

## *Obituary*



**Prof S. L. Kayastha**  
(1924 - 2018)

Prof. Shanti Lal Kayastha (B. March 30, 1924) departed for heavenly abode on January 7, 2018 after enjoying a fruitful life span of about 94 years. Having received his secondary education at the famous Government College Lahore, he went to Aligarh Muslim University for Post Graduation degree. Subsequently, he moved to Banaras Hindu University where he shaped his entire academic career with the privilege of being the first Ph.D. of Geography Department and heading the same department for two terms later on.

As a teacher, Prof. Kayastha had distinction of demonstrating very high degree of punctuality, discipline and communication skill in the classroom. His measuring the distance between parallels and meridians with the help of divider in the practical class was something hard to forget. He was instrumental in introduction of new

courses on resource, population, Indian Ocean and most importantly environmental studies in Geography syllabus. His research interest lay in the studies of river basins as a resource planning unit (his own PhD work on The Himalayan Beas Basin: A Study in Habitat, Economy and Society), appraisal of Water resources, environmental issues, ecological crisis etc. Perception studies elicited his attention with reference to pollution problem of Kanpur city and the flood plains, where it could form basis of decisions as to specific remedial measures. He advocated through his works need for national policies for forests, water and environment. His two Presidential lectures, one at the Indian Council of Geographers Meet, Mysore and the other at Geology Geography Section of Indian Science Congress, Pune, focused on the themes related to environment and development.

Prof Kayastha held important positions like Chairman- Geography Panel of Experts (UGC), Full Member-IGU Commission on Environmental Problems, and Secretary-National Committee for Geography, Chairman - Advisory Board of NATMO etc., whereby he could promote cause of the subject. His visits abroad include about a dozen countries namely, Romania, Mexico, USA, Brazil, Spain, France, England, USSR, Pakistan, Nepal, Japan, where he delivered lectures and participated in discussions of the seminars / conferences. What brought huge popularity to Prof Kayastha was his very long (over three decades) association with National Geographical Journal of India as its honorary editor. The Journal with international reputation provided platform to incentivize research, particularly, by the emerging geographers. In recognition of his contribution, the National Geographical Society of India conferred on him Sardar Ballabh Bhai Patel Medal (1971). Prof Kayastha coordinated a major research project on South Mirzapur: An Integrated Area Development.

As a human being, Prof Kayastha had sterling quality of head and heart. He was soft spoken and highly disciplined both in the department and at home (no deviation in lunch, dinner and bed timings). Keeping

everything in order was his way of life. He has tremendous aesthetic and dress sense. In a lighter vein, it may be partly attributed to his being a room partner of famous film actor Devanand at Lahore. He was very helpful and affectionate to his colleagues and research students and all this manifests in the respect and regards he commands among his students spread over different parts of the country. Prof. Kayastha breathed his last at Varanasi, where he owned a beautiful house, named 'Akhnoor Hut'. He was a committed follower of Radha Swami Sect., Dayalbagh, Agra, where he used to spend considerable time on intervals; all his post death rites were performed there. Having shared some theory and practical classes and research problems, I had opportunity to closely interact with him, enjoying his affection and favor. My unfathomable reverence to him.

**D.N. Singh**

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