

IN MEMORIUM — DR. G. PANIGRAHI (1924 - 2004)



Dr. Gopinath Panigrahi, the renowned plant taxonomist and nomenclatural expert is no more with us. He passed away on 15th December, 2004 in Apollo Gleneagles Hospital, Kolkata. Born on 27th February, 1926 in Baikunthpur - a remote village in Bhadrak district of Orissa State, he completed his schooling in a rural set-up. He had a brilliant academic record, stood first in matriculation examination of Patna University in 1942, was on state scholarship for completing I. Sc. and was awarded Peck Memorial scholarship of Ravenshaw

College, Cuttack for two years and did B.Sc. honours from Utkal University. After completing M.Sc., from Allahabad University, he was appointed as Lecturer in Botany at Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, Orissa in July 1948. As a teacher he was unparalleled in his devotion and depth of teaching. Taught Botany to the Under graduate and Post graduate students of the College till July 1956, except for the two years (May, 1952- August 1954) when he was on study leave in the United Kingdom for the Ph.D. degree. He worked on cytotaxonomy of ferns and angiosperms under the supervision of late Prof. I. Manton, at the University of Leeds. His work on hybridisation of a number of cytological types within *Cyclosorus parasiticus* complex, *Asplenium aethiopicum* complex, *Aleuritopteris farinosa* complex and *Dryopteris villarii* complex resulted in synthesising as many as 13F₁ hybrids.

Most part of Dr. Panigrahi's career as a scientist and administrator was spent in Botanical Survey of India (BSI). He joined the department as a Systematic Botanist in August 1956, became Regional Botanist in December 1959 and worked as Indian Liaison Officer at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, United Kingdom from December 1972 to December 1975. Kew assignment provided him an opportunity to work with W.D. Clayton on floristic relationships of Indian grasses using computer analysis. New evidence from computer studies was utilised to support Wagner's "Theory of Continental Drift". On return from U.K., he was appointed as Deputy Director, BSI, Howrah, in January 1976, and was assigned a special job to reorganize the Central National Herbarium (CAL), BSI, Howrah on modern lines after the pattern of Kew Herbarium. He served the department as Deputy Director, Special/Headquarters, BSI, Howrah, from January 1976 to June 1977; of Central National Herbarium(CAL), Howrah, from June 1977 to July 1978, Joint Director, Central Botanical Laboratory, from July 1978 to February 1982 and retired from the same post. He was Emeritus Scientist, BSI from March 1982 to February, 1987. Even after retirement he was regularly visiting the Central National Herbarium and Library.

His major contributions which will be remembered include floristic survey of different regions of the country and revisionary studies, besides reorganising the Central National Herbarium (CAL) in the pattern of Kew Herbarium. He explored various parts of the Eastern India and

Central India and collected more than 20,000 field numbers of plants; these are deposited in ASSAM, CAL, BSA and K. He made outstanding contributions in the field of plant taxonomy, cytotaxonomy and phytogeography. He distinguished himself in solving intricate problems of plant nomenclature. More than 300 scientific papers published in journals of international repute including hundreds of new species, new combinations and new names are testimony to his passion for scientific writing. His books on "The family Rosaceae" (in four volumes), "Flora of Bilaspur District" (in two volumes) and "Ferns & Fern Allies of Arunachal Pradesh- Tirap District" (in two volumes) are monumental for their authoritative value in plant taxonomy. His masterly editing of Flora of the USSR as the Botanical editor has attracted the attention and received commendation of authorities in the field at the international level.

Dr. Panigrahi was associated with number of Universities as Visiting Fellow/Visiting Professor/Guest Lecturer under the UGC schemes (Utkal University , Nagpur University , Regional College of Education, Bhubaneshwar, and of Berhampur University). He was Fellow of the Linnaean Society, London, Bangladesh Academy of Sciences, Indian Fern Society, Indian Botanical Society, Indian Society of Genetics and Plant Breeding and West Bengal Academy of Sciences and Technology, besides he was a life member of various international scientific societies like International Association of Plant Taxonomists, Netherlands, International Society of Plant Morphologists, etc. He was on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Tropical Plant Science Research, New Delhi, and referee for a number of journals including Current Science, Indian Journal of Forestry, Indian Fern Journal, Proceedings of National Academy of Science, Allahabad, Journal of Bangladesh Botanical Society, Dhaka, Plant Science Research, and Bulletin of the Botanical Survey of India. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to Plant Taxonomy, he was bestowed with Panchanan Maheshwari Gold Medal by Indian Botanical Society in 1994 and prestigious E.K. Janaki Ammal National Award for taxonomy in 2002 by Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India.

Dr. Panigrahi never forgot the plight of the village students, and generously contributed to philanthropic organisations towards cultural and educational development in his home state and adopted state of West Bengal. He was strong believer in the principal of simple living and high thinking and was an embodiment of a real KARMAYOGI.

—M. Sanjappa & Paramjit Singh

NAMES PUBLISHED IN COMMEMORATION

- Alchemilla panigrahiana*** K.M. Purohit
- Bulbophyllum panigrahianum*** S. Mishra
- Habenaria panigrahiana*** S. Mishra
- Osmunda regalis*** L. var. ***panigrahiana*** R.D. Dixit
- Potentilla panigrahiana*** B.K. Dixit
- Selaginella panigrahii*** R.D. Dixit
- Spiraea panigrahiana*** K.M. Purohit