Obituary: The Rev. Father Dr. V. S.
Manickam S. J. (1944–2012)

Dr. A. BENNIAMIN
Botanical Survey of India, Itanagar

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With the passing away of Rev. Father Dr. Visuvasam Sousai Manickam, Pteridology in India has lost one of its great stalwarts. Father Manickam died on the 30th March 2012 at St. Mary’s Higher Secondary School, Madurai, bringing to an end a life of 68 years spent in spiritual quest and in the pursuit of Pteridology.

Born on 1st June 1944, in the small village of Kamalapuram, Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu, as one of several children, the second son of Visuvasam Paripooranam. After his local school studies he joined the Society of Jesus at Beschi College, Dindigul, in 1961 and studied religion for two years. He then went to Chennai to pursue his college studies and was ordained as a priest at Loyola College, Madras (as Chennai then was) in 1964–1967. He chose an undergraduate course in Botany at Loyola College, which he passed with a high mark and then went on to do a postgraduate course in Botany at St. Joseph’s College, Tiruchirappalli (Trichy), earning a first class degree through his dedication and attention to detail.

Following this and his awakening interest in Botanical studies, he was awarded a Ph.D. in Botany in 1975 at the University of Kerala, Thiruvanantapuram (Trivandrum), which he joined in 1971. He studied there under the guidance of Professor C. A. Ninan, in the school of the late Professor A. Abraham, to learn fern cytology. It was under Prof. Ninan’s stimulating supervision that he developed his ground-breaking research studying the cytology of South Indian ferns and carried out extensive detailed fieldwork on the Pteridophytes of the Western Ghats from 1969 onwards. He was able to explore the entire Palni Hill range, surveying and collecting some 2500