

OBITUARY



Prof. R. C. PATEL

*Gujarat Agricultural University
(01 July 1927 – 29 December 2020)*

We are deeply saddened by the demise of Prof. R. C. Patel, one of the doyens of Agricultural Entomology, on 29th December 2020 at New Jersey, USA. He was 94 years. After obtaining Ph.D. in Entomology from the University of Wisconsin, USA, in 1958, he came back to India and served the then Institute of Agriculture, Anand, Gujarat, as Research Officer. After the formation of the Gujarat Agricultural University, he served as Professor & Head, Department of Entomology, Anand Campus, Gujarat, and later as Associate Director of Research, GAU, from 1972 until his retirement in 1987.

Prof. R. C. Patel was a great visionary. Realising the ill effects of indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides in agricultural crops, he initiated a project on biological control of *Spodoptera litura* way back in 1963 and operated it up to 1975. This project was funded by the US PL-480 Scheme. To strengthen his skill, he has undergone a brief training at the Indian Station of Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control, Bengaluru, in 1963. Prof. R. C. Patel was the first to develop a systematic mass production technology for the egg-larval parasitoid, *Chelonus heliopae*, for the control of *Spodoptera litura* in India and conduct large scale trials in farmer's field. He guided a number of students for their

M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees and also trained a number of staff. I was a staff and, at the same time, earned my Ph.D. under his guidance. My thesis was on Biological Control of *Helicoverpa armigera* using the egg parasitoid, *Trichogramma chilonis*. I wish to mention that Dr. T. M. Manjunath, whom Prof. Patel first met at CIBC in 1963, came to Anand Campus on deputation during 1972-74 with vast experience in biological control and obtained his M.Sc. (Agri.) degree in Agricultural Entomology under Prof. Patel. We became friends and are in touch even now. Later, Dr. Manjunath switched his jobs and went on to become the Director of Monsanto Research Centre, Bengaluru. He had profound regards for Prof. R. C. Patel. Similarly, Prof. Patel was always proud of him and made inquiries about him whenever we met during his visit to India from the USA.

I was associated with Prof. Patel from 1971 till his retirement on 31st July 1987. He made me the Officer-in-charge of the Biological Control Project after his retirement. Farmer's interest was his first priority. He made me to take an oath that I will take biological control to farmers fields. During my association, I found him a hard task master. He never compromised on quality of the work. He always insisted on publish or perish policy. The first report of nuclear

polyhedrosis virus (NPV) of *Helicoverpa armigera* from India was published by Prof. R.C. Patel in 1968 in *Journal of Economic Entomology*. He has published over 100 research papers and several chapters in books. He always emphasized on developing communication skills and making effective presentations within the allotted time.



Seated, L-R: Dr. R. C. Patel (white shirt), Dr. D. N. Yadav and other staff in Entomology Dept., Anand (1987)

Appreciating the research done and infrastructure developed, ICAR included the Anand campus of Gujarat Agricultural University as one of the 16 centres when AICRP on Biological Control was launched in 1977.

Prof. R. C. Patel was a great administrator and a versatile scientist. He served in a member of Scientific Committees such as Research Council of Gujarat Agricultural University, State Department of Agriculture, Sardar Patel University, etc. He was the Chairman of Quinquennial Review Team

of ICAR for AICRP on White Grubs. He was deputed to Hungary to study Agricultural Entomology by ICAR during early eighties.

After his retirement, Prof. R. C. Patel went to USA to settle down with his son. He used to pay visit to India periodically. Whenever he visited India, invariably he used to come to my home and enquire about our welfare. Prof. R. C. Patel not only cared for his staff, but also their families.

It was my good fortune that I could see him at Anand two years ago. He was 92 years old. I found him to be as alert and enthusiastic as ever. He enquired about the status of Biological Control in the country and also about his friends and students.

We feel sad when we lose our near and dear one. At the same time, we feel proud that our Professor lived a long and healthy life, raised two brilliant sons in the form of Dr. Jaymin and Mukesh Bhai and an adopted daughter, Varsha Ben, besides supporting a number of kids from his family. Dr. T. M. Manjunath joins me in expressing our grief on the loss of revered Prof. R. C. Patel and we believe that his contribution to Entomology as a Teacher, Researcher, an Administrator and a Mentor will always be remembered.

May his Soul Rest in Peace.
Om Shanti.

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