

A Tribute to Professor D.P. Khandelwal – Founder of IAPT

Indian Association of Physics was established in 1984 by Prof. Khandelwal and his colleagues. He nurtured it for almost 12 years and then departed from the scene rather too early in the life of IAPT. The organization is now 36 years old; not only has it survived all these years but grown. This indeed is a testimony to the strength of the foundation of the organization that Prof. Khandelwal laid in the initial years, the team of selfless volunteers that he built, and the tradition and culture of the organization that he created.

Although I became a member of IAPT in the late eighties, I was not a very active member until late nineties. I had met Prof. Khandelwal, but did not know him closely. What I have known about him is from my colleagues and friends in IAPT and from his writings. The picture of him that has emerged in my mind is of an excellent teacher who cared his utmost for students and colleagues, a passionate scientist who loved science and in particular physics, a visionary who always thought of the country's future and a Karmayogi who constantly strove for the vision to come true through the organization that he founded and nurtured.

Thanks to the literature made kindly available to me by Prof. Subhas Samanta, I happened to read one of Prof. Khandelwal's articles which was published in the IAPT Bulletin, sometime in 1993-94. It was about Physics

Education in India. What struck me is the relevance of his views even for today. He would have been in tune with the vision of higher education expounded in National Education Policy 2020. For him the purpose of higher education in science went well beyond making students merely job-worthy; it is to make them true scientists in spirit and pursuit of their profession. He also gave examples of how teachers can make physics classroom lively and exciting. He advocated, again by giving appropriate examples, effective use of history of science to deepen students' understanding of science. He always stressed on the importance of experiments in science as they are an integral part of science. Three of his favourite ideas were science stage shows, model school and undergraduate college laboratories, and of course centres of science culture (CSC). For him a CSC was not a museum, a passive collection of exhibits and demonstrations, but an active place conducted by science teachers as a living-pulsating model of the teaching-learning process and of teacher development. He expected a CSC to be engaged in a continuous process of design and development of new demonstrations and experiments, curricula and supporting materials, in-house as well as through collaborations. He actively pursued the project of setting up CSCs and obtained aid from the Central Government for it. Unfortunately only one of the several CSCs planned actually took good

shape; it is the Midnapore Centre so dedicatedly nurtured by Prof. Samanta.

The Midnapore CSC is a living memorial to Prof. Khandelwal.

In fact, not only the Midnapore CSC, but the entire IAPT organizational ethos is a memorial to Prof. Khandelwal. He was the creator of this ethos; he lived by it; and colleagues imbibed it as they saw him as a role model. IAPT in its formative years grew on this ethos in his presence, and it remained there even when he had gone. That is the kind of legacy a great leader leaves.

I humbly extend my sincerest homage to the memory of Prof. D.P. Khandelwal.

Dr. H. C. Pradhan

Former President IAPT