Professor Radhey Shyam Tripathi who remained actively associated with CSIR-NBRI till the end, breathed his last at his Indira Nagar, Lucknow residence on 14 February, 2019. With his sad demise the country lost a great ecologist, academician and a visionary plant scientist.

Prof. Tripathi was associated with CSIR-NBRI as INSA Senior Scientist, and proactively served the NBRI-based International Society for Environmental Botanists (ISEB) in various capacities including Advisor on the Executive Council, Chief editor of Enviro News, Editor of International Journal of Plant and Environment, and Chairman, Fellowship Committee of ISEB. Prior to his association with CSIR-NBRI, he served the Department of Botany, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong for 28 years till his superannuation on 31st May, 2004. He was Professor and Head of the Department of Botany, Coordinator, UGC Special Assistance Programme (now Centre for Advanced Studies in Botany), and Dean, School of Life Sciences at NEHU. Prof. Tripathi was also the Coordinator, Regional Centre for Afforestation and Ecodevelopment Board, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India at NEHU, Shillong, where he provided research and training support to seven north-eastern state forest departments in the areas of afforestation and ecodevelopment activities for more than a decade. The CSIR-NBRI, ISEB and the Department of Botany, NEHU, and the Indian Botanical Society deeply mourn his sudden demise.

Prof. Tripathi was born in Raveli, Bhadohi to Late Shri Gadadhar and Amarawati Tripathi on 22 June, 1942. He completed his High school education from Gandhi Vidyalaya, Kachva, Intermediate from Queens College, Varanasi, B. Sc. from Banaras Hindu University (BHU), and M. Sc. from Kashi Naresh Government PG College, Gyanpur under the then Agra University. He was awarded 1st division with 2nd position in Agra University. During his M. Sc. days, he was editor of the College Magazine, and also a football and hockey player. He was the President of College Students' Union as well. He was awarded Ph. D. degree in 1965 by BHU in Weed Ecology under the supervision of Late Professor R. Misra, the father of Indian Ecology. He was awarded Commonwealth Fellowship and pursued Post-doctoral research in Plant Population Biology at University College of Wales, Bangor, UK under the supervision of Late Professor John L Harper, FRS during 1971-1973. He taught at BHU and Gorakhpur University from 1963-71 and 1973-76, respectively. He joined the Department of Botany, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong as one of its founding faculty members in the year 1976 and began his illustrious career as a globally acclaimed scholar of weed biology and plant population ecology. With his in-depth knowledge and understanding of degraded ecosystems of
north-east India and contribution to forest regeneration ecology, he established a flourishing school of ecology at NEHU.

In the year 1993, he was invited to join Imperial College, London as Visiting Professor of Ecology in its renowned Ecology Department at Royal Ascot, UK supported by Marie Curie bursary of the European Commission. He was elected as Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences, India (FNASc) in the year 1991 and Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy (FNA) in the year 2000 in recognition of his outstanding career in the field of plant ecology which he dedicated to all his students. He published more than 200 research papers in leading global scientific journals with worldwide citations, and supervised 36 students for their Ph. D degrees. In the year 2012, he served as the President of the Indian Botanical Society in 2004, and was conferred esteemed Prof Birbal Sahani Medal of the Society in 2012. In the year 2013, he received Vigyan Vibhushan from the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh for his outstanding contribution in the fields of ecology and environmental sciences. He was awarded the coveted Dr V Puri Memorial Award of the Indian Science Congress in 2016, and was conferred the Honorary Fellowship of the Indian Botanical Society in 2018 for his pioneering research and outstanding contributions in the field of Plant Population Ecology.

Prof. Tripathi brought population ecology with experimental approach to the forefront of plant science research in India. His works on several plant populations that ranged from agrarian and ruderal weeds to forest trees linking demography with regeneration and population regulation processes provided conclusive evidence on r- and k- selection strategies in plants, and therefore linking ecology and evolution. He will be remembered with great affection and gratitude by plant ecologists across the world for this contribution.

Much before “invasive alien species” became a frontline research area in plant ecology, his two-decade long research on weeds made him an authority of invasive species ecology. In addition, his contribution to regeneration ecology and analyses of degraded ecosystems have been widely recognized. Being the Chairman /member of several scientific committees of Government of India, he contributed immensely towards the growth of ecological science in the country.

He was a teacher par excellence, much involved in the teaching of population ecology and plant-environment interactions. He earned a lot of praise from the students he taught. He was one of the finest human beings, a great collaborator, gentle mentor and friend, all rolled into one. We will miss him as a role model and a teacher, who always extends his helping hand to all.

Prof. Tripathi was also proud of the legacy of his students. He left a profound ecological footprint across the country. Many of his former Ph. D. students are currently occupying high positions in premiere universities, and front-line research organizations of the country such as CSIR and ICAR.

Prof. Tripathi is survived by his wife Dr. Asha Rani Tripathi, a great scholar of Sanskrit literature, and two daughters Mrs. Anupama, a Civil servant of United Kingdom and Dr. Mudita, an established Physician in UK.

I personally miss him a lot and like me he left a vacuum in the lives of many of his students which can never be filled. However, his human touch to all the problems, continued encouragement, and commitment to plant science research will guide us in the years to come to contribute to the growth of Indian science. The legacy must go on. He will remain immortal among his students, colleagues, admirers and family members.

May his soul rest in peace!

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