

HARI P SHARMA [1934-2010]

'Celebrating Life in Struggle...' SM

Hari P Sharma [1934-2010], a long time associate of *Frontier*, died on 16 March, 2010, in Vancouver, Canada. The founder of IPANA—Indian Peoples Association in North America—is no more. He was 76. At the moment of great stress and strain he was always with *Frontier*. Whenever he was visiting the city of Kolkata, he would never miss an opportunity to visit *Frontier's* office and discuss enthusiastically with *Frontier's* family about the journal's health. To mark his 75th birth anniversary his friends and admirers brought out a book in November 2009, to offer a tribute to Hari Sharma's work among the people of North America and India.

Looking at his rather unassuming physique, one could hardly fathom the strength of the dynamo within. Over the last five decades or so, this subcontinent, the Indian diaspora to be precise, witnessed his relentless struggle to bring justice to all those who are denied it. He fought many a battle with his penetrating writings, but lost against a deadly disease—cancer.

Hari was born in British India, in Dadri, UP, though his family was hailing from today's Haryana. He was educated in colonial India, obtaining a Bachelor's degree (from Agra University) and a Master's (from Delhi University) before he moved to USA for higher education. He was admitted to two very best institutions of higher learning in USA eventually obtaining a Ph.D. degree in Sociology from the Cornell University in 1968. He subsequently joined Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, on the same year and retired as a professor in 1999 from the same institution.

A writer of fine quality, Hari might have been a famous Hindi writer, had he decided to remain in the realm of art & literature. But those were the days, when educated and sensitive youths saw the doom of humankind under the guns of imperialism and Hari was no exception either. He was deeply involved against every possible aggressive move by the US imperialism and invasion and sided over with the people of Vietnam, joining and actively building the resistance movement in Canada and North America.

Without fear he teamed up with Kathleen Gough, who was suspended from her job for her radical view, to co-edit a monograph—*Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*.

Many of the scholars, who left India to join the academics abroad, lose interest in their country of origin. Hari stood as a stark exception to this (more or less) general rule. Wherever he was, he maintained his oriental mind. Thus, it was not a surprising fact to many of his friends in India, when they saw that Hari was extending his able helping hand to the popular movements that were brewing in India. He became an instant supporter of Naxalbari peasant uprising.

In the seventies, the condition of political prisoners in Indian jails was appalling, to say the least. Hari took a bold initiative in 1973 to highlight the plight of prisoners in Indian

jails and represented their case before the Amnesty International in London and the Commission of Jurists in Geneva. With his friend, G Appa of London School of Economics, he organised an international petition campaign against the atrocities in Indian jails which had created quite a sensation in the international circle in those days and served the civil rights movement immensely in India.

Hari became an institution during the internal emergency days in India. His campaign was direct and put the Indira regime into such an inconvenience, that his passport was revoked by the Government of India in 1976.

Hari became a champion in campaigning for the minority community's rights in India, an endeavour he maintained till his last days.

During the days of Babri in India, he formed an organisation—Non-resident Indians for Secularism and Democracy (NRISAD), which later turned into a truly Indian diaspora's voice of dissent. During the Gujarat pogrom in 2002, he wanted to visit Gujarat, but he was denied to set foot in his motherland. He was the moving spirit behind South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy (SANSAD).

With his death the country lost a fighter, the Indian diaspora lost an able spokesperson and *Frontier* a friend.