

# Obituary: Govind Ballabh Pant (1945–2020)

Rupa Kumar Kolli

Dr. Govind Ballabh Pant passed away suddenly on 18 November 2020. Govind was an outstanding scientist and science leader with a wide range of contributions across the whole climate spectrum, from paleoclimate to future climate scenarios. Govind served as a member of the PAGES Scientific Steering Committee from 1997 to 1999 and played a key role in building and nurturing a strong PAGES community in South Asia.

Govind worked at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) in various capacities for more than three decades, including as Director from 1997 to 2005. After his retirement from IITM in 2007, he returned to teaching as a Visiting Professor at the School of Environment and Natural Resources at Doon University, Dehradun, India, and subsequently as a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Atmospheric and Space Sciences, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, India.

Govind's research interests included atmospheric energetics, monsoon dynamics, the ENSO-monsoon relationship, seasonal prediction, climate and climate change, and especially paleoclimatology. He was a fellow of the Maharashtra Academy of Sciences and the Indian Meteorological Society (IMS) as well as the recipient of the K.R. Ramanathan gold medal of the Indian Geophysical Union and an IITM Silver Jubilee award. He was the principal author of two books: *Climates of South Asia* and *Climate Change in the Himalayas*. Along with having served as the President of the IMS and as a member on the editorial boards of many research journals including the *International Journal of Climatology*, he contributed to many national and international bodies in climate science and published numerous research papers in reputed scientific journals.

Govind's international leadership contributions to the International Geosphere Biosphere Programme (IGBP), World Climate Research Programme (WCRP), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and PAGES are highly acclaimed. Govind was associated with the IPCC right from its inception and was the first Indian climate scientist invited to contribute to the First Assessment Report. He continued to support the subsequent assessments and served as the review editor for the Fourth Assessment Report of IPCC WGI in 2007; he received a certificate of appreciation from the IPCC for his contribution to the report when the Panel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. Govind made special efforts to promote these international programs within the Indian scientific community, including through organizing meetings of the governing bodies of PAGES, WCRP and IGBP at IITM. He hosted a PAGES SSC meeting in February 2000, which was attended by the entire PAGES leadership at that time,



along with a PAGES workshop on South Asian paleoenvironments.

Trained in tree-ring labs in Tucson and Palisades, USA, under a UNDP fellowship, Govind established the first dendroclimatology laboratory in India at IITM in 1982 and built a multi-institutional team to reconstruct monsoon variations over the past few centuries with an interannual resolution. He passionately nurtured it over the years, and it grew into a leading international dendroclimatology laboratory. He also played a pivotal role in bringing the paleoclimatological community closer to the meteorological community, which facilitated a more consolidated view of the entire spectrum of climate variability across India.

Govind published pioneering work in 1981 on the quantitative evaluation of the relationship between the Southern Oscillation and Indian summer monsoon rainfall. His visionary contributions to climate change research at IITM led it to be recognized internationally as an authentic source for global and regional climate change projections. In fact, the seeds for the establishment of the Centre for Climate Change Research at IITM were sown during the implementation of the

Indo-UK program of research in which he secured two high-profile projects for IITM.

Govind's international network is far and wide, and he will be remembered more as a dear friend than as a professional collaborator. His sudden passing is certainly a great loss to the climate community, particularly to the dendroclimatic community in India. Govind leaves behind his wife Gita, son Saurabh and daughter Aparna, who played host to many a climate scientist and provided a unique family touch to his collaborations.

#### AFFILIATION

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#### REFERENCES

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