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My Memories With Prof M M Kashyap

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I had a long association with Prof. M M Kashyap since 1980s. But came in close contact when we invited him as a Visiting Fellow/Visiting Professor at NEHU, Shillong (Meghalaya) during 1980s and 1990s. We had introduced a new paper entitled as 'System Analysis'. This paper was being taught by Prof. Kashyap in Delhi University since 1970s. So we thought of inviting him to introduce and teach this paper. My late wife Prof. Veena Saraf was his student at M Lib.Sc and M Phil level. She was instrumental in inviting him to our Department at NEHU. She was an admirer of Prof. Kashyap and used to often talk about his teaching and writings to me before I met him. She used to rate him as a good teacher and writer. Nevertheless, she was more appreciative of his writings. I recall her saying that we as students at Department of LIS used to get more clarity and understanding from his writings. According to her, he was quite friendly, compassionate, cooperative and helpful to his students. Sometimes, he used to take whole class to the coffeehouse for informal teaching and discussion. This attitude and behavior brought him quite close to his students and became dear to all.

I met him with this introduction and impression. Thereafter, when he joined our department sometime in late 1980s, I came into his close contact. Almost every year he used to come and teach our students for many years. Not only our students were privileged by his teaching but the Department and its faculty members were also immensely benefitted. He had been feeling quite homely staying at Shillong as his own student Dr. Veena Saraf was there to look after his comfortable stay. Then, I also happened to be associated with Delhi University, Department of Library & Information as an examiner to evaluate some of the dissertations supervised and guided by him. I still remember the works which he had supervised with all his devotion always maintaining the quality and the standard of the University.

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With the passage of time, we became closer and closer and used to discuss and share many academic matters of mutual interest at length.

I feel that to be a good teacher in Library & Information Science, one should preferably have experience of working in good libraries. He entered teaching profession with the background of experience of working in a well established Delhi University Library. Moreover, he got the opportunity to work under Prof. S Das Gupta who was the University Librarian and Head, Department of Library & Information Science in the same University. Prof. Kashyap like many other library professionals was highly influenced by Prof. Das Gupta. His basic training was under him which left an indelible mark on his working and dedication to the profession. He used to sometime share his experiences working in Delhi University Library. This background of working with users under the leadership and able guidance of Prof. Das Gupta made him an excellent teacher and library professional. Another person who had influenced him by his writings and thought was none other than Dr. S R Ranganathan. His role models were these two stalwarts of library profession.

His subject specialization was system analysis and development. However, he was equally interested in concept classification, indexing, management, etc. Lately, he got interested in learning and teaching library software and specialized in CDS/ISIS software. Since he had the background of teaching system analysis so learning any software was comparatively easier to him. He completely got enthralled with CDS/ISIS and became its promoter. During 1980s and early 1990s there was hardly any Indian library software in use. Since this software was free to download and install, therefore, many libraries began their automation using this software. This was an excellent software so far as storage, sorting and retrieval functions were concerned. Prof. Kashyap started teaching this package at various levels; in seminars/conferences/training programmes including in professional classes. He also wrote many articles on CDS Database Management. This software was primarily for creating databases but was lacking other individual modules like acquisition, circulation, serial management, etc. but he managed to integrate all such operations by creating different worksheets to meet out multiple functions of the library. Thus, he has significantly contributed by teaching and writing on this software which laid sound foundation for further learning on computer applications in libraries. To me contribution of Prof. Neelameghan and Prof. Kashyap to establish and promote CDS/ISIS was noteworthy in India.

I recall that every day after his classes, he used to visit Ratan Tata Library of Delhi University during 1980s, may also be in 1990s to assist the library staff in automation of library services where he had installed CDS/ISIS. He was quite friendly with the then Librarian of Ratan Tata Library Mr A L Kapoor. Both of them worked together to introduce automation in the library as early as during 1980s. This library became his laboratory to work further on CDS/ISIS. He had a passion to promote this software and wanted to train as many professionals as possible.

He was a confident, knowledgeable with strong convictions capable of arguing his point of view strongly and convincingly. He was a teacher with a mission to give more and more to his students even more than he knew the subject. This was the spirit of his teaching. He kept himself busy in professional writings and revising his books after his retirement. He has always been a smartly dressed vibrating personality, full of energy and commitments.

My last conversation with him was on October 24, 2014 when I rang him to wish him a Happy Diwali. When he received my call, he responded 'apko meri yad kaise aa gai' (how did you remember me). I gave my genuine explanation to him being not in touch with him for quite some time. Quite seemingly, there was some element of unhappiness over my silence. He might be expecting at least my call if not a visit to him during his ailment which I never knew. He informed me that he was hospitalized and has undergone some surgery. His voice was feeble, and I realized that he is not very comfortable in talking, moreover, I was not able to hear him properly. So I cut short the conversation and told him to send me a mail writing about his ailment and promised him to meet soon during in November. He immediately sent me a SMS asking me to send my mail ID which I immediately did. I also informed him through SMS that I have sent him a mail so that he attends to it. The text of mail was under:

Dear Sir,

It was sad to know that you are not keeping well and have been operated. I could not know more about your ailment as connectivity was poor and your speech was not clear. However, it was nice to know that you are out of hospital and improving.

I wish you a speedy recovery and restoring to your earlier good health.

With good wishes and prayer,

Yours

This was my last communication to him. I am sure that he might have read my mail and also might be definitely wishing to write me back. Alas! His ailment did not allow him to write me a line or so which I have been eagerly waiting. It was out of my imagination that he will so early leave all of us so suddenly. I have lot of memories with him and he was the first and the last to teach me basics of computer applications particularly CDS/ISIS which I had successfully taught and implemented in some of the libraries. His memories will always remain with all of us who knew him. Let me pay my tribute to him quoting from Alfred Tennyson's poem:

I hold it true, whate'er befall;

I feel it when I sorrow most;

'Tis better to have loved and lost

Than never to have loved at all.

His loss to library profession, family members and his dear and near is indeed heavy, which we have to bear and accept. We lost a good teacher and an excellent human being in him.



Prof Kashyap asking a question during DLA Platinum Jubilee Lecture