

Dedication to Harald Walther my colleague and close friend

I met Harald for the first time in 1966 during the Neogene Colloquium in Berlin. During discussions within the colloquium I recognized Harald Walther as a preeminent scientist in his field and as someone with a friendly and welcoming disposition. From that time we have remained in close contact and since 1971 have undertaken an official international cooperation between Dr Harald Walther and the Institute of Botany, Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków. Harald has visited our Institute several times and I have visited him in Dresden. I have spent many productive days working with Harald and nice evenings with his family at their home, drinking some glasses of good Saxony wine, and discussing a number of palaeobotanical problems. Our discussions also cover philosophy and life's problems; some political problems in our part of Europe have also not been neglected. After all these year, we remain mostly concordant in our opinions. During one such evenings we formulated the idea of organizing a joint Polish-GDR (German Democratic Republic, former DDR) botanical collecting expedition to India in order to collect references materials of trees and shrubs that would be helpful in our studies and form a comparative set for Tertiary palaeobotany. At that time (1972–1976) organizing a multi-national expedition was extremely complicated, initially requiring agreement between the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Ministry for Education and Science of the GDR. These two institutions then needed an agreement with Indian authorities for the expedition to be realized, requiring extensive activities from authorities in various state establishments of Poland, GDR and India.

It was very complicated to correlate agreements between the three institutions. From the Polish Academy of Sciences' point of view it was no problem. The agreement of scientific cooperation with the Indian Botanical Survey was real and effective. However, the German politicians and officers were very reluctant and they presented various problems and difficulties. Harald and myself remained optimists and consequently spent time and effort to plan our activities. Sometimes it all seemed to be working with our expedition on target to go ahead, but suddenly, Harald phoned to say: "Leon, sorry, there are some new problems". At least we had fixed the dead-line on the end of December 1975, and to the last moment we did not know from each other whether all things were going well. I arrived to Calcutta on 30 December 1975 having no news from Harald. I then spent a week alone in Great Eastern Hotel in Calcutta waiting news. At last, after about one week, late in the evening I got a phone call from Harald who just arrived to the airport in Delhi saying: "Leon here I am". After few days he arrived to Calcutta from which point we have started to



Sunderban area – marsch vegetation (phot. L. Stuchlik)



Visiting – Wild Sanctuary Kaziranga (arch. L. Stuchlik)



Kashi Hills – collecting team (phot. L. Stuchlik)

our botanical “life journey” through India from January to May 1976.

The main purpose of our expedition was to collect reference materials from trees, shrubs, and herbs (herbarium specimens, seeds and fruits, as well as polliniferous material) that were possible living relatives to Tertiary plants, and also to study Tertiary relict forests in the known refugia. During these 5 months our stay in India the head-quarters was the Indian Botanic Garden Calcutta-Hawrah, where we studied and determined our collected plant materials. Our home was the Great Eastern Hotel in Calcutta. Living together in one room we had enough time for discussions on a broad subject of topics from botany to life-philosophy. We also kept diaries in which we described our field-work expeditions, our troubles with the Indian bureaucracy, and the very depressing individuals we met during our travels. In our “Great Eastern Hotel” we have celebrated two birthday parties; on 17 May Haralds 47th birthday and 25 April



Shillong – *Pinus khasyana* forest (phot. L. Stuchlik)



Kashi Hills – Harald as operator (phot. L. Stuchlik)

my 45th birthday. Our friendship became closer and closer, and turned into a close brotherhood, what will remain for ever. From our head-quarters in Calcutta, with help of some scientists from the Indian Botanical Service, we organized a number of small 2–3 weeks expeditions to collect materials and study various forest types in the most known refugia. We visited in north-eastern India the Khashi Hills, Sikkim Himalaya, and the Darjeelling area, in the Western Himalayas the Mussoorie region, the Dehra Dun environment, and the Garhwal-Himalaya, in southern India the Nirgili Hills, Pondicherry – Madras territories, and in eastern India, the Orissa and Sunderban areas near Calcutta. At the end of May 1976 all collected material were shipped back to Dresden, and after returning we started to describe all specimens as herbarium sheets for an extensive “Indian Herbarium”, which is now housed in Senckenberg Naturhistorische

Sammlungen Dresden, Museum für Mineralogie und Geologie, Dresden and W. Szafer Institute of Botany, Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków. During that time we met several times in Dresden and discussed the results of our expedition while also preparing for print a contribution resulting from it. After having finished our work with the herbarium material we often met us on different international conferences and symposia organized in Poland, Germany, and also in other European countries". Later, after both Harald and myself retired, from time to time we meet in Dresden or Kraków and spend nice times with our families. I wish Harald to be in good health and still in unabated activity for a long time.

Leon Stuchlik, W. Szafer Institute of Botany, Polish Academy of Sciences, Kraków

Linguistic verification by Dr Jason Hilton