



DR. S. JONES - A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Santhappan Jones was born on 27th August 1910 at Kovalam in Kerala. He is the fifth and last child in the family. He had his early education at Venganoor near Kovalam and at Trivandrum. Soon after graduating with distinction from the Maharaja's College of Science (now University College), Trivandrum in 1933, he started his research as an honorary research scholar in the same college for a year. Later, the award of a university scholarship enabled him to proceed to the Zoology Laboratory of the Madras University for further studies and he received the M.Sc. degree in 1937 for his investigations on the breeding and development of brackishwater fishes. From then on, this line of work has been dearest to his heart. His ability and enthusiasm for studies on fishes captured the attention of Dr. Baini Prashad, Dr. Sunder Lal Hora and Dr. B. Sundara Raj, the giants in the field in those days.

After brief studies on the growth of marine invertebrates of the Colombo Harbour and the development of certain fresh-water fishes at the Marine Biologist's Laboratory of the Colombo Museum, and a short stint as the faculty of the Madras Christian College, he joined the erstwhile Travancore State Service as an entomologist in 1937. He continued the entomology work for the next ten years. On transfer to the Central Research Institute of the University of Kerala in 1939, he underwent training in agricultural entomology in 1943 at the Agricultural Research Institute, Coimbatore. In spite of the administrative responsibilities as entomologist he did concerted work on the control of the coconut leaf roller, the rice swarming caterpillar etc. He established the first research station on cardamom at Pampadampara and worked on cardamom pests like thrips, hairy caterpillar and weevil, and published the results in reputed journals.

He had taken as his ideal Dr. Nelson Annandale, the Founder Director of the Zoological Survey of India, who by his leadership and wide spectrum of work on 'animals, laid the foundation for zoological research in the Indian subcontinent. An incident in 1945 contributed to a great extent to change the entire life and career of Dr. Jones. The erstwhile University of Travancore (now Kerala University), withheld the Ph.D. degree that Dr. Jones was entitled to receive as per the recommendation of the board of examiners. This was done to eliminate him from becoming a potential competitor for higher posts subsequently. The examiners on coming to know of the injustice done, returned in protest the remuneration received by them, and the University authorities smarting under the ignominy and guilt tried to cover up the entire episode by passing on the tainted money to the Vanchi Poor Fund! The above prompted Dr. Jones to accept an offer of appointment under the then British Government and to go in for a higher degree than Ph.D. from elsewhere, without yielding to the pressure and persuasion to resubmit the thesis. In June 1947, he was called upon to serve as the Head of Estuarine Fisheries Division of the newly started Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute at Barrackpore,

Calcutta. During this period he carried out extensive studies on the life histories and fisheries of Indian fishes, which earned him the D.Sc. degree of the University of Madras in 1952. In 1951-'52, he held charge as the Chief Research Officer (Director) of this research station. In January 1954, Dr. Jones as he puts it, was "confronted with the unexpected transfer" to what is now known as the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, and was posted at Calicut as the Head of the Fishery Biology Division. Despite these vagaries of service, by dint of his unremitting hard work, Dr. Jones secured the highest office of Chief Research Officer (later redesignated as Director) in the Institute in April, 1957 at a relatively young age of 46 years, and moved to the headquarters of the Institute at Mandapam Camp.

The polio affliction that he sustained at an advanced age of 53 years would have taken its toll on a lesser mortal but not on Dr. Jones. If anything, it made him more tenacious, more determined, and the tempo of his activity increased tremendously, like the Phoenix rising from its ashes, to the surprise of his contemporaries. To those of his "well wishers" who wanted him to take "complete rest" in view of his disability he used to aver for their satisfaction that this would certainly be done in his grave! He challenges any unwary sympathizer of his handicap by jocularly remarking that he is "more active above his hips" than most of his countrymen!

He held this post for nearly 13 years without allowing himself to be detracted by the lure of more remunerative assignments that were open to him at national and international levels, to develop the Institute and to foster research on marine fish and fisheries till he laid down the office in February, 1970. After retirement also Dr. Jones has been continuing his scientific studies as Emeritus Scientist at the University College, Trivandrum. Simultaneously, Dr. Jones began to plan and organize a residential home for the rehabilitation of children handicapped by polio at Trivandrum, under the aegis of the Church of South India. This he continued till his death in 1997. From April 1957 till February 1970 it goes without saying that the history of Dr. Jones' service assumed a major part of the history of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. To blaze new trails and to be second to none which are parts of his personality-these traits began to unfold and take firm hold on him.

In recognition of his varied researches, Dr. Jones was elected a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences, a Fellow of the Zoological Society of India, a Fellow of the National Geographic Society, etc. The "most" outstanding and perhaps permanent contribution of Dr. Jones for which the marine fishery science in India and particularly in Kerala will have to be ever grateful is with regard to the initiative he took and the dominant and decisive role he played in shifting the headquarters of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute from Mandapam Camp to Cochin. He passed away in 1997.

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