

With wife and Syed Najimuddin Hashim, the then Bangladeshi ambassador to Moscow.

PHOTOS COURTESY: DWIJEN SHARMA



With Father Wheeler, the then principal of Notre Dame College.

It has to take into consideration the socio-economic conditions. Although a scientist, Dwijen Sharma has a deep understanding of our social systems."

In his articles in response to over reliance on technology and wealth as cures for human condition, we see hints of the ideas of Tagore, Martin Heidegger and Thoreau, American transcendentalist and philosopher. He says, "Mahatma Gandhi got his idea of non-violence and civil disobedience movement from Lev Tolstoy and Thoreau's *Walden*, a timeless book on nature in 1854."

Noted writer Hasan Azizul Huq has known Sharma since the late sixties. "Dwijenda is very adventurous in nature. He and I would sometimes tell Boudi (Dr Devi Sharma) that we are going out for a walk and will be back shortly. Then we would saunter by for hours looking at trees and shrubs. One day we went to see the abandoned Jaminder building in Murapara which is the background of Atindro Bandopadhay's *Nilkontho Pakhir Khoje* (In search of the Nilkontho). We hired a small boat and went down the Buringanga. It was an abandoned building, full of snakes and insects. We went to many more places like a couple of vagabonds and explored nature and people."

When he is not busy helping botanists with identifying a species or giving a lecture or an interview, he takes children to parks and introduces them to trees. Bipradash Barua, novelist, story writer and naturalist says, "Whenever we face any questions related to botany, we call him. He is like an encyclopedia. For example, if I see a new botanical species, I bring it to him. One look at it and he can identify it."

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. When he showed us around his garden and introduced us to different species of plants, it seemed as if he was taking care of little children.

William Wordsworth wrote in his 1798 poem *Lines Written in Early Spring*, "To her fair works did Nature link/The human soul that through me ran/And much it grieved my heart to think/What man has made of man." Taking a long pause from our conversation, Sharma quotes Jibananda Das, "*Prithibir govirotoro oshukh ekhon.* (The earth is suffering from a serious illness)." He adds, "We all must try to determine the disease and find its cure."

We can only aspire to fathom the beauty Dwijen Sharma moves through. At 84, he still dreams about building a large garden where people can commune with nature. He used to go shopping for fresh produce every morning. Now his age does not allow him to do that anymore. But he still gets up at sunrise and goes to the terrace. He might see something beautiful. ■