

## DR. G. THANIKAIMONI (1938-1986)

Dr. G. Thanikaimoni, an eminent palynologist and a botanist passed away on 5th September, 1986 in the tragic hijack event in Karachi. Dr Thanikaimoni, a man of Peace, fell a prey to the cruel hands of terrorism.

'*Thani*'—as he was known to his large circle of friends had acquired international reputation as a versatile palynologist in the scientific community. He was snatched away from our midst while on his way to U.S.A. to attend the Second International Conference on Palaeo-oceanography at Woodshole. He was to present at this conference the results of a regional programme on the Mangroves of Asia and Pacific and a state-of-art report on marine palynology.

Thani did his Master of Science from the University of Madras and joined the French Institute, Pondicherry in 1962 where he pursued his scientific career. In 1970, he was awarded the Doctor of Science (Doctorat d'Etat) Degree for his work on 'Palynology and Systematics of the palms' by the University of Montpellier. This work was noted for his original ideas on the large family Palmae. In the framework of evolutionary systematics, he revised several predominantly tropical families and proposed biogeographic evolution of the species. He was the head of the Palynology Department at the French Institute and trained many young botanists.

His contribution to the understanding of vegetational history of southern India and the evolution of mangroves are significant. He also investigated the pollen spectra of the archaeological sites of Borobudur (Indonesia), Laong Speom (Kampuchea) and Singpra (Thailand) reconstructing their past environmental histories.

He was a noted pollen morphologist who maintained wide and active collaborations with specialists from all over the world. He was a member of the International Working Group on the Terminology. He was invited by the Linnean Society of London to present the synthesis of his excellent findings on the form and function of pollen apertural types in 1983. He combined ecology with palynology to bring out a synthesis of the two disciplines.

Thanikaimoni built up a large reference collection of pollen grains of over 20,000 extant species—the largest in the world for tropical plants, which has been frequently consulted by palynologists both from India and overseas. He also served as a Member of the Scientific Advisory Council of the Birbal Sahni Institute of



Palaeobotany, Lucknow and a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee of The Palaeobotanist.

His monumental Bibliographic Index on the Morphology of Pollen Grains of Angiosperms, which he began in 1972, in five volumes stands a testimony to his memory. It includes 9,000 genera covering 5,300 publications. Indubitably, Dr Thanikaimoni brought Indian Palynology to the forefront of the world scene.

He leaves behind his wife, a son, a daughter and a vast circle of friends and fellow-scientists throughout the world who will remember him for ever. Dr Thanikaimoni possessed an untiring energy for work, an insatiable thirst for knowledge, an indomitable zeal to explore new avenues of research and unusual power of self adaptation with different types of people. The community of palynologists will ever miss their dear friend—**Thani**