He laments that our cities have become unliveable over the years. "This happened for three reasons," he explains. "During the colonial era, the British rulers imposed their model of development on us, distorting the natural socio-economic development of the subcontinent. Second, when Bangladesh got independent, the responsibility to build industries and develop the agriculture sector fell on the shoulders of the citizens of this new country. But we did not have any experience of urbanisation and industrialisation. So we built our cities without any proper planning. Third, the population exploded in way that it put a heavy pressure on nature."

Dwijen Sharma has been writing for 40 years and has been working relentlessly to make people understand the importance of preserving our environment. Over the years he has sat on many high powered committees for the preservation of nature. "I cannot say even one of my suggestions has been implemented," bemoans Sharma.

When asked about a memorable event in his life, he closes his eyes for a moment as if to visualise it and says, "During the Liberation War, I joined a group of people who were going to India for shelter. At nightfall, our guide took us to his home near the border. The floor was muddy. So he scattered some straw on the floor for people to sleep on. He brought a small bed for me. I declined. The next morning he introduced me to his wife and said, 'Take a good look at him. This is what a professor looks like. The Pakistani army is killing them all.' Till date I consider it the highest honour I have ever received."

Perhaps Dwijen Sharma's greatest achievement is that he has always stayed focused on how science can help our society. The relationship between science and socio-economic development often appears unclear to the scientist. Asif, a science orator, executive editor of Science World and author of several books on scientific topics, says, "Science cannot survive only in laboratories.



PHOTO COURTESY: DWIJEN SHARMA

In Moscow with colleagues at Progress Publishers.



PHOTO COURTESY: DWIJEN SHARMA

Abdullah Al Muti Sharfuddin, Khaled Chowdhury, Dwijen Sharma and Hayat Mamud. (From L-R)

When a traveller asked Wordsworth's servant to show him her master's study, she answered, "Here is his library, but his study is out of doors." Diwjen Sharma's study has been the roads, lakes, ponds, rivers, forests of Bangladesh and Europe.