

Brief about Dr. G.B. Pant



(15th Nov 1945 -18th Nov 2020)

Dr. Govind Ballabh Pant served IITM at various capacities for more than three decades, including the position of its Director from 1997 to 2005. After completing an extended service period of two years as a Scientist-H in the Institute, he retired on 30 November 2007. Thereafter, he returned to teaching as Visiting Professor at School of Environment and Natural Resources (SENR), Doon University, Dehradun and subsequently as Distinguished Professor in the Department of Atmospheric and Space Sciences, Savitribai Phule Pune University.

He had a brilliant academic record with many awards, medals and scholarships to his credit. After obtaining his master's degree in physics from Agra University in the year 1965, he started his scientific career as a Scientific Officer at Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), Nainital. He then taught Physics at G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar. His journey as an Atmospheric Scientist started in the year 1968 when he joined the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) in Pune as Junior Scientific Officer. After being awarded a research scholarship from the School of Earth-Atmosphere and Planetary Sciences at Purdue University, Indiana, USA, he resigned from the Institute and joined the Ph.D. program in 1972. He received his Ph.D. in 1976 and returned to India to join the IITM as Senior Scientific Officer Grade-I in May 1977.

Dr. Pant's research interests include atmospheric energetics, monsoon dynamics, ENSO-monsoon relationship, seasonal prediction, climate and climate change especially paleoclimatology. He was a fellow of the Maharashtra Academy of Sciences and the Indian Meteorological Society. He was also the recipient of the K.R. Ramanathan gold medal of the Indian Geophysical Union and IITM Silver Jubilee awards. He was the principal author of two books, "Climates of South Asia" - John Wiley, UK and "Climate Change and Himalaya" - Springer Verlag, Germany. He served as the President of the Indian Meteorological Society (IMS) and as a member of the editorial boards of many research journals including the International Journal of Climatology, Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society, UK. He contributed in many national and international bodies in Climate Science and published numerous research papers in reputed scientific journals. Dr. Pant published around 60 papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals, with nearly half of them in reputed international journals. In addition, he brought out around 40 papers/articles in other publications such as symposia proceedings etc. He was quite active in outreach and published several popular articles also in Hindi.

His contributions as a member of scientific committees for the International Geosphere Biosphere Program (IGBP), World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are highly acclaimed. Dr. Pant was associated with the IPCC right from the outset of the establishment of this highly acclaimed body, and probably was one of the first Indian scientist attending Lead Authors meet for the First Assessment Report. He was also a review editor for chapter on climate models in the Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) of IPCC WG-1 in 2007. He received a certificate of appreciation from the IPCC for his contribution for Nobel Peace Prize Award in 2007. Dr. Pant successfully organized meetings for the governing bodies of PAGES, WCRP and IGBP at IITM, facilitating the networking of Indian scientists with the global community.

Dr. Pant led a number of national and international projects that brought additional resources to IITM. He produced excellent research results providing new research directions in the fields of dendroclimatology, climate change and climate impacts.

A landmark contribution by Dr. Pant is on the quantitative evaluation of the relationship between the Southern Oscillation (SO) and Indian summer monsoon rainfall, starting with his joint pioneering publication of 1981 along with Dr. B. Parthasarathy. Though parameters representing the El Niño/SO/Walker Circulation in some form were being used by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in operational seasonal forecasting based on statistical models, the group led by Dr. Pant at IITM helped in re-emphasising the role of this ocean-atmosphere coupling as lead predictor which paved the way for further research on the role of spatial temporal variability of tropical sea surface temperatures in the interannual variability of the Indian summer monsoon and further exploration using statistical/dynamical models.

Trained under UNDP fellowship, Dr. Pant established the first dendroclimatology laboratory in the country at IITM in 1982 and built a multi-institutional team to reconstruct monsoon variations over the past few centuries with an interannual resolution. It has been nurtured and has grown into a leading dendroclimatology laboratory in the world. He also played a pivotal role in bringing the palaeoclimatological community closer to the meteorological community which facilitated a more consolidated view of the entire spectrum of climate variability over the country.

It was due to his visionary contributions to the development of climate change at IITM that the institute is now internationally recognized as an authentic source for global and regional climate change projections. In fact, the seeds for the establishment of the Centre for Climate Change Research (CCCR) at IITM were sown during the implementation of the Indo-UK programme of research in which he successfully brought two high-profile projects that fed into India's First National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This established strong linkages with several groups working on climate change and its impacts in India.

Succession planning has been an integral part of Dr. Pant's leadership and path-breaking career. He took special care to nurture young minds in his team, and actively supported them to grow into leaders in their own right and carry on the baton to new horizons.
