INTRODUCTION

The Insects comprise about 75% of all the organisms living on this planet. According to Dr. C.B. Williams, a British Entomologist, the total number of insects at any given time is $10^{18}$. In spite of enormous information available on insect varieties, even today, many a insect species are either not known at all or improperly understood. So is true of Chalcidoidea (Hymenoptera). Movement of man, and other commodities due to trade and travel resulted in the introduction of plants and animals to new areas. Monoculture of various crops, felling of trees for increased agricultural hectarage, industrial growth, and human habitation caused ecological disbalance resulting in not only pathological symptoms to man and domestic animals but causing outbreaks of many insect species that came to be known as serious pests for the first time. Use of chemicals, many a time indiscriminate, was and still is considered panacea for the control of pest species. This resulted in a set back to natural populations of predators and parasites of insects which were silently operating under natural conditions. Side effects of the chemicals employed in pest control, and hazards in their application and handling have forced us to give emphasis on alternative control methods. Therefore, as a result integrated pest management came into existence, of which Biological control is one of its important components.
Clausen (1978) listed 1543 species of animals and plants involved in Bio-control programme, of which 1509 are insects alone.

In nature, apart from physical factors, parasites and predators are the main balancing factors. Hymenoptera alone comprise 57.5 percent of total insects involved. Chalcids are quite significant as out of 30 families in the superfamily only 6 are phytophagus, remaining are either parasites or hyperparasites of Insects. In biology, naming and classification of organisms are as fundamental as alphabet of a language. A biologist, therefore, has to be well versed with the fundamental principles and methods of systematics. In the words of late Bodenheimer (1959), "It is essential that every zoologist and certainly every ecologist acquire a good knowledge of some special animal group, no matter how small. Any enquiry into the branch of biology can be reliably conducted only on the basis of accurate taxonomy.... Basic taxonomic information on any group gives the biologist the *Dos, moi, po, sto* of Archimedes, the point from which he may manipulate the lever for any biological problem. A zoologist is definitely not a man who does not know any animal". Taxonomy certainly plays a very important role in biological control programme applications, as it is the only aspect of applied entomology so closely linked with the accurate systematics or biosystematics of the predator or parasite engaged.
Many an examples can be cited where due to incorrect knowledge of identification and scanty details on bionomics of a predator or parasite did not yield expected results (Rosen, 1978). In India many parasites and predators of foreign origin have been tried with limited or no success at all. Families Aphelinidae, Encyrtidae and Trichogrammatidae are the main biocontrol families among Chalcids. They mostly attack eggs and larvae of Hemipterous and Lepidopterous insects. Encyrtids alone make for 40% of the seven successful biocontrol programmes conducted in California (Bosch et al. 1982). Casava mealy bug, *Phenacoccus manihoti* biocontrol project employing *Epidinocarsis lopezi* (Encyrtidae) in Africa is a recent success story. Knowledge on encyrtid fauna is rather scanty considering the vastness, diverse climatic conditions and vegetation of the subcontinent. Being microscopic in size these insects usually go undetected and this remains the main cause that very little work has been done on them. It was contemplated to build a who's who of indigenous parasites and predators with complete information on their host reference, taxonomic status and bionomics. Influenced by all the above mentioned facets and thoughts this taxonomic problem was taken up to bring out facts on Encyrtidae: Chacidoidea and to further strengthen the pedestal of biological control.