

Dr. G. D. Agrawal

Scientist and Rishi

Meeting Dr. G. D. Agrawal in his spartan, two room cottage in Chitrakoot, Madhya Pradesh, you would never guess what an accomplished and distinguished scientist he is – first Member-Secretary of the Government of India’s Central Pollution Control Board, former Head of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at IIT Kanpur and a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley.



The list goes on and on. Yet this eminent professional sweeps his own floors, washes his own clothes and cooks his own meals. He retains only a few possessions and dresses in homespun khadi. At the age of 76, his main mode of transport within Chitrakoot is a bicycle and when he travels further afield, he goes by ordinary bus and second-class train. These are the deliberate choices of a devout Hindu whose deepest values are for simplicity and reverence for nature.

Dr G.D. Agrawal is the doyen of environmental engineering professionals in India. Well past retirement, he continues to teach and inspire students as an Honorary Professor of Environmental Sciences at the Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya, in Chitrakoot (M.P.).

Dr Agrawal is a much sought-after EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) consultant and a Director of Envirotech Instruments (P) Limited, New Delhi – a company that he established with some of his former students from IIT-Kanpur. He is an engineer’s engineer, the person senior professionals turn to for solutions to difficult technical problems.

At CPCB he was instrumental in shaping India’s pollution control regulatory structure. He has been a member of various official committees for policy-making and administrative mechanisms to improve India’s environmental quality.

Dr Agrawal is a legendary and inspiring teacher whose students remember him with awe, admiration and affection. In 2002, his former students at IIT-Kanpur conferred on him the Best Teacher Award. He has guided scores of Masters and Doctoral students who are now leaders in the field of environmental engineering and science. Among his more prominent students was the late Anil Agrawal, the trail-blazing founder of the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi.

Dr Agrawal has been deeply committed to supporting rural development initiatives grounded in scientific methodology. Among others, he has helped mentor well-known development activists like Dunu Roy (IIT-Bombay,'67) of The Hazards Centre, New Delhi, Dr Ravi Chopra (IIT-Bombay,'68) of People's Science Institute, Dehra Doon and Rajendra Singh, a Magsaysay awardee and founder of Tarun Bharat Sangh.

Born in a farming family in Kandhla (Muzaffarnagar district, U.P.) in 1932, he did his schooling locally and graduated in Civil Engineering from the University of Roorkee (now IIT-Roorkee). He started his career as a Design Engineer in the Irrigation Department, Uttar Pradesh and later obtained a Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering from the University of



California at Berkeley. He has dozens of scientific publications to his credit.

Dr Agrawal is both deeply religious and rigorously scientific. His passionate devotion to the River Ganga comes from his strong Hindu faith; his conviction that we are staring at an unprecedented ecological and cultural catastrophe comes from his powerfully logical mind. As a citizen and a patriot, he has made it his life's mission to recall India to its glorious traditional reverence for nature and to share that wisdom with the “developed” world. His sense of his duty allows him to do no less.

For further information, contact: