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IN MEMORIAM



Professor Emeritus Dr. Gopal Krishan
(July 05, 1940-November 07, 2023)

Dr. Gopal Krishan, Professor Emeritus, popularly known as G.K. Sir among his students was born on July 05, 1940 in Village Bhalowal of Jhelum district in the Punjab Province of undivided India. After partition, the family settled down at Shimla. Discipline, duty and devotion of the family moulded the childhood of G.K. Sir. As a teenager, Dr. Gopal Krishan got school education in Shimla. At the very young age, when he was in school, he received first prize from Mrs. Vijay Laxmi Pandit in a declamation contest on the topic "The Glory That is India". He passed his matriculation examination in 1956 and topped in the then erstwhile State of Punjab. He did his graduation (with Hons.) from D.A.V. College, Jalandhar. He obtained his Masters' Degree in Geography in 1962 from the Department of Geography, Panjab University Chandigarh and he was the Gold Medallist. He joined the Department of Geography as a teacher in 1962, the year he had completed his Master's course. Dr. Gopal Krishan wanted to pursue his carrier in Indian Administrative Services. But destiny had assigned a nobler role for him, as a teacher, academician and a researcher par excellence, being an analytical visionary.

Dr. Gurdev Singh Gosal, Head of the

Department of Geography at that time was quick to recognize his intellect for research and temperament to commitment. He enrolled him for Ph.D. under his supervision. His thesis was on "Changes in the Demographic Character of Punjab's Border Districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur 1951-61". In those days, one of the external examiners used to be from a foreign university. The presentation of his work was of such a high quality that his viva-voce examination was waived. He was awarded Ph.D. by the Panjab University, Chandigarh in the year 1968.

This in-built quality was well foreseen by Dr. Gosal in Gopal Krishan to whom he respected the most. Both maintained the *guru shishya* tradition in the Department of Geography. An erudite and dignified Dr. Gosal carried an air of confidence and stability which invoked in G.K. high regard for him. In short, both complemented each other in teaching, research and holding high position in various Associations, Societies, and Institutions. G.K. Sir always had a very high respect and regard for his teachers. At a later stage, when his own teacher (Prof. Wahi of DAV College, Jalandhar) approached him to undertake Ph.D. under his supervision, Dr. Gopal Krishan, with

all humility expressed helplessness by saying that the student can never be a mentor of his own teacher.

Prof. Gopal Krishan's gentle demagogic compassion and willingness to support students and colleagues have been moulding their ideas, carriers and lives. On any achievement/accomplishment of his students and near ones he would pat on the shoulder and bless by saying, "I am proud of you, you are an institution in yourself." These encouraging and highly motivated words he bestowed like flowers on many students and colleagues. He took special interest in developing Cartography, Population Geography, Geography of Regional Development, Urban Geography, Disaster Management, Remote Sensing and Geographic Information System, and last but not the least Administrative Geography. He drew an impressive way forward agenda for future research in Political Geography, Gender Analysis, Population Policy, Population and Ecology, Population and Development and Population and Poverty. In the field of Urban Geography, his thrust has been on urban settlements developing outside the jurisdictional boundaries, sustainability of urban development, fixing pricing and costing of urban services.

To commemorate Golden Jubilee of Chandigarh, the International Union of Architects, Paris, held annual Conference on 9th January, 1999. The Chief Guest was Shri K.R. Narayanan, the then President of India. Dr. Gopal Krishan authored sixty-five self-designed maps titled "Inner Space - Outer Spaces of a Planned City - A Thematic Atlas of Chandigarh" which was presented to the President of India. He contributed a lot while preparing Gazetteer of Chandigarh, researched salient features of Chandigarh's Peripheral

Development, perceived its regional plan and suggested realignment of administrative boundaries in the light of the principles of Administrative Geography.

In addition to his appointment as Professor and Head of Department of Geography and Honorary Director, Academic Staff College at Punjab University, Chandigarh, he has served as President of National Association of Geographers (NAGI), President of Indian National Cartographic Association, President of Institute of Indian Geographers, National Fellow of Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ICSSR), New Delhi. He was the Professor of Regional Planning at National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), New Delhi, Senior Professor and Principal Advisor at Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID), Principal Advisor, Planning and Development Cell at Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration, Punjab, Chandigarh. He has also been the President of the Association of Population Geographers and editor of its Journal, Population Geography.

After retirement, the Panjab University, Chandigarh honoured him with the status of Professor Emeritus in the Department of Geography, the position he held till his last breath. In addition, he was very closely associated and has been an inspiration and motivational personality in various research activities and publications of the Kanwar Surjit Singh Institute for Spatial Planning and Environment Research (ISPER), Panchkula. In fact, Dr. Gopal Krishan nourished and nurtured a number of Academic Centers, Societies, Associations and Institutes, both in India and abroad. He was instrumental not only in teaching and research but also in developmental agenda. He left deep footprints on the

Geographic Landscape of such Institutions and Universities. Although he moved and lectured in various universities of United Kingdom, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands and Paris in Europe and some universities in the United States of America, yet his permanent address remained Chandigarh. Notwithstanding his continuous travels outside India, his major focus of research was on spatial issues, population diversity of Punjab and Haryana. He was very active in teaching and research till he breathed his last on November 07, 2023.

In his academic and research life span over four decades, he published 14 books, piloted 26 research projects, wrote five monographs and was author of more than 144 research papers. He also published 19 map series in Population Geography, a journal of the Association of Population Geographers and reviewed 10 books. Dr. Gopal Krishan was conferred D.Sc. (Honoris Causa) by University of Pecs, Hungary in the year 1996, 'Bhoogol Vachaspati' in 2016 and 'Bhoogol Ratna' in 2019 by National Association of Geographers, India (NAGI).

Dr. Gopal Krishan was an academician, researcher and his dedication towards work

impressed everyone with whom he happened to work. When Dr. Gopal Krishan joined Center for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID), the then Director of CRRID Sh. Rashpal Malhotra commented, "Gopal Krishan is the mind that does not disintegrate but synthesize". Similarly, while paying tribute in a condolence message, Prof. Zoltan Wilhelm, from Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Pecs, Hungary, mentioned, "Memory of Professor G.K., who was always cheerful, full of heart, but who carried out his work with unrelenting meticulousness will be cherished and his intellectual legacy will be cherished in Hungary as well".

He has not gone anywhere. He is virtually present in all the discussions and debates of his areas of interest, looking down with smiling expressions and inquisitive eyes. Now it is for us to see, how seriously we carry forward his research legacy.

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