



H. C. Joshi





# AMAR CHAND JOSHI

(1908-1971)

Elected Fellow 1938

## BIRTH & EARLY EDUCATION

AMAR CHAND JOSHI was born on September 18, 1908 at Bahadurpur, a suburb of Hoshiarpur in Punjab. His father Dr. Ram Kishan Joshi, was employed as a Sub Assistant Surgeon in the Medical Department of the Punjab Government. Dr. Ram Kishan Joshi was a staunch Arya Samajist who believed in strict discipline.

Amar Chand suffered from trachoma but in spite of that he passed the Matriculation examination in first division in 1924 and was recipient of a merit scholarship. The author first became acquainted with him in 1924 when the both joined the FSc (Medical) class in the Forman Christian College, Lahore. Another link between them was that both came from Hoshiarpur District. Amar Chand Joshi was hard-working, intelligent and very early showed his interest in botany, which became his special subject.

In 1926, Amar Chand joined the BSc Honours School in Botany in Government College, Lahore. He became a great favourite of Professor Shiv Ram Kashyap who was the Head of the Department on account of his interest in angiosperms. Professor Kashyap used to take his students on hiking tours to the Himalayas during the summer vacations. Thus his students came to know the mountains of the Himalayas and their flora intimately. Whenever we came across an unfamiliar plant we all made efforts to identify it. Where everyone else failed, Joshi was the person who would give the correct name of the plant and also its family, and thus won admiration of the Professor and the envy of his fellow students who were jealous of his knowledge of flowering plants. By patient hard work and study he developed an unrivalled knowledge of the flora of northern India. He passed his BSc (Honours) in first division in 1929, winning a university scholarship, and MSc in 1930 in first division topping the list.

## HIGHER EDUCATION & SERVICE CAREER

After completion of his Master's, while some of the students tried their *Indian Civil Service*, Joshi firmly stuck to his first love, botany. He joined as a Demonstrator in Botany in Punjab University, Lahore, in 1930 and continued there till 1931





There he wrote the '*Flora of Lahore*' which is still consulted by the students of botany in Punjab on both sides of the border.

#### *UP Assignments*

In 1931 he joined as Assistant Professor in Banaras Hindu University and later became Professor. On his return from England in 1934 after the probationary period for the Indian Civil Service, the author too was assigned to Uttar Pradesh. In 1936, when he was posted as Assistant Collector at Faizabad they renewed their friendship. Joshi was a frequent visitor to Faizabad, Allahabad, Almora and Rae Bareilly, places where he was posted. As the author was collecting and studying algae from the ponds and fresh-water streams of these districts, he had to rely on his own resources for research. He built a modest laboratory in his home and Joshi kept him up-to-date with recent developments in research by providing him reprints of papers as well as references.

At Banaras, Joshi developed an active school of research on anatomy of Angiosperms. He got his DSc in 1937. He was author of about 100 research papers in the various fields of botany, such as anatomy, embryology, morphology, cytology and systematic botany, which were published in leading botanical journals of India, the UK, and the USA. Not only was he an indefatigable research worker himself but also provided inspiration to his students a number of whom got PhDs under him.

#### *Assignments in Punjab*

Somehow, we always happened to keep together in our assignments. In 1945 when the author came to Delhi as Secretary of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, Joshi joined as an editor of the Dictionary of Economic Products under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. In the same year he was selected as Professor of Botany of Government College and Director of the Punjab University Botanical Laboratory, Lahore, where he continued till the partition of 1947 drove him to Delhi along with his family. At that time the author happened to be the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, and Joshi and his family members along with numerous other refugees were living with him.

Punjab was in confusion and educational institutions were dispersed in a number of towns. The new Botanical Laboratory was located at Government College, Hoshiarpur where Joshi joined as Professor of Botany at the close of 1947. Professor Joshi continued in Hoshiarpur till 1951. In that year he was appointed Principal of the Government Training College for Teachers at Jullundur. In 1953 he joined as Director of Public Instruction and Secretary to the Punjab Government and continued in that capacity till 1957.





*Father of Punjab University*

In 1957 he got the greatest opportunity of his life when he was appointed as Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University. With single-minded determination and great sense of dedication he started building up the new campus of the university. Mr P Jeanneret was the Chief Architect of the campus and was assisted by BP Mathur, Senior Architect. Both these persons worked in close collaboration with Joshi who examined all the building plans in great detail and gave many helpful suggestions. The result of this collaboration was the beautiful campus of the University at Chandigarh which has won admiration of educationists from all over the world. If any person can validly claim to be the father of this University, it is AC Joshi.

On February 1, 1960, on account of excessive work he developed a heart ailment. However, he methodically mastered this handicap and adjusted his diet and work in such a manner that he continued active work in the field of education.

Dr. Joshi was internationally known as an educationist and he travelled widely in Europe and the USA and also visited Mexico and South America.

*At Planning Commission, Delhi*

He left Punjab University in June 1965, and joined as Adviser for Education in the Planning Commission in July 1965 where he continued till August 1967. This was a highly creative period for him and his advice was eagerly sought by scientists and educationists. He made a keen and intimate study of the educational problems of the country and his ideas and suggestions made an impact on the development of education and science.

*Banaras Strain*

In September 1967 he very unwisely accepted the Vice-Chancellorship of Banaras Hindu University. This was an unfortunate choice for him for on account of his heart ailment he was exposed to great strain and there is little doubt that it shortened his valuable life. However, he heroically continued to grapple with the problems of this difficult university till September 1969 and showed great moral courage in curbing student indiscipline in a place where it had become endemic.

In hours of hard work and crisis, his wife Mrs Sumitra Joshi was a great source of help and inspiration to him. His son, Arun Joshi is the Executive Director, Sri Ram Centre for Industrial and Human Relations. He is the youngest novelist of India and has won many awards for his literary work. His advice as a business administrator is greatly sought by many institutions. His talented daughters Saroj and Shashi, loved him dearly. His happy family life contributed in no small measure to his success as an administrator and scholar.





**ASSOCIATION WITH LEARNED BODIES**

Dr. Joshi was a member of Administrative Board and Central Advisory Board of Education of National Council of Education Research and Training, Advisory Board ICAR; Council of Commonwealth Universities Association; Fellow and Member Executive Council, (later Vice-President in 1963) National Institute of Sciences of India; Honorary member Asiatic Society of Bengal; Member, Govt. of India Committee for Location of High Altitude Research Laboratories; President (Botany Section in 1946) and General President of Indian Science Congress Association (in 1969); Chairman, Science Committee, World Confederation of the Organizations of Teaching Profession at Washington (1964-66); President, North Indian Science Association. He was master and founder planner of the Panjab University campus. He appointed talented and meritorious staff and had a plan to build the university as International University.

He was a keen researcher and Botanist of repute nationally and internationally and had published more than 100 original research papers in Journals of repute in India and abroad. He had guided several Ph.D. scholars and was member of board of Editors of leading Botanical Journals in India. He had widely travelled in Europe, USA, Mexico, South America, Canada, Australia and Japan. He was internationally known as Educationist and a Scientist and was planning to have his own institute of Education.

**LAST DAYS**

Since his retirement from Banaras University he lived in his home in Chandigarh. His advice was eagerly sought by Vice-Chancellor Bishan Singh Samundri for the development of Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar which he frequently visited. In fact, he had gone on an advisory visit to Amritsar on Sunday, February 14, 1971 when on returning, greatly exhausted, he expired at 8 p.m. He was cremated on February 15, 1971. Among those who attended his funeral were the staff and students of Punjab University, Judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Directors of Public Institutions of Punjab and Haryana, Principals of the local colleges and the Director and a few Doctors of the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research. The wreaths were placed on the body of Dr. Joshi by the Governor of Punjab, Dr. D.C. Pavate, Dr. Tulsi Das and Dr. Santokh Singh, former Directors of the PGI, Mr. H.R. Bhatia, former Chairman of the Punjab State Electricity Board, Mr. Bishan Singh Samundri, Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, Mr. Amrik Singh, Registrar of Punjabi University, Dr. P.S. Gill, Director of the Central Scientific Instruments Organisation, Dr. P.N. Chutani, Director of the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Mr. V.S. Mathur, Mrs. G. Parampal Singh, Director of Public





Instruction, Punjab, Mrs. H.M. Dhillon, DPI, Chandigarh, Mr. P.L. Verma, former Chief Engineer of Punjab, Principal O.P. Sharma, and Principals of various colleges and Mr. K.L. Malhotra, Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University.

“Dr. A.C. Joshi is now dead but not gone. He will live for ever in the hearts of practising school science teachers in the country, and of countless others. Like Prof. Armstrong in Britain in the beginning of this century, he alerted the nation regarding our backwardness in school science education. It is not widely known that he began to advocate new ferments in science education even before the Russian sputnik had gone into space. He gave a respectable status to the science teachers by organising the All-India Science Teachers' Association in 1956.

“He saw their problems clearly and initiated the Science Club Movement in the country on a large scale. He discovered talent where he could find it in the country. Even in his retirement, he was in search of young people who could contribute voluntarily to science education. In qualitative set up, he rejected firmly the hierarchical principle of excellence. About four days back, he rang me up to come to his place in connection with the writing of a book. Much to my discomfiture, he talked passionately, while standing on his legs for about two hours, of the unfinished business in science education. He was deeply involved in the problems of a Science Community Centre at Chandigarh, recognition of the critical role of science teachers in developing experimental curricula, strengthening the voice of science teachers by a forum like the Vigyan Shikshak, personnel of the State Institutes of Science Education in the country and research in science education. He was snatched away too soon. The National Science Teachers' Association feels orphaned.”

He belonged to that generation of Indians—a generation that is perhaps, quickly disappearing—that took up work for the sake of work itself and performed it with the most rigorous commitment. It was because of this, more than anything else, that he took up assignments that promised no visible rewards.

He was the most giving of teachers and a most loyal friend. His friendships extended not to a restricted class—academic or social—but over a spectrum that ranged over all walks of life. More than most, he would be missed by those hundreds of young men who were at one time or another associated with him; as students, on botanical expeditions, as members of the faculty and those numerous others who cannot thus be classified and who were attracted to him by his gentleness.

In an age characterized increasingly by opportunism he carried his life by those uncompromisable values that have characterized the best of Indian civilisation down the ages.

Dr. Joshi deserved the highest honour which his country could confer as a renowned botanist and educationist and as builder of the most modern university





campus, Punjab University, Chandigarh. However, with all the qualities he possessed, he had too much integrity of thought and action to kow-tow to politicians. and thus he had no place in the rat race. He was always cool and calm and never allowed his judgement to be coloured by passions of politics and religion. He was fair-minded and had a sense of justice. That is why he managed to select highly talented people for the professorships which he created. He will be long remembered by his friends and students as a great Indian and a great son of Punjab. His memory should be perpetuated by building a suitable memorial in his honour in Punjab University, Chandigarh, which he built up from scratch, and also in Guru Nanak Dev University whose development he fostered by his mature advice.

MS RANDHAWA

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