

**Bhubanesh Kumar Pradhan**

Former Secretary, Government of Nepal

*In light of recent developments in water resources and hydropower development in Nepal, **HYDRO Nepal** felt this an appropriate moment to review some of the personalities who have played important roles in these areas over the past few decades. This time begin with Mr. Bhubanesh Kumar Pradhan.*



### Background

Pradhan was born to mother Ganga Maya and father Rameshwor Lal Pradhan at 185 Makhan Tole, Kathmandu in 1936. He is the third son and the fifth child among four brothers and three sisters. He was married to Bidyabati Shrestha of Mahaboudha, Kathmandu in 1962 and has a son and three daughters.

### Educational Background

Pradhan was admitted to Buddhi Vikash Vidyalaya and then to Juddhodaya Public High School in Grade VI. He took his School Leaving Certificate exam at Juddhodaya and was placed Board Second in 1953. At Tri-Chandra College, Pradhan earned his Intermediate of Science in 1956, majoring in biology and mathematics. From this performance, he was admitted to the University of Roorkee, India to pursue a Bachelor's of Science in Civil Engineering, which he completed in 1959.

### Professional Background

Pradhan began his career as an Assistant Engineer in the then Department of Irrigation, Government of Nepal. While in the Department, he was selected to be a Project Engineer on the Team conducting the Pre-investment Survey of the Karnali Hydroelectric Project (1962), financed by the World Bank.

On his return to the Department from this work, Pradhan was admitted to Strath-Clyde University in Glasgow, Scotland, to pursue a Master's of Science in water resources. He would become the first student to complete this Master's course at Strath-Clyde. While in the UK, he worked with Sir Alexander Gibbs and Partners and on the design of hydroelectric projects and he credits this experience as preparing him to work with expatriate consultants throughout his career. On return from the UK to Nepal, Pradhan oversaw several irrigation projects and played a significant role in the UNDP-financed Master Plan of the Sun Koshi Terai Irrigation Project. Through his diligent work, Pradhan eventually ascended to the position of Director General for the Department of Irrigation, Hydrology and Meteorology (DIHM).

During his tenure as DG of the DIHM (1976-1980), Pradhan helped to complete many irrigation projects (inter alia, Kamala, Banganga, Manusmara, Phewa) while also creating a vision for irrigation plans in the future (inter alia, Bagmati, Babai, Sikta, Sunsari-Morang). Many hill irrigation projects were

also completed during this period with the application of new and innovative technology, bringing in much needed water for farmer in the remote Hill areas.

As the Executive Secretary in the newly-formed Water and Energy Commission Secretariat (1980-1988), Pradhan was instrumental in building the foundation, including a knowledge database that would inform key government planning ministries with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency. Pradhan also directed the formation of a district-wide irrigation database during this tenure.

As a Secretary in the Ministry of Water Resources (1988-1991), Pradhan played a key role in commissioning the 69 MW Marsyangdi Hydroelectric Project in scheduled time under very restrictive sanctions by India. He was also instrumental in sorting out the chronic problems to fruition in three crucial projects: the long-awaited construction of the weir-cum-road-bridge of the Babai Irrigation Project across the Babai River, the Chapakot Tar Irrigation Project, and the UNCDF financed Marchawar Irrigation Project, which irrigated 3,500 ha in the district of Rupandehi.

As a Member-Secretary of the National Planning Commission (1991-1992) –the last leg of his service career – Pradhan played a key role in completing the 8th Five Year National Plan (1990 - 1995), which included future projects such as the Bheri-Babai Diversion and Sun Koshi Diversion. Another important and strategic role replayed as a member of the Huigh Level Section Committee in his short tenure was to land the Government Nominee Late Harka Bahadur Gurung in the coveted post of Director for the Asia Pacific Development centre based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

### Publications

A part from his applied work, Pradhan published many reports and papers that were published in national and international journals. His career-reflection essay, "Personal Reflections: Nepal – India Water Relations," was published in 2009 in the compilation *The Nepal-India Water Relationship Challenges*, edited by Dr. Dwarika N. Dhungel and Santa B. Pun.

Pradhan has also published five prayer books. The first three, collected together, are titled *Dev Devi ko Upasana Swayam Gyanmala* and contain many

popular Sanskrit hymns dedicated to various Gods and Goddesses translated into Nepali. The other two books (*Dev Devi ko Upasana Swayam Gyanmala Laghustotra Part I and Part II*) are short hymns dedicated to Gods and Goddesses and also in Nepali for the ease of local devotees.

In 2010, Pradhan edited "A Tribute to the Late King Mahendra", containing a collection of postage stamps, postal stationeries, coins and bank notes issued during his reign.

### **Pastime**

In his spare time, Pradhan pursues several hobbies including stamp collecting, numismatics, photography, and Sanskrit studies. He prints his own stamp albums, in which he displays his lifetime collections of Nepalese and Chinese stamps.

### **Vision**

For Nepal's water future, Pradhan envisions the country utilizing its resources to irrigate all presently cultivated land (3 million ha) and doing so without showing bias to large-scale irrigation projects. Regarding the irrigation-hydropower balance, Pradhan believes larger-scale irrigation projects secure Nepal's water rights and that its hydropower potential should be developed to promote national interests first. He believes that hydropower and irrigation projects should be developed by Nepali resources, taking Bheri-Babai, and Chilime as prime examples of this potential.

### **Unforgettable Moments**

Pradhan's career has been marked by several important encounters. But he considers his responses to the Late HM King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev regarding Nepal-India Secretary-level talks as the most memorable. Pradhan delivered the responses during an impromptu audience at the King's birthday party.

### **Travels**

In the course of discharging his official duties, Pradhan has travelled far and wide, covering 62 countries on six continents to enrich his vast knowledge of water resources.

### **Present Activities**

Pradhan maintains an office in Bhanimandal, Jawalakhel, Nepal to continue his work. He is presently working on his prayer books. The third edition of *Dev Devi ko Upasana Swayam Gyanmala Part I* has just been released while the second edition of *Dev Devi ko Upasana Swayam Gyanmala Laghustotra Part III* is due for release in the next year.

### **Affiliation/Association**

#### **Member**

In recognition of his contribution to the development of Water Resources, Pradhan was made a member of the

prestigious National Water Resources Development Council for two terms (1993-1995 and 2001-2003).

Registered Engineer: Nepal Engineering Council

### **Life Memberships**

- Nepal Engineers Association
- Jalasrot Vikash Sanstha (JVS)
- JICA Alumni Association of Nepal
- Nepal Philatelic Society
- Founding Member and Life Member: Roorkee University Alumni Association
- Founding President and Life Member: Society of Irrigation Engineers Nepal (SIREN)
- Member: China Study Center
- Member: Nepal Numismatics Society

### **Medals and Awards**

Pradhan has been decorated with the *Suprabal Gorkha Dakshin Bahu III*, the *Bikhyat Tri-Shaktipatta III*, and the *Prasiddha Gorkha Dakshin Bahu II* by the Late HM King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev for his meritorious contribution to the development of water resources in Nepal.

Pradhan has also received several awards for his outstanding contributions in the field of engineering.

The following are a few of the highlights:

- Award with Citation and Cash from the Royal Nepal Academy of Science & Technology (RONAST) for his distinguished contribution in the field of Civil Engineering on Marg 20, 2062 (December 5, 2005).
- Lifetime Achievement Award with Medal and Citation from the Nepal Engineers' Association on the occasion of the Engineers' Day on Shrawan 3, 2066 (July 18, 2009) for his outstanding contributions to the field of Engineering.
- Civil Service Award with Citation and Shawl from the Government of Nepal on the occasion of Civil Service Day on Bhadra 22, 2066 (September 7, 2009) for his exemplary contributions to the Civil service.
- Award with Citation and Shawl from the Department of Irrigation on Irrigation Day on Chaitra 24, 2070 (April 7, 2014) for his outstanding contribution in the development of irrigation in Nepal.

### **Success**

For his success, Pradhan points to the 'Mantra' of two DD's and two PP's: determination, dedication, perseverance, and patience. To this he adds, that success for any individual requires an institution of members who contribute to the whole and without vested interests.