

His Impact on Dravidian Studies

Professor Rev. X. S. Thani Nayagam has made a tremendous contribution towards internationalising Tamil Studies. He was a Catholic priest who championed Tamil Culture. Catholic Christianity is an international religion and it seems to have helped him a great deal in his life-time task of internationalising Tamil studies.

He was the founder and editor of *Tamil Culture*, a quarterly journal, devoted to Tamil studies, for over a decade. It was this Journal that paved the way for recognition of the importance of Tamil studies at an international level. It was probably a recognition of this work that made it possible for him to become the first Secretary-General of the IATR.

He was the live-wire of this organisation during the first few years of its inception. The work of this organisation and the tireless efforts of Thani Nayagam led to the foundation of the International Institute of Tamil Studies in Madras. There are many scholars who feel that Thani Nayagam should have been made its first Director. He could have given the organisation the necessary push in international circles.

Thani Nayagam's work led to the foundation of many other organisations for research in Dravidian studies. Not entirely satisfied with the work of the IATR on holding occasional International conferences and with the slow progress in building up the International Institute of Tamil studies, Professor V. I. Subramoniam founded the Dravidian Linguistics Association. Professor Subramoniam felt that Thani Nayagam had not gained the recognition he richly deserved and he wanted to honour him by appointing him a Senior Fellow of the DLA.

The interest evoked in Tamil studies by International conference seminars stimulated interest in such International conferences in other South Indian States. Telugu language soon followed Tamil. A number of International conference-Seminars had been held and an International Institute of Telugu studies had been set up in Hyderabad. The second International conference-seminar on Malayalam and Kerala Culture is going to be held soon.

Thus Thani Nayagam's work directly led to raising Dravidian studies to International level and attention.

— A. Velupillai