

Chirayathumadom Venkatachali Subramanian (1924–2016)

After leading an active and dedicated life, Professor C. V. Subramanian, the celebrated mycologist and plant pathologist, who had served as Head of the Centre of Advanced Study (CAS) in Botany at the University of Madras (1973–1985) passed away in Bangkok, Thailand on 5 February 2016.

A full article prepared by his former students – D. J. Bhat, J. Muthumary, C. Rajendran, S. Raghu Kumar and B. P. R. Vittal, has appeared in *Current Science* (2014, **106**(10), 1438–1444) under the series ‘Living Legends in Indian Science’. CVS, as he was known to the biologists of his generation, was a broad-based scientist and a scholar with deep roots in philosophy and music. His first appointment as Senior Lecturer in the University of Madras in 1951 was followed by elevation to a Readership. He was then appointed to the newly created Chair in Plant Pathology at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi (1958), the first ever Chair in the subject in the country. On invitation, he organized the new Department of Botany in the University of Rajasthan at Jodhpur and then at Jaipur, where he was the first Professor and Head of the Department in that University. He then returned to the University of Madras in the newly upgraded CAS in Botany. His professional specialization was in the Hyphomycetes, their diversity and taxonomy, requiring extensive surveys in various parts of India and in Southeast Asia. He discovered a large number of new taxa, especially genera. The fungal specimens were examined under the microscope and illustrated systematically. What was unique to the principle of his nomenclature was the use of Sanskrit roots rather than of Latin or Greek, an approach appreciated by scientists both in India and abroad. A few genera are cited: *Angulimaya*, *Dwayabeeja*, *Kutilakesa*, *Nalalanthamala*, and *Tharoopama*. An example of the binomial would be *Angulimaya*

sundaram Subram. He made a substantial addition to our knowledge of these fungi, culminating in the publication of a monumental *Monograph on Hyphomycetes* in 1971.

A comprehensive book authored by him *Hyphomycetes: Taxonomy and Biology* was published by Academic Press, London in 1983. This book was released by the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. In recognition of his contributions to mycology, Subramanian was elected President of the International



Mycological Association in 1977 at Tampa, Florida, USA. He was President of the International Mycological Congress, Tokyo, Japan (1983). He founded the Mycological Society of India in 1973 and launched the journal *KAVAKA*, of which he was the Chief Editor from its inception until 1998. *KAVAKA* is the Sanskrit word for fungi. CVS was awarded the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize by CSIR in 1965 and the Rafi Ahmad Kidwai Award of the ICAR (1972–1973). The Indian Botanical Society honoured him with the Birbal Sahni Medal (1972) and Lifetime Achievement Award (2009). His lasting contributions to plant taxonomy were recognized by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India by awarding him the prestigious Dr E. K. Janaki Ammal Award (2000).

Subramanian was elected to the Fellowship of the Indian Academy of Sciences (1955), Indian National Science Academy (1960), Corresponding Member, Belgian Royal Academy of Foreign Sciences (1978) and National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (1978). He was elected President, Botany Section, Indian Science Congress (1975), Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow (1976–1978) and Member, University Grants Commission (1979–1982). The other prestigious positions CVS occupied have been listed by Bhat *et al.* in their *Current Science* article.

CVS had deep interest in both Carnatic and Hindustani styles of music. He was exposed to Carnatic music in his family, learned to play the mridangam and was a good singer. Few could match him in the intricacies of Hindustani classical music, the various gharanas and their exponents. I had many occasions to exchange notes on music with CVS. He was a great believer and follower of Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahansa. In an article on Swami Vivekananda and science he wrote, ‘Young Naren (the future Swami Vivekananda), from his early life in College, having been exposed to western thought, imbibed the scientific spirit, and would not accept anything blindly and on authority. Everything had to pass the test of reasoning and cold logic. There is no other way. His trust was entirely in himself’. CVS followed this philosophy all his life.

CVS is survived by his wife and two sons.

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