

With a Deep Sense of Gratitude

I was saddened to learn through Professor Edgar Knowlton of Rev. X. S. Thani Nayagam's death last September. I am sure there are hundreds of others, like me, who feel a deep sense of gratitude to Professor Thani Nayagam for the interest which he took in their endeavors and for the assistance which he so willingly extended. I regret that I did not have an opportunity to become one of his intimate friends; even in my occasional professional relationships with him I was aware of a human being with the type of even-tempered and kindly personality who could sustain a satisfying and rewarding friendship.

My contacts with Professor Thani Nayagam began in 1962 after I had spent two academic years (1955-56 and 1961-62) in South India as a Visiting Fulbright Professor during sabbatical leaves of absence from my post here at the University of Hawai. Perhaps the fact that I had spent part of my time in India teaching at Annamalai University was in my favour. Soon after I had met him, at the University in Petaling Jaya, he invited me to give a talk to the staff and students in the Department of Indian Studies which he headed. He was extremely helpful whenever I consulted with him concerning a plan I was developing for a sociological research project on leaders of Indian origin in Malaysia.

When I returned to Kuala Lumpur in 1965 to begin the research I was again asked to talk to the staff and students of the department. In addition to whatever other objectives he may have had in mind from the point of view of the staff and students, I suppose these talks at least gave him an opportunity to make some evaluation of me professionally. In any case he not only encouraged me orally in my research but also assisted me immensely by giving me letters of introduction which I could use if needed in asking busy, prominent Indian leaders to give me time for a lengthy personal interview. I quickly found that the respect which he enjoyed among Indian leaders all over Malaysia was profound. And as my research continued my sense of gratitude to him deepened. His active support of my research during my periodic returns to Malaysia continued until his retiring to Ceylon/Sri Lanka in 1969.

Professor Thani Nayagam will certainly be long remembered for the key role he played in the founding of the International Association of Tamil Research (of which I became one of the early members) and in initiating the holding of international conferences,—seminars on Tamil research.

— Clarence E. Glick