

Obituary

Kakunje Gopalakrishna Bhat (17 May 1947–7 April 2022)



Kakunje Gopalakrishna Bhat, popularly known as K.G. Bhat, was a popular teacher and researcher at Poornaprajna College, Udupi, and one of the well known taxonomists in the country. He was also a Fellow of the Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy (IAAT). Dr. Bhat passed away on the 7th April, 2022. He is survived by his wife Mrs. Bharati Bhat, who was most supportive throughout his journey.

Dr. Kakunje Gopalakrishna Bhat was born on 17 May, 1947 in Kukunje near Peradala (Kasaragod), as the son of Mr. K. Venkappa Bhat and Mrs. Parvathi Bhat. He studied up to the 7th standard in Nirchal at the Mahajana Samskrutha College, staying in maternal uncle's house, and from 8–10th standard in Navajeevana High School in Peradala in his uncle's, Mr. Subraya Bhat's residence. In 1965 he continued

his studies in Bhuvanendra College, Karkala, Karnataka. He completed his B.Sc. degree in the same college where he learnt about the plants around the college campus. In 1969, he joined the post-graduation studies in Botany at Manasagangotri, Mysore, where Dr. B.A. Razi was teaching taxonomy. His friends called him by the nick name 'Taxonomy Bhatru'. In 1980, he started his doctoral studies under the guidance of Prof. C.R. Nagendran, entitled *Studies on sedges and grasses of Coorg and South Kanara districts of Karnataka*, which was later published by Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh, Dehradun, in the year 2001. Between 1971 and 2005, Dr. K.G. Bhat worked as Lecturer and Head of the Department of Botany at Poornaprajna College. Dr. Bhat received assistance and support from the Principal of Poornaprajna College and the Udupi Sri Admar Mutt Education Council for his research work. He established a Taxonomy Research Centre at Poornaprajna College, Udupi. It has a sizable collection of herbarium specimens of Indian flora, as well as publications on botany and plant drawings.

Dr. K.G. Bhat has also guided students for their doctoral degrees. He continued his interest in research and contributed in the field of taxonomy which earned him the distinguished Prof. V.V. Sivarajan Award in the year 2002. He served as the President of Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy (2015) and also as a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee of Rheedea. In 2003, he published the flora of Udupi which included 1,242 species belonging to 694 genera and 171 families, along with 160 coloured photographs and 288 illustrations. His work on the flora of South Kanara which covered the Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, was

published in 2014 as a result of vast and rigorous field collection and research of angiosperms from the region. He undertook the efforts to introduce the contemporary APG system of classification and family concepts in the revised edition of *The Flora of South Kanara*, published in 2020, which contains 1,888 species belonging to 928 genera 166 families.

Dr. Bhat was commemorated by the following species names: *Canscora bhatiana* K.S.Prasad & Raveendran, *Ceropegia bhatii* S.R.Yadav & Shendage, *Curcuma bhatii* (R.M.Sm.) Škorničk. & M.Sabu, and *Eriocaulon gopalakrishnanum* K.Rashmi & G.Krishnak.

Dr. Bhat described and published seven new species: *Amomum ghaticum* K.G.Bhat (Zingiberaceae), *Chrysopogon pseudozeylanicus* K.G.Bhat & Nagendran (Poaceae), *Combretum razianum* K.G.Bhat (Combretaceae), *Curcuma oligantha* var. *lutea* (R.Ansari, V.J.Nair & N.C.Nair) K.G.Bhat (Zingiberaceae), *Eragrostis santapau* K.G.Bhat & Nagendran, *Isachne veldkampii* K.G.Bhat &

Nagendran (Poaceae), and *Rotala tulumadensis* K.S.Prasad, P.Biju, Raveendra & K.G.Bhat (Lythraceae). His work added three species new to the flora of India, *Crotalaria goreensis* Guill. & Perr. (Fabaceae), *Cyperus surinamensis* Rottb. (Cyperaceae), *Robiquetia rosea* (Lindl.) Garay (Orchidaceae), and 51 species to the flora of Karnataka state.

He published 56 research papers and six books, *Sedges and grasses of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts* (2001), *Plant resources of Western Ghats and lowlands of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts* (2002), *Flora of Udupi* (2003), *Palms of Karnataka* (2011), *Flora of South Kanara-Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka* (2014), and *Pteridophytes of Karnataka state* (2016), and one book chapter, *Mosses of Western Ghats and Coastal belt of Karnataka* (2013).

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