

OBITUARY

Professor Harnek Singh Garcha, a devoted teacher and an accomplished mushroom mycologist, was born on 4th March, 1940 at Village Todarpur situated in District Ludhiana. He did his Doctorate with Late Professor K.S.Thind from Panjab University, Chandigarh and subsequently joined as Assistant Mycologist in the Department of Microbiology, College of Basic Sciences and Humanities, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana in 1971 where he rose to the coveted position of Professor and Dean of the college. At this University, besides his normal teaching and research engagements he was also involved in extension education and university administration. For improving his research acumen, he undertook training in solid state fermentation and bioconversion technology at Department of Biology University Science Centre, Chinese University, Shatin, NT, Hong Kong and Bacteriological Research Centre Institute Armand Frappier (IAR) University due Quebec, Laval, Canada. At Punjab Agricultural University Ludhiana, he laid solid foundation for establishment of Mushroom Research Centre. The technology developed by him for the cultivation of edible fungi using agricultural wastes has been included in "The Packages of Practices". As many as 125 genera of fungi and actinomycetes isolated by him from compost/casing are catalogued with Commonwealth Mycological Institute, England. Dr Garcha as a young post graduate student isolated and recorded 12 species belonging to *Belanioscypha*, *Belonopsis*, *Chlorosplecnium*, *Dasyscyphus*, *Helotium*, *Hymenoscyphus*, *Lambertella* and *Ruststroemia* as novel and his work was published in *Mycologia* and *Transactions British Mycological Society*. During his active service he was involved with innumerable projects including ICAR funded All India Coordinated Mushroom Improvement Project and also those funded by various agencies including UGC, DBT, SBI, DNES, Government of India. He served as Chairman of QRT of ICAR for assessing work done by the designated centers of All India Coordinated Mushroom Improvement Project. During his academic career he published 124 Research papers in the *National and International Journals of Repute* along with 25 popular articles, 5 manuals, 3 Bulletins and participated in 55 National and 12 International Conferences where he Presided over/Chaired many academic sessions. He supervised 10 students for Ph.D. and 16 students for their M.Sc. degrees. He was elected Fellow of Linnean Society, London and Indian Phytopathological Society, New Delhi. He was a member of Government of India delegation to Egypt under INDO-ARE working plan in Agriculture. Besides being a member of various National and International Scientific Societies/Bodies, he also served on innumerable Advisory and Editorial committees constituted by ICAR, IDBI, Bioenergy Society of India, PAU Ludhiana, GNDU, Amritsar, and Punjabi University, Patiala. In his capacity as UNDP/ICAR fellow he visited and worked at Department of Microbiology, McDonald College of Agriculture, McGill University, Montreal; Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Sherbrooke, Quebec; National Research Council, Biological Science Division, Ottawa; Department of Environment Biology, Microbiology, Crop Science and Plant



Professor Harnek Singh Garcha
(04.03.1940 - 20.03.2016)

Biotechnology, University of Guelph, Ontario; and Department of Chemical Engineering, Biology, Microbial Biotechnology Centre, University of Waterloo, Ontario, in Canada for varied durations. In addition to all the achievements, he received a Letter of appreciation from USDA for PL-480 project (1965-70) and was Elected Fellow, Linnean Society of London (1974). Personally to me he was a pillar of strength and huge support, always advising and encouraging, the qualities for which I admired him all through my academic journey. He was on the expert panel when I was selected as Lecturer in 1986 and then Professor in 2004 in Punjabi University, Patiala. As a person, he was a simple, gentle and loveable human being with pleasing manners and firm ideals. Professor Garcha left for his heavenly abode on 20th March 2016 and with this India has lost one of the top mushroom scientists who worked tirelessly to popularize mushroom cultivation in India. Professor Garcha is survived by his wife (Mrs Narinder Kaur), a daughter, Dr. Seema Garcha, who is working as Assistant Microbiologist in the Department of Microbiology in the College of Basic Sciences and Humanities at P.A.U. Ludhiana and a son, Er. Gulraj Singh Garcha, who is working as Information Technology Manager with the State of California, Department of Insurance and settled in Saramento, USA. May God give enough strength and courage to the family members, close relatives, colleagues and friends to bear this irreparable loss and grant eternal peace to the departed noble soul.

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