DEDICATION

This Festschrift to Professor C. V. Subramanian has been brought out to mark his sixtieth birthday and to greet him on the occasion. Elected a Fellow when he was barely 31, Subramanian has been closely associated with the Academy as Chairman, Editorial Board for Plant Sciences since 1976 and as a Vice-President since 1977.

Born in Ernakulam, Subramanian is the son of C. M. Venkatachalier, a leading lawyer. Having lost his father at an early age, he was brought up by his mother. He had his schooling and early education in Ernakulam and then joined the Presidency College, Madras from where he graduated with an Honours degree in Botany with a first class first in the University in 1944. In the same year he joined the University Botany Laboratory, Madras and came under the tutelage of Professor T. S. Sadasivan. Subramanian was greatly stimulated by S. D. Garrett’s Root Disease Fungi and Selman Waksman’s Microbial Antagonism and Antibiotic Substances. He obtained his Ph.D. (1947) and D.Sc. (1957) degrees from the University of Madras. His first appointment was with the University of Madras in 1951. He was the first to hold the Chair in Plant Pathology at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi (1958–60) and the Chair in Botany at the University of Rajasthan (1960–64) at Jodhpur and then at Jaipur. He has been Professor (from 1964) and later Director (since 1973), Centre for Advanced Study in Botany, University of Madras where he has built up an active school of research in fungal taxonomy and ecology.

Subramanian has been engaged in research and teaching Mycology and Plant Pathology for more than three decades. His chief original research contributions are in the field of taxonomy and biology of fungi. His early interest in soil mycology led to his pioneering work on the autecology of Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. vasinfectum, the cotton wilt pathogen whose positive susceptibility to microbial antagonism in soil and efficient mode of perennation as a competitive colonizer on plant debris were demonstrated and, for this reason, was classified as a soil inhabitant. In later work, Subramanian elucidated the occurrence and status of Fusaria of Indian soils in a series of papers. He has continued his interest in fungal ecology: and over a period of years he has made significant contributions to our knowledge of fungal ecology, especially coprophilous, marine, and soil and litter fungi.

His most outstanding contributions are in the field of Hyphomycetology, in which he is a world authority. His painstaking work of over two decades culminated in the publication of a monograph entitled “HYPHOMYCETES” by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in 1971. He subsequently refined the earlier concepts on conidiogenesis and also presented a new terminology pertaining to conidiogenesis. He examined in detail the origin and nature of conidial chains and discussed the relationship of phialidic Hyphomycetes to their teleomorphs. The recently published book, HYPHOMYCETES: TAXONOMY AND BIOLOGY (1983 Academic Press, London) is his magnum opus, and it reflects his depth of understanding, comprehensive experience and critical analysis.

His extensive collections in South India have brought to light a large number of
microfungi, interesting or new to science. Much of the work on microfungi from the forests of the Western Ghats is yet to be published. Several fungi of potential use in biotechnology, medicine and agriculture have been described or isolated and these await evaluation.

There has been a growing prejudice against taxonomy in recent times. Yet it remains one of the most difficult among scientific disciplines, requiring keen powers of observation, thorough understanding of variation and its significance and the ability to form judgements concerning the delimitation of various taxa in any scheme of classification. Scientists like Subramanian who combine these qualities are indeed becoming rare and unless taxonomy is given its due place we would continue to be ignorant about our enormous wealth of mycobiota. The constant search for newer organisms for use in microbial processes has to be aided by scientists who have special taxonomic knowledge.

Subramanian has chaired special sessions in International Conferences too numerous to be listed here and he was also leader of the delegations which represented India at the two International Mycological Congresses so far held. The most prestigious of his international assignments is his election as President of the International Mycological Association in 1977 and the pivotal role he played in that capacity in securing a key position for Mycology in the International Union of Biological Sciences. An aspect that singles out Subramanian from other specialists is his commitment to and support for science as a whole. He has found time to write an exciting book THE MICROBES for school children (1974, NCERT, New Delhi). He is editor-in-chief of KAVAKA (Transactions of the Mycological Society of India).

Many honours have been bestowed upon Subramanian, of which mention may be made of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize (1965), Birbal Sahni Medal (1972), Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Prize (1972–73) and the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship (1976–78). He was Vice-President, XIII International Botanical Congress, Sydney, 1981 and a Member of the University Grants Commission, 1979–82. The Indian National Science Academy elected him a Fellow in 1960. He is a Corresponding Member of the Belgian Royal Academy of Foreign Sciences (1978) and of the Mycological Society of America (1982).

Subramanian's secret of youthfulness springs from abundant curiosity, perennial enthusiasm to learn, subtle humour, passion for classical music, and above all deep interest in philosophy. We wish him many years of activity, good health, happiness and the much needed time to complete the stock of unfinished tasks. To his wife Lakshmi and his two sons who have stood by him in his work we offer greetings and best wishes.

The spontaneous response of several authors from India and abroad to our invitation to contribute papers for this special issue is gratefully acknowledged.

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H. Y. Mohan Ram
Member, Editorial Board
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