

## Professor R.B. Singh (1955-2021), an Icon of Indian Geography: A Passage on the Path of Lineage, Legacy and Liminality

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### Abstract

Professor R.B. Singh (1955-2021) had been the first Indian Geographer to have the dual distinction of holding the position of the IGU Secretary General and ICSU Scientific Committee Member. He was the first Indian and second Asian Secretary General and Treasurer of the IGU (2018-2022). Professor Singh was a distinguished geographer of 21st Century India who had made distinct academic contributions over the last five decades, illustrated with publishing 16 books, 40 anthologies, and around 260 research papers. He has covered and profusely published researches in 11 fields—Environmental Studies, Geoecology; Land resources, Land use/ Land cover; Water issues, Hydrology; Disaster, Natural Hazard; Quality of Life, Livelihood; Climatic Change, Air Pollution study; Urban Environment, Health, and wellbeing; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Environmental Monitoring; Geography, Development Studies R-U; Mountain Studies, Forestry, Tourism; and RS, GIS, Recent trends appraisal. He had supervised 39 PhD and 81 MPhil dissertations. This paper presents an appraisal of his life journey on the path of Lineage, Legacy and Liminality—a type of biographical highlights in the frame of his practising geography, while also emphasising various niches, distinctions, networks and collaborative programmes.

**Keywords:** R.B. Singh; Lineage; IGU, Secretary General; Environmental Studies, Climatic Change; Mountain Studies; Future Vision

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## Introduction

Geography is basically rooted in the spirit of place (*genius loci*), which one experiences, understand, memorises and further expands in one's lifeworld. I remember the saying by a great Irish geographer, Anne Buttimer (1938-2017), that "in each person's life echoes the drama of his or her times and milieu; in all, to varying degrees, the propensity to submit or rebel. Through our biographies we reach toward understanding, being and becoming" (Buttimer 1983, p. 3). On this line, the present appraised paper attempts to describe the journey and contributions of (late) Professor Ram Babu Singh (known popularly as R.B. Singh/RBS) with a supplement of proving overall view and enlisting all his publications (see Appendix 1) and the doctoral dissertations (see Appendix 2) supervised by him.

Since 1989 after having 6-months training under UNITAR/UNEP- GRID and EPFL (Switzerland), Professor R.B. Singh had followed the path what once Jack Dangermond (b. 1945-), an American billionaire businessman and a long-time member of the National Geographic family and the CEO of ESRI, said: "[o]ur world is evolving without consideration, and the result is a loss of biodiversity, energy issues, congestion in cities. But geography, if used correctly, can be used to redesign sustainable and more liveable cities" (see, Dangermond 2019, ref.). This is profusely represented in RBS's publications, mostly together with his doctoral students to whom he insisted and inspired to work on such contemporary and multidisciplinary themes; he had lived over three decades (1990 onwards-) of his geographic life, creating geography what the proverb says "Geography is what geographers can do". In a National Geographic Bee competition, held on 24 May 2012, US President Barack Obama, participated and has exposed his

perception of geography: "The study of Geography is about more than just memorizing places on a map. It's about understanding the complexity of our world, appreciating the diversity of cultures that exists across continents. And in the end, it's about using all that knowledge to help bridge divides and bring people together" (see, Tau 2012, ref.). This image was part of the life-long journey by R.B. Singh, who was perceived 'an Icon of Indian Geography' in this quarter of the 21st Century, which was disseminated and received popularity at the global level through his colossal mass of publications and networking, and several international projects (see, Tables 1 and 2).

Professor R.B. Singh's sense of understanding village ecology goes back to his earlier days of courses in master's class with the collaboration of his teacher and elder brother (myself), illustrated with a study of their native village, Majhanpura (Bihar), and resulted in a monograph publication, viz. Singh and Singh *Changing Frontiers of Indian Village Ecology* (1981). In his foreword, Professor Walther Manshard (Secretary-General IGU) has remarked, "I hope that this study will reflect a new direction for an interdisciplinary approach and inspire fellow workers for the detailed investigation of the micro-level rural habitat. With this objective, I wish for its success and wide dissemination" (Singh & Singh 1981, p. 9). Another noted American geographer, Professor Brian J. Murton (University of Hawaii, Honolulu), has opined: "[i]t is an excellent statement of how rural geography should be carried out, and where it should be directing its findings: not only to the theoretical realm of formal geography, but to the real world of rural problems and their solutions" (Singh & Singh 1981, p. 11). Professor R.L. Singh (1917-2001), the Dean and father of modern geography in India has noted, "I am sure

that this study will promote a greater interdisciplinary approach in integrated rural development programmes in the developing countries with similar environs; at the same time, fellow workers and country-planners will not be slow to pursue similar research, and also to implement the measures suggested by the authors in village level planning” (Singh & Singh 1981, p. 10).

Se	Year	Major Projects
1.	1994	Director: Ministry of Agriculture Project for Preparation of Perspective Plan for Land Resources in North Zone, India.
2.	1994-1997	Co-investigator-CIDA-SICI Partnership Project-I on Sustainable Development of Mountain Environment in India and Canada, Univ. of Delhi & Univ. of Manitoba, Canada.
3.	2000-2002	Director, DFID Res. Project on Enhancing Food Chain Integrity...Pollution Impact on Vegetable System in Peri-Urban Areas, Collaboration with Imperial College, London, UK.
4.	1998-2002	Co-investigator-CIDA-SICI Partnership Project-II on Urban Development and Environmental Impacts in Mountain Context, Univ. of Delhi & Univ. of Manitoba, Canada.
5.	1997-2002	Director: ICSSR -Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternative in Development (IDPAD) on Environmental Implications and its Socio-Economic Implications in Rural-Urban Fringe of Delhi -Univ. of Delhi & Univ. of Groningen, The Netherlands.
6.	2003-2005	Co-Investigator: Shastri Applied Research Project (SHARP) on Role of Public, Private and Civil Sectors in Sustainable Environment Management; collaborated with University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Canada.
7.	2012-2014	Principal Investigator: Livelihood Security in Changing Socio-Economic Environment in Himachal Pradesh, India collaborated with University of Turku, Finland.

Se	Broad Theme	T-4*	T-5	T-6	T-7	T-8	T-9
1.	Environmental Studies, Geoecology	1	9	2	5	5	3
2.	Land resources, Land use/ Land cover	--	7	6	7	13	7
3.	Water issues, Hydrology	--	1	15	7	4	5
4.	Disaster, Natural Hazard	3	2	3	7	6	14
5.	Quality of Life, Livelihood	--	1	1	--	1	5
6.	Climatic Change, Air Pollution study	3	6	13	1-	4	2
7.	Urban Environment, health, wellbeing	1	1	4	--	--	1
8.	SDGs, Environmental monitoring	3	7	2	3	7	4
9.	Geography, Development Studies R-U	2	--	4	9	6	9
10.	Mountain studies, Forestry, Tourism	--	--	10	5	9	20
11.	RS, GIS, Recent trends appraisal	--	--	4	9	3	6
12.	Regional Science & SDGs	--	2	--	--	--	--
13.	INSA Geography Report, & related	3	4	--	--	--	--
--	ALL	16	40	64	62	58	76

\* T, Table. T-4 Books; T-5 Edited Volumes; T-6 Papers- Peer Reviewed; T-7 Papers in Indian Jls./ Books; T-8 Papers in International Books & Proceedings; T-9 Papers in Indian Books & Proceedings

### Family & Home: Lineage and Childhood

R.B. Singh [Ram Babu Singh, **RBS**] was a descendant from a farmer's family settled in an underdeveloped and traditional countryside of Bihar, central India, named Village Majhanpura (25°50'05" N latitude and 84°34'54" E longitude, in Saran district). We belonged to the Barahiya-Sengar Rajputs, of the Gautam Gotra clan group, descendent from our progeny Bir Singh, and founding father of our lineage was Sujan Singh (ca 1715--1795). In the early 16th Century, the descendants of Bir Singh, the founder of the Lakhnesar Pargana (Ballia district), have migrated eastward in four successive waves (Singh and Singh 1981, p. 22). The first branch settled in the western part of the modern Saran district in five villages, viz. Nachap, Mahui, Gauspur, Bhuli and Bharhopur.

The second branch moved towards the northern side and also settled in five villages— Dighwa, Katalpur, Kabirpur, Basauli, and Hemuchapra. Another branch that is relatively later in date and known after Bir Singh, as Barahiya Rajputs occupied scattered sites near their kin-settlement, for example, Baghauna, Jamanpura, Kopa Majhanpura, Tahirpur, etc. However, in this part of our native village, the Sengar Rajput clan has established their kingdom during the early 13th Century, and by the end of the Century the clan moved to Lakhnesar Pargana of Ballia district, from where they spread in the tract between the Ganga and the Sarayu (Ghaghara) rivers (*doab*), and further from there along the Sarayu river in Saran district of Bihar (cf. Singh 1977, p. 100). Finally, the descendants of Sujan Singh, settled in Majhanpura in the 18th Century, and we belonged to the 9th generation, recording ca 235 years of time span (CE 1715-1950) (for details see, Singh 2013, pp. 41-42).

RBS was born on 03 February 1955 Thursday: Magha Shukla 11th Vikrama Samvata 2012 [— five years younger than me] in the home itself, and was nurtured by members of the joint-family usual in such countryside. On the line of family traditions and taboos through the arrangements of the parents and relatives, R.B. Singh was married to Radha Singh on 24 June 1973, a homemaker and religious lady who

sacrificed her life devotedly serving for the good causes of her husband. They have four children: three daughters and one son—all are settled. The first one, Anju Singh (b. 1976, daughter), PhD in geography on '*Environmental Implications of Metropolisation: A Case of Delhi Region*' (2004, from the Banaras Hindu University, her father's alma mater) is specialised in urban, environmental studies and climatology, and serving as Associate Professor at Aditi College, University of Delhi. (Late) Manju Singh (b. 1980; d. 2014, daughter), had MS in Chemistry, Polytechnic Institute of NYU, Brooklyn, NY, USA (2006), and PhD in Nanobiotechnology at Genova University (Italy) and Marburg University (Germany) (2014); she died due to blood fusion. Manish Singh (b. 1982, son), PhD 2015 in biophysics, is serving as a postdoctoral researcher at CNRS, Institut de biologie physico-chimique at Paris, France; he is trained in Physics (Optics) and specialises in functional imaging and super-resolution microscopy. And Anu Singh Bisht (b. 1985, daughter) has been a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow (July 2014--July 2016) at the University of Technology of Troyes, Troyes, France; and currently working as Information System Analyst II, GEICO, Chevy Chase, Maryland, USA. Her research monograph is published in AGES Series of Geography, entitled *Commercial Surfactants for Remediation: Mobilization of Trace Metals from Estuarine Sediment and Bioavailability* (Springer Nature Pte Ltd, Singapore, 2019).

RBS was careless about his health and more involved in his image-making and trying to be unique and distinct as the tallest figure in Indian geography, which he succeeded in achieving to some extent, but he paid its price. Since the last eight years, RBS has been suffering from Nephrotic syndrome (damage of the kidneys' filtering system, resulting from removing too much protein from the blood), resulting in more dependency on strict dietary habits and regular dialysis. Resultantly he was admitted in a severe condition in the ICU in Jaipur Gold hospital, where passing two weeks, he departed from this world on 22 July 2021 at 03:50AM IST (that is, Thursday, Ashadha Shukla 13th Samvata 2078). We all family members, friends and students are

thrown into the painful ditch of shock, sorrow, suffering and devastation; however, one has to accept this hard truth as the curse of destiny.

The serene environment of the Sarayu riverfront, the sacred groves and gardens in the surroundings, small monastery of a Vaishnavite saint in the vicinity and beautiful lush trees and shrubs in the surroundings, and also the all-around scattered green fertile fields – altogether made an environmental setting where innocent childhood mind of RBS developed deep attachment to the spirit of places and the village ecology that flourish and sustained throughout his life journey.

Having primary education up to 5th grade in the village school, he had received education up to 8th grade in a junior high school at Revelganj (now named Gautam Sthan, at a distance of 5-km), followed with his further studies (9th to 12th grade: four years) in the Rejendra College

at Chhapra, lying 15-km from the native village. Together with other classmates, he was attending the college by using local bus service, or some time with the help of some friends using bicycle. This was an arduous journey, however, he learnt the field observations and importance of walking and travelling in the countryside, which helped make his future journey easy and enjoyable. In 1973 he passed his 12th grade (see Table 3), under the guardianship of his teacher Professor B.L. Sinha, who taught him the first geography lesson. That was the crucial period when the family was in favour of getting RBS to join a job and support the family's sustenance. However, with support, encouragement and assurances for all the supports from his elder brother (myself; see Figure 1), he followed him, and in the first week of July 1973, together with me, he took the train to his destination for making the future career at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.



**Figure 1: The two brothers: Professor R.B. Singh and Professor Rana P.B. Singh, Seminar at Delhi, 4 March 2017**

<b>Table 3: R.B. Singh, 1955-2021: Chronology—Landmarks and Distinctions</b>		
	<b>Year</b>	<b><i>Biobibliographical Landmarks and distinctions</i></b>
1.	1955	3 February, birth in a traditional farming family, Majhanpura, Bihar
2.	1973	Passed I.A.- 12th grade, Rajendra College, Chhapra, Bihar
3.	1973	24 June 1973, married to Radha Singh
4.	1975	Passed B.A., Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.
5.	1977	Passed M.A. (Arts) Geography, ranked 1st, Banaras Hindu University
6.	1979	Diploma in Statistics, Dept. of Statistics, Banaras Hindu University
7.	1981	Awarded PhD in Geography, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
8.	1983	CSIR Pool Officer, Dept. of Geography, Banaras Hindu University
9.	1985	Lecturer in Geography, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi
10.	1987	April 1987 to Sept. 2000, served as Provost (Acting), Warden and Resident Tutor of the Gwyer Hall Hostel, University of Delhi.
11.	1988	UGC Research Scientist -B (Reader) at DSE, University of Delhi
12.	1988-89	October to April - UNEP-UNITAR Fellowship at Lausanne and Geneva, Switzerland
13.	1992	Elected as South Asian Representative in Managing Board of the Commonwealth Geographical Bureau (1992-2000).
14.	1996	UGC Research Scientist - C (Professor level) at DSE, Delhi University
15.	1998	Sept.-Oct. Fellow as Asian Scholar, NIAS, Copenhagen, Denmark
16.	2001	2nd April, Monday: <i>Chaitra Shukla 9th Samvata 2058</i> : shifted to his residence, Flat no. 143- Kadambari, Sector - 9, Rohini, Delhi
17.	2002	Professor of Geography, Delhi Sch. of Econ., University of Delhi
18.	2002-10	Elected Secretary General- Nat. Assoc. of Geographers India (NAGI); also served earlier as Joint Secretary in 2001.
19.	2002-07	Editor, Association of Geographical Studies, Delhi University.
20.	2004-07	Elected Secretary, Hydrology Section, Asia-Oceania Geoscience Society, Singapore.
21.	2004	15-20 Aug.: Member, INSA National Delegation to 30th IGC International Geography Congress, Glasgow, U.K.
22.	2006-09	Regional Promoter-South Asia, IGU Initiative Culture, Civilizations and Human Development (Home of Geography, Italy).
23.	2007-10	Nominated Special Representative-World Association of Soil and Water Conservation.
24.	2008-23	Nominated Member-IUGG-IGU National Committee (4-terms), Indian National Science Academy; served till his last breath on 22 July 2021.
25.	2008-12	Vice-Chair-IGU Commission on Biogeography and Biodiversity
26.	2008	15-20 August: Leader, INSA National Delegation to 31st IGC International Geography Congress, Tunis, Tunisia.
27.	2010-13	Managing Editor- Nat. Assoc. of Geographers, India, <i>Annals-NAGI</i> .
28.	2012	26-30 Aug.: Leader, INSA National Delegation to 32nd IGC International Geography Congress, Cologne, Germany.
29.	2012-16	Elected Vice President: International Geographical Union (IGU).
30.	2012 (4-times)	Presentations: 25-27 April - Zhangjiajie, China; 21-23 May - Chiba, Japan; 7-11 June - Harbin, China; 26-30 August- Cologne, Germany
31.	2013-16	Head, Department of Geography, DSE, University of Delhi.

32.	2013-18	Coordinator: UGC SAP DRS III, Dept. of Geography, Univ. of Delhi.
33.	2013	June-July- Research Fellowship: JSPS, Hiroshima, Japan.
34.	2013	2-9 August- Kyoto, Japan; 1-3 December- Tokyo, Japan
35.	2014	17-18 July- Tokyo, Japan; 18-22 August- Krakow, Poland
36.	2014	Founding Series Editor: <i>Advances in Geographical and Environmental Sciences</i> (ISSN: 2198-3542), Springer Nature Pte Ltd., Singapore; till 2021 total 23 vols. published, out of these 14 are his co-edited.
37.	2015 (6-times)	23-25 February- Copenhagen, Denmark; 6-9 March- Kyoto, Japan; 20-22 April- AAG Meet Chicago; 26-30 August- Moscow, Russia; 9-12 October- Shanghai, China; November 30 Nov.- 2 Dec. - Kyoto, Japan.
38.	2016 (3-times)	27-29 January- Geneva, Switzerland; 28 Feb.– 1 March- Cape Town, S. Africa; 7-9 June- Macau, China
39.	2016	Re-elected Vice President: International Geographical Union (IGU) for second term (2016-2018).
40.	2016	28 Feb.– 2 March: as Panellist in the IAP-Global Network of Science Academies in Times of Disaster Emergencies in South Africa.
41.	2016	21-25Aug.: Leader, INSA National Delegation to 33rd IGC International Geography Congress, Beijing, China
42.	2017	23-25 November- Tokyo, Japan
43.	2017	July 2017 – till July 2021: (i) Chair-Research Council- CSIR Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI), Govt. India, Mysore; (ii) Member-Research Council-CSIR-Central Institute for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), Government of India, Lucknow.
44.	2018	Nominated as Secretary General & Treasurer, IGU, term: 2018-2022.
45.	2018-19	Chair, Task Force, Landslides Awareness, National Disaster Management Authority, Government of India.
46.	2019-20	Elected President of the Earth System Science Section of the Indian Science Congress Association.
47.	2019-20	(II-term) Head, Dept. of Geography, DSE, University of Delhi: Feb. 2019 – till 29 Feb. 2020 (the day of retirement).
48.	2020	Nominated as a member of the NITI Aayog, Government of India for preparing Vision India- 2035.
49.	2020	29 Feb. (at 65-years age) superannuated from DSE, Univ. of Delhi.
50.	2021	22 July: 03:50AM, death by kidney failure in Jaipur Gold Hospital, New Delhi: “ <i>End of the Era of RBS</i> ”
51.	2022 (?)	18-22 July: IGU 100th Anniversary Congress, Paris, France; <i>INSA Progress in Geography, India, 2016-2022</i> as a memorial to R.B. Singh -?

### Formative Platform of Making

In the second week of July 1973, RBS was admitted to the B.A. course in the Faculty of Arts at Banaras Hindu University, having three subjects to study as the system prevailed during that time. He had chosen geography, ancient Indian history & culture, and English literature. After living with his elder brother in the Aiyar Hostel (Room. No. 19) for about ten days, he was allotted a room in the Birla Hostel (No. 73); of

course, he was taking all his meals in the canteen of Aiyar Hostel under the patronage of myself. Regularly, he had discourse and dialogues with me after dinner that encouraged and helped him create his own world of understanding and geographical vision for the future. He had passed through this academic journey smoothly with sincerity, resulting in accomplishing First Division in his B.A. with distinction in the subject of geography. This helped him get admission easily

in M.A. in Geography at Banaras Hindu University in 1975, with the support of then Head of the Department, Professor R.L. Singh (1917-2001), known as Dean and Doyen of Modern Geography in India. He was taught by such senior and learned geography masters, who had also taught me (now all of them have passed away), like Professors R.L. Singh, S.L. Kayastha, A.S. Jauhari, Kashi N. Singh, Narmadeshwar Prasad, Vijai Ram Singh, and of course, myself (as Senior fellow, I was teaching classes); most of these teachers have taught him in his bachelor studies too. The training here was slightly different from the contemporary geography centres involved in making a geographer as part of academic pigeonholing; instead, it opened the mind to put geography anywhere and create that beautiful. Here for the first time, he learned the use of technology and technocratic approach in understanding landscape and culture; however, he finally put himself into the ocean of empiricism and technocratic narration. What is in the contemporary world is the common scenario. In this realm, the theoretical construction and insightful interpretations become weaker, and pre-determined ideology and pontification become common. In the passage of time, our paths got parallel running: RBS followed through the lenses of 'Remote Sensing & GIS', and I followed the path of 'Intimate Sensing & Deep Ecology'.

I was a U.G.C. senior research fellow that helped me to support RBS for all sorts of the financial requirements, including fees, meals and refreshments, educational facilities and personal needs for livelihood, and also some extra pocket money to fulfil his miscellaneous purposes, etc.; no way the family could afford to support financially even at marginal level. It was during this period RBS came in close contact with friends interested in social activism and politics, resulting in his involvement in students' politics. Thanks to his sense of devotion and dependency with trust in me as 'overall guardian' and another senior student in economics, Shri Haribansh (presently Deputy Chairman Rajya Sabha— 'Council of States' in the Parliament, Government of India, New Delhi) that convinced his mind to give priority to higher studies

avoiding active part in politics. RBS always used to give credit to me for my life-long walk on the geographic pathway. This helped him in a much better way; resultantly, he had passed M.A. (1977) in geography (Arts), securing the first position with the highest marks. For his master class dissertation, at my suggestion, RBS took the topic to understand and expose the space, time and culture of our native village within the frame of rural ecology, which in course of following about three years we worked together to develop a research monograph, under the patronage of IGU Working Group on 'Transformation of Rural Habitat in Developing Counties', under the chairpersonship of Professor R.L. Singh, and was published in 1981. This was our first joint publication as a memorial tribute to our native village, where the family genealogy and linked tree models, socio-economic structure, land occupancy, the religious landscapes, caste ranking, and such related issues are discussed within the purview of my own doctoral research (see, Singh 1977). Let me cite the reminiscences of Haribansh, which explicitly narrates RBS's overall personality:

Prof. R.B. Singh, for us 'Rambabu', was among my personal family friends, as both belong to the same clan. The untimely and sudden news of his sad demise was unexpected. We started the journey of life together from Birla Hostel of Banaras Hindu University in 1973, and that intimacy, mutual harmony, respect for each other that remained till the end in 2021. During our student days, with whom we shared studies, deep interest in social questions and dreams and resolutions of youthful days. Rambabu was very sincere, affectionate and full of compassion and affection towards anyone. But there was another strong reason for our intensity. It was through Rambabu that I met '*Rana Bhaiya*' (Prof. Rana P.B. Singh), his elder brother, who lived in Aiyer hostel in those days, and was known in the university as a very



brilliant, talented, hardworking research scholar. But Rana Bhaiya's generous nature, affection and affinity had created a huge world of younger brothers and admirers, in which I was also one. My coming and going to Delhi was frequent. For this reason, contact with Rambabu remained even after leaving the university. We met quite frequently. We had the same affection, belonging and connection, which initiated about 48-years. Because we would have been proud of Rambabu's international achievements, I would have always been aware of Bhaiya's extraordinary creative works. Rambabu had an impact on my personal life as a friend. His spontaneity, innocence and uniqueness in his field have always been a matter of pride for me. Also, Rana Bhaiya's extraordinary personality, achievement, creative work and deep spiritual and philosophical vision of life, passion for studies made a deep impact on Rambabu and me from the student life, and alive even today. That's why when I got the news of Rambabu's departure, I was shocked and stunned, feeling that the world of personal life has become deserted". — *Shri Haribansh* (personal letter, New Delhi, 30 August 2021).

Possession of good marks and his devotion to study resulted in getting the U.G.C. Junior Fellow award for the Ph.D. research. RBS was registered as doctoral student in July 1977 under the supervision of Professor S.L. Kayastha (1924-2018) on the topic— *Geographical Dimensions of Integrated Rural Development: A Study of Siwan District*, and was awarded the degree in 1981. This dissertation in revised form was published under the name, *Geography of Rural Development* (1986, New Delhi). During his research period, he received a Diploma in Statistics from Banaras Hindu University in 1979, which helped him incorporate statistical analysis in his dissertation. After the passage of time in

1982 he joined as CSIR Pool Officer, Department of Geography, Banaras Hindu University, and continued till August 1985, when he was selected as Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in the Department of Geography, Delhi School of Economics, the University of Delhi (cf. Table 3).

### **Settling Down in the University of Delhi and Achievements There**

In August 1985, RBS had joined the University of Delhi, and the third phase of his life journey started; indeed, Delhi served as the like axis mundi or the epi-centre. Only the last two years, he spent on a rented accommodation. He shifted to the Gwyer Hall in April 1987 and continued there till September 2000, serving in the varying capacities of Resident Tutor, Warden and Provost (Acting) of the Gwyer Hall Hostel, University of Delhi. While associated with the Department of Geography, Delhi School of Economics, he had served and hold several positions, including (i) Vice- President, International Geographical Union (IGU), see Figure 2; (ii) Editor, Springer Nature Series - Advances in Geographical and Environmental Sciences, 2014-2021 and published 25 volumes; (iii) Representing IAP–Global Network of Science Academies on Disaster Risk Reduction and UN Sc. & Tech Conf. on Sendai Framework of DRR; (iv) Awarded with JSPS Research Fellowship, Japan in 2013; (v) Associate Faculty, Global Earth System Governance Project of ESSP, The Netherlands since 2008; (vi) Vice-Chair, IGU Commission on 'Biogeography and Biodiversity' (2008-12); (vii) Special Representative-World Association of Soil and Water Conservation; (vi) South Asian Representative in Commonwealth Geographical Bureau (1992-2000); and (vi) Full Member of IGU Commissions (1988- 2008) (for details of chronology, see Table 3).

His professional services, and membership to scientific committees (see, Table 1), included: Tutor and Provost, Gwyer Hall, University of Delhi (1987-2000); Secretary General of the National Association of Geographers, India, (NAGI) (2001-11), and Managing Editor of its *Journal-Annals of NAGI* (2010-13); Member, IUGG-IGU National Committee of the INSA (2008-22); Member and Leader, INSA National

Delegation to IGU International Geography Congresses, Tunis (2008), Cologne (2012), and Beijing (2016); Nominated Member, Curriculum Development for Geo-informatics jointly nominated by UGC and Department of Space, Govt. of India; President, Geography Section, Indian Academy of Social Sciences; President of the Earth System Science Section of the Indian Science Congress Association (2019-20); Head-Department of Geography, Delhi University (two

terms, 2013-2016 and 2019-20); Nominated, the NITI Aayog, Govt. of India for preparing Vision India- 2035 (2020); and Member, Study Group for Preparation of NCR Plan-2021.

The department of geography had provided him with a solid and potential platform for operating several of the projects, sponsored by national and international institutions, started from 1994 and coming close to 2014 (see, Table 1).



**Figure 2: Professor Yukio Himiyama (IGU President) and Professor R.B. Singh (IGU Vice President), IGU-India Conference at Srinagar, India, 6 June 2014**

### **Publications: Variety, Distinctive and Reports**

Professor R.B. Singh had to his credit 16 books, 40 edited research volumes and around 260 research papers (see, Table 2) published in national and international journals (that is, Remote Sensing, Remote Sensing, Climate Dynamics, Current Science, Singapore Jl. of Tropical Geography, Energies, Agriculture, Theoretical and Applied Climatology, Physical

Geography, Environmental Science and Policy, Ecosystem and Environment, Advances in Meteorology, Hydrological Processes, Mountain Research and Development, Journal of Mountain Science, Climate, Frontiers in Environmental Science, Advances in Earth Science, Advances in Limnology, European Jl. of Geography, Asian Geographer, Environmental Economics, Cities and Health, Tourism Recreation Research). He was Special Guest

Editor of the journals like Sustainability, Advances in Meteorology, Physics and Chemistry of the Earth, and NAM Today. He was on the Editorial Committee of JI. of Mountain Science.

The gamut of publications by R.B. Singh consists of variety and distinct topics, crossing all the traditional border and themes of geography, and under different categories, which include (with a code and Table numbers, T): T-4 Books; T-5 Edited Volumes; T-6 Papers- Peer Reviewed; T-7 Papers in Indian Journals/ Books; T-8 Papers in Foreign Books & Proceedings; T-9 Papers in Indian Books and Proceedings (see, Table 2). Altogether themes and subject matter of his publications could be broadly categorized under 13 categories, viz. Environmental Studies, Geoecology; Land resources, Land use/ Land cover; Water issues, Hydrology; Disaster, Natural Hazard; Quality of Life, Livelihood; Climatic Change, Air Pollution study; Urban Environment, health, wellbeing; SDGs, Environmental monitoring; Geography, Development Studies - Rural and Urban; Mountain studies, Forestry, Tourism; RS, GIS, Recent trends appraisal; Regional Science & SDGs; and INSA Geography Report, & related (see, Table 2). The six categories of his publication (see, Tables 4 to 9, and Appendix: 1) are appraised here in short.

List of the R.B. Singh's books (16) to be classified into three categories, that is, (i) independent, consisting of two such books (research monographs), of them is his memorial lecture, a small piece on "*Urban Sustainability, Health and Wellbeing and Disaster Risk Reduction*" (2020), and another one his revised doctoral dissertation on *Geography of Rural Development: a case study of Siwan district, Bihar* (1986). Three other categories included are report-based books (5), co-authored books (4), and the revised doctoral dissertations of his students published as co-authored books (5) (see Table 4).

He was actively involved in preparing a huge mass of collected thematic papers in the form of

anthologies; this list covers 40 publications from 1990 through 2021. This may be broadly categorised into three types, viz. self-edited (20), co-edited (7), and multi-editors' volume (13); all under the ten broad themes. Of course, among the 40 books, 29 books covered the four thematic groups, that is, Environmental Studies, Geoecology; Land resources, Land use/ Land cover; Climatic Change, Biospheric study; and SDGs, Environmental Monitoring (see, Table 5).

The list of research papers published in the peer-reviewed journal and research series reached 64 (during 1979-2021, see, Table 6), covering eleven themes. Out of these papers only 12 are independent, and the rest 52 are co-authored; the major themes were three: Water issues, Hydrology; Climatic Change, Air Pollution study; and Mountain studies, Forestry, Tourism, covering 38 entries. The follow-up group of papers refer to 'papers published in Indian Journals/books' during 1980-2020, counting to 62 (see Table 7), again to be classified into two: individual (23), and co-authored (39). These entries broadly covered the four thematic groups (enumerating 39 papers), viz. Land resources, Land use/ Land cover; Water issues, Hydrology; Disaster, Natural Hazard; and RS, GIS, Recent trends appraisal (see, Table 7).

The papers published in international anthologies and proceedings reached 58, and as usual categorised into two: individual (20) and co-authored (37). Most individual papers are like encyclopaedical entries or popular descriptions/notes on a theme or based on reports. The primary focus covered three categories: Land resources, Land use/ Land cover (13), Mountain studies, Forestry, Tourism (9), and SDGs, Environmental monitoring (7) (see Table 8). The last group of papers covers 'papers in Indian Books and Proceedings' (1980-2022), covering 76 entries, categorised into two: individual (21) and co-authored (55); and discussed the two broad themes, that is, Mountain studies, Forestry, Tourism (20), and Disaster, Natural Hazard (14) (see, Table 9).

Se	Broad Theme	Independent	Report-based Book	Co-authored	Co-authored, rev. PhD
1.	Environmental Studies, Geoecology	--	--	--	1
2.	Disaster monitoring, Natural Hazard	--	2	--	1
3.	Climatic Change, Biospheric study	--	--	1	2
4.	Urban Environment, health, wellbeing	--	--	1	--
5.	SDGs, Environment, Herbal plants	1*		1	1
6.	Rural development (district level)	1 <sup>+</sup>		1	--
7.	Assessment Report based book	--	3	--	--
	<b>TOTAL (16)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
* Based on a lecture (R.N. Dubey Foundation, Allahabad, 80-pp., 2015).					
+ Revised own doctoral thesis, Banaras Hindu University, published in 1986.					
Source: Collected and collated by Rana P.B. Singh					

Se	Broad Theme	Self-edited	Co-edited	Multi-editors	Total
1.	Environmental Studies, Geoecology	5	1	3	9
2.	Land resources, Landuse/ Landcover	2	2	3	7
3.	Water issues, Hydrology, Watershed	--	1	--	1
4.	Disaster, Hazard	2	--	-	2
5.	Quality of Life	--	1	--	1
6.	Climatic Change, Biospheric study	2	--	4	6
7.	Urban Environment, health, wellbeing	1	--	--	1
8.	SDGs, Environmental monitoring	4	2	1	7
9.	Regional Science & SDGs	--	--	2	2
10.	INSA Geography Report, & related	4	--	--	4
--	<b>Total (40)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>40</b>
Source: Collected and collated by Rana P.B. Singh					

Se	Broad Theme	Individual	Co-authored	TOTAL
1.	Environmental Studies, Geoecology	1	1	2
2.	Land resources, Landuse/ Landcover	2	4	6
3.	Water issues, Hydrology	4	11	15
4.	Disaster, Natural Hazard	--	3	3
5.	Quality of Life, Livelihood	--	1	1
6.	Climatic Change, Air Pollution study	--	13	13
7.	Urban Environment, health, wellbeing	--	4	4
8.	SDGs, Environmental monitoring	1	1	2
9.	Geography, Development Studies R-U	1	3	4
10.	Mountain studies, Forestry, Tourism	--	10	10
11.	RS, GIS, Recent trends appraisal	3	1	4
	<b>Total (64)</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>64</b>
Source: Collected and collated by Rana P.B. Singh				

**Table 7: Professor R.B. Singh: Papers Published in Indian Journals/Books: 62 (1980-2020), Se-No. 65-126**

Se	Broad Theme	Individual	Co-authored	Total
1.	Environmental Studies, Geoecology	5	--	5
2.	Land resources, Land use/ Land cover	--	7	7
3.	Water issues, Hydrology	4	3	7
4.	Disaster, Natural Hazard	3	4	7
5.	Quality of Life, Livelihood	--	--	--
6.	Climatic Change, Air Pollution study	1	9	1-
7.	Urban Environment, health, wellbeing	--	--	--
8.	SDGs, Environmental monitoring	--	3	3
9.	Geography, Rural Development	3	6	9
10.	Mountain studies, Forestry, Tourism	2	3	5
11.	RS, GIS, Recent trends appraisal	5	4	9
--	Total (62)	<b>23</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>62</b>

Source: Collected and collated by Rana P.B. Singh

**Table 8: Professor R.B. Singh: Papers in Foreign Books & Proceedings: 58 (1980-2018), Se-No. 127-184**

Se	Broad Theme	Individual	Co-authored	Total
1.	Environmental Studies, Geoecology	2	3	5
2.	Land resources, Landuse/ Landcover	5	8	13
3.	Water issues, Hydrology	1	3	4
4.	Disaster, Natural Hazard	1	5	6
5.	Quality of Life, Livelihood	--	1	1
6.	Climatic Change, Air Pollution study	--	4	4
7.	Urban Environment, health, wellbeing	--	--	--
8.	SDGs, Environmental monitoring	4	3	7
9.	Geography, Rural Development	2	4	6
10.	Mountain studies, Forestry, Tourism	2	7	9
11.	RS, GIS, Recent trends appraisal	3	--	3
	Total (58)	<b>20</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>58</b>

Source: Collected and collated by Rana P.B. Singh

**Table 9: Professor R.B. Singh: Papers in Indian Books and Proceedings: 76 (1980-2022), Se-No. 185- 260**

Se	Broad Theme	Individual	Co-authored	Total
1.	Environmental Studies, Geoecology	2	1	3
2.	Land resources, Landuse/ Landcover	3	4	7
3.	Water issues, Hydrology	--	5	5
4.	Disaster, Natural Hazard	4	10	14
5.	Quality of Life, Livelihood	--	5	5
6.	Climatic Change, Air Pollution study	--	2	2
7.	Urban Environment, health, wellbeing	--	1	1
8.	SDGs, Environmental monitoring	--	4	4
9.	Geography, Rural Development	2	7	9
10.	Mountain studies, Forestry, Tourism	7	13	20
11.	RS, GIS, Recent trends appraisal	3	3	6
	Total (76)	<b>21</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>76</b>

Source: Collected and collated by Rana P.B. Singh

### Supervision of Doctoral & M.Phil Dissertations

Professor R.B. Singh was an outstanding mentor, guide, and life-long advisor to his students. In his 29 years career of supervising PhD and MPhil (1992-2020), like his excellent mass of papers, he had guided 39 doctoral dissertations and 81 masters of philosophy (see, Table 10, and Appendix: 2). Half of the doctoral dissertations dealt with Environmental Studies, Geoecology (11), and Land resources, Land use/ Land cover (7). The predominance of these topics was

associated with the similar projects where these students worked and, on those themes, submitted their dissertations. Thus, it served the dual benefit: completing the projects and awarding the degree to the associated students. In the case of MPhil's dissertations, the major topics covered include four broad themes, viz. Climatic Change, Biospheric study (16); Disaster, Natural Hazard (11); Mountain studies, Forestry and related issues (11); and Environmental Studies, Geoecology (10)—altogether these covers around 60 per cent of the total.

**Table 10: Professor R.B. Singh: Dissertations Supervised, by Themes (PhD: 39; MPhil: 81)**

Se	Broad Theme	No. of PhD 1992--2020	No. of MPhil 1987--2020
1.	Environmental Studies, Geoecology	11	10
2.	Land resources, Land use/ Land cover	7	6
3.	Water issues, Hydrology, Watershed	4	8
4.	Disaster, Natural Hazard	4	11
5.	Quality of Life, well being	3	4
6.	Climatic Change, Biospheric study	3	16
7.	Urban Environment, health, wellbeing	3	5
8.	SDGs, Environmental monitoring	3	6
9.	Human geography, Rural development	1	4
10.	Mountain studies, Forestry and related issues	--	11
	Total	<b>39</b>	<b>81</b>

§ PhD — addition, Co-supervised dissertations: Urban health 2, Organic Farming 1, Climatic variability 1; Total: 4. Altogether: 43.

Source: Collected and collated by Rana P.B. Singh; see Appendix: 2

### Major Projects and Presentations Abroad

Professor R.B. Singh, as a Project Director/Principal Investigator had undertaken collaborative major research projects on Livelihood Security in Changing Socio-Economic Environment in Himachal Pradesh, India (2012-2016) collaborated with the University of Turku, Finland, Shastri Applied Research Project (SHARP) on Role of Public, Private and Civil Sectors in Sustainable Environment Management (2003-2005) collaborated with University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Canada, ICSSR— Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternative in Development (IDPAD) on Environmental Implications and its Socio-Economic Implications in Rural-Urban Fringe of Delhi —University of Delhi & University of Groningen, The Netherlands. (1997-2002), CIDA-SICI Partnership Project-II on Urban Development and Environmental Impacts in Mountain Context, University of Delhi & University of Manitoba, Canada (1998-2002), DFID Research Project on Enhancing Food Chain Integrity: Pollution Impact on Vegetable System (2000-2) in Peri-Urban Areas, Collaboration with Imperial College, London, UK, CIDA-SICI Partnership Project-I on Sustainable Development of Mountain Environment in India and Canada, University of Delhi & University of Manitoba, Canada (1994-1997), Ministry of Agriculture Project for Preparation of Perspective Plan for Land Resources in N. Zone, India (1994) (see, Table 1). For discussion and discourses on the progress and assessment of these projects, together with IGU meets, he had presented his researches across more than 40 countries, including Armenia, Australia, Bhutan, Brazil, Canada, China, Czech Rep., Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyz Republic, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and UK, and the USA (see, Roy 2021).

### The Role, Contribution and Vision in the International Geographical Union (IGU)

Since 1984, IGU Paris Congress, R.B. Singh had attended all the main Congresses and most of the IGU Regional Conferences and had been actively participating in the academic programs of various IGU Commissions and Working Groups. His previous assignments were: Full Member in the IGU Commissions/Study Groups, viz. Mountain Geocology and Resource Management (1988-1992), Development Issues in Marginal Lands (1992-1996), Land Use and Cover Change (1996-2004) and Biogeography and Biodiversity (2004-2008); Vice-Chair of the IGU Commission on Biogeography and Biodiversity (2008-2012).

Professor Singh was the Vice-President, International Geographical Union (IGU) since 2012 and was elected again for the second consecutive term (2016-18). And, recently, he was elected as first Indian and second Asian, being Secretary-General and Treasurer of the International Geographical Union for the term 2018-2022. As a geographer, he firmly believed in demonstrating interdisciplinary orientation and professionalism in using geographical knowledge and skills. In 1991, he had also organised an interdisciplinary IGU Seminar at Delhi in which four IGU Commissions/ Groups participated. Being a member of the executive committee of the Indian National Science Association (INSA), he got the chance to serve as head of the Indian Delegation to IGU Congress held at Tunis (2008), Cologne (2012), and Paris (2016), where he had raised voices for special concerns to South Asia.

He had also taken the initiative to start a 2-yr alternate IGU-India Conference, already four such meets held at different centres and were attended by selected IGU EC Members and its associated. Many of the proceedings of such conferences were published in his own series editorship under Springer Nature. This was an attempt at his own image-making, making IGU related conferences at the national level. In a way, this was an attempt to Indianise the IGU in projecting the image of Indian geography at a global level, of course, succeeded only

marginally, primarily due to Indian politics and regionalism.

In 2015, Professor R.B. Singh had played an instrumental role as the then Vice-President of the IGU Executive Committee meeting held during the IGU Regional Conference at Moscow, Russia, 17-22 August 2015 (see Figure 3) to establish a 'Taskforce' dedicated to stimulating activities of young and early career geographers in IGU. Through a global call of applications, the Steering Committee was formed. This newly established IGU 'Taskforce for Young and Early Career Geographers' (TYECG) was launched at the 33rd IGU Congress in Beijing, China, on 22nd August 2016, and Dr. Gaurav Sikka (Darbhanga, Bihar, India) was elected as the Secretary and Treasurer, and Dr. Komalirani Yenneti (now, University of Wolverhampton, UK) as the Chair of the Taskforce. The TYECG aims to promote career development for early career

geographers through mentoring, training and competitions; stimulate interdisciplinary, international and inter-generational research conversations between geographers and acknowledge and elevate the achievements of early-career geographers in the Global North and South. This initiative and creation of Professor R.B. Singh will be a role model in making geography the serving catalyst for society. At this juncture, the first such initiative was taken to encourage and provide a publication platform for outstanding young and early career geographers. That is how a special issue guest edited by Gaurav Sikka, Komalirani Yenneti, R.B. Singh and V.S. Tikunov, themed as "Geospatiality and Sustainable Development Goals" was published with *Geography, Environment, Sustainability* (GES) journal—the official journal of Russian Geographical Society (Sikka et al., 2021).



Figure 3: IGU Regional Congress, 22 August 2015, Moscow, Russia: IGU Executive Committee Meet.



Professor R.B. Singh, till last breath, was on the Chair, Research Council, CSIR-Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore; Member-Research Council- CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Lucknow; Member of International Science Council (earlier ICSU) Scientific Committee-Health and Wellbeing in Changing Urban Environment-System Analysis Approach since 2016. But, despite all his dignified positions, recognitions, networking and political links, he had not attempted to revive the existence of the Indian Council of Geographers, which was already abandoned since 1960, and never got affiliated to the government, like its counterparts, for example, Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICCR), Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), Indian Council of Historical Research (ICH), etc. This way Indian geography forum to date failed to have direct interlink to the government system. Similarly, one can also count his negligence (or in a way failure) in the formation of any institution, or even research society in India, like the progenitor of Indian Geography— Professor S.P. Chatterjee (1903-1989), Vice President (1960-1964), and subsequently President of IGU (1964-1968), who had developed National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organization (NATMO), and also established Geographical Society of India, both at Kolkata.

However, Professor RB Singh had successfully mobilised and used his dignified position and international links to develop and enhance the following notable contributions, what he had visioned and proposed for his candidacy to Vice-Chairman and later as Secretary General of the IGU, which included: organizing annual IGU and IYGU events in South Asia for benefit to various cross sections of the society; initiating a Global Open Day for Geography at National Level, especially in developing countries with emphasis on interdisciplinary discourses and promoting joint research projects; promoting IGU as a platform for global understanding, contemporary concerns, prioritization and help in making policies and promotion of leadership; improving academic orientation of IGU through series of publications and start of new thematic

publication series, while maintaining professional standards and the global ethics (e.g., *Advances in Geography and Environmental Science* series under Springer Nature, which is already publishing since 2014); and developing and maintenance of close linkages with UNO and its major branches for promotion of the good causes of IGU. And, (v) Accomplishing Science-Policy Interface (SPI) within IGU Regional Conferences and Congresses on one hand and National committees/Commissions on the other.

### **Memorials and Messages from the IGU**

Here are a few (selected) reminiscences of the IGU senior associates:

I first came into contact with Professor R.B. Singh – I knew him affectionately as ‘RB’ – when he visited me at the University of Cape Town in the mid-1990s, and I had the pleasure of taking him on a tour of our magnificent peninsula and to the lighthouse at Cape Point. He always mentioned this excursion whenever we met – which of course, was often following his election to the Vice-Presidency of the IGU. Our encounters became even more regular from 2018 when he took over from me as Secretary-General, and we worked together very closely on IGU business and more. ‘RB’ was a softly spoken and compassionate person who thought deeply about the subject that he loved so much. His contributions to the discipline – through his indefatigable endeavours in research publications, education and outreach – led to his being considered, quite rightly, as a true ‘Giant of Geography in India’ and beyond. He inspired generations of younger students to pursue our distinguished discipline and has served the global geographical community with great dignity. His countless followers, particularly in his home country, clearly adored him – as the innumerable ‘likes’ of his Facebook posts attest. ‘RB’ will be remembered as a placid, calm but tireless champion of

global Geography and will be sorely missed by all who came into contact with this gentle soul. We all in the IGU, are devastated, and our hearts go out to his family, colleagues, students and close friends. May his soul rest in peace.

— **Professor Michael E. Meadows**,  
President IGU (2020-2024)  
University of Cape Town, South Africa.  
27 August 2021.

I worked with Professor R.B. Singh (1955-2021) closely for over two decades, first in IGU-LUCC (IGU Commission on Land Use/Cover Change) since the 1990s, then in a number of projects, meetings and publications in Japan and India related with land use/cover change, sustainability, disasters, environmental education, etc., while deepening our involvement in the IGU. In 2018 the IGU Executive Committee faced difficulty in finding a candidate for Secretary-General and Treasure for 2018-2022 because the workload of that post seemed hopelessly high. I, then President, was really saved when he said to me that he, then a Vice President, was prepared to take that difficult role if needed. It is my deepest regret that I failed to stop him from overworking for the IGU on top of the other also important duties when his health condition was not so good, then lost one of my best friends and unreplaceable comrade, Professor R.B. Singh on 22 July 2021. His kindness, high and wide-ranging academic expertise and zeal for education remain vivid in my mind forever. Let his soul rest in peace.

— **Professor Yukio Himiyama**,  
IGU President (2016-2020),  
& Emeritus Professor,  
Hokkaido University of Education, Japan,  
25 August 2021.  
In 2006 we had the first larger international gathering to prepare the action plan for the IGU project “Culture and Civilizations for Human Development (CCHD)” at the Home of

Geography in Rome. At that occasion I met R.B. Singh for the first time. Together with (late) Anne Buttimer we were discussing the broadest possible inclusion of geographers from all parts of our planet. From then on, we met at many further events, especially in the context of the International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU). One of the most memorable is certainly the World Cultural Forum at Macao in 2016, where we represented geography, and where the idea was born that IGU shall become a member of the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH). In the following years I could experience R.B. Singh as an extremely engaged General Secretary of the IGU, mastering an incredible workload. When I was asking him on the last day of June 2021 to become a co-signatory of The Jena Declaration he responded as usual the same day. He apologized for being presently in hospital, but that he will be pleased to endorse the declaration after leaving the hospital in about four days. ... With R.B. Singh we lost a gentle and devoted enthusiast who was aiming to integrate cultural diversity for joint action for the benefit of all.

— **Professor Benno Werlen**,  
Executive Director, International Year of  
Global Understanding & Chair of the  
German National IGU Committee,  
UNESCO Chair on Global Understanding  
for Sustainability, Friedrich Schiller  
University Jena, Germany,  
29 August 2021.

I met R.B. Singh first time in Egypt in 1983, during a Conference of the IGU Commission on Resource Management in Drylands. Once again, the following year, during a similar Conference, this time in Delhi, and later at his invitation we visited his residence (the Aiyer Hostel, room no. 19, Banaras Hindu University). Many years passed, in 2006 under the aegis of IGU I had organized a 4-days Conference in Rome on “Cultures and

Civilizations for Human Development”, where he participated and had great discourses. Afterwards, quite every year we met again at international events. In 2008 I was voted for an IGU Vice President, and in the next election to renew the Executive Committee (2014), I suggested he present his Candidacy, and R.B. Singh had succeeded. In the following time, he organized IGU-India conferences every year; and also opened a series of geographical books, mostly with Springer Nature. The last time my wife and I met him was in Istanbul in 2019, when we observed speedy deterioration of his health. But in the following time, we were pleased to see that his activity was continuing as usual. Receiving the news of his sad demise on 22 July 2021 has been a great shock. We are glad that in the recent 34th IGC Istanbul (16-20 August 2021) the loss of Prof. R.B. Singh was felt by all the IGU community.

— **Professor Giuliano Bellezza**, Ex- Vice President IGU and Director- Home of Geography, Rome, Italy. 22 August 2021.

Prof. RB Singh’s untimely death on July 22, 2021 deeply saddened the entire Geography community. I had the opportunity to meet him after he was elected to IGU EC. I had the opportunity to meet him in different cities of the world, as well as in Istanbul, where I live, due to IGU meetings. He was also a wonderful host at the EC meeting in India. In all these works, I have always known him for his gentle and calm personality. I will always remember him as a great and important personality in the geography community. I will do what is necessary to carry out the IGU Secretary General, which he successfully carried out, with the same success. May God have mercy on him, may his soul rest in peace.

— **Professor Dr. Barbaros Gönençgil**,  
IGU Secretary General  
Head, Department of Geography  
Istanbul University, Istanbul-Turkey,  
27 August 2021.

I had known Professor R.B. Singh or ‘RB-ji’ as I affectionately and respectfully called him, for almost thirty years, and it is hard to believe that he is no more. Professor Singh and I interacted in many IGU conferences in different parts of the world, representing India and South Africa, respectively. He also invited me regularly to participate in conferences in different parts of India. RB-ji had amazing powers of persuasion and sometimes gently coaxed me to attend, even when I had a difficult schedule. I have also contributed chapters to his edited book series. ... I believe that a hallmark of a good professor is how he treats his students. I have known many of RB-ji’s students and followed some of their discussions on social media. I can safely say that RB-ji’s students worshiped the very ground on which he walked. I have never heard RB-ji utter a harsh word against anyone, even when things sometimes did not go as planned in some conferences. In many respects he represented the epitome of simplicity and humility. In one of his last discussions with me, Professor Singh had discussed his IGU project with me which will have a huge global impact. He had mandated each of the 40 IGU Commissions to select a theme or sub-theme from one of the 30 SDGs for research. We must collectively ensure that this project continues. This will be a fitting memorial to Professor R.B. Singh.

— **Professor Brij Maharaj**,  
Member SA-NC for IGU,  
Department of Geography,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Durban, South Africa.  
28 August 2021.

### **The Vision that will Radiate**

From carrying the past to channelising the future, country to country, group to group, all he handled with his power of attachment, sacrifice, intimate discourses and honouring other’s domain through solid networking. This way, he succeeded to learn and practice self-guidance to

universal outlook, regardless of what others believe, love or hate him. However, his own enlightenment had always been making geography in serving the causes of emerging society in collaboration and support of his own students, mostly his own doctoral and project associates. In a way, one can say it was RBS's centric approach; nevertheless, it radiated the world and got honour and recognition to Indian Geography through his distinct personality. That is how he was called as "icon of Indian Geography in the emergence of the 21st century". His passage on the road of geography be symbolised as spoken by Buttimer (1993, p. 26), "arboreal representation of a career journey that reveal[s] latent and manifest[s] consistencies as they unfold throughout an entire career". However, his march in diverse directions denotes the evoking of geographic awareness in search of infinite, putting critical reflections, discovery and creative contractions at the margin. Of course, the "RBS Era" is closed on the 22nd of July 2021 by his sad demise. Nevertheless, his messages, visions, signposts, pathways and the frontier lines would always be here what he left for the coming young generations to follow. However, his gamut of publications would hopefully "elicit curiosity and insight about relationships between humanity and the physical earth in themes such as culture and landscape, sense of place, nature symbolism, or the history of ideas" what Buttimer (1993, p. 15) had once envisioned. Let his students and companions pave the path of unification at the place of fragmentation, human service instead of empiricist narration, and making bridges through geographic blocks of cement in furthering geography as intimate knowledge of deeper human understanding. R.B. Singh's contributions should be taken as an enlightened frame —road to unification in the Indian Knowledge System (IKS)— *Bharatiya Jnana Paddhati* (BJP), what Matthew & Herbert (2004, p. 388) said "... that if greater emphasis is given to the unifying themes, Geography will make greater disciplinary and interdisciplinary contributions to knowledge and society, thereby fulfill its destiny amongst the constellation of

disciplines". This was probably the message of R.B. Singh's life-long works.

Through his masses of research students, he followed the path that once Henry said it in his famous book, *Die Empty* (2013, p. 120):

If you have an idea, perform it.

If you know, give it out.

If you have a goal, achieve it.

Love, share and distribute, do not keep it inside.

Naturally, the use of geography has to be judged by its degree of transparency, originality, shared consciousness and its acceptance by the society in terms of its services, and making sense for dignity and peace. RBS had tried his best to do this noble task by collecting flowers from the various wilderness, technocratic landscapes, cognitive works and their associated attributes, and all these illustrated in his colossal mass of publications. Remember what Yi-Fu Tuan (2002, p. 52) once said, "[t]ransparency is the goal of intellect rather than of culture. As for the culture, one might almost say that its purpose is obfuscation. It provides people with a comfortable habitat that lies in the sun, but not too much."

Concerning the goodness and humbleness of RBS, I remember the saying of famous humanist American geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan (2008, p. 80), "[o]ne feels intuitively that goodness cannot be just one act, that it has to be an overall quality, almost innate, like a characteristic smile or tone of voice that is sustained over a life time". RBS had always maintained and kept alive that sense of goodness. RBS had started the run, spread the willpower and whatever integrity inside he had — all he transferred making himself "empty" at the end of his life, and now let his students and companions transform all those in service to the Global community; almost similar to what Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) has envisioned and popularised the message for 'Global Understanding', based on the Vedic teaching: *Utishthata Jāgrata prāpya Varanni Bodhayata*, that is, , "Arise, Awake and Stop not till the goal is Reached" (*Kaṭha Upanishad*, 1.3.14). Let us

realise and reveal this and follow and strengthen the path as homage and tribute to (late) Professor R.B. Singh.

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## Appendix 1: Publications

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7. Kumar, Bhuwan and Singh, R.B.: *Urban Development and Anthropogenic Climate Change-Experience in Indian Metropolitan Cities*. Manak Pub., New Delhi, 216-pp., 2003. [Revised doctoral dissertation of the first author].
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  16. Singh, Swarnima and Singh R.B.: *Simulating Climate Change and Livelihood Security: A Western Himalayan Experience, India*. AGES Series, Springer Nature Pte Ltd., Singapore, 2021. [Revised doctoral dissertation of the first author].
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  6. Abhishek Banerjee, Ruishan Chen, Michael E. Meadows, R.B. Singh, Suraj Mal and Dhritiraj Sengupta (2020) An Analysis of Long-Term Rainfall Trends and Variability in the Uttarakhand Himalaya Using Google Earth Engine. *Remote Sensing* (MDPI Pubs.), 12, 709; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rs12040709>. IF 4.1
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## APPENDIX: 2

### Prof. R.B. Singh: Ph.D. Thesis Supervised (39), 1992-2020 (cf. Table 10).

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