

Obituary

Dr. Amarjit Singh Soodan (1 September 1959–21 November 2025): A renowned Botanist, taxonomist and mentor



Amarjit Singh Soodan, one of the renowned botanists of India and a distinguished authority in plant taxonomy and phytolith research, passed away peacefully at his residence in Alpha International City, Daburji, Amritsar, on 21 November 2025. He was 66 years old and is survived by his wife and two children. His passing marks the end of a distinguished era in the botanical community of North India, where he inspired generations of students, researchers and colleagues through his scholarship, humility and unwavering commitment to the discipline of botany.

Dr. Soodan completed both his M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Botany at the University of Jammu, laying the foundation for a research career deeply rooted in plant systematics. His academic training shaped

his lifelong dedication to understanding the taxonomy, diversity and evolutionary structures of grasses, one of the most ecologically significant groups of plants. During his doctoral years, he cultivated expertise in both classical taxonomy and microscopic analytical techniques, skills that would later define much of his scientific legacy.

Dr. Soodan served for decades at Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar, where he held the position of Associate Professor in the Department of Botanical & Environmental Sciences. He started his career as Curator of the University Botanical Garden. In this role, he played a central part in the development, maintenance and academic utilization of the garden as a teaching and research facility. At Guru Nanak Dev University, he taught plant taxonomy, systematics and biodiversity studies, earning widespread reputation as an exceptionally dedicated teacher. His field excursions, herbarium training sessions and garden-based practical demonstrations were appreciated by students for their clarity, depth and hands-on rigor.

A well-known botanist across India, Dr. Soodan specialized in “Grass Systematics and Phytolith research”, becoming one of the leading experts in these fields. His meticulous work on the taxonomy of Himalayan and Punjab grasses, combined with advanced phytolith (plant silica bodies) studies, contributed significantly to both modern systematics and paleoecological reconstruction.

Over the course of his career, he authored more than 80 research articles in reputed national and international journals. His widely cited and referenced publications include

taxonomic evaluations of Poaceae (grasses), micromorphological and Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) studies of plant silica bodies, investigations of diagnostic phytolith morphotypes in roots, culms, leaves and inflorescences, as well as floristic and ecological surveys across the North-Western Himalayas and Punjab. Through this extensive body of work, he significantly contributed to species delimitation, enriched herbarium collections, and developed valuable diagnostic tools for research in taxonomy, archaeobotany and environmental sciences.

Dr. Soodan was a mentor in the truest sense, supervising 10 M.Phil. and 10 Ph.D. scholars, many of whom now hold distinguished academic, administrative and research positions across India. His students fondly remember his patience in guiding them through complex identifications, his insistence on clear and rigorous research methodology, his passion for fieldwork and herbarium curation. Equally admired was his willingness to support students even beyond office hours. His enduring legacy is reflected not only in the scientific competence of the scholars but also in the professional ethics and dedication he instilled in them.

Beyond his role as a teacher and guide, Dr. Soodan was associated with several botanical societies,

participated actively in national conferences and workshops, and contributed to collaborative research projects related to taxonomy, biodiversity assessment and environmental studies. His expertise in specialized plant groups made him a sought-after resource person for academic evaluations, thesis committees, and botanical surveys.

Beyond academics, Dr. Soodan will be remembered for his gentle nature, humility, and generosity of spirit. He had an uncommon ability to balance scientific precision with warmth and compassion. Colleagues often remarked on his calm demeanor, his willingness to share knowledge, and the dignity with which he conducted both his personal and professional life.

The botanical community of India has lost an extraordinary scholar — a man whose contribution to grass taxonomy, phytolith systematics and botanical education will endure in scientific literature, herbaria, and in the minds of those he mentored.

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