

Dr. Manoj Shukla (1951-2006)



Dr. Manoj Shukla, a well wisher, ardent supporter, active member and Treasurer of the Palaeobotanical Society, passed away in a tragic road accident on 6th June, 2006 near Bachhrawan, a township situated on Lucknow-Allahabad road. In his death Society suffered a great loss. Dr. Shukla had more than 30 years association with the Palaeobotanical Society. He always stood for the cause and welfare of the Society and took active part in all its activities. He served the Society as Editor, Joint Secretary and was occupying the chair of Treasurer. Society conferred on him the prestigious Fellowship for his significant contributions in the field of Palaeobotany.

Dr. Shukla was born on 12th November, 1951 in Nagina, a small town of Uttar Pradesh. His father was Medical Officer with the State Government and used to move place to place alongwith his family. So young Manoj studied at different schools and colleges for his High School and Intermediate courses. He moved to Lucknow to pursue higher education and got admission to Lucknow University for his B.Sc. degree in Botany, Zoology and Geology and received graduate degree in 1971 during undergraduate days he got interest in different aspects of Geology and in order to enrich his knowledge, he enrolled himself for post graduate degree in Geology, Prof. R.C. Misra, the then Head of the Geology Department of Lucknow University inspired him in many ways and he received M.Sc. degree in the year 1973.

Dr. Shukla joined the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany as Junior Scientific Assistant in the year

1974 and rose to the level of Scientist-F (a post equivalent to Deputy Director). He started his research career under the guidance of Dr. K.M. Lele a renowned palaeobotanist who established the tripartite division of Gondwana. Dr. Shukla significantly dealt with the geology and palaeobotanical aspects of Hutar Coalfield. Those days Barwadih (the field area) was a heavily forested area and Dr. Shukla managed the field work from tent with great enthusiasm, zeal and skill. During this period he for the first time discovered the palynofossils from Talchir and Karharbari formations of Gondwana sequences and established palynostratigraphic zonation. The discovery of variety of pollen and spore assemblages helped him to carry out the biometric analysis of morphological characters of microfossils. For his excellent work on Hutar Coalfield he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Lucknow University in 1979.

Dr. Shukla faced a dilemma when his guide, mentor and teacher died at the age of 50. But Manoj came out boldly and took up the challenges of working in the nearly untouched area of the Pre-Cambrian Palaeobiology. The work on microbiota of Suket shales comprising *Chuar* assemblage established him in the field of Vindhyan biota. He contributed significantly towards the knowledge of Pre Cambrian Palaeobiology of Cuddapah, Kalagdi, Vindhyan and the Kurnool Groups.

His pains taking work on plant resin from Tertiary sediments of Kerala and Mahuadanr area of Jharkhand helped him and his associates, to discover, for the first time resin-embedded insect and plant material from India. The publication on Kerala material was adjudged the best paper for the year 2000 and his

team got the first H.S. Pareek Medal of the Geological Society of India, Bangalore.

During his scientific career, Dr. Shukla was actively associated with the organization of conferences, meetings and workshops, and his role as member of scientific and technical committees of the BSIP will be remembered for long time.

Dr. Shukla has published many papers in International and National journals and attended a number of conferences in India and abroad. He was member of many academic bodies viz., Geological Society of India, Palaeontological Society of India and

Palaeobotanical Society. He was also active in many IGCP projects as member of National Working Group.

Dr. Shukla was very social in habit and gentle in temperament. He had this unmatched ability to establish rapport even with stranger. He was a very warm person and many of us can narrate a number of instances evincing his warm and cheerful disposition.

He leaves behind his mother, wife and two sons. His untimely death is a great loss to his family, to the society, to palaeobotanists, to his friends and to the colleagues of BSIP and Palaeobotanical Society.

May his soul rest in peace.

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