

Obituary

Prof. Yagya Datta Tiagi (20 September, 1930 – 24 June, 2012)



Professor Yagya Datta Tiagi passed away on 24 June, 2012, after a distinguished career as a versatile teacher and researcher. He had been inspiring generations of students in the large number of institutions with which he was associated during his checkered and fulfilling career.

Born on 20 September, 1930 at Raniket of Almora district in Uttarakhand, where his father was posted as a military officer. He had his schooling at Quetta (Baluchistan) and in several towns of pre-partitioned Punjab. After passing his intermediate examination with high first division from University of the Punjab, Lahore, he joined for B. Sc. course in Meerut College, Meerut in 1948 and was awarded the Degree in 1950. He obtained the First Rank in all the medicine groups in the university with an aggregate mark of 82%. During his studentship in Meerut, the stimulating influence of Prof. V. Puri made him to choose Botany as his future career. As Prof. Puri left for USA for higher research, he joined Govt. College Ajmer, to complete his M. Sc. He then commenced research work at Agra College under the guidance of Prof. P. Maheshwari on the embryology of Cactaceae. After the return of Prof. Puri to Agra, Dr. Tiagi

continued his work on the floral morphology of the same family Cactaceae, under his guidance.

He joined initially as a Lecturer under the headship of Prof. K.C. Mehta in the leading Botany Department, Agra University, Uttar Pradesh. Soon after completing his Ph. D. he was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Botany in the new University of Saugar, which was then the only university in Madhya Pradesh. He visited Soviet Union as a Post Doctoral Research Fellow under the UNESCO Fellowship during 1958 – 1961. Dr. Tiagi received training in practical methods of Geobotany and Bio-geochemical research, apart from floral evolutionary studies, during his stay in Moscow, which helped him to begin research in India in these subjects.

As a devoted teacher of Botany, Dr. Tiagi spent 12 years of his most meaningful academic life under the patronage of Prof. Shyam Bahadur Saksena at University of Saugar. From December, 1967 to July, 1970, Dr. Tiagi worked as a Reader in the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. He then joined Jiwaji University, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. In July, 1973, he joined Udaipur University as a Professor. For some time he also held the additional responsibility as the Registrar of the University. Thirty-six scholars obtained Ph. D. degree under the guidance of Prof. Tiagi from different Universities. He authored several standard books used as text by students of Botany and published over 100 research papers that are extensively quoted by foreign as well as Indian authors.

When effort to organize a professional association for flowering plant Taxonomists in India began in Calicut in the late 1980s, no one was sure how it will turn out to be. Most thought it would be damp squid since the unfashionable subject had no takers in those days. However, with the determined support of a handful of our members, Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy (IAAT) was established in 1990. After the teething troubles, in the year 1993, Prof. Y.D. Tiagi was elected as

its first annual President, from which time he was providing all support to IAAT. A Gold medal in honour of Prof. Y.D. Tiagi was instituted by IAAT in the year 1995 and is being awarded every year to a distinguished senior taxonomist of the country. Several taxa such as *Sida tiagii*, *Bulbophyllum tiagii* and *Eria tiagii* commemorating his name bear testimony to the love shown by fellow botanists and his students.

Smt. Saroj Tiagi who was a strong pillar of support to Prof. Tiagi, pre-deceased him a few years back.

Prof. Tiagi is survived by two children, the active botanist daughter, Dr. Sandhya Tiagi and a practicing medico son, Dr. Ajay Vats.

K.S. Manilal, Calicut
&
N.C. Aery, Udaipur