

A Tribute to Dr. Vandana Tyagi (1968–2025): A Life of Dedication, Tenacity, and Grace

The ISPGR deeply mourns the untimely demise of one of its Editors, Dr. Vandana Tyagi, Principal Scientist at ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), New Delhi, on January 22, 2025.

Born on 14 May 1968 in Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Tyagi pursued academic journey with distinction, earning her M.Sc. (1989), M.Phil. (1991), and Ph.D. (1994) degrees in Botany from the Institute of Advanced Studies, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, specializing in palynology and aerobiology.



After clearing the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) exam in the discipline of Economic Botany, she joined ICAR-NBPGR, New Delhi, as a Scientist on 24 January 1997, in the Germplasm Exchange and Policy Unit. Over 28 years of dedicated service, she rose through the ranks, being promoted to Scientist (Senior Scale) (2001), Senior Scientist (2006), and Principal Scientist (2012), serving tirelessly in her field until the very end.

Dr Tyagi became a highly regarded expert in plant genetic resources (PGR) exchange and policy matters, making remarkable contributions to the field. A Fulbright Fellow and a Visiting Fellow at Cornell University, Ithaca, as well as State University of New York, USA (2007–2008), she successfully completed a Certificate Course on 'Intellectual Property Management in Agriculture', strengthening her expertise in regulatory frameworks and international treaties. Her distinguished contributions were widely recognized, earning her numerous accolades, including the 'Fellow of ISPGR (2011)', 'The scientist of the Year Award (2011)' by the Society of Scientific and Applied Research Centre, the 'Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship', the 'Fulbright Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Project (2013)'.

She played a pivotal role in germplasm exchange, facilitating the introduction of over 1.5 lakh germplasm accessions, including trait-specific genetic material across cereals, millets, vegetables and medicinal crops. Her work ensured that valuable germplasm and its associated data were effectively utilized in crop improvement programs, a critical contribution in the wake of climate change and evolving agricultural needs.

Her expertise extended to analyzing and navigating complex regulatory frameworks, particularly those that emerged following the enactment of the Biological Diversity Act 2002 and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture 2004. Dr Tyagi also played a significant role in capacity-building programs related to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Her insights were invaluable in shaping national policies, as she provided key recommendations to ICAR and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) on crucial definitions and terminologies within the international Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) regime, including the Nagoya Protocol on ABS (2014). She was associated with the Institute Technology Management Committee and contributed to the portfolio management of IP generated at NBPGR, including patents, copyrights and commercialization of technologies.

The ISPGR is grateful to Dr Tyagi's contributions as a member of its Executive Committee (North Zone Councillor, 2005-07) and being an Editor of the Indian Journal of Plant Genetic Resources (IJPGR) for more than a decade. She actively participated in all activities of the Society and readily extended her support for any assigned work.

Despite her remarkable achievements, Dr. Tyagi remained a humble, warm, and compassionate individual. She was known for her intellect, diligence, and practical approach, always willing to mentor, support, and uplift those around her. In the last four years, she fought a brave battle with cancer, demonstrating unwavering strength and resilience. Even in the face of adversity, she continued to inspire those around her with her determination and grace.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Dr Tyagi was a devoted mother, a loving wife, a cherished daughter, and a steadfast friend. Her gentle, affectionate, and positive spirit touched everyone she met, making her an inspiration both personally and professionally.

The ISPGR family pays a heartfelt tribute to Dr Vandana Tyagi, offering deepest condolences to her husband, Shri Ajay Kumar Tyagi, her sons, Kshitij and Suyash, her family, and her friends. Though she may no longer be with us, her legacy will endure in the seeds she nurtured, the knowledge she shared, and the lives she touched. Her contributions will continue to shape the future of PGR in India and beyond.

Dr. Anuradha Agrawal
General Secretary, ISPGR, New Delhi