

Department of Geography, Faculty of Science
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Our Past Masters: Obituaries

Prof. H. L. Chhibber (1899-1955): An Obituary

Source: Kayastha, S.L. 1955. Dr. H.L. Chhibber: Obituary. *The National Geographical Journal of India*, vol. 1 (1), September 1955: p. 62.

Prof. Harbans Lal Chhibber (4 December 1899 – 25 February 1955) has passed away at Banaras on 25th February 1955 after suffering a distracted ill-health of over two years. He was educated at Prince of Wales College, Jammu and won H.V. Cobb Gold Medal for standing first in B.Sc. Examination of the Punjab University. He joined the Banaras Hindu University in 1923, and in 1926 was appointed in the University of Rangoon in which place he succeeded the great English geographer Dr. Laurence Dudley Stamp [1898-1966], the progenitor of *Applied Geography*, as Head of the Geography and Geology Department. In 1927 he got the D.Sc. degree of the Punjab University. Dr. Chhibber joined the Geological Survey of India in 1928 as an assistant superintendent. He got his Ph.D. degree of the London University in 1933, D.I.C. in 1934 and D.Sc. in 1937. In 1940 Dr. Chhibber rejoined the Banaras Hindu University and on 19th of August 1946 under his leadership was founded the new Department of Geography in the presence of then Vice-Chancellor Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan and the founder of the BHU Mahamana Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya; of which he became the founding and the first Head of the Department. He was also the founder-President of the National Geographical Society of India, Banaras. Dr. Chhibber was a fellow of the National Institute of Sciences of India, Royal Geographical Society London, National Academy of Sciences and Geological Mining and Metallurgical Society of India. He was the author of several books (*see below*). Besides these, he published a number of articles in the *Bulletins* of the National Geographical Society of India and several other scientific journals. During the last days of life he completed '*The Progress of Geography in India*' which he had undertaken at the request of the National Institute of Sciences, India.

Books

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Prof. R. L. Singh (1917-2001): An Obituary

Source: Singh, Rana P.B.: Prof. Ram Lochan Singh (1917-2001). *IGU Newsletter* (Rome, Italy), No. 3-4, December 2001: p. 09; also in *Annals, National Assoc. of Geographers, India* (NAGI, New Delhi), vol. 21 (2), December 2001: pp. 92-93.

Professor Ram Lochan Singh has passed away at the age of over 83 years on 20 December 2001 at 2.30 P.M. at his residence in Varanasi. He was internationally known as the great craftsman and the Dean of Indian Geography. In India, he was known as the “Father of Modern Geography”. He was born on 20 March 1917 in a village of Bahiri, near Varanasi. He received his early education in the local school and later at the U.P. College, Varanasi. He took his master degree (MA) in Geography in 1945 from the University of Calcutta, where he came under the influence of Prof. Shib Prasad Chatterjee [22 February 1903 - 27 February 1989] and Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose [22 January 1901 - 15 October 1972]. He joined the department of geography at Banaras Hindu University in 1946 as lecturer. In 1953 he was awarded PhD degree from the London School of Economics under the guidance of the great English geographer Prof. Laurence Dudley Stamp [1898-1966], the progenitor of *Applied Geography*, on the topic “*Banaras and its Umland: A Study in Urban Geography*”. At the death of then head, Prof. Harbans Lal Chhibber [1899-1955] on 25 February 1955, he became Professor and Head, Department of Geography, Banaras Hindu University, which he continued till his retirement on 31 March 1977. He was also Dean, Faculty of Science, Banaras Hindu University during 1958-1960 and 1967-1969. During his association to Banaras Hindu University (1947-1977) he had also served as Executive member of the council (1968-70), Hon. Librarian, Chairman of the students’ welfare committee, etc. He was elected President of the Geology and Geography section of the Indian Science Congress for the year 1966-67 as the first geographer in India to have received this honour. His presidential address, “Morphometric analysis of Terrain” opened a new vista for geomorphic research in India and was hailed both by geologists and geographers. He became the first National Lecturer in geography under the UGC scheme in 1971. During 1980-83 he was also the Vice Chancellor at Meerut University.

In 1968, during the 21st International Geographical Congress at New Delhi he was the key person as the Organising Secretary. On this occasion he took initiative to start the IGU Commission on “Rural Settlements in the Monsoon Asia” (1968-1972) as the Chairman, which is changed to “Rural Settlements in Monsoon Lands” (1972-1976) in 22nd IGC at Montreal, again under his chairmanship. In 23rd IGC at Moscow, the commission’s name changed into a Study Group on “Transformation of Rural Habitat in Developing Countries” (1976-1980), again under his co-chairmanship together with Dr. Rana P.B. Singh. In the 24th IGC Tokyo, the publications and conferences organised during last twelve years under the guidance of Prof. R. L. Singh have received a wide acclaim and recognition. This Study Group has continued for the next term (1980-1984). As leader of the delegation he represented India in various IGU Congresses, including 20th IGC at London 1964, 18th IGC at Rio 1956, and also IGU Regional Congresses held in Malaysia 1962, Ghana 1970, New Zealand 1974 and Singapore 1975. He was honoured to serve as UNESCO Professor at University of Mexico in 1964. He had visited over fifty countries, giving lectures on Indian geography. Prof. Singh was also one of the founding members of the Commonwealth Geographical Bureau, to which he served as the Asian representative in its first two terms (1968-1976).

His doctoral dissertation is published in 1955, entitled “*Banaras: An Urban Geography*”, and accepted as the basic frame of urban studies in India. In the foreword to this book Prof. L. Dudley Stamp remarked, “Dr. Singh has carried out a pioneer study of a most meticulous and detailed character of Banaras itself and of its Umland”. On the similar outline he has published another book, *Bangalore: An Urban Survey* (1964). Both of these works received a wide acclaim during 1960s to develop urban geography in India. Through these

two books he has introduced the conceptual frames of morphogenesis and umland (city-region) in Indian context. Later on, these approaches were used in the studies of rural settlements that started by his edited anthology, *Rural Settlements in Monsoon Asia* (1972), followed by additionally eight volumes on rural settlements. Many of his doctoral students also chosen topics on rural areas and further advanced this branch of studies. Out of 53 students awarded doctoral degrees under his supervision (during 1958- 1982), about half of them worked on the problems of rural settlements. Many of his doctoral students became the first head of the department of geography at the newly opened departments in various parts of the country. The Banaras School of Geography is symbolised by his personality, interest of research and his own creation.

In the field of regional geography, Prof. Singh pioneered the first comprehensive study of India on the occasion of the 21st IGC New Delhi (1968). Later he took help of a large number of Indian geographers and produced a monumental work on the regional geography of India, *India: A Regional Geography* (1971). His contemporary and specialist of India, the Scottish geographer Prof. Andrew Thomas Amos Learmonth (1916-2008) remarked that, "The book is well written, and for a collaborative work remarkably well integrated. Prof. R. L. Singh and his colleagues in Varanasi in need moved the mountains, and their work will long remain an indispensable source and reference book for all approaching the regional geography of India on the rich range of scales they have used to bring out unity and diversities in their country".

Prof. Singh has been Secretary of the National Geographical Society of India since its inception in 1946, and also the founding editor of its quarterly *National Geographical Journal of India* since 1955, till the last days of his breathe. He has also established NGSI Research Publication series in 1964 under which forty-two volumes published till 2001, and he served as the General Editor. His publications include seven research monographs, two textbooks, eighteen edited/co-edited volumes, and over one hundred research papers. As token of recognition he was awarded Hiroshima University Medal in 1964 and again in 1971, and Jawaharlal Nehru Medal in 1958 by the National Geographical Society of India.

Prof. Singh is survived by four daughters and a son, and also three grandsons. His first daughter is a physical geographer and serving at the geography department, Banaras Hindu University. His son is a civil engineer, employed at Obra, ca 100km SW of Varanasi.

We all pray the Almighty to grant peace to the noble and departed soul.

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Selected Publications: R. L. Singh

BOOKS

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Prof. Kashi N. Singh (1932-2013): An Obituary

We all have been shocked with pain and grief that our beloved teacher and mentor, Prof. Kashi N. Singh (1 January 1932 - 18 July 2013), the luminous figure of Indian Geography, has left this mortal world on 18 July 2013 at 01.50AM, due to massive heart attack; he was cremated at Harishachandra Ghat at the riverfront bank of the holy Ganga in Varanasi. He was a man of vision, a great guide and companion on the road to deeper knowledge, and above all a great humanitarian who always helped his students to follow the right track. As his student, for me that is an irreparable loss in my life. Nevertheless his blissful spirit is always with us to show the light in the passage of darkness. Memorial condolence took place in the department of geography on 18 July 2013: 5.00PM, and attended by all the members who have expressed their homage to the great departed soul and prayed to the Almighty for granting peace to the departed soul. His post-funerary rites (*Trayodasha Samskar*) was performed on 30 July 2013.

Prof. K.N. Singh had received his M.A. (1956), and Ph.D. (1963) under the supervision of Prof. R.L. Singh (1917-2001), the *dean* and *doyen* of Indian Geography, both from the Banaras Hindu University. His topic of Ph.D. dissertation was “*Rural Market and Rurban Centres in Eastern Uttar Pradesh (India)*”, and examined by external examiner Prof. John E. Brush (U.S.A.), a well-known American geographer, who had highly appraised the work and finally invited him to the U.S.A. for post-doctoral research under his own supervision and collaboration.

Professor K.N. Singh was specialised in the studies of Rural settlements, Historical geography and planning, Economic geography, and Social geography, and was well known as leading personality and symbol of Indian geography through publications, lectures, supervision of doctoral dissertations (total 16, including two students from Nepal, and one from Bangladesh), and special lectures in International and National Conferences in India and abroad. His publications include 6 text books, 12 co-edited books, and about 70 research papers. For such academic pursuits he paid visits as scholar, fellow and speaker in several countries in East Africa, Anglo-America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Bali, U.K. and U.S.A. He was acclaimed for his research in the field of historical settlement geography (*historischseidlungsgeographie*).

On 29 September 1957 Prof. K.N. Singh had joined Department of Geography, Banaras Hindu University as Lecturer, and promoted to Reader in July 1968. During the period of January 1977 - November 1978 he had been professor and head, department of geography at Patna University (Bihar), but in followed up year in November 1978 he had return back as Professor of Integrated Area Development in the department of geography at Banaras Hindu University, which he cherished till his retirement in 1993. He has been Head, Department of Geography, Banaras Hindu University for the two terms: 1-4-1981 to 31-3-1983 and 1-4-1984 to 31-3-1986. During 1983-1984 he was honoured to be the National Lecturer (University Grants Commission) and under this he gave lectures in many Indian universities. Under his leadership the University Grants Commission supported this Department through the Department Research Support (DRS) programme during 1981-86 and under the Special Assistance Programme (SAP) during 1987-92 when he served as Coordinator to this programme. He was retired on 31 December 1993, and soon had been honoured to be Emeritus Professor (UGC), however could not join, just to avoid the last painful days he experienced in his own *alma mater*. During 1991-93 (two terms), he had served as member of the Board of Directors, U.S. Educational Foundation in India (U.S.E.F.I.), New Delhi. He was also a member of the INSA Committee on Geography, 1976-80. He had credit to publish 6 books (all text books), 11 co-edited volumes, over 60 research articles. His visits abroad included East Africa, Anglo-America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Bali, U.S.A. and U.K. He was also an Executive Member of the Commonwealth Geographical Bureau, London (1976-1984); Asst. Secretary, NGSI, and was Life Member of national bodies like NGSI, NAGI, NEGS, IIG, CIG, and UBBP. During November 1993 - June 2008, he had been Professor of Geography in the College of Social Sciences, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. After returning from Ethiopia, he was living in Varanasi in his own house (in Mahmoorganj), and sometimes was passing his holidays with his doctor son Dr. Om Prakash Singh and his family in the campus of Banaras Hindu University [house no.: B-1/ B-1 Meera Colony], and his daughter Dr. Meenakshi (chemistry) and son-in-law Prof. Abhay Kumar Singh (physics), and daughter-in-law Prof. Mrs. Poonam Singh (zoology, MMV) – all are the faculty members in the Banaras Hindu University.

During 1964-1966 he was on leave to USA as Post-Doctoral Fulbright Scholar at Rutgers the State University of New Jersey; and in 1965-66 summer he served as Associate Professor at East Stroudsburg State College/ University, East Stroudsburg PA. In this period he studied and collaborated with Prof. John E. Brush [1919-2007], who was already influenced by the researches of Prof. Singh and served as external examiner of his doctoral dissertation, and quoted some of his observations about the morphology of twin township of

Dehri-Dalmianagar (*NGJI*, 3 (3-4), 1957: pp. 169-179) in his classical paper, “The Morphology of Indian Cities”, in *India’s Urban Future* (ed.) Roy Turner (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962, p. 64). During his stay in USA he studied different dimensions of geographical researches through discourses and classes directed by Guido G. Weigend [1920-2012], who was a close friend of Chicago circle of geographers like Edward Ullman [1912-1976], Chauncy D. Harris [1914-2003], Harold Mayer [1916-1994], and wrote his classical paper entitled “Some Elements in the Study of Port Geography” (*Geographical Review*, 48, no. 2 (1958): pp.185-200) taught him intricacies of land and water interfaces and the role of man in transformation and counter changes, and had offered opportunity for Prof. Singh’s placement at Rutgers in the academic year 1964-65. By his friend Artur Getis [b. 1934–], who was at Rutgers during 1963-1977, he learned the sense of cartographic representation and viability of sketches; by John E. Brush [1919-2007], who taught his critiques and empirical testing of Central Place Theory and service centre hierarch that helped him to further investigate the historical processes and associated simulative model of settling phases, later illustrated in his study of Basti district of eastern Uttar Pradesh, and also Joseph E. Spencer [1907-1984], who as specialised of Asian culture taught him cross-cultural understanding and study of cultural landscapes that he further incorporated in his the most cited and pioneering paper on “Territorial basis of Town and village settlement in Eastern U.P., India”, published in *Annals, Association of American Geographers* (vol. 58, no. 2, 1968: pp. 203-220).

The editor of the AAAG, Prof. Joseph Spencer wrote about this paper “Your paper is very good, interesting and significant one. Both editorially and personally like what you have done with your subject, and it will illustrate to the geographers of the world what can be done by penetration in depth and by the use of materials from non-geographical sources of Indian topics, arid by an Indian geographer. Therefore, I would like to make your paper the lead article in the June, 1968 issue”; this issue was released on the occasion of 23rd International Geography Congress, New Delhi: December 1968, held for the first time in Asia, and was attended by his teachers and inspirers from USA, i.e. John Brush, Guido G. Weigend, Joseph Spencer, and Arthur Getis.

The most popular systematic and regional geography of *India and Pakistan* by O.H.K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmonth (Methuen & Co., London, 1967, p. 631), refers that “For an usually vigorous commentary on the urban, land use maps, see, Kashi N. Singh 1957. Morphology of the twin township of Dehri-Dalmianagar (*The National Geographical Journal of India*, 3 (3-4), Sept.-Dec: 169–179)”. Some of his papers were prescribed in the graduate courses in Hiroshima University, and are highlighted by famous Japanese scholar Prof. Hiroshi Ishida in his book, *A Cultural Geography of the Great Plains of India* (Univ. of Hiroshima Press, 1972).

(late) David E. Sopher [1923-1984] in his famous critical essay, “Towards a Rediscovery of India: Thoughts on some neglected geography”, in, Marvin W. Mikesell, ed. *Geographers Abroad* (University of Chicago, Chicago, 1973: pp. 110-133) appraised Prof. Singh’s contribution (p. 123): “The interest of the Varanasi school in rural settlement and urban morphology is expressed in a consistent documentation with maps of the arrangement of villages on the land, of crops on village lands, of caste groups and institutional structures in village residential areas. Systematic relations of the kind suggested by Radha Kamal Mukerjee may, however, be left unexamined, although there are notable exceptions, such as the reconstruction of the historical pattern of caste-differentiated settlement in northeastern Uttar Pradesh, which owes much to the work of K.N. Singh. Some of the more perfunctory treatments of the topic may have been a disappointment to the editor, whose other work suggests an appreciation of land and place, and a feeling of being at home with his area. These are encouraging signs, as are indications of interest in the popular history of Indian localities”.

Famous American anthropologist Richard G. Fox, in his book, *Urban India: Society, Space and Image* (1970, Duke University) wrote about his classical paper (AAAG, 58, no. 2,

1968): “Dr. Singh’s stimulating paper in many ways parallels the present one. It is gratifying that so many of our conclusions are similar, although our work was done independently. Our papers have different emphases and in several places in the text some criticism is made of K.N. Singh’s interpretation. However, these differing viewpoints and interpretations in no way remove my intellectual debt to Dr. Singh, not only for the paper cited above, but for his original paper on the subject which whetted my own scholarly appetite: R.L. Singh and K.N. Singh “Evolution of the medieval towns in the Saryupar plain of the Middle Gang Valley: a case study” (*NGJI*, 9, 1963: pp. 1-11). K.N. Singh was often quoted in the above work so profusely for comparison, similarities and validation of his own explanations. Richard Fox, again in the next classical book, *Kin, Clan, Raja, and Rule* (UCP, Berkeley, & OUP Delhi, 1971), writes: “Recent work by Bernard Cohn, K.N. Singh, M.C. Pradhan, etc. has indicated the important role played by unilineal kin groups of locally dominant Kshatriya “Castes” in the lower level political organisation of traditional North India. K.N. Singh provides (greater detail about the organisation of these kin bodies, although he seems to disagree with Cohn about terms. Singh speaks of regionally dominant Rajput lineages providing corporate political authority throughout eastern Uttar Pradesh. Their internal kinships create administrative and economic linkage extending from the administrative division equivalent to a culture through the Tappa (administrative Division of a Pargana) and into the Gaon or individual village (K.N. Singh, 1969, *op. cit.*)”.

Those anthropologists and historians of north India who profusely cited quotations from the early writings of Kashi Nath Singh on settlement history and diffusion of clan settlement that further resulted to different layers of territorial formations, included are Tom J. Kessinger (*Vilayatpur, 1948-1968, Social and Economic Change in a North Indian Village* (UCP Berkeley, 1974, cf. p. 19), and Brenda E.F. Beck (*Peasants Society in Konku, A Study of Right and Left Castes in South Asia*. UBC Press Vancouver, 1972, cf. pp. 32, 35).

The accompany of the three professors, Prof. Kashi Nath Singh together with Prof. Aizazuddin Ahmad [1932-2006] of J.N.U. and Prof. Anath Bandhu Mukerji [1929-2011] of Punjab University, were known as “trinity” of Indian Geography. Now the great “triangle” and “trinity” has no more physical existence. In a simple way, I express my deeper sense of grief and suffering to convey that both of my masters (Prof. R.L. Singh and Prof. Kashi N. Singh) now no more in this mortal world, but their message, insights and visions are always with us and will further radiate the light of deeper understanding and path of research, what they said “yoga of place”.

On the sad demise of Prof. Kashi Nath Singh through the words of Prof. K.R. Dikshit (retired professor of geography, Pune University), one of his intimate friends, we all express our feelings that “this was a personal loss to all his students, friends and admirers, and above all the country has lost a very distinguished geographer, and Indian geography is certainly poorer today than it was yesterday. The absence of Prof. Singh will be always felt by Indian geography, and we will miss him for many years to come”. We all his students, friends, fellows and followers, and companions convey our homage to the departed soul and pray to the Almighty for granting eternal peace to the sublime soul.

..... Prof. **Rana P.B. Singh**

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Selected Research Papers

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