Makund Behari Lal

Makund Behari Lal, a distinguished parasitologist, died in the early hours of 5 December 2002 at Dayalbagh, Agra.

Born on 31 January 1907 in Sitapur (UP), Lal had his early education in UP and received the M Sc degree in Zoology from Lucknow University. After a Ph D degree, he was awarded D Sc by Lucknow University in 1937 for his outstanding researches on helminth parasites. Later he carried out postdoctoral research in the University of Edinburgh, UK and received a second D Sc degree from University of Edinburgh in 1947 for his pioneering researches on helminth parasites of UK.

Lal had a distinguished academic career. He joined as a lecturer in Zoology at Lucknow University in 1929, subsequently becoming reader and professor, and in 1954, the Head of the Department. He steered the department until he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Science in 1960. He became the Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University for a three-year term in 1968.

Lal has made significant contributions to the morphology and taxonomy of trematode parasites and larval helminths both in India and in Scotland (UK). He also carried out in vitro and biochemical investigations on helminthic parasites. He published over 100 research papers in peer-reviewed journals and guided the research work of over 20 scholars.

Lal was elected a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore, at the young age of 35 in 1942, and of the Indian National Science Academy in 1962. He represented India at the meeting of International Union of Biological Sciences in Rome in 1955. In 1960, he led the Indian delegation at the 300th meeting of the Royal Society of London. In 1958 he was elected Vice-President of the International Congress of Zoology, and chaired the Open Session of the International Congress of History of Science in Cornell and Philadelphia in 1962. He was the President of the Zoology Section of the Indian Science Congress in 1957, and a Fellow of the Zoological Society of India.

Lal became the seventh revered Guru of Radhausami faith at Dayalbagh, Agra in 1975 and steered the Satsang community for 27 glorious years during which period the Satsang made phenomenal progress. Under his guidance and inspiration, the Radhausami faith spread far and wide, and thousands of people from all walks of life from both India and abroad embraced this faith.

Lal was the architect of the education policy of Dayalbagh Educational Institute (DEI) and was appointed its first honorary Director in 1973. He framed an innovative Education Programme for DEI in 1975 that combined a novel experiment in education, social service and integrated development. DEI was elevated as a Deemed University by UGC in 1981. This institute is unique in many ways. In addition to modern courses being taught here, both the teachers and students work in fields and engage in community service. Lal advised and guided this programme till his last days.

It has been said of Dayalbagh that—neither is anyone great or big here, nor anyone small or insignificant, and if anybody here is honoured more than others, it is he who works better or more than others. Those who have visited the institute and have seen its working, the discipline, zeal and commitment of its teachers and students, will never forget the academic atmosphere, and the peaceful and spiritual ambience that prevails.

Lal was a rare combination of an outstanding teacher and a spiritual leader. Those of us who had the privilege of being his students at Lucknow, remember him with great admiration, respect and love. I was his student during my M Sc course from 1949 to 1951. He was up-to-date as a teacher and taught with clarity and perfection. He was progressive in his outlook and always had time to encourage and discuss with students who wanted to know more. I had the good fortune to continue to interact with Lal as an external examiner for several years. Though he observed strict discipline and punctuality, a rare blend of humbleness, kindness and the magnificent spirit of affection emanating from him has left an everlasting imprint on the minds of his students and followers. He was simple and frugal in his personal life, but very liberal and charitable for a good cause.

Lal’s students and his myriad followers all over India and the world will greatly miss his enchanting personality, his spiritual and intellectual guidance, his unparalleled spirit of determination and dedication towards advancement of education.

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