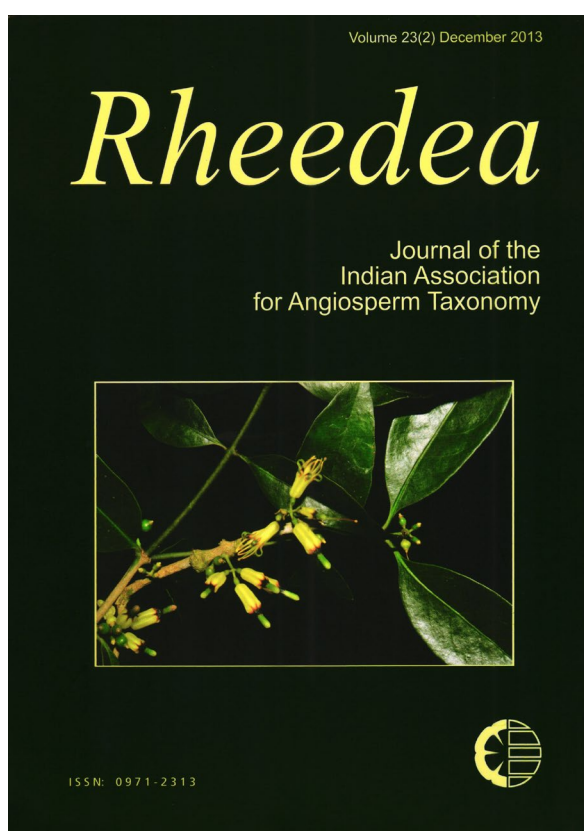




## Obituary: Debandra Bijoy Deb (1924-2013)

Paramjit Singh & P. Venu



How to cite:

**Singh P. & P. Venu 2013.** Obituary: Debandra Bijoy Deb (1924-2013). *Rheedeia* 23(2): 137-138.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.22244/rheedeia.2013.23.02.11>

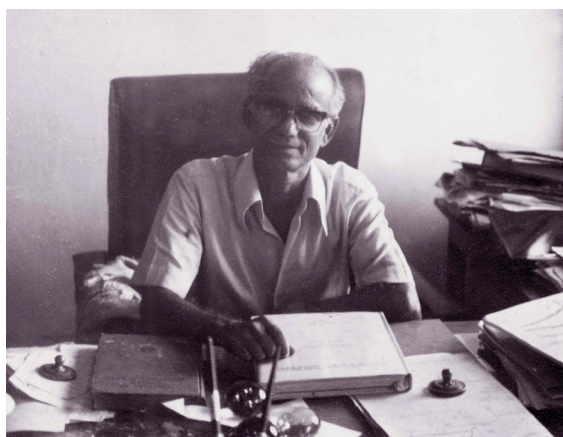
*Published in print:* 31.12.2013

*Published Online:* 31.12.2013



## Obituary

Debandra Bijoy Deb (1924-2013)



Dr. Deb, born on April 1, 1924 and educated at Sylhet and Calcutta, started his professional career as a lecturer of Botany at D.M. College, Imphal in June 1951. This gave him an opportunity to work on the flora of Manipur that secured him a doctorate degree and quite a few publications. Appreciating the richness of the flora of Tripura, he soon after moved to M.B.B. College, Agartala in 1956. He sensed that familiarity with plants is crucial to inculcate interest in students and build himself as a good botany teacher. Despite knowing that no financial support was forthcoming, he embarked on attempting the state flora. He planned his field works in such a way that areas in short distance were done on weekends while remote areas were covered during vacations. He carried out all the tours with his own expenses while attending teaching assignment in the college. All his hard work resulted in 2-volume publication on flora of Tripura that accounted for 1600 species.

He joined Botanical Survey of India as a Systematic Botanist (now called Scientist-B) in 1961, probably as one of the first batch of officers of the reorganized Botanical Survey of India. While working for quite some time in Shillong, he reported many novelties to the flora and explicitly to the northeast region. He discovered 3 new genera, about 50 new species, several new records to India and many regional records, some of which are of economic significance. Having spent a significant part of his career in northeast, he earned a good grasp on the

floras of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Eastern Bhutan. He then shifted to Central National Herbarium, Howrah. From there on, he worked in various capacities in the Regional Centers and units at Coimbatore, Central National Herbarium, Howrah, as Curator, Industrial section, Indian Museum, Kolkata and Head of Office, Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah. While working in Coimbatore, he attempted to revise Fyson's Flora on South Indian Hills. He meticulously collected manuscripts to edit but for some reasons, this did not fructify. His first taxonomic revision of Tribe-Scilleae of Liliaceae jointly with his student, S. Dasgupta, appeared in fascicles of flora of India, number 7 in 1981. His interest in Rubiaceae associated himself with his students on the revisions of *Hedyotis* (with R. Dutta, Taxonomic revision of *Hedyotis* in Indian sub-continent, 2004); *Psychotria* (with Mohan Gangopadhyay: Taxonomic revision of the genus *Psychotria* in India, 1989). Soon after his superannuation, he was offered Emeritus Scientist position in the Botanical Survey, which was then just initiated. He guided seven students for Ph. D in plant taxonomy and published several research articles. He visited research Institutes in Russia, UK, France and Germany for botanical research. He also participated in several International symposia. He was a member of many botanical societies.

Though short and frail in stature and truly unassuming, he exerted the positions he occupied in Botanical Survey. His academic convictions were incredibly strong. He was truly tough with scientific and technical staff, but used to be rational and free, once in know of their abilities. He had gone by procedures and rules and in the course he invited annoyance and wrath of many. His interest remained with botany all through. At 89, age had a telling effect though he was always keen to attend various botanical meetings. In recognition of his services, he was awarded Jubilee Research Medal and prize in Science and Dr. D.Chatterjee Memorial Medal and prize in Systematic Botany of the University of Calcutta and Dr. T.M. Hynniewta Biodiversity Gold Medal in 2009 by 'East Himalayan Society for Spermatophyte Taxonomy', University

of North Bengal. He had become slow, short in memory and hard of hearing in his last days but managed to submit manuscript on Rubiaceae of India with great difficulty.

He breathed his last on June 11, 2013 at his residence in Salt Lake, Kolkata. He is survived by

two daughters and two grandsons. He will always be remembered for erudite nature, strict discipline and his contribution to the flora of northeast India.

**Paramjit Singh & P. Venu**  
Botanical Survey of India