



Prof. M.L. Bhatia
(1896-1990)



Prof. BR Seshachar



Prof. CMS Dass



Prof. DM Saxena



Prof. GR Sapra

International Symposium on Ciliate Biology 2018

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On the eve of International Symposium on Ciliate Biology organized at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi recently, I came across an appealing quote of Francis Bacon (an English philosopher, statesman, scientist, jurist, orator, and author who served both as Attorney General and as Lord Chancellor of England), "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man." The aim of holding of the above mentioned symposium was to put on platform a new generation of Ciliate Biologists.

India has been bidding for various sports events (Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and Cricket World Cup, Hockey World Cup, FIFA Junior World Cup, shooting World Championship, World Chess Championship etc.) and social event - beauty pageant 46th Miss World contest held at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bangalore in 1996. It was a different story at Moscow in 2016 where top Ciliate Protozoologists (first group of animals) were holding their biannual international symposium on the subject. The Delhi University colleges Indian Protozoologists quartet of Drs. Komal Kamra, Renu Gupta, Seema Makhija and Ravi Toteja threw the gauntlet in the ring and won hands down the right to host the next International Ciliate Symposium at New Delhi in 2018.

It was a herculean task to hold a symposium of international echelon. It involved not only academic inputs of high quality and also lot of infrastructure. Nevertheless, there was a bigger perception in holding the International Ciliate Symposium in India. The main aim was to provide platform to the

researchers involved in their field to present their research findings before the international Protozoology community and expose the under graduates to the subject on a bigger canvas to attract them to take up career in this discipline of Zoology. Three colleges of the University of Delhi - Acharya Narendra Dev, Maitreyi and SGTB Khalsa led by their Principals Dr. Savitri Singh, Dr. Haritma Chopra and Dr. Jaswinder Singh, particularly the last one played a pivotal role in providing logistic support amply for the smooth run of the symposium. The symposium was result of synergy with International Research Coordination Network for Biodiversity of Ciliates (IRCNC-BC), an affiliate society of International Society of Protistologists (ISOP). The financial support at international level came from the ISOP while Indian agencies DST, DBT, INSA, UGC and ZSI provided a part of the monetary support.

It is pertinent to point out that the Ciliates (unlike bacteria) are easy to culture, handle and manipulate makes them an ideal group of organisms for research. The other important feature in their favour for research is their genome being closer to humans. Secondly, the Indian ciliate diversity has not been fully worked out as yet. Lastly ciliates are important component of ecosystem and food chain on which pisciculture industry thrives. Finally, while thriving in the polluted water bodies, the ill effects of chemicals from agriculture and industry can easily be detected through ciliate research.

The delegates were welcomed in most apt words, "Let us heartily welcome you to the International Symposium on Ciliate Biology and wish



Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister for Environment & Earth Science inaugurated the symposium with organizing committee.



Delegates & participants during the closing ceremony

you successful deliberations. It is our pleasure, one more time, to say Thank you and welcome in igbomina (Nigeria) dialect and in our own dialect *ShubhSwagatam*. We greet and welcome you once again".

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State, Tourism (independent charge) and MoS, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, graced the inaugural function. He emphasised the role of Ciliates in environment at microscopic level and lauded the efforts of the organisers in winning over the rights to host the symposium. At the end, Prof. Chandrima Shaha, Vice President (Foreign Affairs), Indian Academy of Sciences was the chief guest at the valedictory function. Dr. Jaswinder Singh complimented the organisers for the smooth conduct of the

symposium, thanked the foreign Protistologists and commended the holistic involvement of the students in the venture.

A large contingent of national ciliate biologists was joined by nine foreign scientists to deliver 20 oral and 57 poster presentations were made by the student participants. The specializations covered gambits from biodiversity to ecology, evolution, role of ciliates in the food web of soil and water, indicators of pollution, and in bioremediation fields. The use of ciliates in teaching and research was highlighted by the presenters.

The biggest gain of the symposium was the founding of the Indian Ciliate Biologists forum to coordinate activities of the researchers in the field and collaborate their research activities with the overseas laboratories. The ZSI has come forward to publish the

symposium proceedings as a book with ISBN listing.

In retrospect, the research activities initiated by Prof. M.L. Bhatia (Zoology Department Founder), carried to new heights by Profs. BR Seshachar, CMS Dass, DM Saxena, GR Sapra and their legacy continues to flourish due to sustained efforts of the present generation of their student researchers is indeed commendable and most befitting tribute to their teachers. The baton has been passed on to the new generation of researchers to lead bequeathed research wealth to grandeur and glory.

The dream of holding symposium would not have become a reality but for the advisors of the event, Dr. Alan, Warren (NHM, UK), Prof. Cristina Miceli (Camerino, Italy), Prof. GR Sapra, Prof. Rup Lal, author and members of the national organizing committee.