

Obituary

Padma Kant Shukla 1950–2013

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Professor Padma Kant Shukla passed away on the 26th of January in New Delhi, India, just after receiving the prestigious Hind Rattan (Jewel of India) Award. He was born in the village Tulapur, Uttar Pradesh (UP), India and was educated there. After his Ph.D. in Physics from Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, he obtained his second doctorate degree in Theoretical Plasma Physics from Umea University under the supervision of one of us (Lennart Stenflo). He worked at the Faculty of Physics & Astronomy, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany since January 1973, where he was a permanent faculty member and Professor of International Affairs, a position that was created for him to honour his international accomplishments and reputation. Padma was a great friend, colleague and collaborator. He was passionate about science and had an infectious enthusiasm that touched everyone who knew him. Padma was an inspiration to those around him and was responsible for discovering and mentoring young scientific talents around the world – national borders were no barriers when it came to scientific collaborations. For this he was honoured with the 2005 APS Nicholson Medal for Human Outreach by the American Physical Society. Padma also received the prestigious 2006 Gay-Lussac/Humboldt Prize from the French Ministry of Education and Research. He is the First Laureate of the 22nd Khwarizmi International Award from the IROST, Iran. Padma was undoubtedly one of the world's most renowned plasma physicists. He pioneered and developed many plasma physics topics that we are researching on today. He had wide ranging research interests in multidisciplinary sciences including basic and nonlinear physics, nonlinear geophysical flows, atmospheric physics and environmental sciences. He was a prodigious publisher with more than 1500 authored papers and is one of the most cited plasma physicists. His list of honorary appointments are impressive and include visiting professorships at the Department of Physics, Umea University, Sweden and at the Scottish

Universities Physics Alliance (SUPA) Department of Physics, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland (UK), as well as a full professorship at GoLP/Centre for Plasma Physics and Nuclear Fusion, IST, Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal, an honorary professorship at the School of Physics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa, a distinguished adjunct professorship at COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad, Pakistan, and an adjunct professorship at National Physics Centre, Islamabad, Pakistan. He has honorary doctorates from the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow and the Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal. In addition, he is Fellow of the American Physical Society, Fellow of the Institute of Physics (UK), and Corresponding Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (Scotland, UK), a Foreign Member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, and an Associate Member of the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (Trieste, Italy). Padma was a powerful character, and an extraordinary worker, motivating people around him. He used to say "You are born to carry out your work, without hoping to be rewarded". And also: "Do not forget your roots, but adopt the society in which you live". His homeland was Germany and Europe, which he adopted and where he worked. He was honoured by many universities and scientific organisations around the globe. He was not only an excellent teacher and mentor, but was also conscious of giving something back. Since 1989, Padma was co-organiser of the plasma physics activities (Summer Colleges and Workshops in Plasma Physics) at the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics, Trieste (Italy). At the centre, he interacted with young scientists from all over the world, encouraging them to work on new ideas. This gained him respect from all generations for his vision and imagination. We have lost not only a great scientist but a dear friend. He is survived by his wife Ranjana and sons Prashant, Predhiman and Pushpesh.