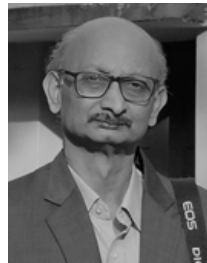


Four Decades of Friendship: Walked Hand in Hand



Prof. Dr Jaydip Sen
(1965-2021)

NABAKUMAR DUARY[†]

*Ashirbad,
18A, Ramkrishna Sarani, Dhalua,
Nabapally, Garia, Kolkata-700152
E-mail: nabakumarduary@gmail.com,*

It is very painful to respond to the request of Professor P. Dash Sharma, founder editor of the *South Asian Anthropologist* to write obituary / reminiscences on one of my best academic friends Professor Jaydip Sen. A relationship that grew dating back in 1983 at Habra Sree Chaitanya College, North 24 Parganas under Calcutta University. For more than four decades we were together beginning from undergraduate to postgraduate level, and that continued further to our respective professional life. We were always keeping in touch over mobile phone and discussed about different facets of anthropological teaching, research and publications. Sometimes he had visited the DNA laboratory and palaeoanthropology laboratory of the Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata, along with his postgraduate students of North Bengal University (NBU) as an educational tour. He often used to send his unpublished articles to me for my comments/ observations and had also sent published articles to

me for my knowledge. He even had sent the cover page of his last edited book for my opinion and suggestion. He had requested many times to me for photographs of some veteran anthropologists in India for publications about them in *South Asian Anthropologist*. Prof. Sen has published many articles and books, but wanted more to add in his list of publications. Once he told me in August 2021 that he would like to publish one personal diary of his mother. It is a valuable document of the Indian freedom movement particularly events and incidents related to Mahatma Gandhi in undivided Bengal. He opined that this will be a significant contribution of his family on the eve of 75 years of Independence of India.

On 24th December 2017, I went with Prof. Sen and his wife and daughter, to our undergraduate Anthropology Department upon an invitation on the occasion of first Anthropology Honours Reunion (1982-2017) and also had visited the Science College

Hostel. This was our last travel journey together from Habra to Kolkata by his car. We had our last meeting on 13th January 2020, in Anthropology Department of North Bengal University on the occasion of a one day Seminar on ‘*Celebrating Hundred Years of Teaching in Anthropology in India*’, in his department. In the evening I presented my documentary film “*Untiring Mind*”, a documentary film on Dr Biraja Sankar Guha, in the seminar hall. During our stay in NBU Guest House he always took care of me about the food and accommodation. One day he had also arranged specially for me *Boroli* fish curry, an additional dish, for the meal and also arranged a local tour nearby with his family.

II

Jaydip passed away on the 30th November 2021, at Calcutta Medical College at 11.30 pm due to massive cardiac arrest. Initially he was admitted in the same hospital on 7 November 2021 for Corona treatment. First I saw the saddening news of his death in the Whatsapp group of the Indian Anthropological Society, when I was in Gorakhpur town of Uttar Pradesh on 1st December, 2021. During that time we were travelling by bus from Maharajganj district (Pharenda Tahsil) to Pratapgarh district for an official fieldwork assignment on a lesser known community Chamarmangta in that state. There I received several phone calls and messages from anthropology fraternity and from college and university classmates who confirmed about the sudden demise of our beloved friend Prof. Sen. I was aware that he has been admitted in hospital for Corona treatment. But the end would come so soon I could not imagine. It is difficult to believe that he is no more and I will never be able meet him again. I was remembering all our bygone days from college life to university life and to our professional life. Jaydip was very much fond of cricket and he was a leftist bowler. He used to come in college/ hostel play ground in the afternoon to play cricket and football. He was punctual and dedicated for any work we as found from his college days. He suffered from economic crisis during final year of Master’s due to sudden demise of his father. As such he worked in a shop to support his family in Kolkata. We shared space, food and exchanged class note during our student life in hostel and during training in the field. I visited his maternal uncle house in

Madyamgram and to his rented house at Santoshpur, Kolkata in May, 1996 and meet his mother Pritha Devi. She was a vigorous reader of scientific books, periodicals and journals. She was attached with many scientific organizations and actively participated in preserving butterflies and Selaginella plant species in Meghalaya region.

III

I joined the first virtual condolence meeting of Professor Jaydip Sen on 12 December 2021, i.e. on the 57th birthday of Jaydip, from Kunda block in Pratapgarh district of Uttar Pradesh. In this meeting, our classmates (Professor Subrata Sankar Bagchi and Dr. Gopal Mandal), professors, research scholars, students of anthropology in different universities and educational institutions participated in the meeting. In the meeting, it was decided to organize the Jaydip Sen Memorial Lecture annually by Anthropology Departments of any colleges and universities. The first memorial lecture was delivered through virtual meet by Professor Michael Hermanussan on ‘*Questioning Stunting and Underweight as Indicators of Malnutrition*’ on the 28th January, 2022, organized by Department of Anthropology, Sidhu Kanu Birsa University, Puruliya, West Bengal. The Indian Anthropological Society organized a condolence meeting of Professor Jaydip Sen on 30 December, 2021 in virtual platform.

IV

Jaydip was born in Agartala, Tripura, on the 12th December, 1965. He was the only child of late Prasun Sen and late Pritha Sen. He had his early schooling at St. Edmund’s School, Shillong, Meghalaya, for a few years and after that he went to Delhi in 1972 and completed his primary education from St. Stephen’s School, Delhi. In 1975 he returned from Delhi to Shillong and completed his Higher Secondary education from St. Edmund’s School. Jaydip first got admitted in Chemistry (Honours) in Sree Chaitanya College, Habra, West Bengal. The following year, he switched over to Anthropology (Honours) in the same college and completed B.Sc. (Honours) in Anthropology in July, 1987. Jaydip passed M.Sc. Anthropology with a specialization in physical anthropology from University of Calcutta in November, 1991. He was also the recipient of the UGC

Fellowship. He pursued doctoral research in applied physical anthropology and completed his Ph.D. thesis in 1998 titled '*Determination of Essential and Toxic Trace Element Concentrations in Scalp Hair of the Bengalee Population, West Bengal*' under the supervision of the renowned Professor A. B. Das Chaudhuri of the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta.

V

Jaydip Sen was employed as a Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology, Bangabasi College, Kolkata from 23rd August, 1996 to 22 August, 2005. Then he was selected as Reader in Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology, NBU, West Bengal and he later became Professor of Anthropology from 23 August, 2011. He was always engaged in academic work from his study table to lecture theatre, library to laboratory, fieldwork to guidance in dissertation work. He has supervised four Ph.D. work in different topics in physical anthropology for his students namely Nitish Mondal, Binu Dorjee, Pushpalata Tigga and Sampri Debnath.

Professor Sen was the visiting faculty to the Department of Anthropology, Vidyasagar University, West Bengal. Professor Sen completed some collaborative research works with Department of Anthropology, Panjab University, Chandigarh; Department of Forensic Medicine, Manipal University, Mangalore and Department of Physiology, North Bengal Medical College and Hospital. However, Professor Jaydip Sen completed UGC funded two research projects titled, (1) "Effect of ground-water arsenic contamination on reproductive performance of the affected individuals and their socio-economic status", and (2) "Assessment of nutritional status using anthropometric measurements and determination of trace element in selected body tissues".

Professor Sen was a successful academic co-ordinator to the UGC oriental and refresher course and was a good organizer of the seminar as well as had administrative capabilities in the post of Controller of Examination of NBU, Departmental Head, Superintendent of R. K. Hall, Chairman of Hostel Monitoring Committee, Chairman of Anti-ragging Squad and anti-ragging squad.

VI

The area of research interest of Professor Sen was human growth, nutrition and forensic anthropology. He published 126 articles in reputed journals in India and abroad jointly with his students, junior faculty members and with his Ph. D. guide or individually. Subjects of the research articles are like aging, nutritional status, anthropometric measurements, human growth, demography, human hair, obesity, blood pressure, methodology in physical anthropology researches. Some of those names of the journals are covered like *Human Biology*, *Human Biology Review*, *American Journal of the Physical Anthropology*, *Annals of Human Biology*, *Forensic Science International*, *Epidemiology*, *Biostatistics and Public Health*, *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, *Journal of Tropical Pediatrics*, *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine and Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology*, *South Asian Anthropologist*, *Oriental Anthropologist*, *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*, *Journal of Human Ecology*, *Indian Journal of the Physical Anthropology and Human Genetics*, *Journal of Ecotoxicology and Environmental Monitoring*, *Journal of Life Science*, *Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India* and so on.

Apart from articles, he published three books on '*Nutrition and Health among Tribal Populations of India: A bio-cultural Approach*' (2016); '*Malnutrition: A Double Burden*' (2018); and '*Nutrition and Health among Indian Tribes: With Special Reference to Eastern India*' (2021). A large number of his research findings have been appreciated by anthropologists in India and abroad. These were carried out on the application of anthropometry in the assessment of human growth, nutrition status, body composition and low birth weight.

VII

Professor Jaydip Sen was the Editor of the journal *South Asian Anthropologist* from March, 2015 to 2019, while Prof. P. Dash Sharma was the Chief Editor of the journal. Prof. Jaydip Sen singularly edited only two volumes of *South Asian Anthropologist*, volume 20 (2020) and 21 (2021) before his sad demise. Once I had the opportunity to ask about his editorship of the

journal in 2018, to this Professor Sen had responded that as Prof. Dash Sharma (the founder Editor of the journal since 1980) because of his age factor, was unable to look after the editing work of the journal so he requested me to take the responsibility of editorship of the journal. After a few days, Sen accepted the proposal of Professor Dash Sharma. In this discussion, Jaydip told me that he never returned article to the contributors; rather he always tried to improve it for publication as advised by Professor Dash Sharma. Professor Sen had a dedication to anthropology and to the journal. He was always thinking to improve the quality of the journal in different dimensions. He was a successful editor having all qualities to be an editor.

Professor Jaydip Sen served as the Board of Editors of some esteem peer-reviewed scientific journals like *Human Biology and Public Health*, *Journal of Life Sciences and Human Biology Review* and a reviewer for several national and international journals of repute. He was also a member of many academic and professional bodies such as the Auxological Society, Germany; the Nutrition Society of India, Hyderabad, and the Indian Anthropological Society, Kolkata.

Professor Sen had the unique calibre to make relationship with some anthropologists in India and abroad since his postgraduate education. His correspondences were with world famous physical anthropologists, paleoanthropologists and prehistoric anthropologists through letters. Even, he had close association with some famous anthropologists like Professor Barry Bogin, Dr Michael Hermanussen and P. D. Christiance Schefeller and few others. Even he published joint articles with them in foreign reputed journals.

VIII

As a person, Professor Jaydip Sen was considered to be a gentleman and had pleasant and kind hearted personality, good soul, down-to-earth attitude, and a perfectionist in research work. He was a good teacher, good scholar in physical anthropology, good academician, good administrator, good research collaborator, good organizer and a good editor. His enthusiasm and indomitable spirit towards anthropological research is remarkable. These things always inspired to his students and young teachers in anthropology in NBU. Young anthropologists will remember him for his contribution in a short lifespan.

Above all he was a good family man and maintained the social circle. He loved Indian music and encouraged his wife and daughter in music and dance. I am still remembering the last conversation I had with Jaydip after reaching in Kolkata on 1st October, 2021. His last words with me, “*I will visit your house along with Gopa (wife) and Upasana (daughter). There we will finalize our edited book and make a plan for publishing joint articles in South Asian Anthropologist....*”

Oh! Friend, we were not prepared about your sudden demise. Why do you leave us silently without information? I will never receive your phone call or nor meet again. I never thought I will write this reminiscence on you. But I am not able to write the whole of our bygone days due to lack of language to express my painful feelings. Please consider my agony. I strongly believe that you will survive in mortal world through your academic contribution and through your students.

Dr Nabakumar Duary
Anthropological Survey of India,
Kolkata 700016, West Bengal