

Obituary



Prof. Hironmoy Sen Gupta
(1934-2022)

Prof. Hironmoy Sen Gupta, an illustrious son of the soil and a reputed nuclear physicist of the world is no more. He breathed his last on 07 January 2022 at the age of 88. He did his M.Sc. in Physics from Dhaka University in 1954 and Ph.D. in Nuclear Physics from University of London, England. His Ph.D. Thesis was supervised by Nobel Laureate Professor J. Rotblat.

I was one of his earliest and most favorite students in the University of Dhaka. I feel greatly obliged to write a few lines about this great scholar. When I joined the Dhaka University as a 1st year Honours student in the department of Physics in 1956, I had him as a teacher. He taught us geometrical optics. One of the books that he used on this subject was titled Geometrical Optics by Flint. Dhaka University had only one copy of this book and it was with him. However, although we did not have direct access to the book in the beginning, it posed no problem to us. He explained things very slowly and clearly. In the class, he used to address us, his students as “Apni” and not “Tumi”. This caused a little embracement to us as we were used to hearing “Tumi” from our teachers from the very school days. He held class examinations to find out whether what he taught registered in our minds or went over our heads. I remember that in the very first class examination in 1956, he gave me 92 marks out of 100. There was a brilliant female student named Saqeba Khan (the only female student of the class). She got around 80 marks. She rushed to Hironmoy Sir and wanted to find why she got lower marks than I did. Hironmoy Sir asked for the presentation of both the answers scripts of Saqeba and myself. He asked Saqeba to find out for herself what was missing in her script. Saqeba understood the marking and smiled. I must say Professor Hironmoy Sen Gupta was one of the very successful teachers that the Physics Dept. of Dhaka University ever had. He also taught us the Gravitation forces between objects. The Book he was following was of Byerley. Again although we had problems in finding the book we faced no difficulty: he was explaining things very clearly. In 1959, when I appeared in the Honours practical exam I was a little upset because although all my measurements were completed and I wrote down the formula to be used in the answer scripts, I could not complete the calculation of the final result because of the lack of time. I was not sure if the results of the calculations would turn up to be right. After a day or two of this practical examination, Hironmoy Sir said to me “Don’t get upset at all. I put all of your experiment numbers in the formula and the result was very good”. On hearing this, I breathed a sigh of relief.

A few days after the Honours examination, we had to give a farewell to Hironmoy Sir on the eve of his departure for England for his Ph.D studies. Incidentally, only two years later in 1961 I proceeded to Manchester University for Ph.D. studies in theoretical Nuclear Physics. While in England we met a couple of times. Fortunately, at that point in time he did address me as “Tumi” instead of “Apni”. I was very glad at this

change of address. On our return home, Dr. Sen Gupta resumed teaching at the Dhaka University and I started working in the Atomic Energy Center in Dhaka. Dr. Sen Gupta was associated with the research projects at the Van de graaff Accelerator of the Atomic Energy Center, Dhaka for a long time since it was set up in 1965. When I become Director of the Atomic Energy Center, Dhaka in 1970, it was a great pleasure for me to have him as a research colleague. An interesting fact to be mentioned here is that there was a very good research interaction between the Atomic Energy Center in Dhaka and the Physics Department of the Dhaka University. I cannot help mentioning a memorable fact of my life wherein Professor Hironmoy Sen Gupta played an important part. In 1973, a special committee was constituted by the Syndicate of the Dhaka University consisting of the members Dr. Quadrat-e-Khuda, Prof. M Innas Ali, Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, Prof. Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal and Prof. Hironmoy Sen Gupta along with Prof. Motin Chowdhury as the Chair. On the basis of the recommendation of the committee, the University of Dhaka in its Syndicate resolution recognized me (in view of my career and original contribution to Nuclear Physics) as Honorary Professor of Physics of the University of Dhaka. This lifelong recognition has been a matter of great honor for me. This had been a rare and unique event in the University of Dhaka. Prof. H Sen Gupta had been associated with this event and I remember this with great joy and delight.

Prof. Sen Gupta has interacted with many scholars at home and abroad. People with whom he worked remembered him for his talent and good disposition. His supervisor Professor J. Rotblat who was associated with the Pagwash Movement for science and world affairs and was awarded Nobel Prize, often asked me at Pagwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs about Prof. Sen Gupta's health and work. Prof. Sen Gupta built a strong collaboration with the researchers at the Atomic Energy Center, Dhaka and also with other universities of which the Physics Dept. of Rajshahi University deserves a special mention. Prof. Arun Kumar Basak, one of the most pioneering nuclear researcher of Bangladesh had a good collaboration with Prof. Sen Gupta as a valuable member of his team. Incidentally, my interaction with Prof. Arun Kumar Basak has also been very intense. When I propounded my Folding Model Theory of the Nuclear Reactions to Professor Basak, he kindly tried the same in a number of reactions between nuclei involving alpha clusters. The results were pretty satisfactory in many cases and a matter of delight was that Professor H Sen Gupta along with Prof. Fazlay Bari Malik were participants of the research team which Arun Kumar Basak had organized. Like me, Arun also had great respect for Prof. Sen Gupta who will be missed by us for all times to come.

Prof. Sen Gupta was associated with the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences as a Senior Fellow, almost from the very beginning. We invited him to chair the selection committees for awards of gold medals both in the senior and junior groups. He participated in these meetings almost till the very end of his life. Interestingly enough, his home work for selection almost coincided with that of me and other members of the committee.

Prof. H Sen Gupta married rather late. He has left behind two sons and his wife Suchorita Sen Gupta who was till recently been the Assistant Attorney General at Dhaka High Court. The Bangladesh Academy of Sciences has always held Prof. H Sen Gupta in high esteem for his research contributions and for his wonderful disposition as a fine gentleman. Prof. H Sen Gupta was highly religious in his personal life.

We pray to the Almighty for the salvation of his soul and for a sound and peaceful living of his family members.

- M. Shamsher Ali