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**IN MEMORIAM**

**Professor Baleshwar Thakur**  
(July 16, 1943 - December 23, 2023)

Reflecting on the charisma, effortless lifestyle, and exceptional work of my late supervisor, Professor Baleshwar Thakur, fills me with both admiration and sorrow. He was not only an eminent geographer of contemporary India but also a guiding star whose legacy will illuminate the field for generations. Over his remarkable 46-years of academic career, he distinguished himself as a teacher, scholar, and administrator.

Born into a working-class family on July 16, 1943, in Sarabey Village, Madhubani district, North Bihar, Professor Thakur received his early education in Khajauli and at R.K. College, Madhubani (then affiliated with Bihar University, now with Mithila University). His father Shivnandan Thakur and cousin uncle Devnarayan Thakur were influential in his early education that led him to obtain a first division in his matriculation examination. He graduated with Honours in geography from Patna University in 1962 and completed his M.A. in 1964. Starting his teaching career at Ranchi University in 1964, he later moved to Patna University, where he served until 1980.

His commitment to academic excellence was recognized with a Commonwealth scholarship, enabling him to pursue a second master's degree at the University of Waterloo,

Canada (1970-72). Under the mentorship of Professor Lorne H. Russwurm, he conducted groundbreaking research on urban hierarchies in southwestern Ontario, enriching his academic perspective significantly.

Returning to India, Professor Thakur further enhanced his academic credentials, by earning his Ph.D. under Professor P. Dayal from Patna University in 1978. His dissertation, "Entropy Analysis of Changing Urban Patterns in Eastern India," underscored his analytical prowess. He joined the University of Delhi, as a Reader in Geography in 1980 and became a Professor in 1990. He served as the Head of the Department from 1996 to 1999. He served as a Vice-Chancellor of Bihar's L.N. Mithila University from 2001 to 2003. He got superannuated from Department of Geography, University of Delhi in the year 2008.

Professor Thakur's academic journey was marked by prestigious accolades such as the Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the University of Akron (2000) and the Shastri Indo-Canadian Fellowship at York University, Canada (2004). His global influence extended through visiting professorships and guest lectures, enriching geographical discourse worldwide.

His epistemological foundations have been influenced by illustrious luminaries in

geography in both India and North America such as L.N. Ram, P. Dayal, A.K. Dutt, A.G. Noble, F. Costa, R. Ramachandran, R.P. Misra, Savitri G. Burman (late), A.B. Mukherji (late), V.K. Verma, Gerard Rushton, and Bruce Mitchell.

Throughout his illustrious career, Professor Thakur's dedication to education and mentorship remained steadfast. He meticulously prepared his lectures and devoted countless hours to train students in research techniques, supervising 62 master's dissertations, 35 M.Phil. dissertations, and 21 doctoral theses. His mentorship profoundly impacted many students, guiding their careers in geography and policy.

Professor Thakur authored 21 books, edited numerous others, and contributed 70 book chapters and 35 articles to prestigious national and international journals. His editorial work shaped the field, ensuring the dissemination of critical research. Actively participating in workshops on quantitative methods reflected his enduring interest in this area.

His outstanding contributions earned him numerous awards, including the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Regional Development and Planning Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers in 2005. His dedication to Earth System Sciences and various geographical associations underscored his lifelong commitment to the field. He held key positions such as President of Earth System Sciences at the 88th India Science Congress Association (2000-01), President of the National Association of Geographers, India (2003-04), and President of the Indian Institute of Geographers (2012-13).

Professor Thakur's research journey can be divided into two significant periods: from 1964 to 1980 and post-1980s. In the early

phase, he utilized quantitative tools to explore long-term urbanization processes in developing countries, particularly in India. This period laid a strong foundation for his subsequent research endeavors. Upon joining the University of Delhi as a Reader in Geography in 1980, his interests shifted to the study of natural resource management and the history of Indian geography. So, his contributions spanned diverse areas such as urban geography, quantitative geography, natural resource management, the history of Indian geography, showcasing his interdisciplinary approach and profound impact within the discipline.

Passionate about fieldwork, Professor Thakur extensively traveled across India, immersing himself in the landscapes he studied. His name, Baleshwar, reflected his determination, courage, and patience. His retirement did not dim his influence; instead, he continued to illuminate the academic world with his research.

Professor Baleshwar Thakur breathed his last in the presence of his loving family in Sacramento, California on December 23, 2023, and his remains were immersed in the Pacific Ocean. Professor Thakur's illustrious career as a geographer, academician, educator, and researcher has left an indelible mark in the field of geography. His pursuit of academic excellence, diverse research interests, and commitment to mentorship has made him a revered figure among Indian geographers. His legacy will continue to inspire scholars and students, for generations to come. May his soul rest in peace.

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