

Chidambara Chandrasekaran (1911–2000)

An obituary

A pioneer in the field of family planning and one of the architects of India's population policy, Chidambara Chandrasekaran passed away on 4 January 2000.

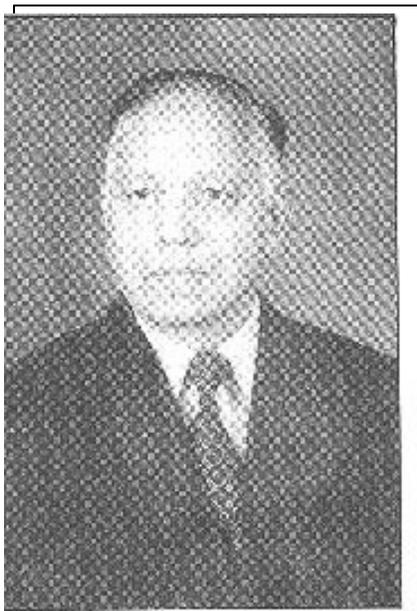
Chandrasekaran came from a family of educationists that had reared two Nobel Laureates. He obtained a Master's degree from Nagpur University and a Ph D in statistics from University College, London.

On his return to India, Chandrasekaran began his foray into public health and medical statistics at the Hygiene Institute of Calcutta. As a Rockefeller Scholar, he obtained further training in biostatistics at the Johns Hopkins, Baltimore. This led to two important developments in his career. Firstly, human ecology – the dynamic adaptation of population and social organization to changes in environment and technology – was then emerging as a global problem. Chandrasekaran was engaged by the United Nations to investigate the determinants and consequences of population trends. This mammoth study was published by the UN.

Secondly, he was deputed by the UN to India to conduct a population survey for policy formulation. The Mysore Population Study, which he completed, provided important inputs to the Government of India in evolving a population policy for the country and in implementing it through a massive family planning programme.

Chandrasekaran served as the first Director of the GOI and UN Demographic Training and Research Centre in Mumbai. The alumni of this institution now hold important positions in population research,

training, policy making and administration. Elected President of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, he gave a new direction to its activities towards the emerging population issues of developing countries and took an



active part in the World Population Conference in Bucharest. He worked in the UN Population Division and as an adviser to the World Bank in Indonesia.

Compared to natural sciences, measurement in social sciences is more intricate, as perception and facts

mingle. No population policy can be formulated or implemented without reliable measurement of demographic

trends. Statutory registration of births and deaths, in countries like India, is far from complete. Chandrasekaran devised a system of dual enumeration of vital events and developed an appropriate method of estimation that even yields a magical number of 'events missed' by both the two independent enumerators. The Sample Registration System of India, that provides the most reliable trends in vital rates among the available series, is based on his pioneering work.

After his return to India, Chandrasekaran was greatly concerned about the need for the wide and rapid dissemination of population research findings on India to enhance the returns on research outlay. He founded the Applied Population Research Trust in Bangalore with this objective and brought out several periodic and occasional publications. In the field of population, he has a long list of scientific papers and reports to his credit. His last major literary effort was his autobiography which has been published by Tata McGraw-Hill.

A lasting tribute to Chidambara Chandrasekaran's life and labours is the transition to the two-child family that has become a reality in the southern states of India with concomitant changes in the rising economic and social values for women and children.

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