

## REBALA VENKATA SESHAIYA

(1898—1973)

Elected F. N. I. 1961

REBALA VENKATA SESHAIYA was born on February 8, 1898 as the only son in a middle class family at Nellore, Andhra Pradesh. After his schooling in the American Mission School at Nellore, he joined the Madras Christian College in 1913 and secured a first class-first rank in B.Sc. (Hons.) Zoology examination in 1919 and won a microscope (on his preference) as '*Caithness Prize*' which actually gave him the added impetus for research. After working as Demonstrator and Lecturer in Zoology for two years, he served as Headmaster of the Mahanth High School, Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh) for ten years, during which period he established there an excellent museum of local fauna and flora. Even today this stands in testimony to his love, enthusiasm, and deep dedication for the subject and for its teaching.

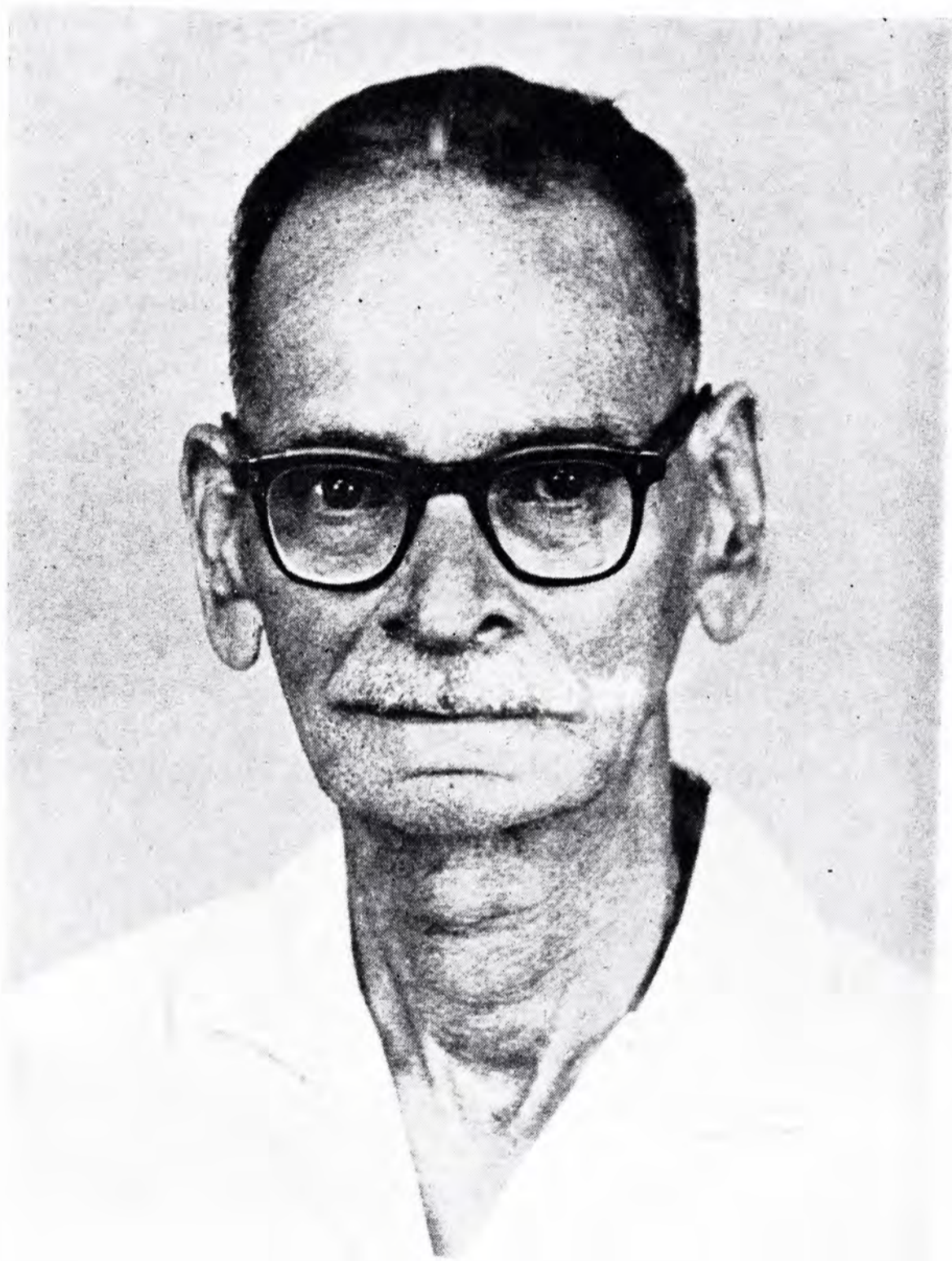
### RESEARCH CAREER

The name of Professor R. V. Seshaiya will continue to occupy a prominent place in the history of zoology in India. His researches on molluscs are classic in invertebrate embryology and helped lay the strong foundation on which the molluscan embryology in this country stands very high. With his ability and perseverance, coupled with his insight and broad vision, he embarked on an active research programme and continued it for fifty years, bringing forth a steady flow of articles and reviews in addition to many theses.

### A GREAT TEACHER

Professor Seshaiya was a born teacher who broke all the rules and yet he was profoundly successful. He was a man of extraordinary parts and could do well in anything he undertook, as a student, as a teacher and as a researcher. He was ever a good and successful teacher and it was that which counted. Apart from his scholarly writing, much of what we know of the teaching genius of him was the spoken testimony of many of his students, colleagues and admirers. He was known by the mark he had left on his students. It was certainly not a mark of indoctrination because he had two particular attributes, namely the ability to awaken and to stimulate delight in the use of the mind together with a belief (almost a religious faith) in its value to the students. He was admired most because he engendered in his students a pleasure, a joy, a raised awareness in intellectual





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activity. Most of his students discovered pleasure in following his ideas, satisfaction in discovering where they led to though this did not come always easily to one and all. The maturity and intellect of this teacher got translated to some of his students so that they went beyond the years. Professor Seshaiya not only believed in this but actually practised it admirably. It always manifested in his words and deeds.

As a researcher, he was an interpreter in the house of learning in the sense he was able to put a student in connection with a problem and lead him to seek, prove and press an engagement with it on his own. In his role as interpreter, his own heart and convictions came through subtly and quietly. As a teacher, with a broad vision and an open mind for facts, he believed that rote learning today is worth even less. To him, teaching and research were like two poles of the magnet since neither had much force without the other. According to him, the link between good scholarship and good teaching should always remain very strong and a balance must be kept to preserve the dignity of the teacher-scholar as a teacher, not solely as a scholar.

He advocated to his students, to his colleagues and to all the educators that meaningful and personalised contacts between the teacher and the taught be maintained in order that the teachers, who are interpreters to the coming generations, will leave their mark on them : the mark of maturity, of the use of mind, of thoughtful conviction.

All those who came under his influence found in him a wise guide and a strict disciplinarian with an eye for precision and perfection. His capacity to spot the latent potential in a student and to inspire him with an infective enthusiasm was unrivalled.

### BOOK LOVER

Professor Seshaiya remained a bachelor and the only love in his life was the love for knowledge. His whole life was dedicated to work and learning. His love for books was legendary and his personal collection contained thousands of volumes practically on every subject on earth. His profound learning was such that he could talk with authority on English literature as he would on embryology of molluscs.

### AT THE ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY

Professor Seshaiya has left an indelible mark on the Departments of Zoology and Marine Biology of Annamalai University where he served as Head in succession for nearly four decades. With dedication, he took active and personal interest in all his students and helped them in every way and many were his unknown acts of kindness and generosity. With his characteristic ability and thoroughness, he gave his undivided attention to the proper and full development of the Department of Zoology first and to the Centre of Advanced Study in Marine Biology later and thus has left behind him a tradition of excellence, scholarship and industry. He persistently refused to accept various positions and jobs offered to him, time and again, and remained loyally wedded to the Departments of Zoology and Marine



Biology of Annamalai University till the end. He lived a very simple, austere life and his wants were always very few. He was a good conversationalist and a ready wit. He did his work all the time with humility without expecting any rewards and he trained his students to take up a similar attitude.

### HONOURS

In a befitting manner and in recognition of his valuable contributions he was elected President of Zoological Society of India and of the Zoology Section of the Indian Science Congress in 1964-65. He was also invited to many Universities in India for special lectures.

The name of the late Professor Seshaiya will always be remembered as a dedicated Zoologist who pursued his work with acknowledged success, ceaseless devotion, singleness of purpose, and as the founder father of the Centre of Advanced Study in Marine Biology of Annamalai University at Parangipettai. He retired in June 1970, after a record period of continuous service of forty years in Annamalai University and died on February 21, 1973 after a very brief illness. He has left behind a handful of his students to carry on his tradition of excellence with devotion, dedication and humility.

R. NATARAJAN

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