

Obituary

Dr. Mohammad Rafiq Siddiqi

(6th May, 1934- 25th August, 2017)



Dr. Mohammad Rafiq Siddiqi, one of the worldwide renowned scientists, eminent nematode taxonomists in the history of the discipline and internationally recognized authority in nematology, passed away peacefully on 25th August, 2017 after a short illness. He was 83 years old.

Dr. Mohammad Rafiq Siddiqi S/O Mohammad Salim Siddiqi, a district lawyer and alumnus of Allahabad University, was born at Tarahuan Village, Karwi, Uttar Pradesh, India, on 6th May, 1934.

He graduated in 1953 from Agra University, received M. Sc in Zoology (Parasitology) in 1955 from Aligarh Muslim University, and was awarded Gold Medal for obtaining first position. Dr. Siddiqi earned his Ph.D. on the studies of “Plant-parasitic nematodes of Uttar Pradesh (North India)” in 1960 and D.Sc. on plant-parasitic and soil nematodes in 1966 from the Aligarh Muslim University, India. In 1967 he began his internationally influential career as a Principal Nematologist at CAB International Institute of Parasitology (IIP) in St. Albans where he served until his retirement in 1994. His career came full circle when he was also consulting taxonomist at Rothamsted from 1994-2004.

In 1991, he started a Nematological Journal as Editor in chief of “Afro-Asian Journal of Nematology (AAJN)” and remained the founder president of the Afro-Asian Society of Nematologists for 18 year. Afro-Asian Journal of Nematology (AAJN) became International Journal of Nematology in 1997. He was also the Editorial Board Member of the Nematological Abstract, Nematologia Mediterranea, and Pakistan Journal of Nematology. Dr. Siddiqi’s monograph “*Tylenchida: Parasite of Plant and Insects*” is a desk-top text book of all the nematologists of the world and was given the names of “Milestone of Nematology” by I. Andrassy and “Taxonomist Bible for the Tylenchida” by E. Geraert.

During his long- term scientific activity Dr. Siddiqi had published more than 300 research papers in the reputed journals of the world on the systematic, morphology and evolution of plant and soil nematodes. He was active in the International promotion of Nematological research, serving an editorial boards, chairing conferences sessions, being involved in research and training courses in many countries of the world. During his long and active scientific career Dr. Siddiqi had made significant contribution to research in Plant Nematology which is reflected by honors awarded to him. He was elected Fellow of the Institute of Biology in 1982, Fellow of the Linnaean Society of London in 1984.

Aside from the colossal output of nematology work, he also found time to translate and interpret the Holy Qur’an coming up with hypotheses that only space and time can validate. He pored for years over other Qur’anic translations and spent time reading books on quantum physics and cosmology. He thought that the word of the Almighty was compatible with science and the Universe theories.

Dr. Siddiqi will always be remembered in the entire nematology community for inspiring us with his engaging personality, teaching abilities, inquisitive mind, scientific expertise, and dedication to the development of nematology.

Dr. Siddiqi contributed a lot to the discipline of Nematology in Pakistan. He had a long-lasting association with the centre and Dr. M. A. Maqbool (Late), the founder father of National Nematological Research Centre, University of Karachi. It is worth mentioning that Dr. Siddiqi played a major role and was also a motivated promoter of nematology in the developing world especially in Pakistan. Dr. Siddiqi had been invited by NNRC at many national and international training courses as a resource scientist. Followings are some of the official occasions of Dr. Siddiqi's visits:

- Three week long "First National Training Course on Plant Nematology, 1980" organized by National Nematological Research Centre, University of Karachi in collaboration with Dr. Siddiqi, the Principal Nematologists of Commonwealth Institute of Parasitology, England.
- FAO-NNRC Second International Meeting on Plant Nematology for an Expert Consultation on Plant Nematode Problems and their control in the Near East Region at Karachi, Pakistan, 1992. Dr. Siddiqi was also invited as a special guest.
- Under the Expert Availing Foreign Services of Ministry of Science & Technology, "Special Nematological Training Course" was organized by National Nematological Research Centre, University of Karachi, supported by the Pakistan Society of Nematologists, for three months in 2004. Dr. M. R. Siddiqi from the United Kingdom was invited as a foreign expert. NNRC availed this facility and the research scholars of NNRC identified 88 genera of nematodes that belonged to 45 families and ten orders. A total of 43 genera and 20 species were identified as new to science.
- The two-week-long "International Training Workshop, 2007" organized by the National Nematological Research Centre, University of Karachi in collaboration with the Pakistan Society of Nematologists. World renowned nematologists, Dr. M. R. Siddiqi from UK and Dr. M. Shamim Jairajpuri from India were invited as special guests. Dr. Siddiqi and Dr. Jairajpuri actively involved in giving informative lectures and identification of nematodes during the workshop. Number of participants from different institutes attended this workshop.
- Dr. Shahina received advance training as Marie Curie fellow by the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) on the "Biodiversity and systematics of plant and soil nematodes and entomopathogenic nematodes as a bio-control agent", at the International Institute of Parasitology, U.K. for her Post Doc under the guidance of Dr. Siddiqi.

Editor-in-Chief,

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CONDOLENCE MESSAGE

On behalf of the Pakistan Society of Nematologists, Staff of National Nematological Research Centre, University of Karachi shares the deep sorrow of all colleagues of the science research community of Pakistan for the sudden demise of Dr. Siddiqi. We are deeply saddened by the loss of the world renowned Nematologist who passed peacefully on to the everlasting heavenly abode on Friday, August 25, 2017 after protracted illness. We pray to Allah Almighty that departed soul may rest in eternal peace in heaven, Ameen!

The passing of Dr. Siddiqi is not only a big loss for those who have known him but for the entire research community. Due to the passing away of Dr. Siddiqi, NNRC as well as researchers in other countries of the world, has lost an outstanding nematologist and a dynamic researcher, who was always there with helping hands, fantastic coordinator, a gentle man and a nice human being. Those of us who were lucky to know him will always remember his kind and warm character as a great nematologist.

He was selfless, devoted, honest and pragmatic. We recognize him as a keen person, devoted to the promotion of nematological research in the underdeveloped countries. No one can fill this gap. May Allah accept his unremitting endeavors in the advancement of Nematology. It is a great pity to lose such a very active and valuable eminent nematologist. Dr. Siddiqi contributed a lot to the discipline of Nematology in Pakistan. He had a long-standing association with the Centre. Whenever, he came to Karachi he always met us with love and kind-hearted friendship which was a characteristic of his personality. His sudden death leaves his family, his colleagues and entire Nematology community in deep sadness and sorrow. He will be greatly missed for a long-time to come. He will be fondly remembered by all us and those who had the pleasure to know him and work with him. May Allah Almighty bless the departed soul through His infinite mercy with eternal peace and give courage and fortitude to his family, friends and the scientific community to bear this irreparable loss, Ameen!

Pakistan Society of Nematologists