



PROFESSOR VASUDEVA KRISHNAMURTHY
1921–2014

Prof. V. Krishnamurthy – A Teacher Par Excellence*

Professor Vasudeva Krishnamurthy (1921–2014), a great teacher, researcher and a guide of unimaginable capabilities. He was praised by every one of his students as a 'walking encyclopaedia'. A strong admirer of Prof. M.O.P. Iyengar, was born in a small village, Valavanur near Pondichery, educated initially in National College School, Trichirapalli and joined St. Joseph College, Trichirapalli in 1940, for his intermediate and continued there for his Degree in B.A. Botany. He completed his post-graduation with M.A. (Botany), in Presidency College, Chennai with first rank and was awarded Palaniyandi Gold Medal by the University of Madras. He was awarded M.Sc. Botany by research in 1952 and completed his Ph.D. under the guidance of Dr. Cathlene Drew and Doctorate degree was awarded by The University of Manchester in 1959.

Prof. V. Krishnamurthy has started his teaching career in a school during beginning and was first appointed to teach in Pachaiyappa's College, Chennai from 1944 to 1946 and moved to Presidency College as Assistant Professor after working in a college at Mangalore for a short period. His research activities started while he was teaching in Presidency College during which he studied planktons of Adyar estuary. His research led to the first research article on *Compsopogon* (1953) from Adyar estuary and this alga was brought to him initially by the lab assistant who mistook it for '*Spirogyra*'. Thus the research career on algae, started with *Compsopogon* from Adyar river continued till his death. Probably this may be the reason for him to continue his work for doctorate degree in this group of algae belonging to Bangiophycidae, one of the two subclasses of red algae under the guidance of Dr. Kathleen Drew at Manchester, U.K. After returning from England he has served in Presidency College, Chennai, followed by St. Joseph College, Trichy (where he was instrumental in starting M.Sc. Botany), promoted as Professor of Biology in Tanjavore Medical College (1960), then transferred to Govt. Engineering College, Guindy, as a Lecturer in Microbiology, Department of Public Health Engineering where he designed the course in Sanitary Microbiology for the first time. He also taught a course in Limnology. In 1965 his service was required by CSIR and was appointed as a Senior Scientific Officer to head the division of Algology in Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI) at Bhavnagar Gujarat. During his tenure at CSMCRI, he initiated survey of drift seaweed, started exploring Indian coasts for a study of marine algal diversity, selected and established 'Marine Algal Research Stations' at Okha in Gujarat and Mandapam in Tamil Nadu. During his stint as head of Algology division at CSMCRI, he registered a number of students and guided them for getting awarded Doctorate degree.

Professor Krishnamurthy was invited by the University of Washington, Seattle, USA to work in their Friday Harbour Laboratories (1967), undertook a tour to California and visited the University of California, Berkeley, latter visited Los Angeles, Pacific Grove and La Jolla. These visits helped Professor Krishnamurthy to work with number of leading phycologists.

After being promoted as Assistant Director at CSMCRI, he established the field stations and continued his research at field station, Mandapam. He was the first person to think about cultivation of economically important marine algae and tried rope cultivation of *Gracilaria* and initiated experiments with other similar forms. In 1970 Prof. Krishnamurthy organized the Seaweed Research and Utilization Association (SRUA) and had it inaugurated by Dr. (Mrs.) Francesca Thiyi, a marine algal expert at that time and was also a colleague from CSMCRI. He assumed the charge of Founder-President and the journal has completed its Golden jubilee last year.

Professor Krishnamurthy came back to Tamil Nadu Government services after leaving CSIR-CSMCRI and was appointed as Principal, Government Arts College, Attur, Salem District in 1974 and then as Principal, Government Arts College (Men), Namakkal towards the end of 1975. He was instrumental in starting M.Sc. Botany course here and retired prematurely from teaching service in 1979. During his service as Principal in these colleges, he inspired teachers from Government Colleges in Salem district and guided many to obtain Ph.D., and motivated several others to register for Ph.D. at CAS in Botany, University of Madras.

Even after his retirement, Professor Krishnamurthy got associated with Prof. T.V. Desikachary in a DST project on 'Algal Flora of India' sanctioned to the latter and worked together with Prof. M.S. Balakrishnan and Prof. V. Sundaralingam. This went on from 1980 to 1986 and his association had extended further in another project on 'Phytoplanktons of Bay of Bengal' sanctioned to Prof. T.V. Desikachary. From 1980 to 1987 he registered or helped research scholars to obtain their Ph.D. degrees. Professor Krishnamurthy continued his research by getting associated with Pachiyappa's college and then Presidency College for some time. On his realisation of the importance of an institute for algal research, founded Krishnamurthy Institute of Algology in 1991 and administered the institute as Founder-President initially and continued as Founder-Director. Professor Krishnamurthy founded a bi-annual journal 'Indian Hydrobiology' in 1995 and functioned as Chief-editor until his death on 9th May, 2014. Volume 20 of this journal is being published this year with no issues in 2014 to 2016 due to his sudden death.

Professor Krishnamurthy devoted his life time for research on teaching and research on algae and helped more than 20 scholars to obtain their Ph.D. Degree. He has conducted symposia, seminars, conferences and workshops almost every year starting from early 1980s till 2013 in association with Colleges, Universities and Research Institutes of not only Tamil Nadu but also other states such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Gujarat. From 2003 onwards, he conducted KIA founding day celebrations during which he selected an algologist and conferred him 'Life Time Achievement Award' and this was continued up to 2016. The talks he delivered during seminars and conferences would always a single theme of encouraging youngsters to take up algal research in large numbers. He always acted as a meaning full bond between researchers and entrepreneurs and helped many as a technical adviser.

He played a major role and instrumental in publication of two volumes of monograph on Indian Red Algae by associating himself with Prof. T.V. Desikachary and Prof. M.S. Balakrishnan. His book on Chlorophyceae of India region includes the orders of green algae that were not covered in ICAR publications. Professor Krishnamurthy has also brought out a monograph on brown algae in two volumes in which he co-authored with Dr. M. Baluswami (volume 1) and Dr. Ezhili (volume 2). He has edited 2 more books and research publications of around 200 will remain forever to speak for his excellence in research.

He was seen always with smiling face, talking no non-sense, explaining algal lifecycles in a simple way, sharing his experience in field studies and experience with other scientists in India and abroad, with whom he had worked closely, visiting shores even at the age of >90 years with those who were interested in algal studies and above all treating everyone above gender, caste or greed make it impossible to forget him till my last breath.

M. Baluswami

*Ref.: M.D. Vijayapathasarathy 2014. Homage to Prof. V. Krishnamurthy. Seaweed Res. Utiln., Vol. 38.