



Sikkim University

chronicle

COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

In Memory of Our Beloved Madam Professor SAMEERA MAITI

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Condolence Message for the Family Members of Professor Sameera Maiti

From the Vice-Chancellor

On behalf of the Sikkim University Community

The Sikkim University community is shocked to hear that Professor Sameera Maiti is no more. During the short stint she had with this university, she gave her best, not only in terms of teaching and curriculum development, but also in respect of its governance. She was the chairperson of the Internal Complaints Committee and an active member of several other committees constituted by the University for its smooth functioning. She was always positive, cheerful, and upright in the meetings she attended. And she endeared herself with everyone who knew her.

Her untimely demise has brought sadness to the entire Sikkim University community. We wish her soul the peace she deserves and her family members the strength to bear the lives without her.

Professor Dr. T. B. Subba

Condolence Message for the Family Members of Professor Sameera Maiti

From the Registrar

Prof. Sameera Maiti joined our University on the 30th of June, 2014, as Professor in the Department of Anthropology. She was appointed Dean, School of Human Sciences, immediately after her joining the university. During her stint in the university for less than two years, apart from being Head of a School, supervising academically three departments, she was Chairperson of a number of committees, and also member of a number of selection committees, relating to selection of faculty members, as well as non-teaching staff. I remember her as a person of high caliber, a dutiful teacher, a

good administrator and a graceful personality. Cruel hands of death have snatched her from us, but her memories will always remain with us. Her untimely death has created a void which is difficult to get filled in near future. I pray that may her soul rest in eternal peace.

Shri T. K. Kaul



Condolence Message to the Family Members of Prof. Sameera Maiti

On behalf of all members of
Sikkim University Teachers' Association (SUTA)

Professor Irshad Gulam Ahmed
President, SUTA

The sudden passing away of Dr. Sameera Maiti, Professor of Anthropology and Dean of the School of Human Sciences, on 29 March, 2016, has deeply shocked and saddened the Sikkim University family. Smitten by this unfathomable loss, we, the members of the teaching fraternity of this university, offer our condolences from the depths of our mournful hearts, to all her near and dear ones. We commiserate with them, in these moments of pain.

She is remembered alike, by her colleagues and students, as a magnificent human being, who made her brief stint in this university so meaningful, so purposeful. In her fierce battle with the deadly disease to which she has finally succumbed, she chose to keep her pains and sufferings to herself, making them so private, so personal. She did so, so that she was not pitied by anyone around her. Only a potent will to live and an indomitable spirit, shone on her. But, alas!, darkness of death has engulfed this bright lamp of life, leaving behind a trail of void, a terrible emptiness. This death which has cheated us all with all its might, nonetheless, remains powerless to erase the niche she has carved out in our hearts.

Her professional life was a unique synthesis of heart and head, administrative skills and academic excellence. As Dean of her School and member of vital committees of the university, she showed remarkable clarity of thinking and uprightness, with a rare gift of the courage to say 'no,' even to the highest authority if she felt it was in the larger interest of the institution but her language always was language of humility. Her humane intellect was rooted in a refined sense of religion and rich religious values. With these rare attributes, she endeared herself to one and all.

May Almighty God give her family members the strength to bear this pain of bereavement and may her soul rest in the abode of peace.

Message from the Controller of Examinations

Adieu Dear Professor

Dr. Debasish Chowdhury

Ever since this young and upcoming institute of higher learning in the serene hills of Himalaya accorded me the privilege to be counted as one of its fraternal members, I had occasions to hear about her in one or the other context during various casual conversations. It was in one of those rather casual conversations that I first learnt about her ailment and the brave fight she was putting up with to fend off that dreaded disease. We were yet to meet each other though I was aware of her official standing in the institute, which both of us, by design of destiny, were serving for, at that point of time. The news of her ailment naturally therefore made me feel sad. No one in his senses ever enjoys the plight of a suffering colleague. Life, we all know, rarely is a bed of roses, but then, the very thought of the kind of challenge the killer sickness posed to her or for that matter, anyone else like her, almost impulsively makes one run into a deep sense of hapless remorse.

Already a Professor and Dean, my imagined impression of her before we ever met, was that of a serious, academically well accomplished, no nonsense senior lady. Professors, not counting few exceptions, generally fit well into this standard impression of them. After all, the prized favourites of the goddess of learning, often appear little awe inspiring, unto at least a host lot of us of my ilk, who failed to gate crash and enter her luminous temple to explore its treasure-trove. Conceiving an unknown and yet to meet professor, as one alike those rather serious academics, therefore, came so naturally unto me, that the probability of my missing the mark in her case did not even remotely tinker my thought for once.

On April 25, 2015, I saw her for the first time at an international seminar that was underway at the auditorium of the Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok. She was busy attending the visiting dignitaries and other participants. On inquiry, someone sitting by my side in that hall, whispered in my ear, "This is Professor Sameera Maiti. She is one of the core organisers of the seminar." I knew this name but she hardly resembled what I presumed she may look like. Much younger than I had initially imagined her to be, and endowed with a pair of sparkling eyes, her sober coloured sari draped tall slim frame, did not even distantly reflect on her ailment. The subtle dignity and grace of her conduct, nevertheless, was amply assuring that all other attributes befitting of a professor, in my scheme of things, must be present in her aplenty. Her engagement on the occasion was such, that despite my seeing her, we did not actually get to meet formally. She did not know me then, and in the absence of any common acquaintance by our side at that moment, we remained unacquainted to each other. It was about an hour after, into the post lunch session, on my way out of the hall, I, seeing her sitting in the front row, wished her while passing by. She did not take much notice of me, though did return a courtesy nod in reflex mode. The first encounter with her if one can claim it as such, at best, was only a tepid one though it left me somewhat amazed and may be little unsettled as well, at the slip-up I did for once more in preconceiving someone not met on any earlier occasion.

Raining heavily as it was on that day, the lush green typical of the hills, on any sunny day was missing in the horizon, as an overcast sky kept that view fully veiled. Gushing rainwater flowing down the lanes and by lanes of the tiny hill city consequent to the heavy down pour, did not present an inviting ambiance either. But the day, incidentally, was destined not to fade out from memory, as any other ordinary wet day at hills. By the time I came out of the seminar hall, news of the devastating damage of life and property in Nepal and its adjoining areas, resulting from the earthquake, the tremor of which we too did not escape, that rocked the hills hours ago, had already started to trickle in. The severity of the extent of damage it caused and the exact count of lives lost in that calamity, till that point of time, was missing any reasonable estimate. It was, however, confirmed by then, that normal life activities had virtually come to a grinding halt in that fate struck country. Catastrophic loss of lives and property in the tiny hilly country, by the time dusk was setting in, had enabled the day to claim a place, of a deadly and painful kind though, in the annals of history. The grisly natural disaster, the havoc it caused in our neighbourhood notwithstanding, did, however, spare us from being the direct victims of its fury.

Beginning that day, till the time I saw her off for the last time on a cold December evening, prior to her sudden going abroad to her brother's place for treatment, we met, may be for a dozen or two times, mostly on official assignments of various kinds, either in meetings that we had to attend to or as co-members in one or the other selection panels or screening committees. On two or three occasions, we did travel together to or from the airport at Bagdogra either on our way out to some place or while returning to the station. Once we travelled together to the campus site at Yangyang along with other senior officers of the university. Only once during a weekend did four of us; Professor Chandel, Professor Maiti, Dr D. R. Chettri and me; could manage to go out for a day long outing in and around the city of Gangtok. It was during those somewhat longer trips in the long winding narrow serpentine hill roads, she occasionally allowed to come to life, the sportiness innate in her that lay otherwise dormant at other times. Generally stoic, calm and composed, never ever however, I recall her to have discussed her sickness.

Devoting even a full life to comprehend the innate qualities that might adorn a human being, often seems utterly inadequate. The little more than six months that we have had the good fortune to work together, hardly perhaps, qualify as a reasonable time even to attempt such an exercise. Fortunately, the straightforwardness and transparency which typically described each of her acts that I was privy to be witness to, did make the job of having an intense view at her true persona, hopefully, relatively easier. At least, so I do prefer to believe. Her youth granted her a brashness that lured her to dream beyond. Her academic accomplishment endowed her with the maturity to respond with ease and authority. A compassionate heart enabled her to see things in perspective and her uprightness armed her with the strength to speak her inner conviction out in an unfazed clear voice. As an institution lady, she looked eager and ever willing to walk the extra mile if she thought that it would help the cause of her institute. She, to my mind, had a world to explore and achieve. Destiny, however, had planned it otherwise.

Making an obituary reference to someone much younger, though way ahead in accomplished credentials, by all count, is deeply painful, and a task far more daunting than one can ordinarily think of. Die, we all would, for death is the only non-negotiable entity in our being. It is, however, difficult to fathom as to what great cause has been served by this most unwarranted passing away of a vibrant, promising scholar who, given a chance, would surely have travelled much farther to scale loftier professional heights. But that, in itself, hardly comprehends the nature of our real loss. In this fiercely combative world, persons with a rising career graph may not be in abundant supply, but they, after all, are not so very rare to find either. In her death, our ultimate loss lies in losing an enthusiastic, enterprising, compassionate young soul, who was ever willing to extend a supporting hand whenever asked for. In her passing away, the exclusive world her parents, siblings, friends and even her students tried to build centering her, has blown off like smoke, thinned out into the horizon. Reality may be harsh and deeply hurting, but that hardly allow us to brush it aside.

In fondly recalling the scholarly young lady who endeared everyone she came in contact with by her charming personality, may we dare to hope that she, her physical absence amidst us notwithstanding, would continue to inspire a whole lot of us, young and old alike, to strive harder to make life a little worthier to live for, as many as possible.

The Upanishad says; from bliss we arise; in bliss we live and to bliss alone we do return at the end of our journey in this splendid earthly abode. For mortals, ordinary as us, it is perhaps not always easy to appreciate in earnest the nature of this divine bliss, but that may not deter us from hoping that the essence of the bliss Upanishad envisages as integral to our beings, from birth to death, remained ever abiding by her in life, death and beyond. May you rest in peace dear Madam.

Reminiscences of Prof. Sameera Maiti

Prof. A. S. Chandel
Librarian

Death of our near and dear ones is always a painful experience. However, it is an inevitable happening to be accepted and endured as such. We have to console ourselves, believing that those who die, also remain with us, till we forget them. Their good deeds and memories left behind, keep reminding us about them. They join us when we remember them. Though Professor Sameera Maiti is no more with us today, yet her contributions to this university and her associations with most of us shall ever remain our most beloved possession, one, which we shall cherish from time to time.

The news of her sudden death came as a big shock to most of us on the fateful morning of the 30th of March, 2016, when we received a mail from the Vice-Chancellor, requesting all of us to attend a condolence meeting, to mourn her death at 4 pm. It was unbelievable for quite a while to most of us. More to me, who had received a reply of a message from her on WhatsApp on the 23rd of March, 2016 only six days before her demise on the 29th of March. She had written to me – 'Thank u sir. Am improving by d grace of God.' She had always been positive and optimistic about her recovery. I am much better, I am improving, all is well, Am trying to b strong n God has blessed me with great people who all are praying for me, God is kind were the other texts of her SMS which I received from her. But unfortunately, our prayers did not work and she lost the final battle, putting up a courageous fight. Thus, the news of her sudden demise was unexpected, unanticipated, and painful to most of us.

She had joined this University during 2014, and became an important part of academics as well as administration. She became Head of the Department and subsequently, Dean of School of Human Sciences, member of Academic and Executive Councils and many other such committees and other bodies, as if she were in a hurry to take up various positions within a short span of time, and fulfill all those responsibilities successfully. During her short period of about two years in this University, she did make a difference, with her presence, in rendering her best services to the University.

When I stroll down the memory lane, I recall her as an excellent person, compassionate, fair and judicious, bold and frank in her decisions, judgement and observations, quick in decision-making. She had an excellent academic record of holding first class first positions in many of the examinations. It was a good experience working with her, which all of us much enjoyed. Her courage and spirit to fight her illness was an exemplar. We never saw any sign of ailment on her face which she had been carrying since years. She was always a happy face and nobody could imagine what she could be going through.

I saw Prof Sameera Maiti for the first time in one of the meetings convened by the Vice-Chancellor, when I thought her to be one of the external members of the committee. Later, I came to know that she had joined Sikkim University as a Professor in the Department of Anthropology. This was followed by many other administrative and academic meetings that we shared together, however there was hardly any personal communication between us. I recall it to be the month of August, 2014, when we were walking to NIC Tashiling Secretariat to attend the address of the Hon'ble President of India on video conferencing. By that time, I had come to know that she was from Lucknow University, where I had also once been a faculty member. During that short walk, I had introduced myself to her as an ex-faculty member of Lucknow University and had shared with her many of my experiences from Lucknow University. She had been a student during my period of service there. She had then covered her head with a scarf during that time. I never inquired about her ailment, it being too sensitive and personal a matter to be discussed.

During 2015, she also became the member of Library Management Committee which brought us in more frequent contact. We were the members of many selection committees of non-teaching staff also during 2015 where we have been meeting quite frequently. These were the platforms of our meeting and association.

Our last meetings had happened during the month of December, 2015. We had met for the last time once for all on the 9th of

December, 2015, at the office of the Controller of Examinations, where she had to climb many stair cases to reach the fourth floor of the building which used to be the venue of the meeting. She had been complaining of a mild fever since weeks, which though, did not deter her from attending to her duties. Her having a fever was a matter of concern for us, and we advised her to go for immediate check-up. But she continued to assure us that it was not related to her ailment, that it was some mild infection, and that she would be son alright. Later on, I came to know that her health suddenly deteriorated and that she had left on the 12th or 13th of December for a check-up and to meet her brother, preponing her travel schedule for Lucknow. I was told by my colleague that she had to leave under emergency, owing to her ill health. It was a matter of worry for all of us. I sent her some SMS to inquire about her health. She responded while back in Lucknow from the US, stating that she was improving under treatment. I never rang her and also told others not to telephone her as she might not be comfortable attending calls and responding to SMS, though she might very much want to. I also stopped sending her SMS, but she would still update me every seven or ten days. Once she wrote to me, "Sir keep praying for me and give your blessings. I am fighting it out." There was no despair ever in her communication and expression. I never called her since then, nor did she, except for once on the 1st of November, 2015. She told me, "Sir today is my birthday and I need your blessings." It was an unexpected call, but it made me emotional. I wished her on the occasion and assured her that I shall never forget her birthday. I explained the reason saying that 31st of October is my daughter's birthday, which will remind me about the next day. That time will never come again to wish her on her birthday, but 1st of November will always remind me of her, till my memories fade away.



She died young with contentment and achievements, she died without the fear of death. Her life though short, was well lived. I am reminded of a famous dialogue of Rajesh Khanna from the Hindi movie, 'Anand', who also happens to be fighting the deadly disease in the film: "Babumoshai....zindagi lambi nahi badi honi chahiye...." (Sir.....Life need not be long it should be big). Professor Maiti's life too was big and meaningful, and yes, unfortunately not long.



Message from the Joint Registrar (Academics)

Dr. S. K. Gurung



Professor Maiti is no more with us, but she has left behind an indelible mark, which the university in general, and the department which she cherished so dearly, in particular, will never forget. We were saddened by her untimely demise at such a young age. She was positive towards life and was indeed one of the bravest persons I have ever met, one who was fighting a war with life on a day to day basis, but with such calm and composure. She never allowed her illness to intrude into her academic career nor disrupt her regular departmental engagements. She was a keen listener and very cordial even when she were to criticize or differ with others. Her life and her positive approach towards its different shades, her indomitable spirit, reminded me of a character played by late Rajesh Khanna in an old Hindi movie, "Anand". When I first met her, I did not quite realize the reason behind her appearance in veil, and when later, I came to know of it, I felt guilty. Her lively presence will stay in our memories forever. May peace be with her always.

Message from the Head of the Department of Anthropology

On Behalf of All Faculty Members and Students of the Department

Dr. Kotra Rama Mohan



The Department of Anthropology fondly remembers Prof. Sameera Maiti. The Department of Anthropology is deeply saddened by the sudden demise of Prof. Sameera Maiti.

We, faculty members, research scholars, and students at the Department of Anthropology, express our deepest sympathies to Prof. Sameera Maiti's family members.

We all shared very fond experiences with her during her time at the department. Prof. Sameera Maiti was a highly respectable teacher and colleague, not only for us at our department but also for other departments as well. Some of the courses she taught included Anthropology of Gender, Anthropology of Development and Theories of Culture.

Prof. Sameera Maiti was well remembered for her engagement with the department, as she was always more focused on the development of the department. On behalf of the Department of Anthropology, Prof. Sameera Maiti was the Organizing Secretary for the 'International Conference on 'Cultural Heritage of Sikkim' funded by IGRMAS, Bhopal, during 25-27th April, 2015.

Research scholars and students of Prof. Sameera Maiti have benefitted much due to her long experience at Lucknow University and owing to the international exposure and experience she gained, particularly at Oxford University and Queen's University, Belfast, U.K.

Prof. Sameera Maiti's active participation and suggestions on the expansion of the departmental activities were well taken in our departmental meetings. Her guidance was useful for the department to move forward in becoming more vibrant within and outside the university.

The Department of Anthropology greatly misses her presence at the department and in the University. We continue to cherish her good memories.

Sameeras Never Die...



Dr. Dhani Raj Chhetri
Associate Professor and Head
Department of Botany

My interactions with Sameera were few and far between. I knew very little about her. When she joined the Sikkim University as a Professor of Anthropology with a scarf tied to her head, I thought she was following some sort of religious cult. In 2014, a group of us met her and requested her to file nomination papers for the President's post in Sikkim University Teachers' Association. I repeated the same request once again. In both occasions she politely declined saying that she would like to devote the coming two years for her personal affairs. Who would have known that the time-scale she had set for herself would bring such terrible news? Perhaps she knew! But how could anyone maintain such dignified composure in the face of imminent obliteration? Not as an unanswered question, but this will remain forever as a lifetime lesson.

Our paths crossed on some occasions. Meeting at my office, her office or the University buildings happened. Every time we met, she was never short of her respect towards me as a colleague and simply as a human being and she was never economic of her smile. Many a time, our opinions were diametrically opposite and we had to agree to disagree! But all the while, she neither lost her smile nor yielded her ground. How could anyone be such calm and smiling while absolutely disagreeing on an issue? In the face of opposition, we usually tend to lose our composure and anger takes over our personality. However, this never happened with Sameera. She would oppose you strongly, but without losing an iota of her decency and always wearing a smile on her face.

For me Sameera is not dead, Sameeras never die! Every time in the face of opposition, if I am able to disagree with anyone without being angry, without losing my calm and with a smile on my face, that will be the essence of Sameera alive within me.



A Tribute to Our Beloved Professor Sameera Maiti From Sikkim University Chronicle Team



If only we had known that her life was gradually drawing to a close... if only we had known that the final moment of truth was not very far away...if only we had known that our moments of togetherness were fast disappearing...then perhaps we all would have made a little more conscious effort to praise her for being the person that she was and thank her for teaching us to live life without breathing a word of complain, to be unyielding in the face of trouble, and to smile in the face of fear. It is hard to believe that Professor Maiti has left all of us, so early in time, and yet, her absence today, perhaps, speaks more of her presence around. We do not know what lies beyond life and further beyond death, but if there is anything that we would want to say to her, it is this, "That you forever will live beyond space and time, here with us, that you taught us to live life meaningfully, and to smile through the hardest times ever..."

Dhriti Roy