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

Prof. Kayastha was born on 30th March, 1924. He had his education at the famous Government College, Lahore, and later at Aligarh Muslim University. He moved from Rupar to join Banaras Hindu University as Lecturer way back in July 1948. He was the first Ph.D. from the Department of Geography, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Later, he was Head of the Department during 1977-79 and 1983-84. For his contributions in Geography, the National Geographical Society of India conferred on him the Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel Medal in 1971.

Prof. Kayastha was the first to undertake the study of a river basin as a viable unit for integrated resources development and planning. His comprehensive work, *The Himalayan Beas Basin: A study in Habitat, Economy and Society*, was a landmark in this direction. He traversed on foot the entire cross-section of the rugged mountainous terrain between the rivers Ravi and Sutlej. His interest in integrated development found further fulfillment in the study of south Mirzapur. Prof. Kayastha earned the credit for initiating Environmental Studies in Geography in India. He guided several researches relating to concepts, perceptions and problems of urban pollution, flood plain and human adaptation, rural water supply, regional development planning, population and impact of development on environment. He formulated ecological mapping pilot studies in several universities as part of the U.G.C. Geography Panel of Experts, of which he was the Chairman. He was Chairman of advisory committee of *National Atlas & Thematic Mapping Organization*, Calcutta. Prof. Kayastha was full member of the I.G.U. Commission on environmental problems. His significant contributions always received high recognition in India and abroad.

Varanasi has been a seat of learning since times immemorial. This could be one of the reasons why Prof. Kayastha continued to stay in the oldest living city of the world, even after his retirement. His post-retirement contributions attest that his decision was correct, which in turn has benefited his friends, colleagues and other co-professionals. Any one calling on him found Prof. Kayastha cool, polite and gentle as ever. But in return, he found himself inspired and activated. He followed a very disciplined and frugal life style. He was a prolific writer, an ardent reader and a keen observer.

Prof. Kayastha's significant contributions have provided conceptual models, developed novel ideas and enhanced our knowledge on the environmental forefront. His continuing dynamism in the last decade of his academic career demonstrated his determination and dedication to the discipline of Geography and related spheres of work. He was senior fellow of the *Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR)* during 1986-88. On account of his valuable contributions to Environmental Studies, he was unanimously elected as the President of the Geology and Geography Section of the *Indian Science Congress Platinum Jubilee Session* in

Pune in 1988. His Presidential address on "Frontiers in Environmental Geography: Reappraisal of Environmental Problems and Policies in India" received wide appreciation and provided the spatial dimension of the Environmental Problems in the country. For Prof. Kayastha, the study of population in its spatial dimension was an important aspect of study. His address on "Sustainability of Metropolitan Centres in the Third World Countries" during the *International Union of the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP)* Congress in Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi in 1989 was remarkable. He also participated in the *Commission on Population Cartography* of the *International Cartographic Association (ICA)* meeting on "Population Mapping Technology". He attended IGU Commission meetings in Karachi, Kathmandu, Sydney and New Delhi. He presented a paper in the Commission meeting in Macquarie University, Sydney on "Planning for Population Change". His most significant contribution to the activities of the IGU Commission on Population Geography was as the co-editor of its prestigious publication, *"Population and Disaster"*, published by Basil Blackwell, Oxford. Its review appeared in the prestigious journal *Nature*. Prof. Kayastha's enduring contributions on environment and related themes helped to provide environmental studies its due place in geography. He contributed an important chapter on "Environmental Policies in India" in *Environmental Policies: World Overview* edited by Chris Park (Croom Helm, London).

Apart from academics, he had a passion for photography, was an enthusiastic swimmer and started Boat & Swimming club of BHU as its chairman. It is rare to hear about the 62nd wedding anniversary which the couple celebrated on 30th October, 2017. This event would be remembered as the finest gift of Mrs. Kusum Kayastha towards a contented married life in a successful joint family set up with daughters-in-law (Roopa and Ritu), after which she quietly left for heavenly abode on 10th November, 2017. Life has a limit and Prof. Kayastha passed away peacefully on 6th January, 2018 close to attaining 94 years age. Prof. Kayastha was the most accomplished person with added spiritual dimension and raised a great family. He is survived by his two sons; Prof. Anand Mohan (former professor of Geology at BHU and currently Registrar at Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra; and Prof. Arvind Mohan Kayastha at school of Biotechnology, BHU) and four grandchildren (Kanika, Hans, Kanwal, Arpan). Undoubtedly, as a soft spoken man of few words, he touched so many lives as a mentor, teacher and as a noble human being. His sad demise is a huge loss to the entire community of geographers and he will be missed by scores of well wishers, friends, colleagues and family members.

Former Head, Department of Geography
Banaras Hindu University
Varanasi

V.K. KUMAR