

To
The Editor
Bulletin of the Botanical Survey of India
Kolkata.

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

This writer is closely associated with two scientific societies, namely **Society of Ethnobotanists (SEB)** and **Association for Plant Taxonomy (APT)** since their foundation. Both societies have recently initiated two new activities. Publication of Scholastic Genealogies was started last year, and this year Mentor-Mentee Programme is being initiated.

During talks with some members of these societies, I got an impression that some points about objectives and procedures of these activities needed elaboration. These two activities are quite different; and perhaps the only commonality is the use of the term mentor in some western countries for the guide of Ph.D. research.

Scholastic Genealogies (SG): The term genealogy here means academic inheritance or the chain of research guide and students who got doctoral degrees. The word scholastic is adjectival form of the word scholar. We know that some very able and active research workers in our country initiated and so organised or expanded certain disciplines or aspects of scientific research that they became well known for that subject and attracted scholars from far and wide to do research and get doctorates with them. Some 'products' of such schools created new centres in same discipline, and one can sometimes see four or even five generations of successful doctoral students. A faithful documentation of these generations of students, and their students is scholastic genealogy. These genealogies provide information on name of Ph.D. student, topic / title of thesis, year of award, and name of university. (For details see *Bull. Bot. Surv. Ind.* 49 : 238-243. 2007; *Phytotaxonomy* 7 : 116-119. 2007; *Nation. Acad. Sci. Lett.* 32: 65-68. 2009).

Mentor-Mentee programme is not so structured an activity; it is voluntary and informal. Young, upcoming researchers have hundreds of questions in their mind on matters of professional scientific or even personal advancement, such as further research work, choice of topic for their students, choice of career (teaching, research, industry, entrepreneurship, etc.), choice of institution, guide, place of work, sources of funds for research, openings for jobs, proper writing of application or C.V. preparation for interview or Group Discussion. Many young ambitious scholars, particularly in smaller towns, very often experience a serious handicap of not readily finding at their place of work any senior, knowledgeable, experienced and willing person for advice or guidance. This program can be helpful for such person.

The initiative has to come from inquisitive, serious and sincere workers. They can approach one or more senior persons whom they think can be helpful to act as their Mentor, providing as much information as possible about themselves (personal & scientific), and few main areas of their queries.

A Mentor is expected to give similar sincere guidance and affection as he will do to his own kith and kin or doctoral students. The mentee is expected to give similar respect, regard and service as he will give to his elders in the family or to his teachers.

Many senior members of SEB and ATP have shown willingness to act as Mentor.

Once a good rapport is established, these associations can be very fruitful and long-lasting. The system already exists in some R & D organisations in our country.

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