

Prof. A.P. Misra Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award (2008-09)

Dr. Y. L. Nene

Yeshwant Laxman Nene was born in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh in 1936. He received his primary and secondary education in the same city. He did his undergraduate education in agriculture at Gwalior and post-graduate education in plant pathology at the Agricultural College, Kanpur. He received his B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in 1955 and 1957 from Agra University (Uttar Pradesh, India) to which the colleges at Gwalior and Kanpur were affiliated. He pursued his advanced education in plant pathology at the University of Illinois and was awarded the PhD degree by the University of Illinois, USA in 1960 for his work on plant viruses.

He started his professional career in 1960 as Assistant Professor and the founder of the Department of Plant Pathology, UP Agricultural University [now GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology (GPAU&T)], Pantnagar, Uttar Pradesh, India. He served as the first Professor and Head of the same Department from 1969 to 1974. In 1974, he was invited to join International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India as Principal Plant Pathologist. Later in 1980, he became Leader, Pulses Research and in 1986, the Program Director, Legumes. In 1989, he was appointed the Deputy Director General of ICRISAT, a position that he held till he voluntarily opted to prematurely retire in 1996 to devote full time to the Asian Agri-History Foundation.

Dr. Nene, while working at GPAU&T, solved the mystery of *khaira* disease of rice and established that it was caused by zinc deficiency, and also pioneered systemic research on viral diseases of pulses. At ICRISAT, he solved the mystery of "wilt complex" of chickpea (gram) and developed multiple-disease resistance-screening techniques and disease-resistant varieties of pulses. He supervised the research of 26 M.Sc. and Ph.D. students and inspired many a young students and scientists. He has communicated more than 500 scientific publications, including research and scientific articles, books "Fungicides in Plant Disease Control" and "The Pigeonpea", and an excellent pictorial bulletin "Tomato Disorders: Identification Handbook".

Dr. Nene received several awards/honors, notably being the International Rice Research Prize by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in 1967; Shri Om Prakash Bhasin Award in Science and Technology in 1992; the Indian Society of Pulses Research and Development (ISPRD) Award in 1994; ISPRD Gold Medal in 2001; Honorary Doctor of Science degree by GPAU&T, Pantnagar in 1991; and a few others. He is a Fellow of many professional societies including the American Phytopathological Society. He delivered the prestigious

Glen Anderson Lecture in the Plenary Session of the International Congress of Plant Pathology in Montreal, Canada.

He has traveled to more than 60 countries for professional work and is recognized internationally as a stalwart in agriculture, a leader in grain legumes research, and authority in pulses pathology. The Indian Society of Mycology and Plant Pathology, Udaipur, India has instituted a Medal in the name of Dr Nene, which is annually given to recognized outstanding Plant Pathology teacher in India.



It was during his student days at the University of Illinois, USA and during the teaching and research career at the agricultural university in Pantnagar, India that Dr. Nene developed an interest in the history of Indian agriculture. This interest was further strengthened during his research and management career at ICRISAT. Through the readings of the old agricultural literature, he developed good understanding of the importance of available information and its relevance to the present-day agriculture. He was amazed to realize the soundness of our agricultural heritage, which was not even mentioned in agricultural books including the modern western ones. He also realized that the Indian scientists and students were unaware of our rich agricultural heritage.

It was on 30 December 1994 that he established the AAHF and a Trust, the Asian Agri-History Foundation Trust (AAHFT) with one staff member to manage its activities. He was whole-heartedly and unanimously elected as the first Chairman of the AAHFT. And it was in December 1996 that Dr. Nene took early, voluntary retirement from ICRISAT to devote full time to his passion and to the affairs of the Foundation as its Chairman as well as the Managing Editor of the Journal, Asian Agri-History. After over a decade now that the activities of AAHF are fully managed and whole-heartedly supported by Dr. Nene in collaboration with and support of all the AAHF trustees. Dr. Nene has thus prepared a solid base of this important mission to serve the Indian agricultural heritage as the foundation for future research and development in agriculture.

During the last 14 years, under the leadership of Dr. Nene, the AAHF has published Sanskrit, old Kannada, Malayalam and Persian translations into English (with commentaries on modern relevance of farming techniques) of 8 ancient and medieval classics, 2 books, and 6 conference proceedings.

Considering his unparalleled contribution in the field of Plant Pathology, Prof. Y.L. Nene has been honoured with Prof. A.P. Misra Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award by Indian Phytopathological Society for the year 2008-09.