

Remembering Professor P N Kaula

PROF A S CHANDEL*

Death is inevitable and does not have any calendar. But those who die leaving behind their treasure of knowledge remain alive through their works which they leave behind. Their contributions, keep them living in the hearts and minds of people. Prof P N Kaula is one of them who suddenly created vacuum particularly in Indian librarianship. Every professional in India knows his contributions which has been duly acknowledged by various professional bodies in India and abroad. The medals instituted on his name during his life time shall keep him immortal that would keep on reminding professionals, family members, friends and his former students about him. Padmashree was his last decoration. He used to often say 'God has given me enough'. All laurels which he achieved kept him satisfied with his contributions, nevertheless he was aspiring to achieve more and more till the last and had been always busy in his academic work.

I feel privileged that I was his student and remained associated with him for about 40 years. I found ideal teacher in him in addition to being exceptionally a good human being always taking care of his students and professionals. During my students days, I observed some of the following qualities in him which I would like to share with my professional colleagues and students:

1. He was an excellent teacher with powerful oration, commendable communication skill, exploring innovative teaching methodology which could make every student to work. I had written a paper on his teaching methodology which I found new and innovative and effective, hardly followed by other teacher†. He used to conduct class interviews in which students among themselves were required

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† CHANDEL, AS. Teaching methods of Professor Kaula. In RAWAT, P P *et al.* Eds. *Current Developments in Library and Information Science (Kaula Festschrift-3)*. New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House, 1998, 647-652.

to put questions to one another, followed by the evaluation/rating of best question put and answered. He never used to come in the class with notes. I noticed him once or twice coming to the class with a small piece of paper much smaller than the size of the catalogue card to dictate some statement or dates of events otherwise he used to lecture verbatim for many hours. He was gifted with wonderful memory and could remember minutely every event and dates.

2. I recall him teaching historical account of development of classification or documentation activities in India, library legislation etc.; what were the recommendations of CRG in different seminars and conferences, he used to remember vividly. One of my class fellows, had once commented Prof Kaula omits *Prolegomena to Library Classification* of Dr S R Ranganathan. Even, he could remember discussions taken place in the sessions of seminars and conferences which he had attended decades ago; and his meetings with authorities in different states of India. He had been frequently meeting Ministers of different states for enactment of library legislation and other improvements in the profession.
3. Great teacher is he who could inspire and motivate his students to work hard and take interest in the profession. He has been often telling his students to work hard and he had techniques of getting work from students and colleagues
4. I recall him saying *'read extensively, work hard to prepare for your examination. If you work hard now, you may not need to work so hard afterwards during your life. Hard work during your student life has long dividend which will continue to pay you always in your future life.* These words still echo in my mind after more than 35 years when I was his student in BHU.
5. His teaching and concern with his students was not limited to class room only but wherever he would meet or see his students outside, he would interact with them and ask about their studies and welfare. He always commanded respect among the students. His stature constituting his personality, contributions, eminence was so high that none could dare to disobey him, "In teaching you cannot see the fruits of the day work. It is invisible and remains so, may be for 20 years" (Jacques Barzum). This quote has relevance to teachers like Dr Ranganathan and Prof Kaula.
6. His advice and instructions were effective as he himself was very

hard working and devoted to his duties and responsibilities which were quite visible. He has been showing his own hard work to his colleagues and students. It was rare occasion to find him not engaged in his professional work. I always found him in his study room with scattered papers around and writing for his journals. He used to say that I teach classification and my own books and other material remain scattered, and I always have problem of retrieval of papers. He used to receive number of journals, newsletters, books (for review) in exchange of his own journals, some of them on gratis. Thus, he had built up very good collection on library science which he gave to North-Eastern Hill University and was about to handover large number of books and back volumes of journals to Jammu University. He had long mailing list for exchange of journals particularly against *Herald of Library Science*. His mailing list was not less than a large institution and used to attend each and every correspondence.

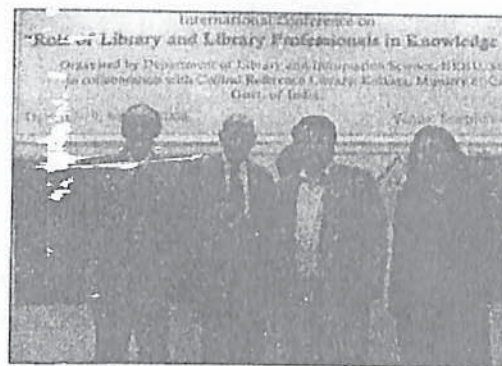
7. No doubt, he was a prolific writer and has considerably enriched library science literature, at the same time his personal contacts and communication was unparalleled. He was always quick in responding to any communication. I don't think he ever kept any letter unresponded. His last letter to me received stated that 'some students don't remain students only but become family members, and you are one of them. This shows how affectionate nature he had. I also noticed him going to hospitals, and hostels during the ailment of his students.
8. He was very punctual in attending his classes, meetings and other assignments. I found him directly coming to attend his classes from the airport or railway station, instead of first going to his residence. When I was a student, he was most busy person in various professional and administrative activities, so had to go out of station to attend professional responsibilities. But he never made his students to suffer. Compensation was taking marathon 3-4 hrs classes on Sundays and holidays. His public relation was unique. Wherever, he had been going, he would make it a point to meet everyone, he knows, visit their places as a family member and greet them with warmth. This brought him closer to many families members who are now missing him badly. He was also a wonderful host and used to immensely enjoy offering tea / snacks to his students and other visitors.

I am not highlighting his academic contributions which other contributors might have covered in this issue. His festschrift volumes, different awards and recognitions given by national and international bodies are enough testimonial for his outstanding contributions. I simply wish to share my personal relation with him. I requested Prof Kaula to give keynote address in International conference on *Role of Libraries in Knowledge Society* which was organized by the Department of LIS, NEHU in collaboration of CRL, Kolkata at NEHU Shillong from 17-19th March, 2008. He gladly accepted our invitation and attended the Conference. He delivered his keynote address for more than an hour. While tracing the historical account of library development in North East India brought forth the problems being faced by the libraries in the region. Reiterated that many recommendations were made to improve the status of libraries in the various meetings and seminars particularly seminars organized by NEC in 1981 and 1986 held at Guwahati and Shillong respectively, and regretted that there has not been implementations of those recommendations till now. Referred to various educational policy documents of Govt. of India in which, there is hardly any mention of library development. Education being state subject is one of the reasons for neglect of library services. Suggested that India should have National Book Museum as in other countries like USA, France, UK and some other countries. It is a matter of concern that reading habits of people has a declining trend particularly due to media. Highlighting that books are irreplaceable and lifelong friend who never leave you. Therefore, called 'never failing friends'. I later requested him to speak on Dr Ranganathan's contributions and some unknown facts of his life. His lecture on Ranganathan has always been excellent in which he used to always give tribute to his 'Guru'. He used to always say that whatever he achieved in the profession, it was only due to his teacher Dr Ranganathan. This was his humility and respect to his teacher. That was perhaps the last conference he attended. It is known to every professional that he kept Dr Ranganathan's Philosophy and contributions alive during his life time. We were fortunate to have him here to celebrated his 84th Birthday during the conference. Before coming here, his birthday was also celebrated at Manipur organized by professionals of Manipur. Some of his photos take on the occasion are given here.

It was coincidence that I talked to him only a week ago from his death. He was at his Delhi residence. He said, I would be going to Lucknow to pack up my things to finally come to Delhi. I am old now and cannot



Prof Kaula Delivering keynote address

Celebrating 84th B'day

With faculty of NEHU

manage things alone. He had been living alone at Lucknow at the age of 85 years. He added that I have to dispatch my collection to Jammu University, before I finally shift to Delhi, which he could not do due to his sudden death. His voice was not as sharp as it used to be. But he did not forget to inquire about my daughter, how she is, how she is studying, has she stopped viewing TV for longer hours etc. That used to be his personal touch inquiring about welfare of family members. Finally he told me 'Chandel' some time used to call me 'Chandel ji' also, 'write something about me, my memoir'. I was not able to understand whether he wanted me to write for a journal or some chapter of the book. But without inquiring the detail, I simply said, 'Sir, I shall do that'. This was my last talk with him and his last words to me. The editor of 'Library Herald' Prof C P Vishishth gave me this opportunity to write these lines in his honour as my tribute to him my heart. It was his wish, which I could fulfill through these lines. His students will still find him inspiring with shaping stick to become good professional and contribute more and more to Indian Librarianship.