

In Memoriam:
Yogendra Singh

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Professor Yogendra Singh, one of the distinguished post-colonial Indian sociologists, breathed his last at his Delhi residence on 10th May, 2020 at the age of 87. It is an irreparable loss not only to the sociology community but to the entire social science discipline also.

Prof. Yogendra Singh was born into a zamindar family on 2nd November 1932 in Chowkhara in the Basti district of Uttar Pradesh. After his early education in his native district, he went to Lucknow for higher studies in sociology and obtained post-graduate and doctoral degrees in the Lucknow School of Sociology. He was blessed to be the student of eminent teachers like Radhakamal Mukherjee, D.P. Mukherji, D.N.

Majumdar, A.K. Saran, Baljit Singh and many other distinguished sociologists. Later he went to well-known universities like Rajasthan and Jodhpur. He was instrumental in establishing sociology departments along with other colleagues like Prof. TKN Unnithan, Prof. Indra Deva and many others.

He was instrumental in setting up one of India's finest sociology departments such as Department of Sociology, Rajasthan University. After a decade of teaching in Rajasthan, Prof. Singh was invited to establish the Centre for the Study of Social Systems (CSSS) in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi in 1971 and contributed immensely to build Indian sociology through eminent

teaching and excellent research guidance. Now CSSS remains a world class teaching and research centre and the products carry reputation at both national and international levels.

Prof. Singh was rarest of the rare and a very popular teacher in JNU. Even students of economics, history and other social science used to attend his lecture sessions due to his unique and simple style of teaching even complex and dense theories with lucidity. He was an expert in social stratification, social theory, social change, culture and modernisation. He was neither a functionalist nor a Marxist, but he emphasised theory in relation to context.

Prof. Singh was a loving teacher who groomed almost three generations of Indian sociologists. He has produced a world class cadre of sociologists such as: Professor K. L. Sharma, Singh's first Ph. D. student at Jodhpur University in 1968; Dipankar Gupta, who was his first Ph.D. student at JNU and Anand Kumar, who was also Singh's M. Phil student, and many others. There are a variety of unique facets of Prof. Yogendra Singh's academic approach. For instance, he was neither a functionalist nor

a hard core Marxist but was a staunch believer in applying an integrated approach to study social stratification, modernization, and transformation of Indian society. Considering the diversities instituted in Indian society, Prof. Singh preferred to apply structural functionalism, structural history, structuralism, cultural and Marxist approaches, simultaneously.

Prof. Singh was particularly remembered for his outstanding contribution to theory building, at a time when majority of Indian sociologists were intending in field-work tradition derived by western scholars, Prof. Singh was an exceptional who ascetically engaged in sociological theories. Prof. Singh had so many volumes of books, research-based articles, chapters, monographs of high intellectual value for reference in teaching, research and guide in development planning and to influence social policies. His epoch-making publications include Modernization of Indian Tradition (1973), Social Stratification and Social Change (1978), Indian Sociology (1987), Culture Change in India (2000), Ideology and Theory in India (2004) etc. Prof. Singh was a versatile

researcher who gave a new path to sociology in India and thus earned a scholastic reputation as a leading social scientist.

He was totally devoted to academic scholarship and research and therefore, very politely, remained outside of power and post as he received offers of vice-chancellorship at India's prominent universities. Prof. Singh lived a full life with varied interests in both research and policy. He has also contributed to the development of sociology as President (1994-95) and Secretary (1976-77 and 78-79) of Indian Sociological Society and he held responsible positions in various academic and government committees concerned with formulation of social policies. He was also a member of research advisory committees, Planning Commission, ICSSR and also served as Convener of the UGC panel of Sociology.

As a person Prof. Yogendra Singh was simple, humble, amiable, humane in nature and always carried a mesmerising effect in interactions. His students used to state that the door of his residence was always open for contact and intellectual discourses. He travelled

to fifty countries in the world on academic assignments and also served as visiting professor in many universities in India and abroad.

In recognition of his "outstanding contributions to Indian sociology" he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Indian Sociological Society (ISS) in 2007 and best Social Scientist Award from the Government of Madhya Pradesh. His death is the culmination of an era in Indian social science which has created a vacuum. He has left a great legacy which we should strive to emulate and extend.

