

OBITUARY



PROFESSOR T. S. MAHABALE (1909-1983)

The sudden death of Professor Trymbak Shankar Mahabale' on July 3, 1983 came as a shock. The botanical world lost a highly devoted scientist. He was one of the most eminent botanists of the country who left a remarkable impression on the minds of scientists and students. He had a wide range of interests in plants, especially in palaeobotany and palms.

He was born on 19th October, 1909 and had his early education at Ahmednagar. He passed his matriculation in 1927 from Nasik. After matriculation, his father wanted him to be a high court pleader but as he had a great interest in science, he joined Belapur Sugar Factory as a Bench Chemist, which he resigned after four years and joined Fergusson College for B.Sc. degree passing it out in 1932. In 1934 he passed B. A. degree in Arts. He spent most of his time in library. His usual hobby was to visit hills and forts around Poona to have knowledge of field botany and history. In 1933 he discovered the subterranean prothalli of *Ophioglossum*. He was admitted to the degree of Ph.D. at Bombay University in 1938. He received training under Prof. D. L. Dixit, Poona and Prof. M. A. Sampatkumaran of Bangalore; Prof. Birbal Sahni created in him the keen interest in the study of fossil plants, gymnosperms, etc.

He started his career as a Sugar Chemist and later as a lecturer in B. J. Medical School and Fergusson College, Poona. Along with teaching he was engaged in research work and it was in 1937 when he discovered the underground prothallus of *Lycopodium* and *Equisetum*. In the same year he was transferred to Gujarat College, Ahmedabad where he pursued his research work with Prof. S. L. Ajrekar and

Prof. J. J. Asana, both trained at Cambridge. In 1964, he was called upon to work as the Assistant Editor of "Wealth of India" published by CSIR, New Delhi.

In 1947 he was transferred to Institute of Science, Bombay, where he proved himself to be a popular teacher and research worker, and was made Chairman of Board of Studies, Bombay University.

In 1953 Prof. Mahabale was appointed as Professor and Head to organise the newly started University Department of Botany at Poona. Within a short period under his leadership, the Department became famous for its teaching and research attracting many workers from different parts of the country. He worked on Bryophytes, Pteridophytes, Palms and Tertiary floras. His work on water ferns was well known, especially that on *Salvinia* and *Regnellidium*. In palms he did intensive work on the morphology, anatomy, geographical distribution, cytology, embryology, palynology and evolution. In 1966 he was elected President of the Botany Section of Indian Science Congress held at Chandigarh and delivered an address on the 'Flora of Deccan-Past and Present'. He held an autumn School at Mahabaleshwar in 1966. He was elected as the Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of Poona, during 1968-69. He was also awarded Birbal Sahni Gold Medal during the Indian Botanical Conference, Meerut.

Prof. Mahabale as a scientist stood high in scientific circles having been elected as a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, 1949; Fellow of the National Academy of Science, Allahabad, 1949; Fellow of the Indian Academy of Science, Bangalore, 1950. He was a founder member of the Maharashtra Academy of Science and a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1954 he was elected as Vice-President of the Palaeobotanical Section of the 8th International Botanical Conference at Paris and President of the Symposium on the Tertiary Floras of Southern Hemisphere. During 1947-49 he was Secretary of the Indian Botanical Society and its Vice-President in 1950-1951, and became its President in 1968 delivering presidential address on 'Search for the Primitive ferns'. In 1959 he was invited by the 9th International Botanical Congress at Montreal and again in 1964 at Edinburgh. In 1962 he visited USSR.

He was elected continuously for one or the other office by many professional bodies, such as Council of Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi; President, Palynological Society of India, etc. He was the member of Board of Studies in Botany of various Universities in India. He worked on various research committees of U. G. C., National Science Academy, CSIR, Forest Research Institute Dehradun, U. P. S. C., Advisory Council of the B. S. I., Wild Life Preservation Board, etc. He visited a number of countries, like France, Germany, England, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Italy, America, Canada and USSR. He worked at the Natural History Museum, London; Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, the New York Botanic Gardens Chicago.

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