

## Obituary for Professor T.N. Ananthakrishnan

(15 December 1925 - 7 August 2015)

Taracad Narayanan Ananthakrishnan (b.15 December 1925), renowned Indian entomologist and insect ecologist, is no more. He passed away in New Jersey (U.S.A.) at 2.30 PM on Friday, 7 August 2015, leaving behind Menaka Ananthakrishnan, Ramdas, Pushpa, Nisha, Arjun, Rane, Aparna, and Ashwini, besides several of us — his doctoral students. Influenced by M.S. Mani, master of Indian entomology of the 1940s, Ananthakrishnan made great strides studying Indian insects from the 1950s. Ananthakrishnan's journey with thrips commenced in mid-1940s. He first looked at the feeding behaviour, population dynamics, and reproductive biology of *Arrhenothrips ramakrishnae*, a thrips described by Joseph Douglas Hood, an American entomologist, based on the materials supplied by Ramakrishna from India, in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Dr. T.N. Ananthakrishnan (1925-2015)**

Approximately until the mid-1970s, with generous funding under the PL-480 scheme, he could travel the length and breadth of India and collect Thysanoptera and describe them. In essence, during these 30-odd years, working in Loyola College, Madras, Ananthakrishnan made immense advances collecting and describing scores of Indian Thysanoptera, which incidentally brought to light their importance in agriculture, horticulture, and forestry.

Between 1950 and 1980, Ananthakrishnan had unravelled 396 new nominal taxa of Thysanoptera, which included 76 new taxa of the genus group and 320 new taxa of the species group. With the experience of collecting and analyzing hundreds of Indian Thysanoptera, Ananthakrishnan was impressed with phenotypic variations he saw in their populations. His interest into the ecology and evolution of animals was gradually evolving and the most opportune moment came in the 1970s, when the University Grants Commission (New Delhi) launched a textbook-writing scheme, which he utilized to write the *General Animal Ecology* with T.R. Viswanathan. This book was, and continues to be, one of those fine books on animal ecology, which was (and is) highly suitable for use by undergraduate and postgraduate students of biology. This book uniquely incorporated ecological details of Indian animals.

He served as the Director of Zoological Survey of India and in 1980 formed the Entomology Research Institute at Loyola College, Chennai. The Entomology Research Institute was established by him with a singular purpose of understanding and explaining the chemical and molecular ecology of insect-plant interactions. He also served as the Co-chair of the IUCN SSC South Asian Invertebrate Specialist Group. An admirable trait in him was his thorough knowledge of animals — from the Protozoa to Mammalia and from their classification to their physiology. He was a born teacher who had the innate skill to teach effectively and inspirationally, be it general zoology or entomology or the ecology of insect-plant interactions -

**Extract from Anantanarayanan Raman Note.**