



## Obituary: “Heavenly flight of a birdman of Gujarat”

**Dr. Bhavbhuti Mukundray Parasharya (4 July 1955 – 9 October 2020)**

It was Sunday, 20 September 2020; I called Dr. B. M. Parasharya in the morning at around 10 am on his cell phone, telling ‘Bhai’ (as I usually called him) ‘is it convenient for you to have a round in the salt pans in the Bhal region (around 10 km from Bhavnagar city) for birding in the afternoon?’ He received the cell phone call with usual original zeal! ‘Yeah...lovely’ he replied and added ‘but why don’t you join us right now at Victoria Park (a reserve forest in Bhavnagar)?’ He was with a group of students of Zoology Department of Sir P. P. Institute of Science, teaching them biology of butterflies! Unfortunately, it was the last Sunday in the field with him. We were on a birding trip till the late evening. As the light was not favourable, we planned to visit the place again after a couple of days. But that day never came! On the following Sunday (27 September), when I called him again for the planned birding trip he said, ‘I am not feeling well, I am Corona positive and now I have to be home quarantined for a fortnight! You also take care and please finish that pending task’. We were neighbours; his house is just 100 mts away from mine. As he was Corona positive, I could not meet him but I was in constant contact with him till his sad demise. On 2 October, he was admitted to the hospital and on 9 October morning, he was shifted to the ICU as his condition was deteriorating and in the evening, he had some cardiac trouble. It was the most unfortunate day for me and for all the bird lovers of our country, as I received a call from Dr. Dishant, his nephew, at 10 pm, that we had lost the warrior; he had lost the battle against Covid-19 and the birdman took heavenly flight, leaving behind many friends and family members.

Dr. Bhavbhuti Mukundray Parasharya was the sixth among seven children of Smt. Nirmalaben and a great poet and writer, Shri Mukundray Parasharya. He was born in Bhavnagar, in Gujarat, on 4 July 1955. He was a brilliant student from his childhood. His whole academic career was with first class distinction marks. He completed schooling and B. Sc in 1977 from Sir P. P. Institute of Science at Bhavnagar and went to Vadodara for a Masters degree in Zoology, with specialization in ornithology and fisheries biology, from M. S. University, in 1979. He completed his Ph. D. on “Studies on the coastal birds and their marine habitat with a special emphasis on the biology of Indian Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* (Bosc.)” under the supervision of the renowned biologist Prof. R. M. Naik from Saurashtra University, Rajkot, Gujarat, in the year 1985. International heron experts from USA, Dr. James Hancock and Dr. James Kushlan, were the external referees of his Ph. D. and admired his research work greatly. For the initial six months of his career, he joined the National Institute of Virology in the year 1984 and from August 1984, till July 2017, he was in various positions, from Jr. Scientist to Senior Professor (Research), in AINP Ornithology Project, at Anand Agricultural University, Anand, Gujarat.

Dr. Parasharya authored 112 research papers, which were published in peer reviewed national and international journals and also 9 books, including one on butterflies of Gujarat! He also wrote on damsel flies, dragon flies and spiders. He was probably the first author to describe the breeding between different colour phases of Reef Egrets. He was a thorough naturalist. He was contributing for Asian Waterfowl Census (AWC), a project by Wetlands International, since 1987 and was the coordinator of the AWC programme for Gujarat State from 2001 till his sad demise. He designed and formulated two masters degree courses (1) Agricultural Ornithology and (2) Vertebrate Pest Management, which were finalized by ICAR and implemented by all agricultural universities of India. He was an active member of research, monitoring and advisory committee, the Standing Committee on Applied Ornithology (SCAO), constituted by International Ornithological Congress (IOC) for 1990-1994 & 1994–1998 and by Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Coimbatore, from 2006 to 2020. He was also an active member of more than 10 national and 3 international organizations working for avian diversity and conservation. Being a member of IUCN Flamingo Specialist Group, he prepared an informative booklet on Lesser Flamingo. He was a founder member of Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat (BCSG), and served as Joint Secretary, Secretary and Vice President and was the chief editor of “*Flamingo*”, the newsletter of the society. His demise is a great loss to the scientific community of our country.

**- Dr. I. R. Gadhvi**

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