

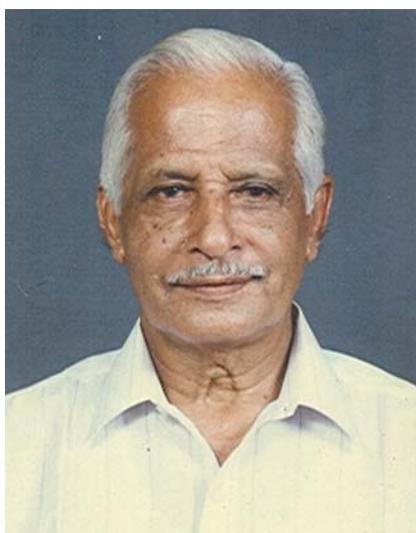
Kolliyil Hameed Alikunhi (1918–2010)

K. H. Alikunhi was born in Azhicode, Kodungallur, Kerala on 27 May 1918. He graduated with BSc (Zoology) in 1938 from Madras University; MSc by research from Madras University in 1941, and was conferred DSc by Central Institute of Fisheries Education (Deemed University) in 2000. He served as Research Assistant in Zoology Research Laboratory, Madras University during 1941–1943; Assistant Professor (Zoology) in Maharajas College, Ernakulam during 1943–1945, Assistant Director (Freshwater Research) in Department of Fisheries, Madras during 1945–1948, Research Officer (Pond Culture) in Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Barrackpore during 1948–1964 and Director, Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Bombay during 1964–1972.

Alikunhi's contribution to fisheries was recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1972. Since then, he had been assigned different positions by FAO. During 1972–1978, he served as Inland Fisheries Development Adviser, Government of Jordan, Amman; Project Manager, FAO/UNDP Brackishwater Shrimp and Milkfish Culture Research and Training Project, Jepara, Indonesia, and as FAO Consultant in Sri Lanka and Vietnam. Later, he served as Fisheries Development Adviser, Government of Kerala and as Director, Shrimp Hatcheries. In 1969, he was elected a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore.

Alikunhi's career took a turn from being an academician to that of a fisheries scientist after he joined the Department of Fisheries, Madras. Since then, his contribution to fisheries research, production, development and management was immense. In the late 1940s, he studied the breeding habits of carps and reared the high-altitude stocks of *Cyprinus carpio* in the plains of Madras. These initial, but important headstart researches demonstrated the potential of a breakthrough in freshwater aquaculture in India. After one decade, in the late 1950s, the breakthrough followed. Alikunhi, along with Hiralal Chaudhury,

achieved the induced breeding of Indian carps for the first time. The team also followed up the success with production of zooplankton for the newly-hatched larvae of carps and pond management. The rest is history. The success achieved in induced breeding and published in *Current Science* in 1958 paved the way for a revolution in carp production in the country, in what is termed as 'aquaplosion'. In the last 50 years, carp production from farming has consistently



increased and reached more than 3 million tonnes, valued at more than Rs 10,000 crores in 2009–2010. The technique described by Chaudhury and Alikunhi is being practised by every fish farmer in India and South East Asia. Hence in terms of economic impact, their *Current Science* publication is indeed important.

Other achievements of Alikunhi and his team include extensive trials showing superior growth potential of exotic carps in Indian waters and demonstration of the potential for 10 tonnes of carp production per hectare per year. He also played a major role in the establishment of the Aquaculture Station at Orissa, which later fructified as the Central Institute of Freshwater Research at Kausalya-ganga, Bhubaneswar.

As Director at the Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Alikunhi was instrumental in locating the institute in its permanent location at Versova, establishing training sub-centres for freshwater and brackishwater aquaculture and equipping the institute as one of the foremost fisheries educational institutions in the region with FAO/UNDP assistance. Later, as Chairman of the Quniquennial Review Team of CIFE, he recommended its upgradation as a Deemed University, which was accepted by the Government of India. The country's first fisheries university was thus born.

As Fisheries Development Adviser, Alikunhi set up and operated the first commercial penaeid shrimp hatchery for the tiger shrimp, *Penaeus monodon* and the Indian white shrimp, *Penaeus indicus* at Azhicode, Kodungallur in 1978–1979 and demonstrated the use of hatchery-produced seed for raising commercial crops in brackishwater ponds at Narakkal. Again, for the first time, he demonstrated large-scale rearing of freshwater giant prawn, *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* to juvenile stage at Azhicode.

Alikunhi received several awards, including Chandrakala Hora Memorial Gold Medal of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, and Sunderlal Hora Gold Medal of the Ichthyological Society of India, Madras. He published more than 200 papers on fisheries development, freshwater and brackishwater aquaculture, marine fisheries and marine biology. His contributions have left a footprint in fisheries education and research. His demise on 26 September 2010 is a great loss to fisheries science and development in India.

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