

PROFESSOR ARUN KUMAR SHARMA



The most respected teacher of all, Professor Arun Kumar Sharma passed away in Kolkata on 6th July, 2017 at the age of 93 after a brief illness. He was well-known both at National and International levels as a renowned Plant cytogeneticist, especially on Chromosome research.

Professor Sharma was born on 31st December, 1924 in Calcutta in a well-known cultured family. At the age of eight, his father passed away which caused a severe financial crisis in his family. He was then brought up by his maternal grand-parents. His maternal uncle played a prominent role in his early education. He started his education at Mitra Institution, Bhowanipore and graduated from Ashutosh College in 1943 and obtained his postgraduate degree from Calcutta University in 1945. He obtained his D.Sc degree from the same University in 1955. He was married to Professor Archana Sharma, another reputed cytogeneticist, who died in 2008.

During the last few years when Professor Sharma's health was deteriorating, Swamiji of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture (RKMIC), Golpark, brought him to their Guest House and took care of him with all sincerity, including medical assistance, till his death. At an event held to pay homage to Professor Sharma at RKMIC on 22nd July, 2017, Swami Suparnanandaji mentioned that Professor Sharma possessed an enlightened soul which is hardly to be found among any academician. When Professor Sharma was brought from the Nursing home to Golpark after his death, we witnessed a rare scene which filled my saddened heart with pride and joy. Some staff members of the Mission brought his body on a stretcher

and held it without putting him down on the ground. Swamijis chanted slokas from *The Holy Gita* and prayers for about twenty minutes and then only allowed the body to go to the Science College, Calcutta University and ultimately for cremation. At that moment I felt it was my great fortune to have been associated closely with such a great man since 1961 as a student, research fellow and finally as a colleague.

His outstanding knowledge in botany, helped him to secure a place in the Botanical Survey of India where he trained himself in Taxonomy and developed the Herbarium of the Royal Botanical Garden, Sibpore, Howrah. As a result he developed a new discipline Cytotaxonomy in Botany at Calcutta University. During his short tenure at Botanical Survey of India, he published important Monographs of *Sargassum* (Seaweed of Phaeophyceae) and a moss *Sphagnum*.

Professor Sharma moved to Calcutta University in 1947 as a temporary teacher. He was soon promoted to Assistant Lecturer, and then Lecturer, Reader and ultimately to the respectable Sir Rashbehary Ghosh Professor and Head of the Department of Botany till 1988. He became the Programme Co-ordinator at the Centre of Advanced Study in Cell and Chromosome Research (CASCR) in 1972 along with Head of the Department of Botany and Sir Rashbehary Ghosh Professor (till 1985). He served as INSA Golden Jubilee Research Professor from 1985 along with Co-ordinator of Centre of Advanced Study, till his superannuation in 1990 and continued his association with the University as Honorary Professor till death.

Professor Sharma's research on chromosomes and different chromosomal techniques led to establishing a new discipline of Cytotaxonomy and Cytochemistry in India that made him the Father of Plant Cytotaxonomy. He developed a very good team of research from the very beginning as he had the unique capability of picking up sincere and devoted workers from his students.

Different Chromosome techniques for getting scattered chromosomes in metaphase in large number of plant taxa developed by Professor Sharma are still being used across the world. To preserve the huge data of plant chromosomes, Sharma and his group has developed a Plant Chromosome Data Base Centre in CASCR) with the assistance of University Grants Commission.

Professor Sharma and his group made extensive studies on micropropagation of plants of medicinal and economical importance through *in vitro* culture for their conservation and to produce genetic variability through the production of somaclonal plants. He guided 80 Ph.D and 10 D.Sc scholars in their researches and published more than 300 research papers in reputed International and National journals. His research works and knowledge were expressed in several notable books or articles written or edited by him. He jointly with his wife Professor Archana Sharma founded an international journal of Cytology and allied topics known as *The Nucleus* which is completing 60 years of its existence in this year.

On the basis of overwhelming contributions in research, he was awarded the *Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize* in 1967. He received the *Paul Bruhl Memorial Award* from the Asiatic Society in 1972 and was selected for the *Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship* for his work on Chromosomes in relation to development and differentiation in the same year. He got the *Birbal Sahni Medal* from the Indian Botanical Society in 1974. He received the first *J C Bose Award* from the University Grants Commission and the *Silver Jubilee Medal* from the Indian National Science Academy in 1976. The University Grants Commission selected him as a **National Professor** in 1977 and got the *FICCI award* of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 1979. The Government of India awarded him the third highest civilian honour **Padma Bhusan** in 1983. INSA awarded him as Golden Jubilee Professorship in 1985. He received the Om Prakash Vasin Award in 1992, Gujar MalModi Award for Science and Technology of the International Institute of Fine Arts in

1994 and Vasvik Industrial Research Award in 1999. Professor Sharma received the Rathindra Puraskar of the Visva Bharati University in 2008, Tagore Peace Award of the Asiatic Society in 2010 .

He was elected as a Fellow of The Indian National Science Academy and Indian Academy of Sciences in 1970 and 1975 respectively. The World Academy of Sciences selected him as Fellow in 1988, Fellow of the National Academy Agricultural Sciences in 1992 and the National Academy of Sciences elected him as Fellow in 2012. He was also selected as a Fellow of the Third World Academy of Sciences.

Professor Sharma was closely associated with the Indian Science News Association (ISNA) and with the journal *Science and Culture*. He was Vice-President (1983-84) and Secretary (1974-81) of ISNA and was in the Editorial Board of Science and Culture for more than a decade (1970-1980). He was associated with several other societies like the Botanical Society of Bengal, Indian Society of Cell Biology, Indian Botanical Society, the Indian Science Congress Association, Indian National Science Academy, Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science and was the Founder President of the Federation of Asian Academies and Societies

He worked as a Chairman in many National and International Scientific Committees like Indian National Committee of IUBS- INSA, Man and Biosphere Programme Committee and the FASAS Commission of Science and Technology for Development in Asia, Plant Science Research Committee of CSIR, Plant and Biotechnology Committee of the DBT, President of the Research Advisory Committee of Tea Research Association etc.

He was a strong pillar in the Department of Botany and Centre of Advanced Study for Cell and Chromosome Research, University of Calcutta. He was a good example of a self-made man. With the passing of this great scientist, there will be an immense void not only in Plant Cytology but also in the world of Botany.

May His soul rest in Peace

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Satyesh Chandra Roy

Former Professor and

Head of the Department of Botany and

Co-Ordinator, Centre of Advanced Study for Cell and

Chromosome Research, University of Calcutta.

DR. KALYAN MUKHERJEE



Dr. Kalyan Mukherjee passed M.B.B.S. from Calcutta Medical College in 1958 and became Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburg in 1966 and Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, Glasgow in the same year. He worked as a surgical consultant to *Manchester United Club, UK* from 1964 to 1968 and for the *Tottenham Hotspurs, UK* from 1968 to 1970. He returned to India in 1971 and worked as orthopedic surgeon in Bangur Hospital and Burdwan Medical College from 1972 to 1994. He obtained *meta gold medal* in 1982 from the Indian Orthopedic Association for a paper on Ankle Injuries among Footballers. He became President of the Indian Orthopedic Association in 1996. He published 50 research papers on different aspect of orthopedic surgery and sports medicine in leading journals of India and abroad. He published 3 books on Sports Medicine, the English versions of which were best sellers in South East Asian countries. The German version is very popular in Germany.

He was a very successful orthopedic practitioner drawing patients from not only from nearby localities but also from different parts of India and neighboring countries. He was very popular among the leading foot-ball and cricket players in Calcutta Maidan.

He was the Council Member of Indian Science News Association for long time and served this organization regularly as a resource person to conduct the condensed Science Journalism course, '*Training Programme on Science Communication and Media Practice*' which had completed its 30th episode in 2016 in which he delivered wonderful lecture to the students.

He passed away on July 22, 2017 at the age of 83 years after brief illness, leaving behind his wife, son, daughter-in-law and two grand daughters.

In his death the Indian Science News Association lost a most ardent patron and well wisher of the Association. The country lost a great orthopedic physician, an authority on sports medicine and a science communicator.

The council members and staff of the Association sincerely share the sorrow with the members of the bereaved family. □

Biswapati Mukherjee, PhD
Former Professor and Executive Director
S. N. Pradhan Centre for Neurosciences
University of Calcutta
email: mukherjee.biswapati@gmail.com