

## A Tribute to Dr. R.K. Arora

In the sad demise of Dr. R. K. Arora, destiny has snatched from India, rather South-East Asia one of the ablest and devoted explorers of plant genetic diversity. He botanised from hot dry deserts of Rajasthan to dense evergreen forests of north-east and east India, and from cold & dry regions of Leh-Ladakh to humid evergreen forests far south in penninsular India. Dr. Arora's hard and scholarly work on collection study and analysis of land races and wild relatives of crop plants contributed very largely to our knowledge of India's biodiversity, conservation of valuable germplasm and significant improvement in many economic crops in India and other countries. His scientific conclusions have remained undisputed.

My association with Dr. Arora dates back to middle of last century when he worked as Research Scholar in the Botanical Survey of India (BSI), at Pune; he accompanied me in several field trips in North and South Canara in the Western Ghats and coastal Maharashtra. Later, he joined the BSI and our association became closer when we lived in different floors in the same building at Calcutta. We spent long evenings discussing plans of field work, seminars, conferences and publications. Even after he moved to ICAR we regularly met. As a member of the Quarterly Review Team of the NBPGR during 1980s it pleased us greatly to see the outstanding work, organisation and guidance which he provided to his

colleagues as a senior scientist and later Head of NBPGR. Dr. Arora had excellent communication skills, and his lectures and writing received wide acclaim. He was a perfect gentleman, always cool with a pleasant smile. He shunned publicity and advertisement; but his excellent work attracted attention of international bodies and the FAO and IBPGR invited him for several consulting assignments and later made him the head of the Regional South-East Asia office of IBPGR at Delhi. He served with the IBPGR till his failing eyesight and other health problems intervened.

This tribute will not be complete without a few words of sincere admiration for his very supportive wife, Smt Krishna Arora, who happily allowed his frequent long absences for field work or assignments as Consultant; she not only single-handedly managed the house but also ably organised the education and development of their two loving children. Hundreds of friends share the grief of the bereaved family. Dr. R.K. Arora still lives in the immortal work which he did for the study and conservation of plant genetic resources.

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