

K. CHERIAN JACOB (1890—1972) : A PROFILE

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K. Cherian Jacob was born on 28th January, 1890 at Thalavady, Quilon District, Kerala. After his school education, he studied for the L. Ag. and joined Government service in the Agricultural College, Coimbatore. He was also a postgraduate student at Pusa for sometime. He continued his career as Assistant in Systematic Botany in Agricultural College, Coimbatore and retired as Gazetted Assistant in Botany, on 27th January, 1945. He was closely associated with the Madras Herbarium throughout his career. He led a very systematic and planned life till his end. It was a surprise for the authors to find a manuscript by him containing particulars on his own obituary. It seems that he had even made his coffin ready, 4 years before his death !

Jacob had a genuine interest in botany and agriculture and botanically explored from Ganjam to Cape Comorin and in the west-coast districts of the former Presidency of Madras, and collected over 15,000 specimens. He has published 43 research papers including new species and new records in various scientific journals and some popular articles in newspapers. His critical approach is evident even now from his dissections, figures and critical notes found on the herbarium sheets at MH. Based on his critical notes on two unidentified and insufficient materials, the junior author could recently make fresh collections of these from the



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original localities, and described two new species viz. *Polygala jacobii* Chandrabose and *Rhynchosia jacobii* Chandrabose & Shetty. Several other new species have also been named after him by eminent botanists like C. E. C. Fischer. He made an extensive survey of bananas from Cape Comorin to Ganjam and Canara and discovered a new species, *Musa kattuvazhana* Jacob.

Jacob became well known to the scientific world by his publication of a monograph on Madras Bananas (1952) which provides a wealth of information on about 70 different varieties. He spent the last 15 years of his service with the above studies. The book consists of detailed descriptions, notes on edible and keeping qualities of the fruit, cropping, growth characteristics and other economic uses. F. N. Howes (*Kew Bull.* 1953 : 268. 1953) reviewing his book states, "The author is to be complimented on the immense amount of labour he has obviously devoted to his subject and for so enthusiastically recording his many valuable observations on what is one of the most important food crops of his country" The wealth of details in his book would be of great value to agriculturists, botanists and others for very many years to come. Jacob introduced to India the world-famous Gros Michel Variety of banana from Trinidad, West Indies. His contribution to economic botany by his papers on fodder grasses, wild plants yielding edible fruits, millets and indigenous dyes are noteworthy.

He was appointed by the Madras Government as a member of the Special Fodder and Grazing Committee in the year 1939. He was also awarded George the Vth Silver Jubilee Medal in recognition of his contribution to botany. He was a Life Fellow of the Linnean Society of London, since 1959. Because of his popularity and social contacts in Coimbatore, the road in front of his residence was named 'Cherian Road'. He used to correspond with scientists at Kew on botanical matters till his death on 3.4.1972.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- CHERIAN JACOB, K. Observations on pollination in *Alysicarpus*. *Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengal* 18(5) : 287-292. 1917.
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- Stem fasciation in the Coconut Palm. *Journ. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 37 : 966-67. 1935.
- An unrecorded economic product—*Decalepis hamiltonii* W. & A. (Asclepiadaceae) *Madras Agri. Journ.* 25(6) : 176-177. 1937.
- Forcing of Bananas. *Ibid.* 26(6) : 218. 1938.
- A fasciated inflorescence in a Banana. *Journ. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 40(3) : 531. 1938.
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- A note on the cultivation of Bananas in the Madras Presidency. *Ibid.* 27(6) : 199-202. 1939.
- Grass flora of North and South Arcot Districts with special reference to fodder grasses. *Ibid.* 28(2) : 63-68. 1940.
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- Banana products. *Ibid.* 29(6) : 217-221. 1941.
- A new species of *Coleus*. *Journ. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 42(2) : 320-322. 1941.

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- Bananas of the Mysore State. *Madras Agri. Journ.* 30(2) : 37-44. 1942.
- *Eichhornia crassipes* Solms—The Water Hyacinth. *Ibid.* 30(5) : 165. 1942.
- Grass flora of the Travancore State with special reference to fodder grasses. *Ibid.* 30(6) : 179-191. 1942.
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- *Madras Bananas—A Monograph*. Madras. 1952.
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- AND — Note on some examples of plant tetra-tology from South India. *Ibid.* 4(6) : 225-226. 1925.
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