

OBITUARY



Prof. Dr. Rafiq Ahmad (Late)
November 2, 1927 – October 27, 2023

On October 27, 2023, an outstanding scientist, former chairman Department of Botany, renowned physiologist, former Dean Science, Former Registrar, University of Karachi and former Director Institute of Environmental Studies, University of Karachi, passed away in New York, USA.

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad was born on November 2, 1927, and embarked on his academic journey with great determination. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Botany, Chemistry, and Zoology from Muslim University, Aligarh, India, in 1949. Subsequently, he pursued his Master's degree in Botany at the University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, graduating in 1952. Dr. Ahmad's insatiable curiosity and passion for plant sciences led him to the United States, where he worked on the Radioactive Isotopes Tracer Techniques in Oak Ridge Nuclear Research Institute, U.S.A. and got a certification course in 1958. He completed his Ph.D. in Botany (Plant Physiology) at Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, in 1959.

Dr. Ahmad's expertise encompassed mineral nutrition in plants, Biosaline investigations, and the growth and development of plants in saline and arid conditions. He dedicated his life's work to addressing the challenges of saline agriculture, afforestation, and agriculture using highly saline underground water on sandy deserts. His work was instrumental in the development of coastal sandy belts and the promotion of sustainable land use practices. Throughout his illustrious career, Dr. Rafiq Ahmad held various academic and research positions. He served as a lecturer at F.C. College, Lahore, Pakistan, and later as a demonstrator at the University of Karachi, Karachi, Pakistan. His pursuit of knowledge took him to Ohio State University, where he worked as a Graduate Assistant. Upon his return to Pakistan, Dr. Ahmad continued his academic journey, becoming an Assistant Professor at the University of Karachi. Over the years, he ascended through the academic ranks, eventually attaining the prestigious position of Professor. His dedication and commitment to education were further evidenced by his role as a Visiting Professor at Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman, and as the Founder Chairman of the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Karachi. His administrative prowess was equally impressive, with roles such as Provost, Chairman of the Department of Botany, and Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of Karachi. Dr. Ahmad's leadership extended to serving as the Registrar and Director of the Institute of Environmental Studies at his alma mater.

He has got many scholarships like Fulbright-Hays Scholarship in the U.S.A. from 1956 to 1959. Nuffield Foundation Post-Doctoral Research Scholarship in 1968, involving work at the Long Ashton Research Station, University of Bristol, U.K. DAAD Visiting Professor Fellowship in West Germany in 1976, including work at the University of Hoehenhein, visits to the Technical University in Berlin, and the University of Munchen.

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad's contributions were widely recognized. He was named a Fellow of the Pakistan Academy of Science (PAS). His extensive involvement also saw him assume the role of Vice President of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences. He was renowned Fellow of the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS). Founding member of the establishing the International Center of Biosaline Agriculture in Dubai, UAE. He organized an international US-Pakistan Biosaline Research Workshop in Sept. 22-26, 1985, in Karachi, Pakistan as National Coordinator. He also organized an International Seminar "Prospects of Saline Agriculture" from April, 10-12, 2000 in Islamabad, Pakistan. He had participated in at least 46 International Meetings, Seminars and Conferences in Foreign Visits. As the Principal Investigator, he successfully completed 13 national and international research projects from 1975 to 2009. He was also a **Co-P.I of Flora of Pakistan** during 1972-76 which was a Joint Project of PARC and USDA. He supervised 13 PhD students and 06 MPhil students who successfully awarded degrees. He had published more than 125 research publications in international reputable journals. He published 7 international books including; *Prospects for Biosaline Research*, *Saline Agriculture at Coastal Sandy Belt*, *Saline Agriculture: Salt-Tolerant Plants*

for Developing Countries, Trees, shrubs and grasses for saltland: An Annotated Bibliography, Prospects for Saline Agriculture. Task for Vegetation, Special Contributor, Asian Desert In: Encyclopedia of Deserts.

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad 's life and work were defined by a deep commitment to scientific exploration and a passion for addressing some of the most pressing environmental challenges. His pioneering efforts in the field of biosaline agriculture had influenced and continue to inspire researchers worldwide. His remarkable contributions, unwavering dedication to education and his profound impact on the world of science, his legacy will forever live on in the fields and the hearts of those he touched.

May he rest in peace.

Dr. Muhammad Azeem

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