
CURRENT SCIENCE—50 YEARS AGO

Professor Birbal Sahni, D.Sc., Sc.D., F.G.S., F.A.S.B., F.R.S.*

THE news that Professor Birbal Sahni has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society will give the greatest satisfaction among his numerous colleagues, friends and students. On behalf of our readers we have great pleasure in offering him the warmest congratulations of *Current Science*.

Professor Sahni comes of a gifted family belonging to Bhera, Punjab. He is the third son of Mr. Ruchi Ram Sahni, Retired Professor of Chemistry, and the late Shrimati Ishwar Devi (*née* Anand); the former, a pioneer educationist of the Punjab, is distinguished for his activities leading to the advancement of scientific prestige in India and the latter was well known for her piety and culture.

The influence of his father during his tender years and later that of Professor A. C. Seward at Cambridge inspired Professor Birbal Sahni's whole subsequent career of scientific research. At the University of Cambridge which he entered in October 1911, he became a Foundation Scholar and later a life-member of Emmanuel College. Both in Cambridge and London, he distinguished himself by his original researches which brought him the doctorate degrees of the two Universities.

In India honours have come to him thick and fast. He is Professor and Head of the Department of Botany in the University of Lucknow, Dean of the Faculty of Science, Lucknow University; one of the

Founders and an ex-President of the Indian Botanical Society; ex-President of the Lahore Philosophical Society; President of the section of Botany (1921) and of Geology (1926) of the Indian Science Congress; Fellow of the Asiatic Society of Bengal; one of the Vice-Presidents of the Indian Academy of Sciences and of the National Institute of Sciences; a former Vice-President and now Foreign Secretary of the National Academy of Sciences (U.P.); recipient of the Barclay Medal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for his researches in biological science (1936). He was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Palaeobotany Section at the 5th International Botanical Congress, Cambridge, 1930, and again at the 6th congress, Amsterdam, 1935.

His published original papers cover a wide range of subjects in botany, but his interest has lain chiefly in the study of extinct plants, which has led him into the domain of geology. His scientific achievements, which deal largely with the flora (present and past) of India and of the Southern Hemisphere, are marked by a broad philosophical outlook and intensive field researches. He is the leader of a small but enthusiastic school of young botanists, whose activities are recorded in the Quinquennial Reports of Research published by the University of Lucknow.

The election into the Royal Society has come to him at a comparatively early age, and *Current Science*, which owes a great deal to Professor Birbal Sahni, confidently hopes that his further scientific work will bring him higher distinctions, and the country, he loves, greater glory.

*Published in *Curr. Sci.*, Vol. IV, May 1936, p. 795.

NEWS

NAYUDAMMA FELLOW SHIP

International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, has instituted Rs.86,000/- annual award for five years to a scientist of any nationality below the age of 30 in the memory of late Dr. Y.

Nayudamma who was a member of the IDRC board. Dr. Nayudamma was also a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore.
