

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ramesh Raj Pokharel was born in remote hills of Eastern Nepal on October 10, 1957. He attended a local high school and obtained his Intermediate in Agricultural Science from IAAS, the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science. He was provided a meritorious USAID Scholarship to pursue his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at Haryana Agricultural University in Hissar, India. After the completion of his B. Sc. Ag. degree majoring in plant pathology with honors, he joined the IAAS Campus in Lamjung (in the remote hills region of Central Nepal). Here, he taught associated degree students in different subjects (mostly plant protection) for 8 years. He also held several administrative positions like Farm Manger for the Livestock and Agronomy Farms, and Chairman of the Instruction committee. For his excellent achievements in teaching and other jobs, he was again awarded a USAID- scholarship to pursue his Master of Science (MS) at the University of Philippines in Los Banos, Philippines. He studied Plant Pathology and majored in Nematology. He also joined IRRI, the International Rice Research Institute, as an Affiliated Research Fellow 1 for his Masters thesis research work on nematode problems in rice under the supervision of Dr. Jean C. Prot. After the completion of his Master of Science degree, he rejoined IAAS, this time as a faculty at the Rampur Campus. Here, he taught undergraduate level courses in plant pathology, plant protection and other relevant subjects until August 2001. During 1999- 2001, he also taught MS level students and mentored 3 graduate students.

In addition to teaching, he was actively involved in research, extension and administrative duties. He focused his research on plant-parasitic nematodes, especially in rice and rice-based crops, as rice is the major crop not only in Nepal, but also in SE Asia. Along with many other short-term projects, he worked as nematologist in a long-

term monitoring project of rice-wheat with Dr. Peter Hobbs as the principal investigator. Most of his collaborative projects were multidisciplinary: in addition to nematodes, he had exposure and interest in fungal and viral diseases of crop plants. As such, he collaborated in projects studying viral diseases, especially after the completion of his training in seed-borne viruses in Denmark in 1998. He collaborated with Danish Government Institute of seed-borne pathogens (GISP) in conducting surveys on viral diseases of legumes. At the same time, he continued working on nematodes, collaborating as a nematologist in the Soil-Health Project of the Soil Management CRISP funded by USAID, (John M. Duxbury, PI), studying nematode problem in rice-wheat systems of Nepal, which he continued for his Ph.D. thesis research at Cornell.

As an extension pathologist, he obtained field exposure and interest in IPM while working with growers in pest clinics. For his interest and substantial work with growers, he was awarded “IPM training” for 3 months held in Israel in 1992 and funded by Israel-USA funds. After returning from Israel, he started working on IPM projects. At the same time, he also got a scholarship attending a training in “Sustainable Agriculture” in Bangalore, India in 1993 which was funded by the Ford Foundation, New Delhi. As a result of his excellent performance in the training, he continued working in “Sustainable Agricultural Projects.” Later, he was hired as a consultant expert on sustainable agriculture and IPM working with the South Asian Partnership, Nepal. For excellent work in sustainable agriculture, especially in training, he was awarded a fellowship to participate in “Trainers training on sustainable Agriculture” in Bangalore, India Funded by South Asia Partnership (SAP) Nepal in 1994. As he worked with growers as an extension plant pathologist, he was interested in virus problem of various crops, especially legumes, for which he was awarded “Danida Fellowship” to participate in the study of seed-borne viral pathogens

in Denmark in 1998. With this fellowship, he studied seed-borne viral diseases of legumes in Nepal for 2 months. In addition, he participated in several other trainings, workshops and seminar sessions, held nationally and regionally.

As pathologist, he also served as team member in “Plant Pest Clinic”, diagnosing farmer’s problems in the laboratory and fields. He served as a resource person in “composting and IPM for the rural poor” with the South Asian Partnership, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Later, he joined FORWARD, Forum for Rural Welfare and Agriculture Reform and Development, another NGO, as part time consultant. He was a training expert analyzing farmers' situations and assessing the need for and designing training to implement projects for the rural poor. Meanwhile, he worked as PI in 1999-2000 in a livelihood improvement project through the use of natural resources and IPM in Morang district, Nepal. In addition, he also co-ordinated a training program for farmers and extension workers. He served as a resource person in several training sessions on IPM and plant diseases for trainers and growers as well as extension workers.

In the IAAS Rampur Campus, he also served as Hostel Warden (faculty in residence) for more than 3 years, guiding and supervising more than 500 students in their day to day activities and housing. Latter, he served as chairperson of the Department of Plant Pathology from 1999 to 2001. Because of his contribution in rice research and team co-ordination capacities, he was appointed as coordinator of the rice-wheat research team at IAAS, where he co-ordinated the activities of faculties of different disciplines. He started and established the concept of hiring graduate students as research assistants, with the financial support obtained from Soil Management CRISP Project for research and education. For his hard work and interest in solving the root-knot nematode problem in several crops, he was awarded a research

assistantship at Cornell University in 2001, with support from the USAID funded Soil Management CRISP Project.

At Cornell University, he characterized the isolates of the root-knot nematode collected from different rice-wheat production fields of Nepal and screened growers' rice and wheat varieties and other potential germplasm for resistance to Nepalese isolates. He is happily married to Parbati Bhattarai and blessed with two wonderful kids, son Prabhas and daughter Shreya. He is member of the Society of Nematologists, American Phytopathological Society and life member of Nepalese Society of Agriculturists.

to my parents and grand parents

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Biographical sketch	VI
Dedication	X
Acknowledgment	XI
Introduction	1
Literature cited	9
Chapter I. Characterization of root-knot nematodes from rice-wheat production fields in Nepal and variability of <i>Meloidogyne graminicola</i> isolates from different geographic areas.	13
Abstract	13
Introduction	14
Materials and methods	17
<i>Sample collection and maintenance</i>	17
<i>Morphometric measurements</i>	19
<i>Perineal pattern study</i>	23
<i>Host range study</i>	23
<i>Variability in aggressiveness of the isolates</i>	24
<i>Molecular characterization of isolates from Nepal by the internal transcribed spacer (ITS) region.</i>	26
Results	28
<i>Morphometric Measurements</i>	28
<i>Characterization and variability of perineal patterns</i>	29
<i>Infection, symptoms and host range studies</i>	29
<i>Variability in aggressiveness of the isolates</i>	30
<i>Molecular characterization of isolates by Internally transcribed spacer (ITS) region</i>	38
Discussion	43
Literature Cited	52

Chapter II. Protocol for screening rice and wheat germplams for resistance to <i>Meloidogyne graminicola</i> in greenhouse.	58
Abstract	58
Introduction	59
Materials and methods	61
<i>General Methodology</i>	61
<i>Incubation period</i>	62
<i>Initial inoculum Densities</i>	62
<i>Experimental unit size</i>	63
<i>Age of seedling at inoculation</i>	63
<i>Inoculation Methods,</i>	65
<i>Relationship of infection (RGS) and reproduction (RF)</i>	65
Results	66
<i>Incubation Period</i>	66
<i>Inoculum Densities</i>	67
<i>Experimental Unit</i>	67
<i>Age of Seedling</i>	68
<i>Inoculation Method</i>	69
<i>Relationship of infection severity (RGS) and reproduction (RF) of M. graminicola</i>	70
Discussion	81
Literature Cited	89
Chapter III. Isolate-by-cultivar interaction between <i>Meloidogyne graminicola</i> and selected rice and wheat germplasm.	93
Abstract	93
Introduction	94
Materials and methods	97
<i>Interactions between isolates of M. graminicola and rice germplasm</i>	97
<i>Interactions between isolates of M. graminicola and wheat germplasm</i>	98
<i>Effect of initial inoculum level on variety by isolate interactions in rice and wheat</i>	98

Results	100
<i>Interactions between M. graminicola isolates and rice germplasm</i>	100
<i>Interactions between isolates of M. graminicola and wheat germplasm</i>	101
<i>Effect of initial inoculum density on variety by isolate interactions (rice)</i>	102
<i>Effect of initial inoculum level on variety by isolate interaction (wheat)</i>	103
Discussion	117
Literature Cited	122
Chapter IV. Greenhouse evaluation of rice and wheat germplasm for resistance to <i>Meloidogyne graminicola</i>.	127
Abstract	127
Introduction	128
Materials and methods	129
Results	132
Discussion	156
Literature Cited	163
Overall Summery and conclusions	167
Appendix	170

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1.1.	Sketch map of Nepal showing the collection sites of the Nepalese isolates of root-knot nematodes in Terai (dark brown) and low hills (white) and high hills (light brown.) production regions.	22
Figure 1.2.	Variability in the perineal patterns observed among the Nepalese root-knot isolates showing minor variations in marking (punctuation)	36
Figure 1.3.	Different shape and size of galls, extensive branching and root-tip thickening caused by root-knot nematode infection in rice.	37
Figure 1.4.	Phylogenetic tree of Nepalese, Bangladesh and US isolates of root-knot nematode (<i>M. graminicola</i> , <i>M. graminis</i> and other <i>Meloidogyne</i> species based on ITS sequences.	42
Figure 2.1.	Evaluation of rice germplasms for resistance to <i>M. graminicola</i> in plastic tubes and clay pots.	64
Figure 2.2.	Influence of initial inoculum density of <i>M. graminicola</i> on root galling severity developed on rice cv. Mansuli planting seeds or 4 weeks old seedlings.	71
Figure 2.3.	Influence of initial inoculum density of <i>M. graminicola</i> on reproductive factor values in rice cv. Mansuli established by planting rice seeds or 4-weeks old seedlings.	71
Figure 2.4.	Effect of the plating container small (plastic 150 cc vs clay pot 10 cm) and initial inoculum density (0.5, 1, 2, 4 or 8 eggs/cc soil on root galling severity produced by <i>M. graminicola</i> on rice cv. Mansuli and wheat cv. Brikuti maintained in greenhouse.	72
Figure 2.5.	Effect of the planting container (small tube vs clay pot) on root galling severity and reproductive factors of <i>M. graminicola</i> in rice cv. Mansuli and wheat cv. Brikuti maintained in greenhouse.	72
Figure 2.6.	Effect of planting container (small tube vs 10-cm clay pot)	

	and initial inoculum density (0.4, 1, 2, 4, or 8 eggs/cc) on reproductive factors of <i>M. graminicola</i> in rice cv. Mansuli (A) and wheat cv. Brikuti (B) maintained in greenhouse.	73
Figure 2.7.	Symptom of infection inoculated at seeding by <i>M. graminicola</i> on wheat (A) and rice (B) roots.	74
Figure 2.8.	Symptoms on rice roots inoculated with <i>M. graminicola</i> at transplanting	75
Figure 2.9.	Root-galling severity caused by <i>M. graminicola</i> on rice cv. Mansuli inoculating seeds or 1, 2, 3 and 4 weeks-old seedlings with 1000 and 5000 eggs/cc soils under greenhouse conditions.	76
Figure 2.10.	Reproductive factors (RF) of <i>M. graminicola</i> in rice cv. Mansuli as affected by inoculating seeds or 1, 2, 3, and 4 weeks-old seedlings with 2 and 10 eggs/cc soil under greenhouse condition.	76
Figure 2.11.	Correlation of RF values and RGS ratings resulting from infection by <i>M. graminicola</i> to root weight and the correlation between RF values (A) and RGS(B) in rice cv. Mansuli in the greenhouse	77
Figure 2.12.	Correlation of RF values and RGS resulting from infections by <i>Meloidogyne graminicola</i> to root weight and the correlation between RF values (A) and RGS (B) in wheat cv. Brikuti in the greenhouse.	78
Figure 3.1.	Rice germplasm growing in the greenhouse approximately at 60 days after inoculation with <i>M. graminicola</i> .	99
Figure 3.2.	Symptoms developed on wheat (A) and on rice (B) inoculated with <i>M. graminicola</i> in pots maintained in the greenhouse	116
Figure 4.1.	Root-knot symptoms in susceptible rice cv. Labelle (A) and on wheat cv. Brikuti (B) varieties of following inoculation with <i>M. graminicola</i> in greenhouse test.	135
Figure A 1.1.	Variability in perineal patterns observed among the isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> from Nepal, India, Bangladesh and USA, showg the three minor variants identified (A, B and C).	177
Figure A 1.2.	Symptoms on roots of rice cultivar Labelle resulted	

from inoculation by <i>M. graminicola</i> Florida isolate (A) and Nepalese isolate (B).	178
Figure A 1.3. ITS sequences of root-knot nematodes collected from rice-wheat fields of Nepal, Bangladesh and Nut-sedge grass in Florida, USA.	179
Figure A 1.4. Phylogenetic tree of different isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> collected from Nepal, Bangladesh, India and US and also <i>M. graminis</i> and other root-knot species based on ITS sequences.	188
Figure A 2.1. Influence of initial inoculum density of <i>M. graminicola</i> on root-galling severity developed on rice cv. Mansuli established by planting on seeds of 4 weeks old seedlings in a repeated experiment.	189
Figure A 2.2. Influence of initial densities of <i>M. graminicola</i> on reproductive factor values in rice cv. Mansuli established by planting rice seeds or 4-weeks old seedlings in a repeated experiment	190
Figure A 2.3. Effect of container (small tubes vs pots) and initial inoculum density (0.5, 1, 2, 4 and 8 eggs/cc) on reproductive factors of <i>M. graminicola</i> in rice Cv. Masuli and wheat cv. Brikuti (repeated) maintained in greenhouse.	191
Figure A 2.4. Effect of container (small tubes vs pots) and initial inoculum density (0.5, 1, 2, 4 and 8 eggs/cc) on root-galling severity of <i>M. graminicola</i> in rice Cv. Mansuli and wheat cv Brikuti maintained in greenhouse (repeated).	192
Figure A 2.5. Effect of container (small tubes vs pots) and initial inoculum density (0.5, 1, 2, 4 and 8 eggs/cc) on root-galling severity in rice cv. Mansuli and wheat cv. Brikuti of <i>M. graminicola</i> maintained in greenhouse (repeated).	192
Figure A 2.6. Reproductive factor s (RF) of <i>M. graminicola</i> in rice cv. Mansuli as affected by inoculating seeds or 1, 2, 3 and 4 weeks-old seedlings with 2 and 10 eggs/cc soil under greenhouse condition.	198
Figure A 2.7. Reproductive factors (RF) of <i>M. graminicola</i> in rice cv. Mansuli as affected by inoculating seeds or 1, 2, 3, and 4 weeks-old seedlings with 2 and 10 eggs/cc soil under greenhouse (repeated)	198

LIST OF TABLES

Page

Table 1.1:	Characteristics of sample collection sites of the isolates of root-knot nematodes used in the study	20
Table 1.2:	Morphometric measurements (μm) of larvae of the Nepalese isolates rice in the greenhouse.	31
Table 1.3:	An expanded North Carolina host range tests, for differentiating races of <i>M. graminicola</i>	33
Table 1.4:	Root galling severity (RGS) ratings and reproductive factor (RF) resulting from inoculating roots of rice cv. Labelle and LA 110 with <i>M. graminicola</i> isolates from Nepal.	34
Table 1.5:	GeneBank accession numbers for ITS sequences of isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> collected from Nepal and submitted to GeneBank	40
Table 2.1:	Effect of incubation time and initial inoculum densities on root-galling severity and reproductive factor of <i>Meloidogyne graminicola</i> on rice cv. Mansuli	79
Table 2.2:	Effect of planting materials (seed vs seedling), and inoculation levels and methods on the multiplication of <i>M. graminicola</i> on rice cv. Mansuli.	80
Table 3.1:	Root-galling severity ratings caused by five isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected rice varieties (experiment 1).	104
Table 3.2:	Reproductive factors produced by selected isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected rice varieties (experiment 1)	105
Table 3.3:	Root-galling severity ratings caused by three isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected rice varieties (experiment 2).	106
Table 3.4:	Reproductive factors of selected isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected rice varieties (experiment 2).	107
Table 3.5:	Root-galling severity ratings caused by selected isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected wheat varieties (experiment 2).	108
Table 3.6:	Reproductive factors of selected isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected wheat varieties (experiment 2).	109

Table 3.7:	Root-galling severity ratings caused by three isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected wheat varieties.	110
Table 3.8:	Reproductive factors of selected isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected wheat varieties (assumed to have narrow genetic base).	111
Table 3.9:	Root-galling severity ratings caused by two isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected rice varieties under different initial inoculum densities.	112
Table 3.10:	Reproductive factors of selected isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected rice under different initial inoculum densities.	113
Table 3.11:	Root-galling severity ratings caused by three isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected wheat varieties under different initial inoculum densities.	114
Table 3.12:	Reproductive factors of selected isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected wheat varieties under different initial inoculum densities.	115
Table 4.1:	Root-galling severity (RGS) ratings and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculation of commercial rice varieties developed by Agricultural Systems in Nepal with <i>M. graminicola</i> isolate NP 50.	136
Table 4.2:	Root galling severity (RGS) and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculating commercial rice varieties developed by International Rice Research Institute, Philippines with <i>M. graminicola</i> (isolate # NP 50).	139
Table 4.3:	Root galling severity (RGS) ratings and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculating commercial rice varieties developed by Agricultural Systems in Bangladesh <i>M. graminicola</i> (isolate # NP 50).	141
Table 4.4:	Root galling severity index (RGS) and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculating rice germplasms having resistant genes to other pathogens, inset and hysio-chemical character with <i>M. graminicola</i> (NP 50).	144

Table 4.5:	Results of repeated evaluation of rice varieties/ germplasm which exhibited < 3.0 RGS and <10 RF values in the initial evaluation greenhouse tests. All materials were inoculated with the Nepalese isolate <i>M. graminicola</i> (NP 50).	148
Table 4.6:	Root galling severity (RGS) and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculating commercial wheat varieties/parental lines developed by Agricultural Systems in Nepal with <i>M. graminicola</i> isolate (NP 50).	149
Table 4.7:	Root galling severity index (RGS) ratings and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculating commercial wheat varieties/parental lines developed by Agricultural Systems in Bangladesh with <i>M. graminicola</i> isolate (NP 50).	152
Table 4.8:	Results of repeated evaluation of wheat varieties/germplasm which exhibited < 3.0 RGS and <10 RF in the initial evaluation greenhouse test.	155
Table A 1.1:	Morphometric measurements (μm) of the larvae of the isolates from different countries.	170
Table A 1.2:	Root-galling severity and reproductive factor of <i>M. graminicola</i> isolate no 29 on different crop plants in greenhouse to assess the host status.	171
Table A 1.3:	Host range test of <i>M. graminicola</i> isolates from Bangladesh, India, USA (Florida) and Nepal, an isolate of <i>M. graminis</i> from NY was included for comparison.	172.
Table A 1.4:	Root galling severity (RGS) ratings and reproductive factor (RF) of <i>M. graminicola</i> isolates from Nepal on the susceptible rice cv. Labelle and a resistant cv.LA 110 (repeat experiment)	173
Table A 1.5:	Root-galling severity (RGS) and reproductive factor (RF) of <i>M. graminicola</i> isolates from Nepal susceptible rice cv. Labelle and resistant cv. LA 110 to a Louisiana isolate of <i>M. graminicola</i> (repeat)	174
Table A 2.1:	Reproductive factors (RF) of <i>M. graminicola</i> in rice cv. Mansuli as affected by inoculating seeds or 1, 2, 3, and 4 weeks-old seedlings with 2 and 10 eggs/cc soil under greenhouse condition in a repeated experiment.	194

Table A 2.2:	Effect of planting materials (seed vs seedling), and inoculation density and methods on the multiplication of <i>M. graminicola</i> on rice cv Mansuli in a repeated experiment.	195
Table A 3.1:	Root-galling severity ratings caused by five isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected wheat varieties (experiment 1 repeated).	196
Table A 3.2:	Reproductive factors produced by selected isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected wheat varieties (experiment 1 repeated)	196
Table A 3.3:	Root-galling severity ratings caused by five isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected rice varieties (experiment 1 repeated).	197
Table A 3.4:	Reproductive factors produced by selected isolates of <i>M. graminicola</i> in selected rice varieties (experiment 1 repeated)	197
Table A 3.5:	Effect of inoculum densities on the var x isolate interaction of <i>M graminicola</i> in RGS production in rice.	198
Table A 3.6:	Effect of inoculum densities on the var x isolate interaction of <i>M graminicola</i> in RF production in rice.	198
Table A 3.7:	Effect of inoculum densities on the variety x isolate interaction on RGS caused by <i>M graminicola</i> in wheat.	199
Table A 3.8:	Effect of inoculum level on the var x isolate interaction on the reproductive factor of <i>M graminicola</i> in wheat.	200
Table A 4.1:	Root galling severity (RGS) and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculating commercial rice varieties collected from Nepal with <i>M. graminicola</i> (BP 3).	201
Table A 4.2:	Root galling severity (RGS) and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculating commercial rice varieties collected from Nepal (repeated experiment) with <i>M. graminicola</i> (isolate # BP 3).	202

Table A 4.3: Root galling severity (RGS) and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculating commercial wheat varieties collected from Nepal with <i>M. graminicola</i> (BP 3).	203
Table A 4.4: Root galling severity (RGS) and reproductive factors (RF) resulted from inoculating commercial	204