

HISTORY OF INDIAN AEROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Indian aerobiological work dates back to 1873 when **D.D. Cunningham**, a British physician who surveyed the atmospheric biopollutants in the air of Alipore Central jail at Calcutta (the then capital of India) and published an account, “Microscopic examination of air” illustrating the occurrence of airborne pollen, fungal spores, algal and fungal fragments, etc. He tried to establish a relationship between the airborne organisms and the so-called “Zymotic diseases” among prisoners of Central jail.

There was a complete absence of Indian aerobiological research for more than half a century later than Cunningham’s work. After such a long gap, many Indian scientists started aerobiological work with special emphasis on plant pathology which include N.C. Chatterjee (1931), K. C. Mehta (1952), B.S.V. Rajan (1952), S.Y. Padmanavan (1953) and T. Sreeramulu (1959).

Later, Dr. D.N. Shivpuri of V.P. Chest Institute, Delhi organized the **First aerobiological workshop in India** during 27 – 29 October 1975 where aerobiologists and medical practitioners attended the workshop dealing with aerobiology and clinical immunology. Among others, the prominent aerobiologists and allergologists like Prof. S. Chanda, Prof. S.T.Tilak, Prof. N.I. Singh and Dr. M.K. Agarwal participated in the 3 days programme.

The foundation pillar of Indian aerobiology was started when many Indian palynologists gathered together during the **4th International Palynological Conference** held in 1977 at Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany, Lucknow. In that conference Dr. P.K.K. Nair, the President of Indian Palynological Society organized “Active Group of Aerobiologists” where many internationally reputed foreign and Indian palynologists and aerobiologists like Prof. S. Nilsson (Sweden), Dr. Ruth Leuschner (Switzerland), Prof. S. Chanda, Prof. S.T. Tilak, Dr. Vishnu Mittre and other scientists unanimously decided to form “ Aerobiological Society of India” in due course.

The resolution adopted in the 4th International Palynological Conference for formation of Indian Aerobiological Society was implemented in the Bose Institute of Kolkata during an **International Workshop** on “*Modern trends in Aerobiology with special reference to Plant Pathology and Medicine*” organized jointly, sponsored by Bose Institute, Kolkata, the British Council and the Govt. of Sweden from 29 – 31 January, 1980. A team of experts from Great Britain consisted of Dr. John Lacey and Dr. A. Bainbridge (Rothamsted Experimental Station, Harpenden, Herts), Prof. J. Pepys (Brompton Hospital, London), and Prof. S. Nilsson (Swedish Museum of Natural History, Stockholm) and many scientists of India namely, Prof. S. Chanda, Prof. S.T. Tilak, Prof. S.N. Agashe, Prof. C. Subba Reddi, Dr. A.B. Singh, and others attended the workshop. On the concluding day of the workshop (31st January 1980) the “**Indian Aerobiological Society**” with its Head Office at Bose Institute, Kolkata was formed as a scientific body with Prof. S. Chanda of the Bose Institute as its Founder President and Prof. S.T. Tilak of Marathawada University, Aurangabad as Vice-President and Prof. S.N. Agashe of Bangalore University as its Secretary. Prof. S. Chanda was also elected President of the International Association for Aerobiology for a term of five years (1985 – 1990) and presided over the 4th International Aerobiological Conference held in Stockholm in 1990. The Indian Aerobiological Society (**Registration No. S/32742**) was registered at Kolkata on 18.07.1981 under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act XXVI of 1961, with Division of Palynology and Environmental Biology, Department of Botany, Bose institute, 93/1 A.P.C. Road, Kolkata-700 009 as its Head Office.

The IAS was affiliated by the **International Association for Aerobiology** and the **5th International Conference of Aerobiology** was held in Bangalore, India from 10th to 15th August 1994. Prof. F.Th.M. Spieksma, the then President of the IAA presided over the conference and Prof. S.N. Agashe of Bangalore University was the Chairman of Organising Committee of the conference. Many participants from all over the world attended that conference. The IAA conference was a grand success where IAS made liaison with the other International Association of Aerobiology.