
Obituary

Dr Bhagabat Panda

16th March 1929 – 16th December 2016



Dr Bhagabat Panda was an internationally renowned scientist specialising in the field of poultry science and nutrition. His expertise in these areas is reflected by his significant contributions both in the public and private sectors of poultry science in India and abroad. Bhagabat Panda was born on March 16, 1929 in Orissa, India. He obtained his Bachelor of Veterinary Science Honours degree in 1953, together with the Best All-Rounder Award from Bombay Veterinary College. He worked for the Orissa Department of Animal Husbandry and Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology, before joining the University of Maryland at College Park, USA, for his postgraduate studies. He received his MSc in 1960 and PhD in 1963 from the University of Maryland. His postgraduate work on vitamin A nutrition and resistance to coccidiosis infection received international acclaim by the feed industry and poultry scientists.

Following a brief assignment on behalf of the government of Venezuela, he returned to India in 1963 to be appointed Scientific Officer at the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore, India. Here he developed six technological processes in the areas of egg preservation and the utilisation of agro-industrial products. These were released to the industry by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research for commercial exploitation.

In 1969 Dr Panda moved from CFTRI to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Izatnagar, as head of the Division of Poultry Research. His planning, contributions and achievements at IVRI, brought international repute to the poultry science education and industry. Under the auspices of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) project, he transformed the Division of Poultry Research into a 'Centre of Excellence' in Poultry Science - the first of its kind in the country. In 1972, he was awarded the UNDP fellowship and visited poultry science research and educational institutions in many nations including France, USSR, UK, USA, Canada, Japan, Scotland and Australia.

Dr Panda developed different disciplines in poultry science in India, attracting postgraduate students to work for higher degrees from within and outside the country. His untiring efforts contributed to the establishment of separate poultry science departments and curricula in many agricultural universities and institutions in India. During these times, poultry science education grew in size and scope to keep pace with the developing industry and its need for qualified technical staff, hence it is not surprising that Dr Panda is popularly known as the 'Father of Poultry Education' in India. In 1970 when ICAR launched the All-India co-ordinated poultry breeding research projects for eggs and for poultry meat, aimed at making the country largely self-sufficient for stock, Dr Panda took on the additional responsibility of project co-ordinator. He made major contributions to establishing these projects and in planning and executing the breeding programmes.

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His dedication to poultry research, development and education was, in large measure, responsible for the 'upgrading' in 1979 of the Poultry Science Division at IVRI to the Central Avian Research Institute (CARI). He served as the Founder Director of this Institute from 1979 to 1990. Under Dr Panda's leadership CARI grew from strength to strength. It gained wide recognition and attracted a number of National Awards to the Institute and its Director for outstanding contributions to poultry science research, education and organisation. Under Dr Panda's leadership, CARI received the prestigious National Productivity Award in 1988 by the President of India.

As well as being an educator, examiner and technical expert, Dr Panda became closely involved in the appointment process for senior academic staff in food science and poultry science at most agricultural universities in India. Amongst Dr Panda's other achievements are the publication of 320 research papers together with six textbooks on poultry science and a number of technical bulletins and popular articles. For a number of years he was the Editor-in-chief of the Indian Journal of Poultry Science and a member of the Editorial Board of the World's Poultry Science Journal. In addition to identifying and helping to preserve and utilise indigenous domestic fowl germ plasm, Dr Panda was largely responsible for the introduction and popularisation of Japanese quail in India and helped to develop systems of production for guinea fowl.

In 1965, together with a few poultry scientist colleagues, Dr Panda founded the Indian Poultry Science Association. He led this organisation as President for 15 years. Since 1962 Dr Panda has been a Life Member of the World's Poultry Science Association (WPSA) and was a founder member of the WPSA India Branch. He played a prominent role in the organisation of the 20th Poultry Congress, and particularly its scientific programme. During the 20th World Poultry Congress held in New Delhi India on September 4, 1996, the World's Poultry Science Association elected Dr Panda to the 'International Poultry Hall of Fame' to recognise his contributions made in the field of poultry research, education and extension.

During his professional career spanning 35 years, Dr Panda witnessed eventful and turbulent periods of the transformation of the Indian poultry industry from a backyard activity to a modern, sophisticated and sustainable industrial enterprise. His contributions to the Indian poultry industry were well-appreciated. In 2001, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from WPSA. In 2009, the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (D.Sc.) to Dr Panda for his contributions to the development of poultry science research and education. After his retirement, Dr Panda resided in Bhubaneswar, India with his wife, Saraswati. It was not surprising that, even in retirement, Dr Panda continued to be active in promoting the causes of research, education and organization in the poultry industry. On December 16th, 2016, Dr Panda passed away in Bhubaneswar, due to health related issues. He was 87 years old and is survived by his wife, Saraswati Panda, four daughters, sons-in law, four grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

The WPSA Board and Editorial Office would like to express their thanks for Dr Panda's support over the years and extend their sympathies to his family.