OBITUARY

Dr. Y. S. Kulkarni (1910–2008)

M. V. Deshpande

YSK Sir, as the 98-year-old Agriculture Microbiologist Dr. Y. S. Kulkarni was popularly known, passed away in Pune on June 9, 2008. He was an agriculture graduate coming from a small village Kiroli, Dist. Satara. Dr. Y. S. Kulkarni had a successful start as a Plant breeder for potato, cotton and for oil seeds too. The Y-1 variety of cotton developed by him is still in use. He also worked almost for 10 years as oil seed breeder. The SB-11, a summer crop variety of ground nut was also among the widely accepted ones.

While developing different crop varieties he initiated work on plant pathogenic bacteria. From there onwards he started working in the field of bacterial plant pathology and soil microbiology. His papers in the fifties were on bacterial leaf spot of castor, stem canker of pigeon pea, leaf spot of grapes, so on and so forth. He also identified *Synchytrium*, a chytrid fungus, on black gram. YSK Sir was one of the few microbiologists of India of the fifties who got the world wide acceptance for his ideas and authentication of his novel isolates too. Professor M. P. Starr, a well-known bacteriologist accepted his proposal of suggesting a separate family Phytobacteriaceae to include all the phytopathogens under one umbrella. He further added in one of his reviews, "...While the Indian phytopathologists (YSK with M. K. Patel) have accepted *Xanthomonas*, *Agrobacterium*, *Pectobacterium*, and *Erwinia*, they have created a genus *Chlorobacter* for the phytopathogenic green-pigmented pseudomonads, adopted *Phytobacterium* for the phyto-

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pathogenic nonpigmented pseudomonads, and returned to *Aplanobacter* for the non motile coryneforms." (Ann. Rev. Microbiol. 1959; 1972). *Pectinatus rhapontici* earlier named as *Erwinia rhapontici* (ATCC29283) has been included in the approved list of bacterial names, edited by V. B. D. Skerman.

Dr. YSK intuitively started all his projects well ahead of time. He designed a novel strategy for the control of loose smut of wheat caused by *Ustilago tritici*. The biological control and biofertilizers are the main components of eco-friendly agriculture and organic farming. He published a paper on the microbial control of *Pseudomonas* infection on potatoes in the eighties. In addition to working with plant pathogenic bacteria he also worked on nitrogen-fixing rhizobacteria. He developed a rapid method based on protein profiling to distinguish closely related rhizobial strains associated with cowpea.

In the seventies, Agharkar Research Institute, Pune was actively engaged in post graduation in Microbiology partly by research, affiliated to Pune University under the eminent guidance of scientists working in different fields. Eventually, Pune University started Microbiology teaching programme, graduation in Garware College and post graduation at ARI, Pune in 1971. Dr. YSK was actively involved in the teaching programme at ARI from the beginning. Indeed, our generations knew him as a conscientious teacher and a dedicated researcher. He selflessly worked in ARI, helped research students, supervised their work even at the age of seventy plus. The last meeting with him was in September 2007 when I went to invite him for the function of AMI Pune chapter. He was affectionate and concerned about all the students and his junior colleagues as ever. A 'long inning' has ended before reaching 100 mark but his contributions would continue to motivate generations of microbiologists.

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