

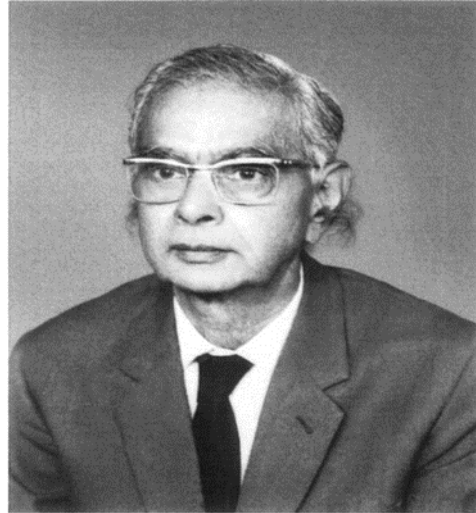
Contributions of Dr. M.S. Mani to the Field of Entomology

Jabez Raju B and Karthik S

Mahadeva Subramania Mani (M.S. Mani) is a distinguished Indian Biologist, Ecologist and contributed greatly to the field of Entomology in India. He not only inspired many through his work in Insect Taxonomy and High altitude entomology but also through his personality. Because of his notable work, Gordon Edwards from the University of Colorado called him as “The Dean of High Altitude Entomology”. M.S Mani from his humble beginnings had a challenging life and inspired his students and his fellow scientists.

Early Life of Dr. M.S Mani

He was born on 2nd March 1908 in Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu, India). He completed his secondary schooling in K.S High School from Thanjavur. He attended Government Arts College, Coimbatore and passed the Intermediate examination. He then joined Madras Medical College to study medicine and had to leave the college due to his father’s sudden demise and financial limitations. Later he moved to Calcutta and worked as a part-time tutor in Physics in Bangabasi College. He later worked as a gallery assistant in the Zoological Survey of India, during which he studied gall inducing arthropods (Especially Cecidomyiidae: Diptera) and the galls encouraged by them. He got M.A degree from the Madras University in 1937 based on his research on chalcids under the



supervision of Bainsi Prasad, the then director of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) (Calcutta) and was the first person to be awarded Master’s based on research thesis and scientific papers by the university (Ananthakrishnan, 2007). He has mastered over 20 languages including French, Russian, German, etc. For a brief period, he earned money working as an interpreter and German language translator in the censor unit of Army (Cherian, 2003), New Delhi. He joined St. John’s College, Agra where he established the School of Entomology in 1950. He was awarded with a Doctor of Science (D.Sc) by the University of Agra in 1947 for his work on gall forming insects (Raman and Gupta, 2007).

His Professional Career

Dr. M.S. Mani got interest in studying insect induced galls while he studied at Government Arts College,

Coimbatore. He collaborated with Sir C.V Raman on insect coloration while working at Bangabasi College, Calcutta. He joined as a research assistant to the then Imperial Entomologist H.S Pruthi at the Imperial (now Indian) Agricultural Research Institute, Delhi in 1937. He started teaching at St. John's College, Agra in 1945 and in 1956 he left to work as Deputy Director of Zoological Survey of India and continued to teach in the college until 1984. He then moved to Madras and taught in Presidency College as an Emeritus Professor in the Department of Botany till his death. He was the pioneer of Cecidology in India.

M.S Mani led the Indian delegation of Zoologists to U.S.S.R in 1963. He represented India in the Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme committee on Alpine and Arctic Ecology (Little hammer, Norway) in 1972. He was a visiting Professor of Entomology at Tribhuvan University (Kathmandu, Nepal) in 1975.

Dr. M.S Mani as a Mentor

Dr. Mani was an inspiring teacher. He was quite approachable and helpful to his students. He would test his students to evaluate their seriousness (Gupta V, 2003). He trained his students on various groups of parasitic hymenopterans particularly the Chalcidoidea, Proctotrupoidea, Braconidae, Ichneumonidae, Bethylidae, and Evaniidae. He took his students along with him in his expeditions to the Himalayas. His students like Virendra Gupta and Ananthanarayan Raman promoted his work. Several students obtained Ph.D working on Himalayan insect fauna and their ecology under his guidance.

Major Research Accomplishments

His research work on gall forming arthropods lead to evolution of a new

discipline, Cecidology in India. Professor M.S Mani has over 35 books to his credit besides over 250 research papers and monographs. His book "Introduction to High Altitude Entomology" greatly influenced many in India and abroad. He published a book called Invertebrate Zoology in the mid 1950's. He published a series of papers in "Agra University Journal of Research". He was the first person to report maternal solicitude in Thysanopteran in a species *Giganothrips elegans* (Mani & Rao, 1950). "The ecology of plant galls" (Mani, 1964) and "Plant galls of India" (Mani, 1973; 2000) were his outstanding books acknowledged by cecidologists globally. Other important books written by him were General Entomology (1982), Butterflies of the Himalaya (1986), Ecology and Biogeography in India (2012), Ecology and Biogeography of High Altitude Insects (1968), Ecology and phytoecology of high altitude plants of the Northwest Himalaya (1978). Modern Classification of Insects (1974), Pollination ecology and evolution in Compositae (1999), The Fauna of India & the adjacent countries (1989), Indian Insects (1989), Introduction to Zoology (1950), Beetles of the Himalaya (1967), Insects (1971, 1977) etc.

Other Notable Contributions

He contributed the English version of the German technology, for manufacturing hydrogenated oil (Vanaspati) in India to the creator of the manufacturing plant at Modinagar. He has held various positions during his life time i.e., Honorary Research Worker, Zoological Survey of India (1933-37), Research Assistant, IARI (1937-45), Professor of Zoology & Entomology St. Johns College, Agra (1945-56), Director, Zoological Survey of India (1956-68), Professor Emeritus, Presidency

College, Madras (1991-2003). The Ministry of Environment and Forests (Government of India) recognized him with the coveted E. K. Janaki Ammal award for his contributions to insect taxonomy in 2002 (Gupta, 2003). His book “Your face from Fish to Man” can be entertaining to the readers with a tinge of humour (Cherian, 2003).

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AUTHORS

Jabez Raju B (Corresponding author)-
Department of Entomology, CSK HPKV,
Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, India.
Email: yebbetzyisrael@gmail.com

Karthik S - Department of Entomology,
RPCAU, Pusa, Bihar, India.
