

Prof Mahesh Rangarajan, historian and researcher, receives the TN Khoshoo Memorial Award 2014

Prof Mahesh Rangarajan, historian and researcher, and Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, received the 11th TN Khoshoo Memorial Award at Bangalore on 6 November 2014.

Professor Rangarajan receives the TN Khoshoo Memorial Award 2014 for adding depth to our understanding of the environment through an analysis of the history of nature-society interactions. Dr Bawa, President, ATREE, says, *“Mahesh Rangarajan has been a thoughtful writer and commentator on major environmental issues of our time. He has recently called for new, more holistic approaches to conservation.”* Professor Rangarajan is a prolific writer, exploring ideas on environment through multiple disciplines—history, politics and environment—and stimulating thought on how the history of humanity’s co-existence with forests and wildlife could revise current conservation practice.

Prof Rangarajan, on receiving the award, *“It is humbling as well as an honour. This award is less a recognition of my individual effort as a student of history and much more a recognition of the significance of history and the humanistic disciplines in the search for an environmentally sound future. It has been my privilege to have had exceptional teachers, colleagues, students and citizen who have engaged with these issues. Their work and insight has informed not only research and writing but the development of environmental history in India. It is also especially humbling for me to receive an award named after a distinguished scientist like Dr Khoshoo.”*

The annual TN Khoshoo Memorial Lecture was replaced by a panel discussion this year, on a topic relevant to all stakeholders of environment and development: *‘Challenges to conservation in the context of a pro-growth development agenda’*. The panel discussion featured Prof Rangarajan; Praveen Bhargav, Managing Trustee, Wildlife First; and Vidya Athreya, Research Associate, Centre for Wildlife Studies and Wildlife Conservation Society– India chapter, and recipient of the TN Khoshoo Memorial Award in 2012. The discussion was moderated by Shri Jairam Ramesh, Chair, Future Earth Engagement Committee, former Union Minister for Rural Development and previously Minister for Environment and Forests, also Chief Guest for the evening. Shri Jairam Ramesh said that if ecological concerns affect livelihood and livelihood security today, it is not inclusive growth. The panel concluded that growth, for a country like India, needs be rapid, inclusive and most of all, sustainable. Dr Balachander Ganesan, Director, ATREE, *“Finding a balance between the aspirations for development and growth and maintaining the ecological integrity of ecosystems is the key to sustainability.”*

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The TN Khoshoo Memorial Award recognizes outstanding contribution in the fields of conservation and sustainable development. It is given annually in memory of renowned environmental scientist, the late Dr Triloki Nath Khoshoo. Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) organizes the award event.

PROFILES

Professor Mahesh Rangarajan

Prof Rangarajan has been selected for contributing to our understanding of nature-society interactions through his ideas and scholarship on history, politics and environment. His research explores how the history of humanity's co-existence with forests and wildlife could revise current conservation practice, and his writings have made these ideas on the environment and environmental issues accessible to academic as well as popular media. Prof Mahesh Rangarajan has a special interest in environmental history and colonial history of British and contemporary India.

Prof Rangarajan is Director of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. He did his BA in History from Hindu College, University of Delhi. He was awarded a BA and MA in Modern History by Balliol College and did his doctorate at Nuffield College, both in Oxford University (where he was a Rhodes Scholar, 1986-89).

He has taught at Cornell and Jadavpur Universities and at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru. From 2007-11, he was Professor in Modern Indian History at the Department of History, University of Delhi. In 2010, he was chair of the Elephant Task Force of the Government of India.

His first book, *Fencing the Forest*, was published in 1996. His works include the co-edited *Environmental History as if Nature Existed (2010)*, *India's Environmental History (2012)* and two recent books, *Nature without Borders (2014)* and *Shifting Ground (2014)*. He is working on a collection of essays titled *Nature and Nation*.

Praveen Bhargav

Managing Trustee, Wildlife First. Praveen Bhargav has been a volunteer activist in wildlife conservation since 1982. In 1995, he co-founded Wildlife First, which carries out wildlife advocacy campaigns. He has represented Wildlife First on the National Board for Wildlife, the highest advisory body on wildlife, chaired by the Prime Minister. He has also served on various committees of the Ministry of Environment and Forests and carried out field appraisals of Tiger Reserves for the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

Vidya Athreya

Research Associate, Centre for Wildlife Studies and Wildlife Conservation Society–

India chapter, and recipient of the TN Khoshoo Memorial Award in 2012.

Vidya Athreya is an ecologist. Her focus is on wildlife outside Protected Areas, where she studies the ecology and dynamics of human-animal conflict through scientific research, and involvement of the key stakeholders— the Forest Department and local communities. Her work questions known paradigms of large cats living among humans. Her findings have led her to believe that large-carnivore persistence in human use landscapes has to do as much with the ecology of the species as with the social, political and cultural aspects of the human-animal interactions.

Shri Jairam Ramesh

Jairam Ramesh is an economist and politician belonging to Indian National Congress. He was Minister of Rural Development and, prior to that, Minister of State (Independent Charge) at the Ministry of Environment and Forests from May 2009 to July 2011. Jairam

Ramesh studied public policy and management at Carnegie Mellon University in 1975-77, and later, an interdisciplinary policy programme at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Dr. Triloki Nath Khoshoo

(27 April 1927-10 June 2002)

Dr. Triloki Nath Khoshoo was a world-renowned environmental scientist and an able administrator. Dr. Khoshoo started his professional career as co-founder of the Department of Botany at the Punjab University, Lahore, which moved to Khalsa College, Amritsar, soon after the partition of India. After a brief stint as Chairman of the Botany Department at Jammu and Kashmir University, he joined the National Botanical Gardens, Lucknow, in 1964 as Assistant Director. He soon became the Director, and due to his untiring efforts, the institution rose to the stature of being the National Botanical Research Institute in 1978.

Dr Khoshoo became the first Secretary of the newly created Department of Environment of the Government of India in 1982, with the responsibility of developing an Environment Policy for the country. In 1985, he joined the Tata Energy Research Institute as a Distinguished Fellow and contributed to public policy discussions at national as well as international forums. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1992 and the Sasakawa Environment Prize by the United Nations Environment Programme in 1996.

Dr. Khoshoo was a prolific writer. Over the course of five decades, he authored more than 250 research papers on plant genetics and evolution, biomass, energy, forestry, conservation and, the utilization and management of natural resources. He has written seven books and edited eleven more on a wide range of subjects. His book '*Mahatma Gandhi: An Apostle of Applied Human Ecology*', published in 1996, was widely applauded for his interpretation of the practical relevance of Gandhian views.

ATREE

ATREE is a research institute whose mission is to promote socially just environmental conservation and sustainable development by generating rigorous interdisciplinary knowledge that engages actively with academia, policy makers, practitioners, activists, students and wider public audiences. ATREE works primarily in the hotspots of the Western Ghats and eastern Himalayas. It provides an interface between on-ground practice and policies through long-term engagements with local communities at its field stations.

ATREE is headed by President, Dr Kamal Bawa and Director, Dr Ganesan Balachander.