

'Look at the world from the earthworm's viewpoint'

Bangalore, Nov 30: Prof Srinivas was a world-renowned social anthropologist and an international authority on Indian society, in particular the caste system. He wrote several books on these and related subjects, including *The Remembered Village*, which is a classic in sociological literature.



an outstanding social scientist, but also a sensitive human being and keen observer. He was one of the authors of the *Bangalore*

This book was put together from memory and scraps of whatever documents survived a fire that burnt down his office at Stanford during the height of the Vietnam disturbances in the US (1970-71).

His recent work included a collection of essays titled *Indian Society Through Personal Writings* and an edited volume on *Caste: Its 20th Century Avatar*. His other works are: *Marriage and Family in Mysore, Caste in Modern India and other Essays, Social Change in Modern India; The Remembered Village, The Dominant Caste and other Essays, The Cohesive Role of Sanskritisation and other Essays*.

Prof Srinivas was not only

Declaration on Information Technology for Developing Societies, adopted in November 1998 at a seminar on the *Global Village*.

Srinivas founded the discipline of social anthropology in India, started departments on the subject in Baroda and Delhi, and co-founded the Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC) in Bangalore.

Before accepting the JRD Tata professorship at NIAS, Srinivas held a variety of posts in India and abroad — Joint Director at ISEC, Professor of Sociology at the Universities of Delhi and Baroda, visiting professor at Oxford, New England, Cambridge, Stanford, Cornell, Canberra, Wel-

lesley College, National University of Singapore and IIT, Chennai. He did his MA, LLB. After completing his PhD from the Bombay University and D.Phil from Oxford, he spent three years as University lecturer in Indian Sociology at Oxford.

He was a Fellow of the British Academy, Honorary Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute and Foreign Hon-

OBIT: M N SRINIVAS

orary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Foreign Honorary Member American Philosophical Society, Honorary Life Member of South Asia Association, Australia, and Life Member of Indian Sociological Society.

The Union Government conferred on Srinivas the Padma-bhushan in 1976. The other awards were: Rivers Memorial Medal (1955); S C Roy Medal (1958); Naoroji Prize, (1971); Huxley Medal (1976), G S Ghurye Award, 1978.

New Delhi, Nov 30: *Perhaps we will never find a sociologist as great as Prof M.N. Srinivas.*

This is how the first Indian student of renowned sociologist and Padma-bhushan awardee Prof M N Srinivas responded when he heard of his teacher's death on Tuesday. Prof Srinivas passed away in Bangalore after a brief illness. He was 83. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Prof A M Shah, retired professor of Sociology in Delhi University, is the first student Srinivas taught when he set up the department of Sociology in the university of Baroda.

"For 49 years, I have kept in touch with him," says Shah.

Sociologist Andre Betielle, a lecturer of Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics, had written in a journal in 1996: "Srinivas's reputation and that of the Delhi School of Economics attracted a succession of dedicated students from all parts of the country and from overseas. The place became a hive of intellectual activity and weekly research seminars over which Srinivas presided were among the best I have attended anywhere in the world."

For four decades, Srinivas has been an authority on caste in contemporary society and politics. His books — *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India, The Remembered Village, Social Change in Modern India* — are elementary textbooks of sociology and his

thesis on *Sanskritisation*, the "dominant caste" and vertical (inter-caste) and horizontal (intra-caste) solidarities have shaped Indian sociological theory.

Srinivas became an academician by chance. The youngest of four sons, his family had wanted him to be a civil servant. Srinivas was not interested in taking another public examination as he had failed to secure a first division in BA.

He joined the Mumbai university for higher studies. In 1948, he became a lecturer in Indian Sociology at Oxford.

Says B S Bavisker, a student of Srinivas, "The professor had a fine sense of humour. I remember how Prof Srinivas would make his students present papers every week. He never addresses the speaker by name. He always addressed him as the Prince of Denmark."

Many of Srinivas's students remember him as a teacher who "hated the bookish style of imparting education. The professor wanted his students to be involved in class. Blank looks were not tolerated".

Says Prof Yogendar Singh of JNU: "I have met Srinivas on a number of occasions. But what comes to mind is an evening in Paris where we were attending a conference.

"Srinivas told me that it was important that a sociologist look at the world from the earthworm's eye-view point than a bird's eye view."