

M.A. Wadoodkhan (12 July 1944–27 August 2023)



It is with a very heavy heart I am writing this obituary of my close friend, Dr. M.A. Wadoodkhan, who passed away at the age of 80, following a massive cardiac arrest on 27th August 2023. I had over five decades of close association with him in plant taxonomy research. Hailing from a remote village, nestled in Beed district in Maharashtra, Dr. Khan was a dedicated teacher at Department of Botany, Majalgaon College, and a notable cyperologist of the country. He was also a Fellow of the Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy (IAAT).

Simple and unassuming, Dr. Khan was very serious in his studies. He was attracted to the field of angiosperm taxonomy during his post graduate studies at the Department of Botany, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Maharashtra. Interested in plant taxonomy, he took floristic studies for his doctoral thesis, '*The flora of Bhokar and Hadgaon range forest of Nanded district*' under

the guidance of renowned taxonomist, Dr. V.N. Naik. He continued his career in plant taxonomy in Majalgaon College with a very limited research facility. The role of Dr. Khan was very admirable in bringing out the flora of Marathwada, contributing huge information on taxonomically difficult families, such as Cyperaceae, Commelinaceae, Lamiaceae and Verbenaceae. While surveying sedges of Maharashtra, Western Ghats and the Andaman, he had published revision of three important genera of Cyperaceae: *Scirpus*, *Eloeocharis* and *Scleria*. He described 17 new species, 11 new infraspecific taxa and a new genus *Naikia*.

Dr. Khan tirelessly worked on Cyperaceae for 35 years and collected more than 16,000 specimens from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Odisha and Andaman Islands. He guided four students for their doctoral thesis. Considering his contribution, the Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy awarded him the distinguished Y.D. Tiagi Gold Medal in 2014. In 2015 he published 'Cyperaceae of Western Ghats, West Coast and Maharashtra' which provided an account of 400 species, sub-species and varieties. His wife, Mrs. Sophia Khan contributed most of the illustrations in this book.

A most unassuming individual, he worked hard and dedicated himself to the pursuit of academic excellence. Due to his simplicity, grace of behaviour and profound knowledge of Cyperaceae, he was respected among the taxonomic fraternity. Besides his academic calibre, he was a great human being, and a most respected person in the town he resided. His untimely demise is a severe loss not only to his wife, daughter and son, but also to the Indian botany. I pray on behalf of IAAT that let his soul rest in peace.

D.S. Pokle
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