

OBITUARY: OUR FOUNDER, DR. RAJENDRA KUMAR VARSHNEY

ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY AND ANURAG VARSHNEY

Raj Bhawan, Manik Chowk, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh

Dr. Rajendra Kumar Varshney was born in Aligarh on 10th October 1939 into an established business family. His father, Shri Jyoti Prasad, was a prominent businessman and social worker who was instrumental in building Dharamshalas in Aligarh. His mother, Chameli Devi, was a very religious woman.

Dr. Varshney did his early education in Aligarh in various colleges like Hiralal Barahsaini Inter College, DAV Inter College and Arya Samaj Inter College. He did his B Sc. and M Sc. in Zoology from Aligarh Muslim University in 1960. While working at the Zoological Survey of India, he did his PhD in 1972 and was awarded a D. Sc. by Patna University in 1996. He learnt German from Max Mueller Bhawan, Kolkata. Apart from that, he was also well versed in Bengali and Urdu. He was an avid philatelist and had a lot of rare stamps in his collection.

Socially, Dr. Varshney was always active in the Varshney community. From 1952, he was involved in various Varshney publications (Barahsaini, Varshney Patrika, Jhankaar etc.) as an editor. He also held various posts in the community groups. His poetry collection "Phool Ek Sau Pankhuria" was published in 1957. Many of his short stories were broadcasted from Aakashwani All India Radio from 1962 to 1964 and then from 1984 to 1995.

He was employed in the Indian Lac Research Institute at Ranchi and then joined Zoological Survey of India, with stints at its Kolkata, Patna, Shillong and Jodhpur offices. He retired from ZSI in 1997 while serving as Additional Director.

Dr. Varshney was a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society of London,

Entomological Society of India, Academy of Zoology, and Indian Association of Systematic Zoologists; and a member/office bearer of the National Geographic Society, Washington; Academy of Entomology, Chennai; Indian Society of Salinity Research Scientists, Jodhpur; the International Symposia on the Scale Insect Studies; etc.

Dr. Varshney had published over 150 research papers, including more than 30 on Lepidopteran insects. His works on Indian butterflies have been cited by several workers in India and abroad. He wrote the first Hindi book on Indian butterflies and was senior editor for the first catalogue of Indian butterflies, which established that there were 1318 species known from India at the time.

He has served on the Editorial boards of Oriental Insects, USA; Zoos' Print Journal, Coimbatore, Indian Journal of Biodiversity, Bangalore, Prani Jagat, Kolkata, Biosystematica, Kozhikode; etc. He was the founder-editor of Bionotes, a quarterly periodical on Life Sciences.

Other entomologists have named the following taxa in his honour: Genus *Varshneyia* (Thysanoptera), Genus *Varshneococcus* (Homoptera), *Microstylum varshneyi* (Diptera), *Hemiptarsenus varshneyi* (Hymenoptera) and *Neptis miah varshneyi* (Lepidoptera).

He was also an interviewer for M Phil and PhD courses for Aligarh Muslim University.

Dr. Varshney got married in 1963 to Mithilesh Kumari Varshney in Aligarh. He was a doting father to 3 children, Nidhi Krishna, a doctor based in Patna, Ashutosh Varshney and Anurag Varshney who are working in the

management layer in multinationals in NCR area.

Dr. Varshney left us all for his heavenly abode on 28th April 2021. His memories remain with

all of us in the form of his work for his community, his scientific work and his writings – prose and poetry which will always remain with us.