

SAILING THROUGH PANDEMIC: ONE YEAR OF INDIAN ENTOMOLOGIST

The Indian Entomologist is now a year old. In retrospect, this unique venture of few enthusiastic young entomologists started as an experiment has performed exemplarily well. It has started a digital forum in the form of an informal platform for the upcoming and young entomologists. Some of its unique contents make this a novel approach so far never attempted by any professional group. In fact, it started playfully like an upcoming sportsperson will like to play along, without any barriers and with enough freedom, to bring out the inherent talent in the field that is ingrained in few volunteers. These have enabled putting together the knowledge that emanates from both experts as well as amateurs, as a unique experiment. The statistics over a year reveal that this digital output



in entomology attracts more than 80% of new visitors every time, with page views being around 60%. These speak very well of the impact of this unique venture: "Indian Entomologist", and the outcome meets the objectives with which this venture got started. In fact, the page views have doubled in the last six months, revealing the ripple caused by this venture. Except for an unexplainable peak in May the viewing has been almost steady. As expected there had been viewers from all corners of India, indeed south India tops in the viewers, perhaps of the reason that insects, their causes, and effects are more pronounced here in view of the congenial weather favoring insects and their diversity. More than 5500 viewers had dug into the contents in more detail, which I guess is a big achievement taking into account the 2000 plus entomologists in the country, including Ph.D./ PostDoc researchers. The unique section which is becoming very popular is BLOG, it has gained a lot of momentum. Some blogs even reached more than 1000 reads and they are crisp and informative. Many young entomologists are encouraged to write blogs on the Indian Entomologists website and these blogs are regularly published without any time barrier.

In other words, it can be said that more than the active entomologists, nonentomologists too view this unique output of the Entomological Society of India. Myself being solely occupied and engrossed with the more professional Indian Journal of Entomology, I view this venture as a more thought-provoking outcome of the Entomological Society of India, for the upcoming generation. I take this opportunity to congratulate the movers and shakers of this unique venture. I also invite young entomologists to open up their thoughts and get involved in this unique endeavor.

Having deliberated upon the Indian Entomologist, let me ink a few words about the Covid 19 pandemic, as it has affected all walks of life. Covid 19 has got in our life for a full year by now, and naturally, its impacts are becoming more pronounced as we are learning to live with it. We entomologists also have acclimatized ourselves with all possible efforts and actions to tide over this unusual pandemic. In the last one year, I had an opportunity to hear from not only biologists, other life scientists, but also some entomologists continuously about how this pandemic got intertwined with our core activities including research. I am also aware of the handicaps and

impediments many of us experienced in performing research. I also equally heard from many who were not upset to that much extent as many others. These latter lot of researchers perhaps believed in synergizing their field-oriented research with basic research, though not equally but at least or even to a small extent. Such a synergy is always possible in all walks of our entomology oriented research, for eg., in IPM if a researcher gives equal or the desired impetus to basic research in its components, synergy can lead to appreciable outcomes, and provide much better and valid outputs. I noticed that those who practiced this kind of synergy did not suffer like the ones who depended solely on field-oriented experiments during this Covid 19 pandemic. That is why, as a taxonomist, I had emphasized this in my editorial on locust research last time. Basic research must form the core of any research for tangible and sustainable outcomes.

No doubt all researchers are being impacted by Covid 19, and it is true with entomology too. That is why, the Entomological Society of India jointly conducted a "Webinar on Entomology 2020: Beyond COVID-19" at Hyderabad, along with Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University, the Plant Protection Association of India, and Agri Biotech Foundation during 11-12 December 2020. It could be observed that Covid 19 impacted Entomology in many ways, and one of these was the impediments experienced by the entomologists in their research. That is why in the research funding meetings, we as a group of biologists are seeking moratorium/support to overcome the negative impacts of the pandemic, especially with the timeline oriented research experiments. No doubt, this holds good for entomologists too. Covid 19 provides us a unique experience, and we must learn to use this to convert a challenge or a problem into an opportunity and still march ahead unscathed. I wish we learn such a lesson from this pandemic, to ensure our safe voyage in any activity. Indian Entomologist wishes all a safe and successful life journey beyond this Covid 19.

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