

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE MARINE BIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

The Marine Biological Association of India was inaugurated by the Honourable Mrs. Lourdhammal Simon, Minister for Local Administration and Fisheries, Madras State, in the presence of a large and distinguished gathering. The function started with an invocation song by Miss. H. Kamala. The President of the Association, Dr. S. Jones, welcomed the Honourable Minister and the others who had assembled. While welcoming the President spoke:

Hon. Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this inaugural meeting of the Marine Biological Association of India. We are singularly fortunate in having the Hon. Minister who is in charge of Fisheries to inaugurate this infant Association which is the first of its kind to be organized in this country. It is seldom that this place gets such a galaxy of distinguished visitors. We are most happy to have with us now all the officers and technical personnel of the Madras Fisheries department and Members of the Madras state Fishery Advisory Board.

It may not be out of place to briefly refer on this occasion to the hoary traditions attached to this area from time immemorial. It was presumably over the Gulf of Mannar that Ravana piloted his aerial vehicle or 'Viman' to kidnap the Consort of Sri Rama and it was in the sea around here that Sri Rama laid to bridge to cross over to Lanka and free Sita. Again, there are numerous other references to this area occurring in the Puranas and Vedas. The 'net casting epic' or the 'Valai Veesu Puranam' had its origin not far from here. According to it Lord Shiva came in the guise of a fisherman and by its fishing exploits recovered his Consort Parvati who was being brought up as the daughter of a fisherman chieftain. It is possible that the Conches referred to in the Maharashtra and which were used by the mighty warriors at the great battle of Kurushetra had their origin in the sea around this place.

Further, the seas around abound in valuable pearl oysters and the sacred chank and a rich variety of fauna and flora. The pearls from this area found their way even in far off days to Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome and China to cater to the vanity of the opulent. Kautilya in his *Artha-Sastra* refers to the trade in shells, pearls, etc. between the South and North and gives the place of honour among pearls to *Tamaraparnika* and *Pandyakavadaka* both from these coasts. There are numerous references to pearls originating from here in 'Periplus' and in the accounts of Pliny, Ptolemy, Megasthenes, Arrian and others and in the Tamil poems of the Sangham Age and in subsequent literature. The pearl and chank fisheries of more recent times and the struggle by various powers for monopoly over these are historically recorded and need no recounting.

This part of India has also been a meeting ground for ages between the North and the South in that pilgrims from all over the country visit Rameswaram and other holy places and take

back with them various shells and corals as sacred relics or souvenirs. Further, because of its rich marine life, this area is a paradise for to come and make biological collections. Numerous student parties from universities and colleges visit the area all the year round for educational and scientific purposes. Krusadai Island with its well-known Marine Biological Station and rich specimen collecting centres, is not far from here. More recently, the Union Government has taken steps to establish the Central Marine Fisheries Research Station with Mandapam as headquarters and investigations on various aspects of marine fish and fisheries are in progress here.

I take this opportunity to refer and pay my tribute to the great pioneering work carried out in the field of Marine Biology and Marine Fisheries by the Madras Government Museum and the Madras Fisheries Department. Very valuable work has been carried out as a result of these pioneer research investigations and marine biologists all over the country owe a deep sense of gratitude to Madras for the initiative taken in this regard. In view of the above it is only appropriate that an association like this should be inaugurated by the Minister in charge of Fisheries of this State.

We have been for some time considering the question of organizing an Association to serve as a common platform for persons interested in Marine Sciences in India to met together with a view to promoting the cause of marine sciences, in the country. Though we have been feeling the necessity for such an Association for long time, formal discussions were initiated only very recently –just a month back to be exact – and a Constitution for the Association adopted on the 30th of last month. We have had the most promising response from scientific workers interested in marine sciences all over the country for becoming members of the Association.

Marine Biology is an infant science in this country. India has a long coast line and our marine resources remain inadequately explored and underexploited. The object of the Association is to create a dynamic interest in the pursuit of marine sciences and raise the status of this country, in the study of this discipline. The Association is looking forward with courage and hope towards the achievement of this goal and as I referred to earlier, it is a very good augury that we have been fortunate to get the Minister in charge of Fisheries, Madras, in our midst to inaugurate the Association, and such vast assemblage of distinguished visitors. We are indeed grateful to the Hon. Minister for kindly agreeing to our request in spite of various preoccupations. I now request the Hon. Minister to formally inaugurate the Marine Biological Association of India.

The Honourable Minister inaugurated the Association with the following speech:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I express my profound thanks to Dr. Jones for having conferred upon me this great honour of inaugurating the Marine Biological Association of India. I understand that this is the first Association of its kind in Asia and Africa, though similar associations exist in Europe and America. And I am happy that the association originates in Madras State. I also feel happy to know

that marine biological researchers were first initiated by the Madras Fisheries Department which started the Marine Aquarium at Madras in 1909. But, by establishing a marine biological station in Krusadai Island, which is only seven miles from here the Department gave considerable impetus to marine biological studies. Krusadai Island with its coral reefs is considered to one of the richest grounds of marine animals and plants in the Indian Ocean region. It is now visited by students and professors from all over India and even from abroad for field observations on marine biota. Through the Marine Biological Station at Ennore, near Madras, the department is supplying all varieties of marine biological specimens to several schools, colleges and universities in the country with a view to promote study of marine biology. The department also maintains marine biological stations at Tuticorin and Cape Comorin.

Among the universities in India, it is the Madras university that initiated researchers in marine biology in the in the year 1927. The marine biological laboratory of this university has produced several marine biologists including Dr. Panikkar the Fisheries development advisor to the government of India. Dr. S. Jones, the President of this Marine Biological Association that I am inaugurating this evening and also many members of the Central Fisheries Station and of the Fisheries Department.

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Station at Mandapam Camp, the Chief Research Officer of which is Dr. Jones, is said to be the best marine fisheries research station in the Indo-Pacific region, with its survey, biological, hydrographical, physiological, phytological, technological, off-shore fishing and extension divisions and with its sub-stations and field units scattered along the coastline. This station is doing tremendous work for the development of the marine fisheries resources of the country. It is only appropriate therefore that the Marine Biological Association of India is started with its headquarters at Mandapam Camp where the Central Marine Fisheries Research Station also has its Headquarters. I am confident that this Association will promote and co-ordinate both fundamental and applied marine biological studies and researches in the country.

I now inaugurate the Marine Biological Association of India, and give it my blessings and best wishes. - Thank you all.

The Secretary, of the Association, Dr. R. Raghu Prasad then thanked the Minister for inaugurating the Association and the other present for readily responding to the invitation and making the function a success. The function came to a close with the National Anthem.



Inaugural address by Hon. Minister Mrs. Lourdhammal Simon, Minister for Local Administration and Fisheries. To her right is Mr. P. P. I. Vaidyanathan, I.C.S., Secretary, Govt. of Madras.

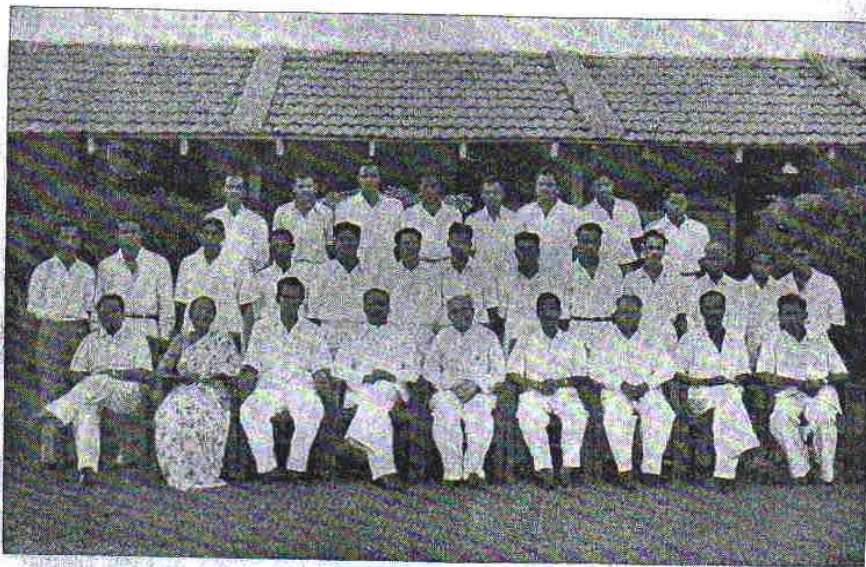


Welcome by Dr. S. Jones, President of the Association. To his left are Mr. N. Murugesu Mudaliar, Deputy Secretary, Government of Madras and Mr. C. P. Kulu Erady, I.A.S., Director of Fisheries, Madras.



Vote of thanks by Dr. R. Raghu Prasad, Secretary of the Association.

Photograph taken on the occasion of the 'At Home' by the members of the Association at Mandapam Camp on 27-5-1959 to PADMA BHUSHAN PROF. M. S. THACKER, Director-General, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, New Delhi,



Sitting (Left to Right) : Mr. L. R. Kasturirangan, Dr. (Mrs.) F. Thivy, Mr. S. K. Banerji, Dr. S. Jones, Prof. M. S. Thacker, Dr. R. Raghuprasad, Mr. R. Velappan Nair, Dr. R. Prasanna Varma and Dr. Samuel V. Job.

Standing—1st row : Mr. P. K. Talwar, Dr. M. D. K. Kuthalingam, Mr. V. Sadasivan, Mr. Edward Chellappa, Mr. G. Luther, Mr. K. K. Tandon, Dr. T. A. Mammen, Mr. D. Sudarasana Reddy, Mr. Egbert Dawson, Mr. M. Kumaran, Mr. T. Joseph, Mr. M. S. Rajagopalan and Mr. K. M. Gopal.

Standing—2nd row : Mr. P. R. Sadasivan Tampi, Mr. A. N. P. Ummer Kutty, Mr. P. Sam Bennet, Mr. P. S. B. R. James, Mr. M. Subramaniam, Mr. Alexander Varkey, Mr. C. Sankaran Kutty, and Mr. P. Sulochanan.