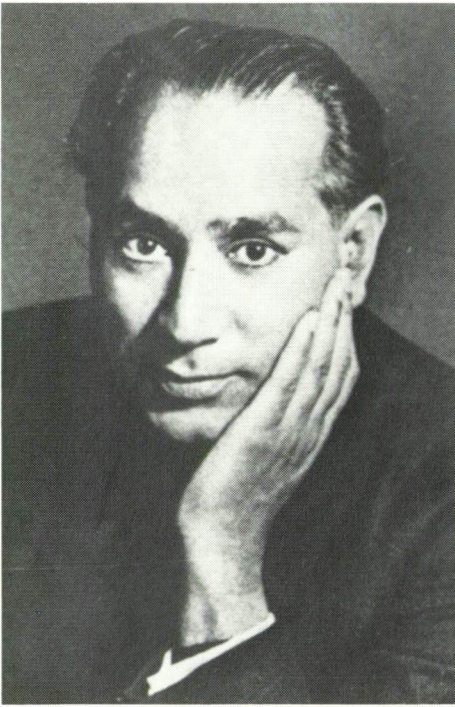


## Preface

This number is dedicated to the Birbal Sahni  
Centenary



Photograph 1

Dr. BIRBAL SAHNI professor, 1891—1949



Photograph 2

Madam SAVITRI SAHNI, 1902—1985

Photograph 1 was reproduced from the Birbal Sahni Memorial Volume (The Palaeobotanist, vol 1), photograph 2 from the commemorative paper of Dr. (Mrs) CHHAYA SHARMA, Grana 24, p. 137. Reproductions and enlargements were made by Dr. I. BAGI and E. FARKAS.

It was a long time ago when I as student and later as a young assistant to Professor P. GREGUSS in the Department of Botany of the University of Szeged, that I learned and started the investigation of the anatomy of the secondary wood of

recent and fossil species. During these studies I got acquainted with the outstanding standard work of the Birbal Sahni Institut. Scientific contacts were well established between the two institutions not only through the common interest in the investigations of secondary wood anatomy, but also when the palynological investigations on the Hungarian Tertiary sediments were started in Szeged, by Dr. J. MAÁ CZ, Dr. P. SIMONCSICS and myself. Personal contacts with Dr. B. V. VENKATACHALA, Dr. S. C. SRIVASTAVA, and Dr. M. B. BANDE strenghtened the contacts. It was a great honour for me that the Birbal-Sahni Sahni Foundation asked me to deliver a lecture at the Savitri-Sahni Smarak Lecture series.

Now on the occasion of the Birbal Sahni Centennarium my laboratory will express our respect to the great scientist but at the same time not forgot his wife, Mrs SAVITRI SAHNI who was his helpmate during his lifetime. I think that to draw the character of the scientific aims and concepts of Professor SAHNI some citations from the Birbal Sahni Memorial Volume are the best illustration.

SAHNI M. R., p. 6: "BIRBAL's interest were wide and, if I might say so, Lamarckian in scope. To this his discovery of the coin moulds at Rohtak in March 1936 bears witness. This archaeological discovery by a palaeobotanist, with the stroke of a geologist's hammer, symbolizes the vitality and versatility of the man. It is a tribute to his genius that not only did he make this unique discovery, but also threw himself heart and soul into the study of these coin moulds."

P. 8: "BIRBAL was always a dreamer and a visionary."

"Towards this end he worked incessantly, enriching his collections of fossil plants by field work and exchange and by building up the finest library for palaeobotanical work in India."

RAO, A. R., p. 10: "As in teaching, so in research he emphasized hard and careful work, accuracy and attention to details.

'Hard work killed no body'

was a frequent saying of his. He liked intensive work on any problem more than extensive work."

P. 11: "He himself had a worldwide correspondence and exchange of reprints and his collection was easily one of the best in the East.

P. 14. "One of Prof. SAHNI's most often quoted papers of theoretical interest is the one 'On the ontogeny of vascular plants and the theory of recapitulation'. In this paper he pointed out several examples amongst vascular cryptogams, gymnosperm seeds and angiosperm flowers, to show that the well-know biological principle."

MAHESHWARI, P., p. 17: "SAHNI's first paper entitled 'Foreign Pollen in the Ovules of *Ginkgo* and of Fossil Plants' was published in the *New Phytologist* of 1915, only a few years after he reached Cambridge. Here he recorded the presence of pollen grains other than those of *Ginkgo* in no less than eight out of about a dozen ovules of this plant obtained from Montpellier. Most of them showed the presence of two prothallial cells thus indicating their abietineous nature and one had germinated to form a tube twice as long as its own diameter." P. 18: "Soon after the publication of his papers on *Nephrolepis*, SAHNI submitted a dissertation for the SUDBURY-HARDY-MAN PRIZE on the 'Evolution of Branching in the *Filicales*' which was published in the *New Phytologist* of 1917". "In the year 1920 SAHNI published another paper dealing with seed structure of *Taxus* and suggested that the Palaeozoic seeds

*Cycadinocarpus*, *Rhabdospermum*, *Mitrospermum* and *Taxospermum*, all belonging to the *Cordaitales*, illustrated the general tendency which may have operated in producing the types of seeds found in *Taxus*, *Torreya* and *Cephalotaxus*." P. 19: In 1924 Prof. SAHNI, then Head of the Department of Botany at the Lucknow University, was elected President of the Indian Botanical Society which had been founded only three years earlier as the result of his own efforts and those of Profs. W. DUDGEON (Allahabad), S. R. KASHYAP (Lahore) and K. RANGACHARI (Madras), none of whom is with us any more. The subject of Prof. SAHNI's presidential address was 'The Ontogeny of Vascular Plants and the Theory of Recapitulation'."

HALLE, p. 22: "Even a cursory glance at BIRBAL SAHNI's work on fossil plants inevitably conveys a vivid impression of its extraordinary compass and variety. His researches, in fact, ranged over practically the whole field of palaeobotany."

Following S. R. NARAYANA RAO, p. 48: "No notice of Prof. SAHNI's work or life would be complete without a reference to his wife, SRIMATI SAVITRI SAHNI, whose understanding sympathy and companionship meant everything to him. She always accompanied him on his scientific travels and took part in many of his geological excursions. Her unflinching devotion in no small measure contributed to the great scientific achievements of Prof. SAHNI.

Finally, I would like to point out as follows:

The inter- and multidisciplinary research concept was not only emphasized by Professor SAHNI, but was realized, too, in his work. I would like to stress again and again the importance of the hard work as a single way for scientific advancement.

The necessity of a world-wide correspondence and publication exchange, which seems to be now also the unique opportunity to keep the world standard in the scientific research activity.

The life and the work of Prof. SAHNI is an excellent ideal for the young students and young scientists.

Szeged, 8. April, 1991.

M. KEDVES  
head of the laboratory