

Prof.K. S. Valdiya



Prof. K. S. Valdiya is a renowned geologist and a former vice chancellor of Kumaon University, known for his contributions in the field of geodynamics. A 2007 recipient of Padma Shri, he was honoured again by the Government of India in 2015 with Padma Bhushan, the third highest Indian civilian award.

Internationally recognized for his path-breaking work in the fields of Geology and Environmental Science, Prof. Valdiya was born to Dev Singh Valdiya and Nanda Valdiya on 20 March 1937 in Myanmar. In 1947 his family returned to their hometown in Pithoragarh in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. After schooling in Pithoragarh, he did his bachelor (BSc), masters (MSc) and doctoral (PhD) studies at Lucknow University and joined the university as a member of faculty in 1957. A 1965-66 Fulbright scholar at Johns Hopkins University, he has also taught at Rajasthan University, Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) and Kumaon University. He was the vice chancellor of Kumaon University in 1981.

Valdiya has been involved with the establishment of such geological institutions as Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Central Himalayan Environmental Association, Nainital, G. B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, Almora, and the Geology Department of the Kumaon University. He is an elected fellow of Indian National Science Academy, National Academy of Sciences, India (FNASc), Indian Academy of Sciences (FASc), and the Third World Academy of Sciences (FTWAS) and is a fellow of Geological Society of India, Geological Society of America and Geological Society of Nepal. He has served as a member of the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India. He has written over 110 research papers, authored 20 books, edited 9 books and penned 40 articles in Hindi towards popularization of science.

He has made significant contributions to Himalayan Geology through a sustained and comprehensive study of the Kumaon Himalayas. These include pioneering studies of cyano-bacterial stromatolites leading to fixing of age of crucial stratigraphic horizons; systematic investigations of economically rich magnesite deposits; sedimentological and palaeocurrent study of the Precambrian flysch leading to reconstruction of palaeogeography of northern India; and the structural study of geodynamically sensitive areas leading to the tectonic synthesis and evolutionary history of the Himalayas. Dr. K.S. Valdiya has contributed to Himalayan Geology through a sustained and comprehensive study of the Uttarakhand Himalayas. His internationally recognized works are based on the painstaking mapping of mountainous terrain, traversing thousands of kilometres on foot. This body of work has made the Uttarakhand Himalayas one of the best documented, most thoroughly studied sectors of the Himalayan Mountain Arc.

His well-researched scientific report on the destabilizing effect of limestone quarrying formed the principal basis of the Supreme Court banning limestone mining in the Mussourie Hills. In a pioneering and benchmark study on declining discharges of mountain springs, he developed the concept and methodology of spring sanctuary, and demonstrated its workability by successfully augmenting the spring discharge in a catchment area of a multidisciplinary 10-year project on sustainable development.

(The programme of spring sanctuary has been adopted in many areas in Uttarakhand). He is deeply involved in eco development through people's participation such as development of spring sanctuaries, afforestation in village panchayat lands, linkages of animal husbandry, horticulture and agriculture in 7 villages in Kumaun under the aegis of an NGO (Central Himalayan Environment Association).

For the last few years, Prof. K. S. Valdiya has been working on a Science Outreach Programme to popularize Science among young students, in the remote regions of Uttarakhand. Along with leading teachers and specialists from various disciplines, he has been delivering and organizing lectures on the application of science, the avenues & opportunities for young minds, as well as offering career guidance to pre-university college students.