

Report on the XXXV Annual Conference of the Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy (IAAT) and the International Symposium on Global Perspectives in Angiosperm Systematics, Traditional Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation

The XXXV Annual Conference of the Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy (IAAT) and the International Symposium on 'Global Perspectives in Angiosperm Systematics, Traditional Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation' was organized by the St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Devagiri, Kozhikode, Kerala, from 21–23 November 2025, in collaboration with IAAT and co-organized by the Malabar Botanical Garden and Institute for Plant Sciences (MBGIPS-KSCSTE), Kozhikode. Commemorating the Coral Jubilee of IAAT, the event brought together over 450 delegates, including participants from 17 states and 6 countries, who presented across 11 scientific themes and 10 award categories. The conference also featured distinguished national and international experts who delivered keynote and plenary lectures.

The inaugural ceremony was presided over by Rev. Dr. Biju John Vellakada CMI, Provincial, St. Thomas Province, Kozhikode. The program began with the Prayer, followed by ceremonial lighting of the lamp. Dr. Fr. Biju Joseph, The Principal, St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Devagiri welcomed the delegates and the participants. Prof. Santhosh Nampy, Secretary, Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy briefed about the conference and the objectives and functioning of IAAT. Dr. D. Narasimhan, the President of Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy highlighted the importance of taxonomy in India and the hurdles faced by

the taxonomists in India. The conference was officially inaugurated by Prof. P. Raveendran, Vice Chancellor, University of Calicut. The senior members of IAAT, Prof. Sunil K. Chaturvedi, Prof. V.S. Ramachandran, Dr. Maria Emilia Mascarenhas, and Prof. Debjyoti Dr. Debjyoti Bhattacharyya, the organizing secretary of XXXIV Annual Conference of IAAT were honoured. The release of the Abstract Book was carried out by the Chief Guest, who formally handed it over to the dignitaries on the dais.

The first technical session of the conference featured the presidential address by Dr. D. Narasimhan, the president of IAAT who highlighted deep concerns about the current state of plant taxonomy in India, where outdated classifications, poor research practices, and an excessive focus on publishing new species have weakened the quality and credibility of taxonomic work. He emphasized that many Indian taxonomists continue to rely on old systems, produce inadequate analytical studies, and follow questionable publication ethics, leading to global criticism and frequent synonymy of newly described species. Dr. Mathew Dan delivered the Prof. Y.D. Tiagi Gold Medal Award Lecture, while Dr. Anzar Ahmad Khuroo delivered Prof. V.V. Sivarajan Gold Medal Award Lecture. Dr. Michael Möller, Royal Botanical Garden, Edinburgh delivered the Prof. Chavali Kameswara Rao Endowment Lecture and shared his A journey through the systematics of the family Gesneriaceae. Dr. C. Sathish Kumar delivered



Prof. P. Raveendran, Vice Chancellor, University of Calicut inaugurating the Conference by lighting the lamp.



Prof. P. Raveendran, Vice Chancellor, University of Calicut delivering the inaugural address.



The release of the abstract book of XXXV Annual Conference of IAAT.



Dr. Mathew Dan receiving the Prof. Y.D. Tiagi Gold Medal Award.

the Prof. K. S. Manilal Memorial Lecture, fondly recalling and honouring the monumental contributions of Prof. K. S. Manilal to plant taxonomy in India. He highlighted Prof. Manilal's pioneering work, his unwavering commitment to floristic research, and his transformative role in shaping modern taxonomic practices in the country. The lecture served as a heartfelt tribute to a visionary taxonomist whose legacy continues to inspire generations of botanists.

The conference included oral and poster presentations under the following eleven themes:

1. Advances in Angiosperm Systematics
2. Molecular Phylogenetics and DNA Barcoding
3. Floristic Diversity and Biogeography
4. Ethnobotany and Indian Traditional Knowledge
5. Biodiversity Conservation
6. Climate Change and Plant Adaptation

7. Digital Taxonomy and AI Applications in Botany
8. Economic Botany and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Resources
9. Plant-Animal Interactions in Ecosystem Dynamics
10. Phytochemical Studies and Bioactive Compounds
11. Microscopy in Taxonomy and Structural Botany

Over 450 delegates participated in the conference, and around 265 high-quality papers and posters were presented. The event was further enriched by the presence of distinguished international experts, including Dr. Michael Möller (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, UK), Dr. Masahiro Kato (Japan), Dr. Mark A. Spencer (UK), Prof. Deepthi Yakandawala (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka), Dr. Kanchi N. Gandhi (Harvard University Herbaria, Cambridge, USA), and Dr.



Dr. Anzar Ahmad Khuroo receiving Prof. V.V. Sivarajan Gold Medal Award.

Róger Alonso Moya Roque (Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica), who were among the major highlights of the scientific sessions. Dr. Tiina Särkinen (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, UK) also joined as an expert for the panel discussion organized during the event.

Two panel discussions were organised as part of the conference. The first panel discussion, *'Bridging the Divide: Alpha to Omega – Molecular Systematics and Classical Taxonomy'*, featured eminent panellists including Prof. A.K. Pandey, Dr. M. Sanjappa, Prof. S.R. Yadav, Dr. Michael Möller, and Dr. Senthil Kumar Umapathi. The session offered deep insights into integrating classical taxonomy with modern molecular systematics. The second panel discussion, *'IAAT Grants and Funding Opportunities for Aspiring Indian Taxonomists'*, brought together distinguished experts such as Dr. Vinita Gowda, Dr. Ritesh Kumar Choudhary, and Dr. Vinod



Dr. Michael Möller, Royal Botanical Garden, Edinburgh delivered the Prof. Chavali Kameswara Rao Endowment Lecture.

Shimpale along with Dr. Tiina Särkinen (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, UK) represented International Association for Plant Taxonomy and Dr. Shilpi Paul represented the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF). This session provided valuable guidance on Indian and global funding avenues and support mechanisms for young Indian taxonomists.

The Executive Committee (EC) of IAAT met on 21 November 2025, followed by the General Body (GB) meeting on 22 November 2025. The conference also featured a vibrant cultural programme performed by the students of St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Devagiri, which added colour and charm to the event. In addition, a special meeting was convened during the conference to initiate discussions on bringing and organising the International Botanical Congress (IBC) in the year 2035. The meeting was



The participants of the XXXV Annual Conference of IAAT.



Dr. Kanad Das, Director, Botanical Survey of India, delivering the keynote address at the Valedictory Session.

coordinated by Dr. Vinita Gowda (IISER, Bhopal) and was attended by leading taxonomists from within the association as well as experts from other institutions.

Ten awards—namely the Prof. K.S. Manilal Award, Prof. R.S. Rao Award, Prof. T.R. Sahu Award, Fr. Antony Mukkath–Prof. K.S. Manilal Award, Prof. S.R. Yadav Award, S.M. & M.R. Almeida Award in Plant Nomenclature, Dr. A.K. Pradeep Young Researcher Award, Prof. A.K. Pandey Award for Revisionary Studies, Prof. Santhosh Nampy IAAT Young Scientist Award, and the Prof. M. Sabu Award for Scientists and Teachers—were presented at the annual conference for the best paper/poster by IAAT. The list of award categories and this year's awardees is given below.

1. **Prof. K.S. Manilal Award for best paper in Floristics (New Species/New Reports):** Arshad K. (University of Calicut)

2. **Prof. R.S. Rao Award for best paper in Biodiversity Conservation:** Haritha P. Bharathan (University of Calicut)

3. **Prof. T.R. Sahu Award for best paper in Medicinal Plant Systematics:** Arshi Fatima (National Botanical Garden and Research Institute, Lucknow)

4. **Prof. S.R. Yadav Award for best poster presentation:** Drisy V.V. (Govt. Brennen College, Thalassery)

5. **Fr. Antony Mukkath – Prof. K.S. Manilal Award for best paper in Modern Techniques in Plant Taxonomy:** Geetika Sukhramani (Agharkar Research Institute, Pune)

6. **S.M. Almeida & M.R. Almeida Award for Plant Nomenclature:** Ajay Mondal (Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata)

7. **Dr. A.K. Pradeep Young Researcher Award:** Anishkar Feroshwa Joy King (Madras Christian College, Chennai).

8. **Prof. M. Sabu Award for best paper in Angiosperm Taxonomy (for Teachers and Scientists):** Jayakrishnan T. (Government Arts and Science College for Women Malappuram)

9. **Prof. A.K. Pandey Award for Revisionary Studies:** Sandip Gavade (Dattajirao Kadam Arts, Science and Commerce College, Maharashtra)



The awardees of various sessions in XXXV Annual Conference of IAAT.

10. **Prof. Santhosh Nampy IAAT Young Scientist Award:** Akhil M.K. (Sidha Medicinal Plant Garden, Central Council for Research in Sidha, Mettur,)

In addition to the ten prestigious awards instituted by the association for various award categories, the Alumni Association of St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Devagiri has also instituted twelve additional awards to honour the best paper and poster presentations under the General Themes. The list of award categories and the awardees is given below.

1. **Rev. Fr. Theodosius Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 1. Advances in Angiosperm Systematics** instituted by Devagiri Alumni Research Foundation (DARF): Neenu Maria George (St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Devagiri, Kozhikode).
2. **Rev. Fr. S.H. Antony Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 2. Molecular Phylogenetics and DNA Barcoding** instituted by Devagiri Alumni Research Foundation (DARF): Aleena Xavier (Saryan Vigyan Foundation).
3. **Rev. Fr. Melanius Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 3. Floristic Diversity and Biogeography** instituted by Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya, former Principal, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam: Sunit Singh (University of Jammu).
4. **Rev. Fr. Isidore Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 4. Ethnobotany and Indian Traditional Knowledge** instituted by Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya, former Principal, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam: Pranjali Gaonkar (Goa University).
5. **Rev. Fr. Columbus Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 5. Biodiversity Conservation** instituted by Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya, former Principal, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam: Resmi S. (Botanical Survey of India, Coimbatore).
6. **Rev. Fr. Ivans Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 6. Climate Change and Plant Adaptation** instituted by Dr. C.J. Mani, former Head, Department of Botany: Krishnapriya M.P. (University of Calicut)
7. **Prof. Joseph Thomas Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 7. Digital Taxonomy and AI Applications in Botany** instituted by Dr. Azeez K., former Principal, PSMO College: Joby Paul (St. Thomas College (Autonomous), Thrissur)
8. **Rev. Fr. Joseph Paikada Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 8. Economic Botany and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Resources** instituted by Dr. C.J. Mani, former Head, Department of Botany: Thete K.G. (MVP SAMAJ'S K.R.T. Arts, B.H. Commerce and A.M. Science (KTHM) College, Nashik).
9. **Rev. Fr. Bennet Kurian Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 9. Plant Animal Interactions in Ecosystem Dynamics** instituted by Dr. C.J. Mani, former Head, Department of Botany: Vaishnavi K.P. (University of Calicut)
10. **Prof. Mathew Thamarakkad Memorial Award** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 10. Phytochemical Studies and Bioactive Compounds** instituted by Dr. Azeez K., former Principal, PSMO College: Govind M.G. (Christian College, Kattakada).
11. **Dr. Jose Marydas Memorial Award for Best Paper Presentation** for Best Paper Presentation in **Theme 11. Microscopy in Taxonomy and Structural Botany** instituted by Dr. Azeez K., former Principal, PSMO College: Jagdish Dalavi (Botanical Survey of India, Pune).
12. **Rev. Fr. Mathew Chalil Award** for Best Poster Presentation in General themes insti-

tuted by Devagiri Alumni Research Foundation (DARF): Deebika Kumar, Siddha Medicinal Plants Garden, Central Council for Research in Siddha, Mettur,

The fellowships of Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy (FIAAT) were conferred to Arun Prasanth R., Dani Francis, Devananthan K., Nilesh Appaso Madhav, Shruti Kasana and Sujit Kumar Ramanlal Prajapati.

The conference was funded by Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Kolakata, National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB), and Kerala State Council for Science, Technology & Education (KSCSTE).

Overall, the IAAT Conference 2025 successfully celebrated the Coral Jubilee of IAAT and served

as a vibrant platform for advancing research, fostering collaboration, and strengthening global perspectives in angiosperm taxonomy and biodiversity conservation. At the Valedictory Session, Dr. Kanad Das, Director, Botanical Survey of India, delivered the keynote address. Rev. Dr. Biju Joseph, Principal, St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Devagiri, presided over the session. Dr. Delse P. Sebastian welcomed the gathering, and Dr. D. Narasimhan, President of IAAT, along with Prof. Santhosh Nampy, Secretary, IAAT, addressed the audience. Dr. K. M. Manudev delivered the Vote of Thanks. The conference concluded with a one-day field visit to Wayanad, providing delegates with an enriching opportunity to explore the rich biodiversity of the region.

Manudev K.M.

Organizing secretary,
St. Joseph's College (Autonomous),
Devagiri, Kozhikode, Kerala