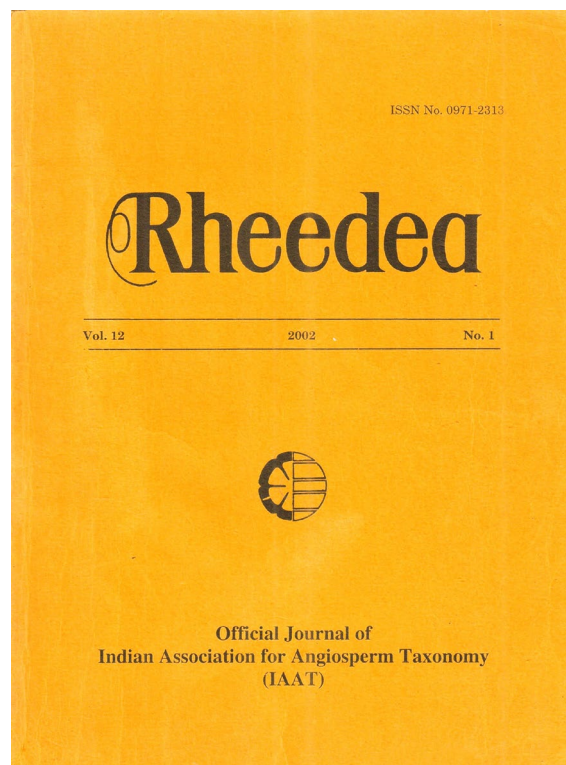




## Obituary: Rev. Fr. Dr. Cecil John Saldanha, S.J. (1926-2002)

Sanjappa M.



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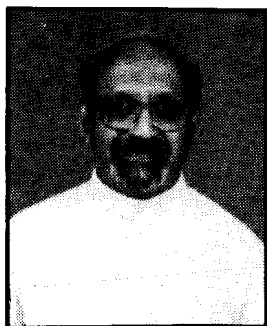
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## Obituary

### Rev. Fr. Dr. Cecil John Saldanha, S.J. (1926-2002)



Rev. Fr. C.J. Saldanha, the renowned taxonomist-ecologist, passed away on 7 April 2002, at the age of 75 after a brief illness. Born on 27 December 1926 at Mangalore in Karnataka State, Fr. Saldanha had his schooling at St. Aloysius College High School, Mangalore. He had his initial college education at St. Aloysius College, Mangalore and moved to St. Xavier's to do his B.Sc (Hons.) in biology. Joining the Society of Jesus in 1945, he studied theology in France and became an ordained priest in July 1958. His thesis on the taxonomic revision of the Scrophulariaceae of western Peninsular India, done under the supervision of the reputed taxonomist and a fellow-jesuit Fr. H. Santapau of St. Xavier's College, Bombay, got him his Ph.D. in 1963.

St. Joseph's College, Bangalore was his place of dream. He was instrumental in establishing the teaching and research department of botany there, and was the founder-director of the Centre for Taxonomic Studies there. Though was the Vice-Principal and Principal of the college for sometime, administration was not his cup of tea. He always loved teaching and research and making young committed botanists.

A renowned field botanist, he was more keen in remaining in the field than in the laboratory in his early years. His love for taxonomy and ecology ultimately ended up in the much researched flora of Hassan district in 1976 which was acclaimed as a model of a district flora. This was done as a collaborative project with another reputed taxonomist Dr. Dan H. Nicolson of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., U.S.A. All his collections are now in the herbarium at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore where he was a Professor Emeritus in his later years. His passion for taxonomy did not stop with the district flora he produced for others to emulate. He continued the work on the flora of the Karnataka State and brought out the first 2 volumes with funding from the Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India. As he became deeply interested in issue concerning environment and development, the Island Development Authority of the Planning Commission asked him to make an in-depth study of the Andaman & Nicobar and the Lakshadweep Islands. Commissioned by the Govt of Karnataka, he also brought out Karnataka's state of the environment series.

Fr. Saldanha was associated with a number of multidisciplinary environmental impact assessment studies and projects involving resource utilization and industrial development. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to ecology and environment, the Govt. of

Karnataka honoured him with the Rajyotsava Award, and the Govt. of India with the Pitambar Pant National Fellowship.

Fr. Saldanha was a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore and also a Life Member and Fellow of the Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy (IAAT). He served in the Editorial Board of the *Rheedea*, the official journal of the IAAT. He was also a member of several panels of the State and the Centre on matters pertaining to ecology and environment, and an advisor to the Prime Minister of India.

A noble soul that he was Fr. Saldanha reserved his intelligence, profound knowledge and wealth for the welfare of others – the community at large. All his life he was a role model of the saying:

River never drink their own water  
Trees never eat their own fruits  
The wealth of noble people  
is for the welfare of others.

*Requiescat in pace.*

**M. Sanjappa**