

Obituary

MIKLOS KEDVES

(1933-2003)



Professor Miklós Kedves, a dedicated and devoted Palaeobotanist and Palynologist left for heavenly abode on 6th November 2003. Barely four days before his scheduled visit to Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany, Lucknow, India we got the shocking news of his passing away. For a moment it was extremely difficult for me to accept that Miklós, a close friend of mine, will never meet me in future. The drearily event has not only snatched a great palynologist but also a good human being. His family members, friends, and research collaborators shall always recall noble virtues of this acclaimed and ardent scientist.

Born on 21st March, 1933 in Szeged, Hungary, Prof. Kedves, after obtaining Diploma in Biology and Chemistry in 1952 and Ph. D. in 1955 from Szeged University, Szeged, Hungary, served as a teacher in P.M. Secondary School, Siofok, Hungary from 1955-1958. He joined the position of Assistant in Department of Botany, J. A. University, Szeged in 1958, became Lecturer in 1965, Research Counsellor in 1975 and Honorary Professor in 1984. Prof. Miklós assumed the responsibility of Head of the Cell Biological and Evolutionary Micropaleontological Laboratory, Szeged University, Szeged in the year 1990, the position which he held till he breathed his last. Miklós attained the distinction of being Candidate Biological Science and Doctor of Biological Science of Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest in the years 1965 and 1974 respectively. Prof. Kedves was recipient of Birbal Sahni Centenary Medal in the year 1995, International Man of the Year 1995-1996 of International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England, Man of the Year Commemorative Medal of American Biographical Institute, USA and Men's Inner Circle of Achievement of American Biographical Institute, USA.

Scientific enterprises of Prof. Kedves were stretched to myriad of fields. In the earlier phase of his career he made significant contributions to the xylography of Gymnospermous woods and histology of Pteridophytic epidermis. A distinct

change in his field of research became apparent in his publications since 1960 which mainly pertained to different aspects of palynological studies. Tireless efforts made by the industrious palynologist on Cretaceous to Miocene palynofossil studies are worth mentioning. He also worked on organic geochemical characterization of brown coals and degradation of sporoderm *in vivo* and *in vitro*. Unequivocal importance of ultrastructural studies in ascertaining the phylogenetic links of different plant groups inspired Prof. Kedves to make comprehensive studies on extinct and extant spore/pollen. His monographs and lavish research papers on fossil pteridophytic spores and gymnospermic and angiospermic pollen grains are extremely valuable to the workers who intend to take up research in this field.

About fifteen years back Prof. Kedves initiated studies in a field which ultimately evolved into one of his most favourite subjects - the Biopolymer Symmetry in spore/pollen walls. In the year 1988 he revealed the quasi-crystalloid biopolymer structure in modern pollen of *Pinus griffithii*. Developing these studies further with the help of modified Markham rotation method, he succeeded to establish the symmetries of the basic quasi-crystalloid skeleton in partially degraded cell walls of different plants. Trailing on these lines, he identified the Penrose unit-like biopolymer unit with the help of secondary rotation method and endeavoured the computer modelling of quasi-crystalloid structures in pollen walls. Incessant efforts of Prof. Kedves in this field and his bountiful publications established him as one of the imposing and cognisant workers of this discipline.

Thematically, to promote the multidisciplinary research programmes through collaboration with foreign scientists and institutions, the Rector Szeged University, in the year 1990, conferred an independent status to the Cell Biological and Evolutionary Micropaleontological Laboratory and aptly designated Prof. Kedves as Head of this unequalled unit. Although several such collaborations were going on but this status gave a boom to the cause for which the unit was

instituted. The new status of the laboratory not only facilitated Prof. Kedves in reorganising his scientific programmes but also provided an opportunity to the young students of different levels to work and assist him during their leisure time. Making specific reference about the collaborative studies in his laboratory with scientists of other institutions, Prof. Kedves, in one of his publications, extolled the valuable co-operation of Department of Biophysics, Biological Research Center, Szeged. In the same publication he blustered the fecund collaboration with scientists of many countries like - India, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, The Netherlands, Germany, Georgia, Russia, France, and Egypt.

To highlight the momentous results of research activities of the laboratory, Prof. Kedves initiated the publication of a scientific journal *Plant Cell Biology and Development* in the year 1990. Going through the first article of the thirteenth volume of this journal, which accounts one decade's progress in research activities of his laboratory, one can have an idea about the passionate involvement and dedication of - Miklós Kedves.

In consequence to my visit to laboratory of Prof. Kedves under the Academy Exchange Programme, collaborative research activities between him and scientists of Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany were established in the year 1996 which continued till his passing away. Several exchange visits from both sides advanced the juvenile collaboration to grow fast and pervaded in the disciplines of palynology and biopolymer symmetry. Although the sad event exterminated our collaboration, the nice impression of the gentle and noble Hungarian friend shall never fade from our minds. The inflicted pain and sense of bereavement is long lasting and can not be bound in words.

For valuable contributions the Hungarian Scientist shall be remembered world over - virtues survive the grave - "*vivit post funera vertus*"

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