

OBITUARY



DR. ABDUS SATTAR
(1904-1991)

The death of a person is always a sad occasion but that of a great personality is a big shock, causing more trembling than an earthquake, particularly for those who have been closely associated with him. The sad demise on 5th March, 1991, of Dr. Abdus Sattar, the father of Plant Pathology in Pakistan, was greatly mourned by his pupils and his close associates.

Dr. Sattar was born on March 1, 1904, in a middle class Zamindar family of the village Mahaddipur, about 12 miles from Jullundar. He received his secondary education at the Mission High School Jullundar and then joined the Agricultural College and Research Institute, Lyallpur (now Faisalabad). He went through the mill of academic career with flying colours, winning merit scholarships, first positions, gold and silver medals, honours and distinctions in various degrees. He was selected for a 2 year post-graduate training and obtained IARI Diploma from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa. In 1930 he went to Imperial College of Science and Technology, London where he worked with Professor William Brown on the occurrence, perpetuation and control of gram blight caused by *Ascochyta rabie* and obtained the Ph.D. degree in 1932. Dr. Sattar has been involved in the development of a solar energy seed treatment method for the control of loose smut of wheat. Gram cultivars F8, C12/34, C62-18 which showed resistance to gram blight were given for large scale cultivation. Dr. Sattar has also made significant contributions in studies on sugarcane mosaic and smut, citrus and mango anthracnose, root and stem rot of tobacco, flag smut of wheat, etc. Dr. Sattar received the D.Sc. degree from the University of London in 1953.

After his brilliant academic success, Dr. Sattar joined the *Alma mater* as a Plant Pathologist and later on served in many capacities including the Principal of the Institute. His heart was always in research and he never liked an administrative job. He

was an outstanding researcher, always linking the plant disease control with crop husbandry to make it worthy of farm application. This was due to a happy marriage between his agricultural background and the scientific knowledge he had acquired.

Dr. Sattar had a unique approach to both teaching and research. He created the student's self interest in the work without imposing his will. He threw suggestions but never gave the orders. He was not an officer but a well wisher and a friend. When I joined M. Sc., I asked him how did he formulate experiments. He told that if you had a research instinct you would learn the art in six months time, and if not he would advise me to quit research. He also induced me to do Ph.D inspite of difficult political situation. He loaded me with all types of research work and extramural duties. When I returned to Pakistan in 1948 after obtaining my second Ph.D degree from London, I joined my original post of Research Assistant. He was worried about my possible frustration. I assured him that I was planning to write a review book on Plant Pathological Researches to overcome the unpleasant situation. He was very happy. When I left him after 15 years of association he had tears in his eyes. I was not the only favourite person but each of his pupil has a similar story to tell. When I went to Dr. Ram Lal's house in New Delhi for a lunch, he said to his wife, "Look who comes to our house, the first student of my honourable teacher, who virtually forced the M.Sc. degree on me although I tried to quit studies many a time. Without him I would not have been here". It is an example of a non Muslim student. This is a brief narration of Dr. Sattar's dedication and greatness.

After retirement, Dr. Sattar involved himself in farming and also served on various important committees apart from advising his old associates. In 1986 when I presented him a copy of my book on "PLANT DISEASES" which was dedicated to him, he had tears of joy in his eyes and said " I am proud of you and you have acquitted yourself most creditably".

Dr. Sattar was an outstanding example of self made intellectual but simple personality, who imported light of knowledge to his many disciples to carry forward his noble mission. Many of them occupied high positions in their career.

Dr. Sattar has left behind five sons (the eldest is a Major General in the Army) and a host of his students. May God Almighty bless his soul and give fortitude to his family members and students to endure the irreparable loss which is not only personal but national too (Amen).

(ABDUL HAFIZ)