



OBITUARY

Prof. N. Venugopal (1953-2020)



Prof. Nagulan Venugopal born in Tamil Nadu on May 27, 1953 unfortunately left for his heavenly abode on December 28, 2020. He came all the way from south India to join the faculty of the Department of Botany at North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong on July 29, 1992 as a Lecturer. He studied science and graduated from Government Arts College, Krishnagiri in 1975, and later received Master degree from Presidency College, Madras in 1977. Venugopal pursued doctoral research at the University of Madras under the guidance of eminent Professor K.V. Krishnamurthy and received Ph.D. degree in 1986. He was a recipient of the Fyson Prize at Presidency College for submission of best herbarium.

Prof. Venugopal had passion for teaching since beginning of his career. He started teaching as Assistant Professor of Botany in A.P.A. College, Palani affiliated to Madurai Kamraj University. For almost a decade (1982 to 1992), he worked as Technical Officer in the Department of Botany, University of Madras and during this period, he completed his Ph.D. on “Studies on the vascular cambium and its derivatives in some tropical trees”.

In his innings of just over twenty-five years at the Department of Botany, NEHU, Shillong, Prof. Venugopal enjoyed teaching mainly plant anatomy and reproductive biology of angiosperms. He also taught gymnosperms for a number of years until he superannuated. He was an asset to NEHU as the expert faculty in these areas of research and teaching. He acclimatized the cool climate of Meghalaya with some effort and contributed to the teaching of his courses with diligence establishing research tie with Professor Y.S. Chauhan who was an expert in plant morphology. After passing away of Prof. Chauhan in 2000, Venugopal inherited and extended his laboratory with a focus on rare and threatened plants of the Northeast region.

Venugopal scaled up in his career from Lecturer (1992) to Senior Lecturer (July 01, 1997) Reader (2001) and to Professor (December 14, 2005). He ably headed the Department of Botany, NEHU for a full-term of three years from March, 2011 to March, 2014. He was an active member of various scientific societies of the country such as Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA), East Himalayan Society for Spermatophyte Taxonomy (EHSST), and a life member, fellow and Executive councillor of The Society of Plant Reproductive Biologists and published several research papers in The International Journal of Plant Reproductive Biology. At NEHU, he served as a member of Academic Council, Board of Research Studies, and Board of Studies. He also served as member of the Biodiversity Board of the Government of Meghalaya and was an expert in selection committees of various colleges and universities.

Prof. Venugopal guided a dozen of students for Ph.D. degree and over thirty students for M.Sc. projects. His Ph.D. students are: N. Dharendra Singh, N. Rashi Devi, H. Lalruatsanga, Kshetrimayum Raseshowri Devi, M.G. Liangkuwang, Preeti Ahuja, Wympher Langstang, Lalnuntluangi Ralte, Lalchhanhimi, Ester Jones Marbaniang, Stella Pamidimarri and Devika Jana. He had special affection for the plant family

Podostemaceae, which is known for river weeds. He found two new records from Meghalaya from this family, viz., *Hydrobryum griffithii* and *Podostemon subulatus*. He also established a new species *Illicium arunachalensis* from Arunachal Pradesh. He investigated reproductive biology of an endemic and the only species of pitcher plants in India, *Nepenthes khasiana*. Besides, he also studied *Aquilaria malaccensis*, *Drosera peltata*, *Dillenia indica*, *Gaultheria fragrantissima*, *Gymnocladus assamica*, *Illicium griffithii*, *Panax wangianus*, and *Pinus kesiya*. He published his research in journals of international repute such as *Trees*, *Feddes Repertorium*, *Annals of Botany*, *Current Science*, *Nordic Journal of Botany*, *International Journal of Plant Reproductive Biology and Flora*.

A man of solitude, Prof. Venugopal mainly involved with his students and family. He preferred to keep himself away from rat-race and controversies. He lived with pride a simple life, wearing a stamp of his native in south India. As he was a man of contentment, he preferred to settle in his native village after completing his service at NEHU in May, 2018. He shifted there with his family (wife, two daughters and a son). However, he got only few years to live in serenity of his village as he proceeded to his eternal journey in the dusk of December 28, 2020 triggered by an asthma-related heart attack.

I join my colleagues at the North-Eastern Hill University in extending our deepest sense of regard to Professor Venugopal and his services rendered to the University as well as the students of Botany in the region of Northeast India, and we pray to the almighty to rest his soul in peace always. We also extend our condolences to his family. His professional journey from the Western Ghats to the Eastern Himalayas will be an inspiration to many and remembered forever. God bless.

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