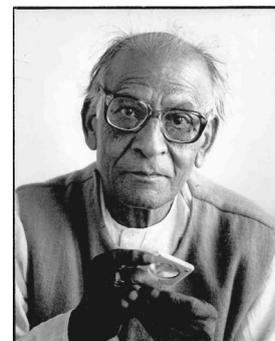


DR. PARMESHWARI LAL GUPTA

(Biographical Sketch)
(24-12-1914 to 29-07-2001)



Dr. Parmeshwari Lal Gupta, a doyen of Indian Numismatics and an ardent freedom fighter, was born on 24th December 1914 at Azamgarh town in Uttar Pradesh. In the year 1930 while he was in the eight standard at the Wesley High School, he was expelled for organizing a protest strike at the school against the arrest of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. Being expelled from the school, he joined the Indian National Congress and became an ardent Freedom-fighter under its aegis in his district Azamgarh. For his freedom-fighting activities, he was imprisoned several times by the British Government. He was so popular amongst the masses as their leader that they called him “Azamgarh ke Nehru” (Jawarlal Lal Nehru of Azamgarh).

When in 1947, the country became free from the clutches of British Imperialism, he felt that the goal was achieved and he retired from political activities. There after he devoted his full life in the quest of knowledge.

After independence in 1947, 17 years after leaving school, he returned to studentship. He appeared first in the High School Examination and then step by step he crossed the subsequent examinations and obtained the Degree of M.A. in Ancient Indian History and Culture in First Class. Lastly in 1960, he obtained the Ph. D. Degree from Benaras Hindu University.

As a Social Worker

Besides being a Freedom-fighter, Dr. Gupta, in those very early days was equally a fighter against social-evils. He struggled hard to eliminate a number of evils that were prevailing then in the Agrawal community and were successful in his efforts. He organized there Agarwal Yuwak Sangh and Agarwal Sevak Mandal for this purpose. He equally took interest in education of the people of the town. He established a public library there. To promote female education, which was then lacking there, he started a primary school Agrasen Kanya Pathshala for girls and developed it gradually into a Girls Degree College, which is a great contribution not only to Azamgarh town but district as well. For this great service, he is held in great esteem amongst the people there.

As a Journalist

In between the Freedom struggle and his education pursuits, he worked as a journalist for about 15 years and served in the editorial department of the two nationalist Hindi dailies Aaj (Varanasi) and Sainik (Agra). He took active interest in the activities for the welfare of the

fellow journalists. He attained such an importance in this field at a very short time that when for the first time in India an enquiry committee was set up in Uttar Pradesh during Sampurnanand Ministry, he was nominated as one of its members.

As a Numismatist & Museologist

Dr. Gupta is known world-wide as a great scholar of Indian numismatics. He had acquired serious interest in numismatics – the study of coins as the source of Indian history, quite early in his life. While he was still a non-matric, he had mastered the subject to such an extent that his research papers had found place in the research Journal of the Numismatic Society as early as 1942. By the time he appeared for M. A. examination, some of his research papers had attained such importance that the University professors referred to them in their classes, where he himself sat as a student. He has worked almost in all the branches of Indian numismatics from the earliest times to the present day. He has written more than 32 books and monographs and more than 250 research papers are to his credit. He has fundamentally reshaped and made a definitive study of India's most ancient coins, known as the Punch Marked Coins.

His book COINS in the series – India – Land and people in English, Tamil, Bengali, Assamiya and Japanese languages are a concise and straight forward but remarkably detailed and readable accounts of the whole series of the coinage of India and is a model of effective popularization based on the highest scholarship. This book has won Dr. Gupta friends all over the world. His latest book Paper Money of India is the first and only book of its type on Indian Paper money.

Dr. Gupta worked as Assistant curator in Bharat Kalabhavan, Varanas, from 1950 to 1954. Thereafter as Numismatist in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay upto 1961. In 1962 he went on deputation to British Museum, London, and from 1963 to 1972 he worked as Curator (Director) of Patna Museum, Patna. After retirement he settled in Nasik and nurtured the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies.

National & International Rewards and Recognitions

In appreciations of his researches, the Numismatic Society of India honoured him with its Chakravikrama Medal in 1954 and with the Nelson wright Medal in 1962, and then elected him its Honorary Fellow in 1972. The Royal Numismatic Society also had elected him its Honorary Fellow in 1975 and made him its Medalist in 1972. The Asiatic Society of Calcutta gave him in 1975 Sir Jodunath Sarkar Gold medal in recognition of his researches in Medieval Indian Numismatics. In 1986 he was made Honorary member of the International Numismatic Commission and in 1987 he received the Huntington Medal of the American Numismatic Society of New York, he is the first Asian to have received the Huntington medal. In 1993 he was elected Honorary Fellow of the Asiatic Society of Bombay.

Dr. Gupta extensively travelled abroad and lectured at London University-London, Gothe University-Frankfurt, Minister University-Berlin & Munster, Munich University Munich, University of Tubingen, Chio University-Columbus, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Asia House-New York and most of the Indian University.

His biggest contribution

Dr. Gupta's greatest contribution to Indian Numismatics and history is the establishment of the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies at Nasik in 1984 with the help of an industrialist friend Mr. K.K.Maheshwari. This Institute is the only one of its kind not only in India but in entire Asia and ranks among the few in whole of the world. It has rapidly established a world-wide reputation among all scholars working in the field of Indian Numismatics and history. Its rich collection of books on numismatics and allied subjects is based on Dr. Gupta's personal collection, its photographic archives of coins from Indian and foreign collections and the facilities for study and research have made it a key centre for research and study in Numismatics and History for the scholars from all over the world. The Institute is financially supported by Maheshwari Foundation.

His other achievements

Besides his achievements in the fields of numismatics, Dr. Gupta commands equal respect in the field of History and Archaeology. He was elected President of the Ancient Indian History section of the Indian History Congress for its Mysore session in 1966. He presided thrice at three different sections of All India Oriental Conference - Archaeology section in 1966 at Aligarh, History section in 1969 at Jadavapur and the Technical and Fine Arts section in 1979 at Dharwar. In 1972 he was the Chair-person at the Numismatic section of the South Asian History Conference at Wisconsin University, USA.

Besides numismatics, history and archaeology, Dr. Gupta also owns another field of his scholarship i.e. Hindi literature. He has to his credit the discovery of a number of unknown works of Sufi poets of the medieval period. They were lying buried in the obscure corners of European libraries. He has edited them critically. Most outstanding among them are Chandayan of Maulana Daug and Kanhawati of Malik Muhammad Jaisi. Besides critically editing the Sufi Hindi Romances, Dr. Gupta has contributed much to various other branches of Hindi literature and published a number of books. Some of them have received awards from Uttar Pradesh Government.

In 1987, Dr. Gupta donated his substantial savings and established "Gopal Das Guladavadi Devi Memorial Trust" for the advancement of numismatic study in India. His personal books on Numismatics is now part of the exhaustive library of the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, Nashik.