

## Malepati Venkatarama Nayudu (1934–2005)

Malepati Venkatarama Nayudu (M. V. Nayudu), a distinguished academician, virologist and the Founder-Head of the first M Sc virology degree course in India, passed away on 27 August 2005 in Bangalore.

Born into an agriculture family on 31 January 1934, he completed his school education at Uravakonda and Bellary, close to his native village in Andhra Pradesh. Nayudu moved to Chennai for higher education and completed his B Sc (biology major), and M Sc (botany) from the University of Madras. In 1959, he obtained his Ph D in plant pathology from the University of Wisconsin, USA, under the direction of J. C. Walker, a stalwart in the field of plant pathology. Nayudu continued his postdoctoral research with Walker before returning to India in 1960, to start his academic career as Lecturer in Botany at Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. Nayudu, along with his colleagues, V. S. Rama Das, late I. M. Rao and late A. Seshaagiri Rao made significant contributions to the academic growth of the Botany Department. He was promoted as Reader in 1965 and assigned plant virology courses of M Sc, botany. This inspired him to initiate plant virology as one of the specialized subjects in botany. His efforts culminated in the establishment of a separate Virology Department in the same university in 1988. The first and unique interdisciplinary M Sc course in virology in India had biotechnological applications and helped train students in plant, human and animal virology.

During 1978–79, Nayudu was Professor and Head of the Biosciences Department at the autonomous Post-graduate Centre of Sri Venkateswara University, Anantapur. During this tenure he laid strong academic foundation for its future development into a university (Sri Krishnadevaraya University). He then returned to the Botany Department as Professor and Head, and served there till he moved to Virology

Department as Professor and Founder-Head in July 1988. After serving the academic institutions with commitment and devotion for nearly 34 years, Nayudu retired from service on 31 January 1994. In recognition of his efforts in establishing the department and promoting virology, the university has established 'MV Nayudu Endowment Merit Award', given to students who obtain First Rank in M Sc Virology.

Nayudu, who specialized in plant bacteriology, mycology and plant virology, men-



tored several M Phil and Ph D students in these areas, who later occupied good positions in academics and research in India and abroad, and made significant contributions. Nayudu and his research team identified several new fungal, bacterial and viral pathogens of crop plants and contributed to pathogen biochemistry and physiology, molecular mechanisms of disease induction in plants and disease epidemiology. Nayudu was a member of the American Phytopathological Society, Indian Phytopathological Society, Indian Virological Society, Indian Botanical Society and Current Science Association. He was associated with the scientific activities of these Societies/Associations and organized several

annual meetings of these organizations. He was also associated with Environment Protection Training and Research Institute, Hyderabad. He was instrumental in organizing two national-level short-term training courses in plant virology for the benefit of junior scientists.

In the university academics, Nayudu made a mark with his outspoken nature, uncompromised principles, sincerity and devotion to the profession. He was an active member of the local 'Intellectuals Forum'. He represented several public problems to the local, state and/or central governing bodies and was able to resolve several issues, most notably preservation of water tanks in and around Tirupati and Hyderabad.

Nayudu maintained high standards and motivated his colleagues and students to uphold international standards in their careers. With his reputation and contacts, he mustered sustained collaboration with reputed national and international centres involved in virology research.

Nayudu had a long cherished ambition of preparing a textbook on plant viruses at affordable cost to students in India. He took up the onerous task of writing a comprehensive book on *Plant Viruses* in 2002. He was proof-reading the book, when he suddenly passed away. (This book is due for release in early 2006 by Tata McGraw Hill). All those who knew him personally will miss him greatly. He is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.

P. SREENIVASULU<sup>1,\*</sup>  
P. LAVA KUMAR<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Virology,  
Sri Venkateswara University,  
Tirupati 517 502, India*

<sup>2</sup>*Virology and Mycotoxin Diagnostics Lab,  
International Crops Research Institute  
for the Semi-Arid Tropics,  
Patancheru 502 324, India  
\*e-mail: plavakumar@cgiar.org*