

Some of my memories with Dr. S.K. Jain

Mark D. Merlin

Botany Program, School of Life Sciences,
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawaii
Corresponding author: merlin@hawaii.edu

I first met Dr. S.K. Jain in Sydney, Australia in late August 1981 at the XIII International Botanical Congress, where I presented two papers, one on the “Flora and vegetation on recent Samoan lava flows,” and the second on “Contemporary use of hallucinogenic fungi in the Hawaiian Islands.” The second presentation was invited by Dr. Jain to be part of his special ethnobotany symposium in that botanical congress.

Based on that experience and presentation, Dr. Jain subsequently invited me to present two related papers in the Symposium on Ethnobotany for Human Welfare organized by S.K. Jain for the XI International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, August 1983. The two invited papers that I presented in that Congress dealt with “Prehistoric Use of Psychoactive Drug Plants: A Worldwide Perspective” and “Recent Use of Psychoactive Mushrooms in Some Tropical Pacific Islands.” Both of these papers were presented in Dr. Jain’s “Symposium on Plants in Folklore and Folk life” at this international congress, and both eventually were published in refereed journals. Some years later, S.K. invited me to present a paper, “Psychoactive Resources of the Ancient Eurasian Shaman: An Ecological Perspective,” in Zagreb, Yugoslavia (now officially in Croatia) at the XII International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, July 24-31, 1988.

In 1989, when the journal **Ethnobotany**, produced in India, began publishing, at Dr. Jain’s request I submitted my paper on *Cordyline fruticosa*, a widespread multipurpose shrub with deep spiritual and other important uses throughout much of Oceania; it was published as part of the first issue of *Ethnobotany*. Then for anniversary and other journal issues of **Ethnobotany**, I submitted papers that were also published in this periodical. At the request of Dr. Jain, I also served on the Advisory Board of *Ethnobotany* for several years.

S.K. Jain and I remained in communication with each other for decades and I certainly appreciated his collegiality, his friendship and his humanity. He inspired many, many aspiring ethnobotanists and other scientists, especially in India where there is enormous tribal diversity and associated long lasting relationships with plants, native and introduced to the Indian subcontinent.

Besides his very long life, Dr. Jain’s legacy will live on in India and beyond as he would, I believe, say: There is so much more to learn about and preserve regarding the great heritage of ethnobotanical knowledge developed over the millennia among the traditional peoples of his vast homeland. I remember Dr. S.K. Jain with much admiration and affection.

God Bless you S.K., your friends and colleagues, Mark Merlin.

