

Dev Raj Sikka -- a tribute

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I had the privilege of knowing Mr. Dev Raj Sikka since the first day of my joining the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology at Pune on 25th January, 1974. Over this long span of more than four decades, we enjoyed interacting with each other not only on various scientific issues but also sharing our views on general and personal matters. We had a common (but unspoken) bondage of similar cultural background. Both of us belonged to an area which is now Pakistan. Although, we agreed to differ sometimes, I always respected his views as of a senior colleague. I appreciated his style of communicating clearly and loudly. Be it a private gathering of friends or an official meeting, he always made his presence felt and expressed his views freely.

Mr. Sikka was conscious of performing his duties well and expected the same from others. For a short period of time during his tenure as Director of IITM, unfortunately he suffered with a complaint of having severe pain in his legs which made him difficult to walk or climb to his office on the first floor. Some rest was much needed and well-deserved. However, recognising the need of attending to some important and urgent matters, he got arranged on a cot in a room on the ground floor of the office building. For several days, he was attending to files and meeting the concerned persons while lying in the cot. That period, definitely showed his courage and the commitment to his duties.

Mr. Sikka was well-known, both nationally and internationally, for his deep understanding of the Indian summer monsoon which was his main forte. The names of Mr. Sikka and synoptic meteorology were synonymous. Moreover, from his vast experience and keen interest in reading literature and vigorously interacting with various scientists of all

ages, he was well aware of the fundamentals and latest developments in diverse areas of atmospheric sciences. Once, I had the opportunity of attending an international conference on INDOEX in Netherland, along with him. The conference was well attended by a large number of internationally well-known scientists; Dr. P. J. Crutzen, Nobel laureate, being one of them. During the discussion part a scientific session, a particular feature of atmospheric aerosols observed during the INDOEX, was being vigorously debated. Several diverse views were being put forward by different scientists to explain the feature. At that juncture Dr. Y. Ramanathan, Chief organiser of the INDOEX, and chairman of that particular session, spontaneously announced that different scientist provides their explanations of the observed feature, by the evening. These different views will be adjudged by a panel and the scientists giving the best explanation will have the honour of having a dinner with Dr. Crutzen, and himself. When the result of the contest was announced the next day, it took many by surprise. Who was the lucky winner? Mr. Sikka - of course! Later on, he modestly admitted that it was not as much to winning the contest as sharing a table with such luminaries.

After his retirement from service, Mr. Sikka shifted from Pune to Delhi. But instead of spending a private and secluded life, he chose to expand his sphere of work on national scene. His impact was now being felt in almost every activity in atmospheric sciences. Be it a small project in some organization or a big national project, his stamp was seen everywhere. His voice was heard and his opinion was counted. He was a fearless critic. He expressed his opinion without reservations whether it was a forum of a seminar or a conference or a meeting for deciding on some scientific or functional aspects. He added his flavour to every forum, he attended.

Mr. Dev Raj Sikka remained active till his last day. His loss is not only a loss to synoptic meteorologists but to the whole community of the atmospheric scientists. He will be long

remembered for his services and active participation in most of the activities in the field of atmospheric sciences.