

Obituary : Dr. B. H. Patel, Arachnologist B.M. Parasharya^{1*} & Raju V. Vyas²

Dr. Bhikhabhi Harmanbhai Patel, a renowned Arachnologist of the country a.k.a 'Spiderman of Gujarat' passed away on 6th May 2013 at the age of eighty at Anand, Gujarat. He suffered from lung infection and was hospitalized for a week. He is survived by a daughter Hemangini and a son Kinshuk.

The country has lost an eminent spider taxonomist – with the expertise of identification and naming of spider species, a kind of expertise which is slowly vanishing in the country. Dr. Patel had described and named 47 species of spiders from 18 families. Several new species were named after the region, locality as well as prominent persons. He had several new records of the species from Gujarat state as well as India.

Dr. Patel was born on 1st September 1933 in a farmer family at Napad, a small village near Anand. He received school education at Anand and obtained his bachelor degree from Gujarat University in 1956 with specialization in botany as main and zoology as a subsidiary subject. After graduation, he served as a school Principal at Talod and Ramol villages for two years. In 1959 he joined as a demonstrator at J.J. Science College, Nadiad and simultaneously obtained his master's degree in Zoology from Gujarat University in 1961.

After post-graduation, he joined as a lecturer at V. P. Science College of S.P. University at Vallabh Vidhyanagar. It was his personal interest and enthusiasm in spider taxonomy that helped to convince late Dr. H.K. Patel – an entomologist working at the college of Agriculture to register him for Ph.D. programme.

He learned basic taxonomy from late Dr. B.K. Tikadar – former Director of Zoological Survey of India. His thesis was titled



Dr. B.H. Patel, 1 Sep 1933 - 6 May 2013

'Spiders of Gujarat' for which he was awarded the doctorate degree in 1971 from S.P. University, Vallabh Vidhyanagar, Gujarat. He used to collect spiders from all possible sites, preserve them and compare with the available description in the books. In his thesis, all together 76 species, contained in 50 genera belonging to 20 families were reported. Of this, 15 species of spiders were new to the science and five species were recorded for the first time from India.

In 1973, he joined as the Head of Zoology Department at Sir P.P. Institute of Science, Bhavnagar of Saurashtra University. During his twenty years career at Bhavnagar, he guided several students including seven Ph.D. students on taxonomic study of spiders, scorpions, pseudo-scorpions and snakes. He and his students added 33 more new species to science during this tenure, making a tally of total 47 new species.

He was a correspondent for International Society for Arachnology (IAS) since 1983. He collaborated with Dr. Elizabeth Mungaal – a Texas based

researcher for her studies on Blackbucks of Velavadar National Park, Bhavnagar. In 1988, he successfully organized 'National Symposium on Ethology' at Bhavnagar. During his career, he attended a number of National seminars and conferences including four International Arachnological Congresses and presented research papers. He received Hari-Om Ashram Prerit Jaykrushna Indrajai Research Award (Gujarat State, India) in Zoology, in 1990 for his prominent contribution towards taxonomy of spiders.

After his retirement in 1993 from the academic institute, he returned to home town Anand and spent three years doing social services, honorary school teaching and farming. In 1996, Gujarat Ecological Education and Research Foundation (GEER Foundation, Gandhinagar) identified him as an expert spider taxonomist and involved him in each and every

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List of spiders described by Dr. B. H. Patel

No.	Family Name	Species Name	References/ Source
1	AGELENIDAE	<i>Tegenaria hemanginae</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1992
2	AMAUROBIIDAE	<i>Amaurobius andhracus</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1990
3		<i>Amaurobius nathabhahi</i>	Patel & Patel, 1975
4	ARANEIDAE	<i>Chorizopes khedaensis</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1993
5		<i>Chorizopes pateli</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1993
6		<i>Gea tyloridia</i>	Patel, 1975
7		<i>Neoscona dhumani</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1993
8		<i>Neoscona murthyi</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1990
9		<i>Neoscona parambikulamensis</i>	Patel, 2003
10		<i>Neoscona ujalalai</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1992
11	CLUBIONIDAE	<i>Clubiona pashabhahi</i>	Patel & Patel, 1973
12		<i>Simalio aurobindoi</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1991
13	CORINNIDAE	<i>Castianeira tinae</i>	Patel & Patel, 1973
14		<i>Oedignatha binoyii</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1993
15		<i>Oedignatha indica</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1993
16	CTENIDAE	<i>Ctenus dangsus</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1994
17		<i>Ctenus narashinhai</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1988
18		<i>Ctenus tuniensis</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1988
19	FILISTATIDAE	<i>Filistata napadensis</i>	Patel, 1975
20		<i>Pritha dharmakumarsinhji</i>	Patel, 1978
21		<i>Sahastata ashapuriae</i>	Patel, 1978
22	GNAPHOSIDAE	<i>Phaeoedus haribhaiius</i>	Patel & Patel, 1975
23	HOMALONYCHIDAE	<i>Homalonychus raghavai</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1991
24	LYCOSIDAE	<i>Hippasa valiveruensis</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1993
25		<i>Lycosa balaramai</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1993
26		<i>Lycosa thoracica</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1993
27		<i>Trochosa gunturensis</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1993
28	MITURGIDAE	<i>Cheiracanthium nalsaroverense</i>	Patel & Patel, 1973
29		<i>Cheiracanthium sambii</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1991
30		<i>Cheiracanthium seshii</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1991
31	OXYOPIIDAE	<i>Peucezia akwadaensis</i>	Patel, 1978
32	PISAURIDAE	<i>Dendrolycosa bobbiliensis</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1993
33		<i>Hygropoda chandrakantii</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1993
34		<i>Nilus decorata</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1990
35		<i>Pisaura podilensis</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1990
36	SPARASSIDAE	<i>Heteropoda bhaikakai</i>	Patel & Patel, 1973
37	TETRAGNATHIDAE	<i>Guizygiella shivui</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1990
38		<i>Meta abdominalis</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1993
39	THERIDIIDAE	<i>Cylognatha surajbe</i>	Patel & Patel, 1972
40		<i>Thwaitesia dangensis</i>	Patel & Patel, 1972
41	THOMISIDAE	<i>Strigoplus moluri</i>	Patel, 2003
42		<i>Thomisus godavariae</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1992
43		<i>Thomisus krishnae</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1992
44	ZODARIIDAE	<i>Lutica kovvurensis</i>	Reddy & Patel, 1993
45		<i>Storena arakuensis</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1989
46		<i>Storena indica</i>	Tikader & Patel, 1975
47		<i>Storena tikaderi</i>	Patel & Reddy, 1989

biodiversity survey of 'Protected Areas' of Gujarat state. He prepared a baseline data on the spider diversity of almost all the protected areas of the state. He voluntarily helped the faculties at Anand Agricultural University, Saurashtra University and M.S. University of Baroda. Besides that, he also provided identification services to NGOs and students for promoting spider studies. He worked in the laboratory, always busy on the microscope at Ornithology Laboratory of Anand Agricultural University till mid March 2013.

When he was at Bhavnagar, he had an *ad-hoc* project from Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi. He made systematic survey of the spider fauna of nine different crops in Saurashtra and North Gujarat covering at least ten districts. His study on the spiders and their role in biological control of crop pests was the pioneering work of the subject in agriculture sector of India. On every outing, he always carried a *joli* (cotton bag) containing collection tubes, forceps and spirit for the exploration of spider fauna.

During his entire academic carrier he published about 77 scientific papers in reputed journals on various groups of taxa including spiders, scorpions, pseudo-scorpions, snakes, crocodiles, turtles, birds and wildlife too. In 2003, *Zoos' Print Journal* started a series of research papers entitled 'Fauna of Protected Areas in India' in which Dr. Patel contributed first two papers on spiders.

Lastly, before departing from the world, he passed on 48 species of spiders belonging to 17 families from 34 genera as un-named and yet to be described as new to the science on the operational microscope and his desk. He was a taxonomist of an exceptional kind, and his personality will remain rare forever.

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