours. The Society has been well equipped with secretarial staff and the General Secretaries including Prof. B.R. K. Shukla, Shri P. K. Tiwari, Prof. Nadeem Hasnain and myself cooperated with him for his work and enjoyed his company. The second volume is about displacement and rehabilitation of oustees in Sonbhadra District of Uttar Pradesh. Sonbhadra was full of irrigation and mining projects near Rihand River. He along with his long term associate Shri Chandra Sen undertook intensive field work in the area at the age of 70. The third volume is about atrocities on Scheduled Castes which is a study of few districts of Uttar Pradesh. Saksena also did some intensive field work in a few villages. It was a project undertaken from Ministry of Welfare, Government of India. Later on, he revised the work extensively and earned a Ph.D. from University of Lucknow at the age of 78.

The fourth book has been the outcome of a project on Prof. D.N. Majumdar which he undertook as a Senior Fellow of Indian Council of Social Science Research at the Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow. It was Saksena's dream project because he loved his Guru and was truly mesmerized by him. In my hundreds of meetings with him he hardly missed a chance to discuss some aspects of D.N. Majumdar. Saksena also edited a few volumes along with the other editors: (i) *Perspectives in Tribal Development: Focus on Uttar Pradesh* (Lucknow: Bharat Books, 1998), (ii) *Scheduled Tribes and Development* (New Delhi: Serials Publication, 2006), (iii) *Anthropology in India* (New Delhi: Serials Publication, 2010). Out of the above the first one was the outcome of a seminar organized by EFCS in 1988. The second and the third volumes are the outcome of some of the papers taken from *The Eastern Anthropologist*.

His work on D. N. Majumdar is a detailed reading of Majumdar's theoretical perspectives, his researches and publications on different aspects of Indian society and culture. Saksena meticulously collected information for his books from various sources: on a visit to Cambridge, he went through Majumdar's Ph.D. thesis; he tried to get personal letters written by Majumdar to his students and so on. He was in constant touch with Prof. T.N. Madan for his work, who went through the whole draft seriously and suggested him some changes. Worth mentioning here is that, I went through the whole first draft and learned a lot besides suggesting a few things. The book has thirteen chapters: beginning with a chapter on Majumdar's life and works, then proceeding to chapters on his tribal ethnography, his ideas on primitive religion, culture contact and cultural changes, tribal rehabilitation; three chapters on village studies, one chapter

each on urban studies, applied anthropology, contributions to other branches of Anthropology, Majumdar's academic journey in the perspectives of Sociology of Knowledge and also a concluding chapter. It is an example of perfect blending of personal and professional life of D.N. Majumdar.

I was associated with him personally from 1992 when I joined the Department of Sociology, University of Lucknow, as a lecturer. My supervisor Prof. J.S. Bhandari (Department of Anthropology, Delhi University) introduced me to him, then no looking back, he would motivate me every time to read and publish. I worked with him in all his projects and wrote the rough drafts partially as well. He would discuss all aspects of life including the drawing room culture, kitchen culture, seven course dinner, cigar and scotch culture, Kayastha culture and Brahmin culture as well among other things. We have spent several evenings together discussing personal lives of academicians to politics to secularism and many social problems. We miss Saksena Sahab very deeply, particularly his warm nature and tips for good health as well as lively jokes. I also had some critical arguments with him, may be sometimes ended up with a sumptuous dinner. Dr. Saksena has left his gracious wife: our Manorama Aunty, two sons Amit Sahai, 58, who is working as a senior Indian Forest Service Officer, younger son Commander Soumitra Sahai who was working with Navy and subsequently joined a multinational company, and a married daughter Jaya. All are well settled in Delhi and the NCR. Dr. Saksena will be remembered by his colleagues, friends and associates as a man of substance and the academics will remember him for his posthumously published work on D.N. Majumdar. In fact, Prof. T.N. Madan in his foreword to the book said that not much work has been done on intellectual biography in India, hence, "Saksena's work is an exemplary work and significant contribution to the history of Anthropology in India". Prof. R.K. Jain (formerly Professor, CSSS, School of Social Sciences, J.N.U.) delivered the first H.S. Saksena Memorial Lecture on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019 under the auspicious of EFCS in the Department of Sociology, University of Lucknow. His topic was "Reinventing Holistic Anthropology: The D.N. Majumdar Legacy in Perspective". He fondly recollected his association with Late Dr. H.S. Saksena particularly dinner time discussions. As far as I remember both Dr. Saksena and Mrs. Manorama were great hosts and most of the Sociologists and Anthropologists visiting Lucknow must have had some meal with them. I distinctly remember a lavish party thrown by his sons on the occasion of their 50<sup>th</sup> marriage anniversary at the sophisticated Kota House in New Delhi, where I along with Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava enjoyed the party to the maximum with a lot of *shayari* and dancing. It is an unending story and truly Saksena's memory leaves significant imprints on many minds.

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