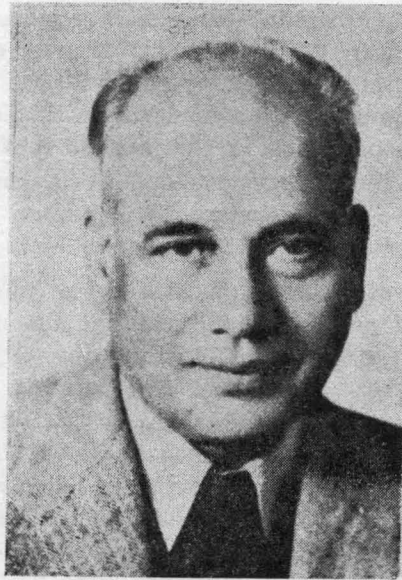


OBITUARY



DR. B. P. PAL

The Indian Society of Plant Genetic Resources is deeply grieved on the sad demise of Dr. B. P. Pal, a doyen of Indian Agriculture and a plant breeder of great eminence. He was the patron of ISPGR and his passing away in the afternoon of 14th September, 1989 at AIIMS, New Delhi is condolled by all its members.

Dr. Benjamin Peary Pal was born at Mukandpur in Punjab on 26th May, 1906. He received his early school education in Burma, which was then a part of British India. He had a brilliant academic career althrough. He graduated from Rangoon University in 1924 and distinguished himself by winning the Mathew Hunter Prize for standing first among all science graduates in the university. He obtained his post graduate (M. Sc.) degree with 1st class honours in Botany. He won the state scholarship for studies at the Cambridge University, England for his Doctoral degree.

Dr. Pal returned to Burma in 1933 and was appointed Assistant Rice Research Officer at the Central Rice Research Station. Later in the same year, he was selected as the Second Economic Botanist at the Imperial Agricultural Research Institute (now called Indian Agricultural Research Institute) at Pusa, Bihar. Dr. Pal became the first Imperial Economic Botanist in 1937. The post was later redesignated as Head of the Division of Botany which he held for nearly 13 years. In 1950, he took over as Director of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute and continued until May, 1965. Later in the same year, he was appointed as the first Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. During this

period (1948-1965) he laid the foundation of plant introduction activities at IARI, which later became Plant Exploration and Collection Organisation, and finally became a full fledged Division of Plant Introduction. Dr. Pal had a highly distinguished research career spread over several decades, and happened to be the most renowned and illustrious plant breeder of great eminence. His contribution to the development of high yielding rust resistant varieties of wheat is considered to be of great practical scientific significance. Equally well known are his contributions to the improvement of potatoes and tobacco. Development of unique varieties with rare and bewitching colours of Indian roses is perhaps the best recognition of his love to the nature. His passion and devotion to rose breeding was not only legendary but deeply inspiring.

Dr. Pal earned great scientific fame, recognition, and was bestowed with several prestigious honours and awards. The prominent among these include, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai Memorial Award (1957), Padma Shri (1959), Birbal Sahni Medal (1962) and Padma Bhushan (1968). He also received Srinivasa Ramanujam Medal (1964), INSA Grant Medal (1970), Agri-Horticultural Society of India, Barclay Medal (1971), Asiatic Society, Aryabhata Medal (1980), INSA, Chatterjee Memorial Award (1982), Indian Science Congress Association and Sir Williams Jones Medal (1982). He was elected President, Indian Science Congress Association (1951, 1957-58, 1965-67). Additional member (1977-78), Treasurer (1952), Secretary (1953-56), Vice President (1960-61, 1973-75), Editor of Publications (1960-61) and President (1975-76), INSA. He was also conferred Doctor of Science (D.Sc.) honoris causa by the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Haryana Agricultural university, Hisar, Banaras Hindu University, Sardar Patel University and Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi. He also received prestigious Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Award (1982) for his contribution to the environmental conservation. The O. P. Bhasin Award was also bestowed upon him in 1985.

Dr. B. P. Pal was conferred fellowships of many learned Academic Societies in India and abroad. He was a distinguished Fellow, Royal Society of London; Honorary Fellow, Linnean Society, London; Foreign Member, All Union Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences; Honorary Member, Japan Academy, Genetics Society of Japan; President of Indian Society of Genetics and Plant Breeding; Indian Botanical Society; Horticultural Society of India; and Society for the Advancement of Breeding Researches in Asia and Oceania. Dr. B. P. Pal was a highly respected and admired person. He was a great humane and visionary. He endeared himself to every one because of his grace, deep love for nature and science and a good sense of humour. He remained a bachelor throughout his life and devoted selflessly his time to the passions of science, nature, fine arts and creativity. In him, scientific community in general and Indian Society of Plant Genetic Resources in particular has lost a patron, great advocate of plant genetic resources, and a conservationist, under whose shadow the sapling of genetic resources emerged, nurtured and got established firmly. We owe a great deal to this departed soul.

We all pray, 'May his soul rest in peace.'