

## OBITUARY



**Prof. V.K.K. Prabhu**  
**1935–2025**

Born on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1935 to Mr. Krishna Prabhu and Mrs. Sundari Bhai at Kottayam in Kerala state, Kesav Prabhu has had his early education in the town itself. He passed ESLC examination with first class in 1951. After completing his intermediate programme in CMS college Kottayam with first class and distinction, Keshav Prabhu continued his under graduate education in SB college Changanassery, which also he passed with first rank and first class. His main option was zoology with chemistry as subsidiary, for which he won the C. John Memorial gold medal. Young Prabhu continued his college education and joined for Master's degree in Zoology in the University college, Trivandrum and passed out with colours. He continued for doctoral studies on nerve anatomy and neuro secretion in *Jonespeltis splendidus*, an arthropod. All his degrees were from the University of Travancore/ University of Kerala; subsequently he worked as a Post-Doctoral fellow and a Research Associate, mentored by Prof K.K. Nayar at the Department of Zoology, University of Kerala. He started his career as a Lecturer in Zoology in the University of Kerala at Calicut centre from 1964, continued in that capacity or on deputation till he became a Reader in 1975. He was appointed as a Professor in the Department of Zoology, University of Kerala in 1978. In the early 1970s, Prof. Prabhu engaged classes in physiology to Biochemistry students in the Kerala University Senate campus as testified by Prof. P.R. Sudhakaran, who later became the Head of that department. Prof. Sudhakaran remembers him as a very disciplined scientist and as an efficient teacher.

Prof. Prabhu was on deputation in U.S.A as a Fellow at Worcester foundation on experimental biology at Massachusetts under the Ford foundation training program on Reproductive Biology. He also was on deputation for a training in electron microscopy in Germany in early 1970s. Prof. Prabhu participated and presented papers in several international symposia held in Czech Republic, New Delhi, Japan, Hong Kong etc, with Commonwealth foundations grant. He also participated, presented papers and chaired sessions in several National Symposia. He mentored around 8 people for Doctoral Research and several students for their MPhil and Master degrees. Prof. Prabhu was a well-known insect physiologist after his mentor K.K. Nayar, who was a well-known insect neuroendocrinologist and physiologist internationally. In fact, Prof. K.K. Nayar brought in grants to the University of Kerala from Ford foundation and PL480 scheme from U.S. that helped Prof. Prabhu also to continue that legacy. Well known Comparative

Endocrinologists like Prof A. Gorbman and Prof H.A. Bern visited the Department of Zoology several times in the 1970s on his invitation. He has been a member of several scientific societies including the New York Academy of Sciences.

Prof V.K.K. was closely associated with the establishment of Association for the Advancement of Entomology, back in 1975. When Prof. Nayar passed away in 1975, Prof V.K.K. took the leadership in starting the Journal ENTOMON, as Managing Editor and the first issue was brought out in 1976 dedicating to Prof. Nayar. Prof. V.K.K. Prabhu had been Secretary-Treasurer of the Association for the Advancement of Entomology and the Managing Editor of the prestigious journal ENTOMON for several years from 1975. His tenure as the Managing Editor of ENTOMON for many years and brought name and fame to the Journal and still ENTOMON stands out as a prestigious Journal in our Country. It is his hard work during the formative years that maintained the periodicity and quality of the Journal. As part of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of AAE, Entomocongress - an International Congress was organised in Technopark, Trivandrum organised under the able guidance and leadership of Prof V.K.K.

I am very happy that Prof Prabhu had completed four research projects funded by national funding agencies including UGC and INSA. His contribution to teaching and research in Zoology, particularly in the area of Entomology in our state are enormous. Prof. Prabhu had been the member of Board of Studies of the Universities of Kerala and Calicut, was the member of the Faculty of Sciences in the University of Kerala, Scientific panel of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research for Entomology and Nematology. He was on the panel of Referees of several agencies in India and abroad. He had evaluated several research projects submitted to CSIR, ICAR, DST, and BARC. He was on the board of examiners to evaluate PhD theses of several Universities in India and abroad.

I have had the privilege of working with him for over 20 years as a faculty in the Department and enjoyed his suggestions in the running of Department of Zoology for several years. His contributions to the Department will be remembered by his Doctoral students who later occupied several key positions in India and abroad and all his Masters and M Phil students who also entered into the scientific arena of our state and elsewhere. His doctoral students included Dr. R.V. Varma, the late Dr. V.K. Krishnan Nair, Dr. D. Muraleedharan, Dr. Ambika Varma, Dr. Geetha Bhaskar, Dr. Mariamma Mathew, to name a few. Prof. Prabhu's contributions to science in general and insect physiology, in particular will be remembered by scientists working in those areas through his publications in both well-known national and international journals. His contributions include Hormonal regulation of feeding digestion and reproductive aspects in insects with insight into insect endocrinology as well. His studies on *Dysdercus cingulatus*, *Hyblea puera* etc., demonstrated the endocrine mechanisms controlling insect growth and metabolism. His researches on the effects of plant-derived compounds on ovarian development in juvenile insects paved the way for developing natural alternatives to synthetic pesticides. His works extended beyond physiology and led to environmentally safe pest control strategies.

While we mourn his loss, we also celebrate his enduring legacy-something which will continue to sustain through the knowledge he imparted, the research he pioneered and the students he mentored.

He is survived by his wife, Dr. Nirmala Prabhu, sons, Dr. Nirmalkumar Prabhu and Dr. Pradeep Prabhu, all medical professionals and their families.

May his soul Rest in Peace.

**Prof. Dr. Oommen V. Oommen FNASc., FRE, FAS**

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Department of Zoology,  
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