

PROFESSOR LAKSHMAN KUMAR MAHAPATRA
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A LEADING MILITANT SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGIST

Michael M Cernea
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Professor Lakshman K. Mahapatra was a leading Indian militant Social Anthropologist and a vastly influential scholar, both in India and far beyond. He was also a dear personal friend, whom I much respected. I was fortunate to meet him several times, both in science conferences, and when I visited him twice in Bhubaneswar, Orissa. We also kept a long transoceanic correspondence which also enriched our same wavelengthness.

I also cherished Lakshman's writings, his insightful theoretical papers, and his Reports based on his own empirical research. The major *Mahapatra Address: "DEVELOPMENT FOR WHOM?"*, presented decades ago at the Vancouver International Anthropological Conference, was a searing critique of India's Governments, as well as of Governments elsewhere, for their misguided policies and practices of forcibly displacing and impoverishing countless people. It was also an open question and a powerful call to the international community of Anthropologists and Sociologists to battle for defending the livelihood, the culture, and the dignity of India's large tribal populations

Lakshman Mahapatra's seminal book *RESETTLEMENT, IMPOVERISHMENT, AND RECONSTRUCTION IN INDIA* (1999) has inspired me, and I am sure it will continue to inspire many, many others scholars.

MY PARTNER IN CRIME

Professor Thayer Scudder, CALTECH, USA

L K. Mahapatra was my favourite Indian colleague. It was he who arranged for me to be picked up at midnight in Ahmedabad by a motorcycle to visit the office of the NGO which might give us their data that documented that there was sufficient enough land for initial resettlement purposes. To convince them, I also had to return by motorcycle the next night. Later they slipped the necessary data under my hotel door the next night.

After I returned to Delhi; this data enabled me to show national irrigation authorities in Delhi about the availability of land for proper resettlement though the Chief Engineer, Sardar Sarovar Project had insisted that there was insufficient land for proper population resettlement. Alas, we never had the chance to meet socially and develop a close personal friendship.

THE GUIDING FATHER OF ODISHA'S RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION POLICY

Bishnupada Sethi, IAS
Principal Secretary,
Disaster Management Department, Govt of Odisha

One is considered very lucky for having come across with people with great personality who leave lasting impressions and influence on one's life. Such was my case as far as my association with Prof. (Dr.) L. K. Mohapatra is concerned. I was very sad at the news of his demise, which I got to know through social media. Though I was not in touch with him for last few years, but I used to visit him when he was acting as the chairman of Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre of Development Studies and later, for many years, subsequent to our working together for a UNDP project on formulation of a comprehensive Rehabilitation & Resettlement Policy for the Odisha state (2003-2005). For many years, I used to go to his house regularly and he was very fond of me.

In the initial days soon after I had joined as the Project Coordinator for the Project of UNDP in the latter half of the year 2003, I on behalf of UNDP and DfID was looking for support for a formal acceptance of the project proposal to work for a comprehensive Resettlement Policy by the state government. I met the then senior officials and the Minister to advocate the need for a sound policy, which was the felt need. I was advised to meet Prof. Mohapatra as there were not many experts in the world who understood the subject well. During the course of our discussion, he had advised to recruit a retired IAS officer like Dr. Hari Mohan Mathur as the main consultant for better acceptability amongst the policy makers though he himself was eminently suitable. Prof. Mohapatra was always available for any advice. Whenever Dr. Mathur was in the town he made it a point to see Prof. Mohapatra at his home and I used to accompany him without fail.

Protection of rights of the indigenous population was foremost in the mind of Prof. Mohapatra. I had requested him to take up an empirical study relating to tribal rights and entitlements in land, forests and other resources, which he accepted happily. He participated actively in the first state level consultation workshop on 28th August 2004 and presented his research findings very elaborately. He was part of every meeting, seminar, workshop which we organized to involve and seek recommendations from almost all stakeholders. His inputs were vital in our documentary films too.

As the Director, of NCDS, he had started Kalinga Lectures. I took our project as an opportunity and requested him to invite Prof. Michael Cernea of George Washington University to deliver a Kalinga Lecture on Resettlement issues faced by the world during 17-19, Dec 2004. Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha sat through the entire lecture organized at Utkal University and reiterated his commitment to adopt a people centric R& R Policy for the Odisha state. If Odisha today boasts of a robust R & R policy today being the first state to do so, the credit goes to our team and Prof. Mohapatra was a guiding father for our endeavour.

A PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR L K MAHAPATRA

Triloki Nath Pandey
Professor Emeritus of Anthropology
University of California, Santa Cruz

In the passing away of Professor L. K. Mahapatra, the doyen of Indian Anthropology, the world of anthropology lost one of its leading lights. His pioneering work on tribes, castes, peasants, and social and political change in Orissa made him a valuable source of knowledge on the culture and society of an important region in India. His arrival in German ethnology made him see culture as a dynamic process, and not just a product of history. He saw the necessity of stringing, as he said, history with myths, legends, and current or recently extinct social institutions in the reconstruction of the nature and structure of tribes and castes in pre-colonial, colonial, and contemporary Orissa.

He taught in the Anthropology Department at Guwahati, Lucknow, and Dharwad before returning to Bhubaneswar. At Vani Vihar, he pursued a distinguished career in teaching, research, and administration, culminating in the position of Vice-Chancellor of Utkal University.

Professor Mahapatra was my senior by a decade but our paths crossed in various parts of the world. We met at Lucknow, New Delhi, Shillong and in Washington D.C. When his daughter Sheela was living in California, her parents came to visit her. She brought them to Santa Cruz to visit my wife, Annapurna, our children, Alok and Akash, and me. We had a wonderful time discussing anthropology, our common friends, university life in India and the United States.

Those days he was the Director of a research institute for social sciences. He invited me to give a lecture there and I gladly agreed but the timing did not work out. However, during the past decade, we met several times, mostly at his home. Even though his health was not very good, he remained cheerful and attentive. Bhubaneswar is not going to be the same for me without him. My wife and I will cherish the memories of the time we were blessed to have together.

PROFESSOR L.K. MAHAPATRA, THE INSTITUTION BUILDER

Robert Parkin (Dr)
University of Oxford, England

With this tribute, I would like to honour the life, work and memory of Prof. L.K. Mahapatra. I first met Prof. Mahapatra during a visit to the Department of Anthropology, Utkal University in 1998, arranged by Prof. Prasanna Nayak under the auspices of the University Grants Commission's Special Assistance Programme. It was because of the efforts made and initiative taken by Prof. Mahapatra, then the Head of the Department that this Department earned the distinction of being the **first department of anthropology in India** to receive DSA (Department of Special Assistance) status from the University Grants Commission, New Delhi.

Prof. Mahapatra had a distinguished career in anthropology and was a scholar of international repute, as well as being a key figure in the development of anthropology in India. I especially

value his interest in tribals in Orissa and his foundation of a highly esteemed academic journal that dealt with issues concerning them, among others, namely *Man in Society*. I am sure that, through his passing, he will be keenly missed by his family, friends and colleagues, but also that his memory will be kept alive by his achievements in building anthropology as a university subject in India.

OUR GUIDE TO RESEARCH AND LIVING IN ODISHA

Professor Akio Tanabe,
Director, Center for South Asian Studies,
the University of Tokyo
Yumiko Tokita-Tanabe,
Visiting Researcher, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka

Professor L. K. Mahapatra was Akio's local supervisor during our first fieldwork in Orissa from 1991 to 1992. Professor Mahapatra was then the Director of Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies. He was well-known internationally for his anthropological work which are read extensively in universities worldwide, and Akio sought his guidance at the beginning of his fieldwork. Authoritative and friendly at the same time, Professor Mahapatra subsequently continued to help us immensely with his vast knowledge and experience at the beginning of our careers as anthropologists.

He was not only a wonderful academic guide, but also a kind and generous man. He took great care of us, always making sure that we were happy and well. His guidance and care extended from the best of academic advice to minute details of everyday life like food, water, medicine and clothing. One of the early advices for our fieldwork included purchasing a mosquito net in a bazaar: he instructed us where to purchase, what we should say to the shopkeeper in Oriya, and how much we should expect to pay including the "foreigner-tax". He said the last part with his typical humorous twinkle in his eye. When Akio asked him whether he can use Bengali instead of Oriya, he said with laughter that then we would be charged "Bengali-tax" besides "foreigner-tax"!

He and his late wife kindly invited us to their home many times, introducing us to their children, Silu and Ilu, and treating us with delicious Oriya cuisine. He had a delightful sense of humour, and we remember his laughter. That is how we will always remember Professor, with his charming laugh and twinkle in his eye. We remain grateful to his kindness and offer our heartfelt condolences to his family.