

# BIONE

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### “Oh Lord”: Kary Mullis is no more....!

The world has lost one of its marvelous scientists this year. On 17<sup>th</sup> of August, Kary Mullis breathed his last in Newport Beach, California, USA. In the year 1983, he invented a technique for *in vitro* amplification of DNA in the laboratory known as polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Because of its simplicity and extensive applicability, PCR became a very popular laboratory technique across different areas of biological science within a very short span of time. From disease diagnosis to species identification, from sequencing to sex determination, from recombinant protein production to paternity detection, ....you name any problem in biology, PCR has the answer, it is helping directly or indirectly to solve them. This ground-breaking technique could make a huge difference in the way in which many research problems were solved before its invention. Its impact is such that we can divide the evolution of biological science research into two ages, pre-PCR and post-PCR. Recognizing his invaluable contribution towards science, Mullis was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in the year 1993. As a mark of tribute to this great scientist, I decided to highlight a bit into the life of Kary Mullis in this issue.

Mullis was born on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1944 in Lenoir, North Carolina in USA. As a child, Mullis enjoyed observing nature at their backyard. He spent most of his childhood in Columbia, South Carolina and attended Dreher

High School. Subsequently, while studying about solid fuels for rocket, he developed interest in Chemistry and decided to continue further studies in Chemistry. In 1966, he completed B.Sc. in Chemistry from Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta and then a PhD in Biochemistry from University of California, Berkeley in the year 1973. After PhD, he took a brief break from science and started writing fictions. Mullis returned to science and started working as a Post-doc in University of Kansas and thereafter joined a biotechnology company called Cetus as a DNA chemist. In Cetus, his responsibility was to mainly work on nucleotides. It was during his work in Cetus that he invented PCR. In his biography, he goes on mentioning how the idea of PCR suddenly came to his mind while driving one day for North California with his wife. Mullis called that special day as the first day of his next life. He left Cetus in 1986 and worked as the Director of Molecular Biology for Xytronyx, Inc., San Diego for two years. In between, he also started his own business by opening a company. He was associated with many scientific bodies until his death due to pneumonia.

Saying “Oh Lord”, in response to the absurdities of life, was a habit of Mullis. So, by quoting his words, I want to pay tribute to this great scientist by naming this small write-up as “Oh Lord: Kary Mullis is no more....!”