OBITUARY

Professor (Mrs.) Alka Srivastava, an Associate Editor of the Journal of the Indian Botanical Society since 2013 and a recipient of the Woman Scientist Medal of the Society (2011) left for heavenly abode on 20th February, 2020 in this Centenary Year of the Indian Botanical Society. Coincidently, this period precedes the Centenary year of the foundation of the Department of Botany of the University of Lucknow, from where she graduated and served the Department as a Research Scholar and as a Faculty member for a period spanning 36 years. Little did we realize when we met her in her chamber on 21st January, 2020 over a cup of tea in a happy mood, that she would soon be trapped by serious health issues, and would soon be saying goodbye to her family, admirers, colleagues and well wishers she had so graciously earned.

A passionate teacher having soft voice with commanding teaching skills she was widely appreciated by the students. An enthusiastic researcher, she had mentored ~ 20 Ph.D, 4 M.Phil and 6 Post-doctoral scholars and executed several research projects funded by the DST and DBT, leading to publication of over 70 research papers. Her work on B chromosome system imparting stress mediated adaptability is internationally acclaimed. Besides, she had proactively contributed on nutritional aspects of silk worm food plants, and pesticide tolerance to host of economic plants grown in vitro, genotoxicity and mutational efficiency of agrochemicals, and stress genetics of weedicides on crop plants – which is highly commended. A Fellow of the Indian Botanical Society (FBS), and the Indian Society of Genetics & Plant Breeding (FISG), she was also elected to the Fellowship of the Linnean Society London (FLS) and Membership of the National Academy of Science India (MNASc).

A brilliant student with a first class and distinction, her career in research and academics has spanned a very happy and fruitful 40 years. She completed her ICSE from La Martiniere Girls' College in 1978 and her Intermediate from Loreto Convent in 1980. She received the Dr. EM Thilayampallam Scholarship for Outstanding Performance on completion of her graduation in B.Sc. from Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow in 1982. She then joined the University of Lucknow for post graduation and was awarded the Birbal Sahni Memorial Gold Medal as well as the Certificate of Merit for First Position in M.Sc. (Botany) in 1984. She was awarded Ph.D. in
1988 while working as a UGC Research Fellow, followed by three years as a Research Associate of CSIR and DST. In continuation, she joined the faculty of University of Lucknow as a Lecturer in August 1991, and rose to the position of Professor in August 2008 – a position she continued till her last journey.

She contributed to the academics as well as the corporate life of the University of Lucknow, by serving in the Faculty Board of Studies, as both Internal and External Examiner, as Assistant Provost of Kailash Girls' Hostel and Provost of Tilak Girls' Hostel. She was a Founding Member of the Lucknow University Botany Department Alumni Association (LUBDAA). Her dedication and efforts during her tenure at the University of Lucknow, are a testament to the fact that the Department of Botany was her home away from home.

She was born in Lucknow into a family of doctors, lawyers and academicians. Her father Dr. V.K. Srivastava was an Entomologist and Joint Director, Malaria in the UP State Department of Health, and her mother Smt. Sushila Srivastava, a teacher by profession was her ideal, mentor, guide and spiritual teacher. She had a very happy childhood with her two brothers and a sister in the green surroundings of Butler Palace Colony, Lucknow. In 1986 she got married to Dr. A.K. Srivastava, an ophthalmologist from KGMC, Lucknow; together they both selflessly served the society in the best possible manner. Her close association with the Eeshwar Child Welfare Foundation – an NGO in the service of children suffering from malignancy disorders shall always be remembered. She leaves behind her husband, caring son and daughter-in-law - Dr. Mayank Kumar and Dr. Nivedita; a loving daughter Dr. Meghna Kumar and grandson Manas. The best consolation to the departed soul has been that she could share few months of abundant happiness with her little grandson who joined the family in her last days.

To us, it is a great personal loss of an intimate friend who one could always confide in and unconditionally rely upon. While organizing the All India Botanical Conference in 2011 and while I (Prof. Seshu Lavania) conducted the sectional meetings of the Plant Sciences of ISCA in 2018-19, Prof. Alka Srivastava was my greatest support and help in organizing the modalities. I also shared her facility of sprawling wire house for our experimental work.

We met her last on 18th February, 2020 and were greeted by her affectionate smile that we shall always treasure. The Department of Botany of University of Lucknow and the Botanical fraternity of the country shall always cherish and treasure her memories as well as her multifarious contributions in the service of the University and the Indian Botanical Society.

May God grant peace to her soul.

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