M arch 18, 2010

Hari Sharma 1934 - 2010

Stacy Pigg...a glimpse of his remarkable life in the obituary prepared by Chin Bannerjee:

It is with de epe st sorrow that we announce the death of our friend and comrade, Hari P rakash

Sharma, on March 16 following a prolonged battle with cancer. Hari took his last breath in his

home of 42 years at Burnaby (a suburb of Vanc ouver), Br itish Columbia, surrounded by his

comrades Harinder Mahil, Raj Chouhan, and Chin Banerjee. All of them had come together in

1976 to for m the Vancouver Chapter of the Indian People’s Association in North America

(IPANA), which had been founded b y Hari and many others at a meeting in Montreal in 1975.

Hari was born on March 16, 1934 at Dadri in Uttar Pradesh though his family came from

Haryana. His father was a railway employe e, so he moved from one place to another wherever

the Mayor of Vancouver presented a scroll to H ari dedicating the week to the memory of

Komagata Maru.

Following the attack on Babri Masjid in Dece mber 1992 Hari became the prime mover in the

formation of a North American organization dedicated to the defense of minority rights in India

called, Non-resident Indians for Secularism and Democracy (NRISAD). This organization brought

together Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, an d Christians of origin in South Asia through educ ational and

cultural activities. It had its most significa nt moment in Vancouver in 1997, when it ce lebrated

the 50th anniversary of the independence of India from colonial rule by bringing together

people from the entire spectrum of the South Asian community to focus on how much

remained to be done on the subcontinent and the urgent need for peace between Pakistan and

India.

Recognizing the need to build a North American fr ont against the growing menace o f Hindutva

fascism in India, Hari travelled to Montreal in September 1999 to join the founding of

International Soth Asia Forum (INSAF). He became is first Pre sident and organized the Second

Confer ence in Vancouver from Augst10-12, 2001.

Hari’s leadership again led to the development of N RISAD i nto South Asian Network for

Secularism and Democracy (SANSAD) in Vancouver to embr ace the necessity of going beyond a

focus on India to the entire South Asian region in the quest of peace and democracy based on

secularism, human rights and social justice. SANSAD has pursue d these goals vigor ously,

condemning the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002 (for which he was denied a visa to go

to India), championing the human rights of Kashmiris, promoting peac e between Pakistan and

India, supporting the rights of women in Pakistan, condemning violence against journalists and

academics in Bangladesh, supporting the moveme nt for dem ocracy and social justice in Nepal,

and defending the human rights of Tamils under the attack of the Sri Lankan state.

Besides being an able political organizer and a gifted writer of short stories, Hari was also a

talented photographer. He photographed the c ommon people of India, t heir lives and struggles.

His photpgraphs hang in many homes and have been displayed in many exhibitions. He proved

himself to be an excellent direc tor of political drama .

Political ideals remain steadfast. However , there has, naturally been, divergence of opinion on

the strategy and tactics of achieving these ideals. During the course of long political activity of

more than 50 years, Hari made many friends and comrades. It is natural that among these

comrades there also arose disagreements on many issues. Nevertheless, Hari remained a

comrade or a friend of all of them and they all are dee ply saddene d by his passing away.

Hari leaves behind him a legacy of activism in the service of the oppressed. He is an inspiration

to engagement in the struggle for a better world, to a never -flagging effort to create a world

without ex ploitation, wit hout imperialist domination, without religious, caste, ethnic or gender

oppression, a world that Marx envisioned as human destiny.

Chin Bane rjee

Harinder Mahil

Raj Chouhan

Daya Varma

Vinod Mubayi