

Obituary: Professor Ashok K. Prasad (1961–2023)

Professor Ashok K. Prasad was born on 2nd October 1961, in a very moderate family of Anant Prasad and Anasuya Devi in a village Madhubani Ashram, East Champaran, Bihar. He completed his Secondary education in 1977 and Senior Secondary education in 1979 from Muzaffarpur, Bihar. He completed his higher education B.Sc. and M.Sc. from Langat Singh College, Muzaffarpur, Bihar in 1981 and 1983, respectively. Later, he joined the University of Delhi for his M.Phil. and Ph.D. under the supervision of Professor A. C. Jain (Cantab., D.Sc., Bhatnagar Awardee). He earned his doctoral degree in the area of bioactive polyphenolic natural products from the University of Delhi (1990) and joined the department (Department of Chemistry, University of Delhi) as a reader of organic chemistry in September 2001 after spending about a decade as a post-doctoral fellow/visiting scientist at internationally well-reputed laboratories. During his career, he worked as a Post-doctoral Researcher/Fellow/Visiting Scientist in numerous foreign universities and institutes, such as the University of Southern Denmark (Odense, Denmark), University of Copenhagen (Copenhagen, Denmark), Max-Planck Institute for Molecular Physiology (Dortmund, Germany), La Sapienza University of Rome (Rome, Italy), and University of Massachusetts, Lowell (USA). In June 2009, he became a full Professor at the University of Delhi. He served in the position of Head of the Department of Chemistry (2021–2023) and Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of Delhi. He was an eminent and renowned scientist, who was well-known for his research work in the field of carbohydrate chemistry and nucleoside chemistry. He was a splendid teacher and a motivating mentor. He was a courteous, supportive, and respectful human being who was appreciated and admired by his colleagues, subordinates, and students.

Professor Ashok Prasad significantly explored a diverse field of chemical sciences where his main research interests were the synthesis of sugar-PEG-based amphiphiles as novel carrier agents, nucleotide and nucleic acid chemistry particularly modified nucleoside monomers for therapeutic oligonucleotide synthesis, biocatalysis/biotransformations, natural product chemistry, and synthesis of bioactive heterocyclic compounds and also the development of sugar-based chiral crown ethers for host-guest chemistry.

During his research work, he has collaborated with numerous national and international funding agencies, such as the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), India; Danish International Development Agency, Denmark (DANIDA); Danish National Research Foundation, Denmark (DNRF); National Institute of Health, USA (NIH); German Research Foundation, Germany (DFG); Department of Science and Technology, India (DST); Department of Biotechnology, India (DBT); Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany; Government of Italy, Italy; Canadian Institute of Health Research, Canada; Natural Science and Engineering Research, Canada; Swedish Research Council, Sweden, etc.



Professor Prasad supervised 32 Ph.D. students and published more than 280 research papers in peer-reviewed international and national journals of high repute (7200 citations, with an h-index: 40, i-10 index: 153) in addition to the 13 patents to his name. He presented over 250 research posters and delivered more than 150 invited lectures. He initiated collaboration with Wiley and was the original guest editor for the collection. He was the Associate Editor for journals, like Biocatalysis & Biotransformations (Taylor & Francis), Editor for Trends in Carbohydrate Research (ACCTI Journal), Guest editor for a special issue of Biochemie (Elsevier), and Indian Journal of Chemistry (CSIR, New Delhi). He successfully organized many International and National conferences/ symposia in the Department.

Professor Ashok K Prasad has lived a life that was a testimony to the power of love, sympathy, and resilience. He faced life's challenges with unvacillating courage, and his unwavering determination inspired everybody around him and beyond. He showed us all, the ACCT(I) family, the importance of compassion, generosity, and the value of human connections. He was the recipient of many nationally and internationally renowned awards. His untimely demise has caused an irreparable loss to the Association of Carbohydrate Chemists and Technologists, India (ACCTI), the University of Delhi, and the organic chemistry community. We have lost one of the best supportive and caring human beings.