

*A Report  
on the Special Lectures  
delivered by  
the foreign scholars*

*Organiser*

**Dr.R. Vijayalakshmy**



**International Institute of Tamil Studies,  
Taramani, Madras - 600 113.**

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## Forward

It gives me great pleasure in bringing out this short report on the lectures delivered by the foreign scholars at our Institute during the months of December 1994 and January 1995. We expect to publish these lectures before the end of this year and I am sure that these valuable lectures will be useful to all scholars interested in Indology.

My sincere thanks are to Dr. R.Vijayalakshmy who have organised these seminars.

June 1995.

**Dr. Ramar Ilanko**  
Director

International Institute  
of Tamil Studies,  
Taramani,  
Madras - 113.

Date: 14.12.1995

Speaker:     **Dr. S.P. TINNAPPAN**  
Nanyang Technological University  
School of Arts  
National Institute of Education  
Singapore.

Dr. Tinnappan spoke about the Tamil Education in Singapore. While discussing the education system in Singapore he said that Tamil is a compulsory subject for all the Tamil students learning in schools. This Tamil teaching is mainly computer aided. Different programmes are being developed for this purpose and this has helped teaching immensely. Further he added, though teaching Tamil in school level is made compulsory, there is not enough interest among Tamil students to learn it in an advanced level.

Date : 20.12.95

Speaker: **Dr.K.C. Rajaraman**  
Brunei Institute of Technology  
Brunei.

Dr. Rajaraman spoke on the subject "Tamil Orthography: Need for a system of phonetic Notations. He, in his talk, considered English as the principal source language from which most of the scientific technical terms are borrowed into Tamil. In borrowing technical terms from English, transliteration of words are followed. This transliteration should be in such a way that the technology is recognised at sight. This advantage of transliteration can be fully realised only if the transliteration is phonetically accurate i.e. the word when pronounced, should sound exactly as the word does in the source language. This ideal is seldom attained in transliteration from English to Tamil owing to lack of characters in the Tamil alphabet to represent even the basic phonemes in English, and because of certain restrictive rules of Tamil grammar.

To overcome this difficulties he suggests the following:

1.     a)     Grantha letters may be used to express the phonemes which do not have the exact characters in Tamil.
- b)     A set of phonetic notations to க் (for K,G) ட் (for T,D) and ப் (for P, B, F) be devised.
2.     He also suggested that the grammatical rule against words beginning with certain letters, particularly mute consonants மெய்யெழுத்து be relaxed.

Date: 26.12.1994

Speaker : **Prof. Arasaratnam**  
Department of History  
University of New England  
Australia.

Prof. Arasaratnam spoke on the 'Tamil Agricultural past and the Industrial production of the immediate precolonial time from the 17th Century A.D. to 18th Century A.D. The following are some points from his talk.



Tamil states and Tamil society have always been exposed to overseas contacts. Tamils have a heart for the sea and they are very much sea-borne people. Their adventurous nature helped them to reach any country they wanted to go to. They sailed

to many countries to make money, to settle down and they made themselves a part of the place they went to. But they maintained in their hearts the culture of the society from which they came. There are good records of the commercial contacts Tamils had upto the Vijayanagara period. But after this period one tends to get a feeling that commercial activities have come to an end. But this is not true. Prof. Arasaratnam and others have worked on this subject and they have shown that Tamil coastal interaction, and their commercial dealings which continued upto the 17th and 18th Century. In the coastal area, which starts from the Telugu coast, Krishna and Godavari deltas and extends right down into the southern tip and also to southern Malabar was used for commercial purposes by Tamils and Telugus. There are strong commercial and cultural contacts between the South East Asian Countries and the Tamils.

Though during 1714 A.D. and 1760 A.D. due to the Anglo French Supremacy there was a lot of difficulty in trading, the Tamil merchants adopted very clever commercial strategies. They followed the old type of commerce. What is the old type of commerce? Tamils had trade connections during this period towards the Burmese coast, the Siamese coast, the northern Sumatra coast and the western Malaya coast. During this century Tamils were in the forefront in India's trade with South East Asia. Tamil Chettiars and Muslims were very much involved in this trade.

The things which they exported were mainly textiles. The requirements of the South East Asian people, the Malays, the Thais, the Burmese, the people of Sumatra were taken into consideration and standard goods were exported. This trade was profitable as the merchants were selling their goods at a lower price as against the price of the same textiles in South East Asia.

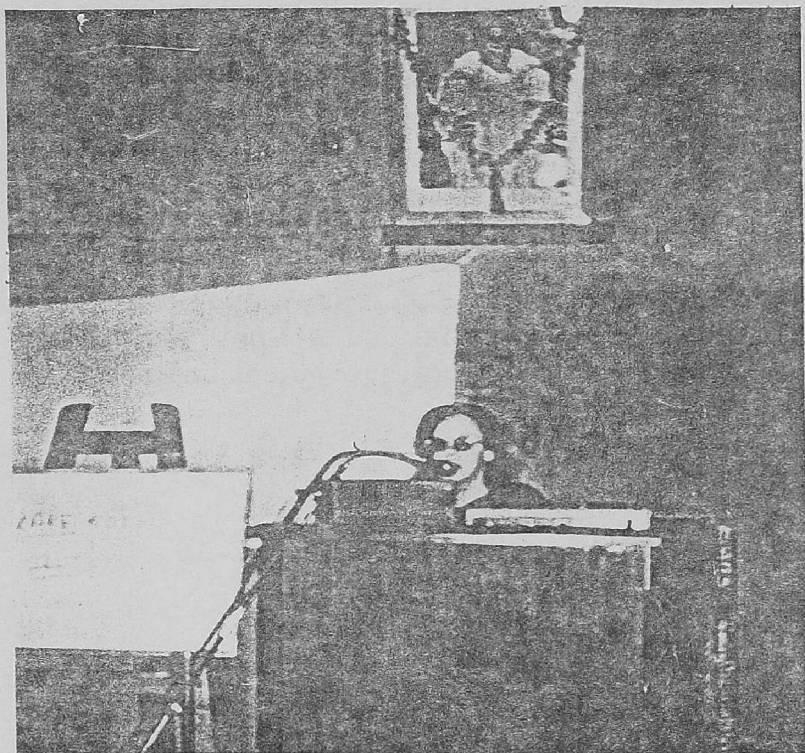
The ships which took textiles often brought back spices, pepper, elephants, Tin and Copper. The spices which the Tamils brought were re-exported to the other parts of the country. Elephants were used in temples and by Islamic rulers. They used elephants in armed forces and to travel. Copper was used to make coins and vessels. Gold which was cheap in South East Asian countries was also brought to Tamil Nadu by these merchants.

Trade enabled the Tamils, mainly ordinary people to have access to cash. With cash, a great deal of internal exchange was going on.

Date: 26.12.1994

**SPEAKER: Dr. Hellmann Rajanayagam,  
Malaysia**

Dr. Hellmann Rajanayagam spoke on the Tamil movement in Tamil Nadu. The following are some of the points which are pointed out by her.



Tamil movement is often represented as a political movement in India. Dr. Hellmann does not feel it is correct. According to her E.V.R. Periyar did

not want to only have a political movement but wanted to have a social movement. This movement wanted to transform the society and it has to a great extent transformed the society.

Maraimalai Atikal, another person who worked for the elevation of Tamils, focussed on the language, Tamil culture and religion embodied in a group of people called the Vellalas. They were the people who tilled the land and were engaged in agriculture. He has not looked at them as a caste but as a group of original Tamil people. Anybody could be a part of this group and one does not have to be born in this group. It depends on how one lives, what ideals one has, how one behaves towards ones fellow human beings. Everybody who is born Tamil can be a Vellala. This is the point on which Periyar and Maraimalai Atikal met. One of the strong points of the Tamil movement in India is its flexibility.

Date: 29.12.1994

Speaker: **Dr. Vijaya Ramaswamy**  
Indian, Institute of Advanced Studies,  
Shimla.

Dr. Vijaya Ramaswamy spoke on 'Gender' Politics and literature in Tamil Nadu. She pointed out the following aspects.'



The struggle in Tamil Nadu was an ethno-Dravidian Movement distinct from North Indian Aryan Struggle. Between the forties and fifties of the nineteenth century many women became linked with the freedom struggle. They linked themselves with movements like Dravidan movement, theosophical movement etc. In Tamil Nadu not all the women linked themselves with Tani Tamil Iyakkam. The upper class women who went to convent schools fought against British Imperialism. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy is one of them. In 1906 Dr. Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins established the Home rule league. This movement had started publishing a Theosophical journal called 'Sri Dharma'. The Adayar Feminine politicians on one hand fought against British Imperialism and on the other hand did not agree with the British liberal ideas. They were talking about women being modest, chaste and good house wives and mothers. In a way, they were holding women back at home. The important thing is that this movement had hold mainly over the upper class Tamil Women.

The Tanit Tamil Iyakkam which was headed by Maraimalai Atikal and Neelambikai Ammaiyar is a shining contrast to the above said movement. There were also many women who formed the Congress. Khadi movement. and burnt foreign clothes.

On 14th of November 1938, five women Mutatti Muvalur Iramamirtam, Malar Muttammaiyar, Pattammal, Dr. Dharmambal and

Neelambikai Ammaiyar led a March to the Theosophical society along with hundreds of other women. There were housewives, professionals and all types of women. They went to theosophical society and demonstrated against the British, the Colonialism, the English, Sanskritic and Hindi followers.

Dr. Vijaya Ramaswamy spoke also about various fields in which women were involved.

Date : 9.1.1995

Speaker : **Prof. R.E. Asher**  
University of Edinburg, England.

Prof. Asher spoke on the subject Tamil and Japanese: Some Typological Analogies. In his talk he pointed to the comments made by Caldwell in the second edition of his work, about the affinities between the Dravidian and Scythian and Japanese among Scythian languages. (1956 reprint e.g. pp. 64,255). He also mentioned about Prof. Ohno's work where he has showed the phonological and morphological similarities between Dravidian and Japanese.

Prof. Asher in his speech made attempts to see the extent to which one major Dravidian language Tamil and Japanese resemble each other from the typological point of view. His concentration was at the grammatical level and in particular at Syntax.

At the morphological level, it is observed that both languages are agglutinating and suffixing. As far as syntax is concerned, both Tamil and Japanese can be classified as SOV (Subject, Object, Verb). He also explained the typological analogies in Tamil and Japanese with enough examples.

Date: 9.1.1995

Speaker : **Dr. Mrs. Gabriella Eichinger  
Ferro-Luzzi**  
Institute Universitario Orientale,  
Italy,

Chairperson : **Malan**, Editor, Dinamani.

Dr. Ferro-Luzzi talked on the subject "Illusionary truth or true illusion in L.S. Ramamrtham's Works".

She discussed the Kaleidoscopic nature of the truth or reality in Ramamrtham's eyes under three headings: relativity, Undeterminacy and its relation to illusion (maya).

She pointed out that Ramamrtham consolingly tells all those, who complain about the difficulty of his writings not to worry, since both understanding and not understanding are temporary stages. Talking about the figurative uses of things of Ramamrtham, she explained how he 'employs the same object of comparison for the expressive description of different subjects. As example she quoted the smooth dough for preparing 'tocai' in comparison to the positive softness of a baby's skin and for the negative, the sight of an old man's flabby skin. She also explained the relationship between illusion on Truth in Ramamrtham's works.

Date: 10.1.95

Speaker: **Dr. Kay Kopperdryer**  
Department of Religion and Culture  
Wilfrid Lauries University, Canada.

Chairperson: **Prof. A.S. Gnanasambandham**

Dr. Kopperdryer spoke on the relationship between Tirumalikaittevar and Tiruvavatuturai atinam. Tiruvavatuturai atinam was founded by Srila-Sri-Namaccivaya, a late 16th Century A.D. ascetic. From 16th Century A.D. onwards, this atinam has been the home of a group of Saiva Vellala ascetics who follow the Saiva siddhanta tradition. This atinam which now plays a large role in the administration of twenty seven temples in South India, has the 'camati' of Namaccivaya. Within an arms reach of this 'camati' there is also a tomb-shrine of a much earlier Saiva cittar (mystic) known as Tirumalikaittevar. Dr. Kopperdryer in her talk explored the connection between the earlier mystic, and the later lineage. She explained this connection, by examining what the members of Namaccivaya's lineage have had to say about their relationship with Tirumalikaittevar and in the lineage's ritual performance.

She also pointed out that Tiruvicaippa poems which were composed by Tirumalikaittevar has attracted relatively little attention outside Tamil Saivaite circle, because it has been eclipsed by the major widely known and earlier works such as the Tevaram and Manikkavacakar's Tiruvacakam.

Date : 10.1.95.

Speaker : **Prof. Pauline Kolenda**  
Department of Anthropology,  
University of Houston  
United States of America.

Chairperson: **Vasanthi**, India Today.

Prof. Kolenda who is a well known anthropologist, works with Indian women mainly in Uttarpradesh and Nancil Natsu in Tamil Nadu. She explained in detail the women studies programme in the United States of America. She pointed out that most of the social sciences and Humanities have many women studies programmes whereas science courses have very few courses in women studies. While speaking about the general programmes she said in America the anthropologists study women in all cultures both on a comparative and comprehensive basis. She also analysed the various conditions which give women a high status in the society. Among the native Americans she said that there exists a matriarchy society in which women are the land owners. There will be a long big house where the women-sisters, mothers, and daughters live together. The men come to live with them. She also explained the power of women after menopause among pygmies. Her lecture on the whole highlighted the special power which existed among women in various societies.

Date : 11.1.1995.

Speaker : **Dr. Robert Eric Frykenberg**  
Department of History &  
South Studies  
University of Wisconsin,  
Madison, U.S.A.

Chairperson : **Prof. A.S. Gnansambandam**

Prof. Frykenberg spoke about Hinduism. He first pointed out the word Hinduism and its first occurrence in India. He thought that this word would not have been in vogue earlier than 150 years. In many ways he felt that this word is simply an adjective and there is no single phenomenon called Hinduism. In modern times this word is used only for a single religion and he questions how this has come to have the sense in which it is used now. He wondered whether this is a result of Hindu nationalism. He also pointed out that this word has many meanings and many connotations.

Date : 11.1.1995.

Speaker : **Dr. Dennis Hudson**  
Department of Religion  
and Biblical Literature  
Smith College, Nothampton,  
United States of America.

Chairperson : **Prof. K.V. Raman**  
Department of Archaeology  
University of Madras.

Professor Hudson spoke on the Special Study of Vaikunthapperumal Temple in Kancheepuram. His lecture, demonstrated with slides, was on all aspects of the Vaikunthapperumal Temple. He explained the continuity of the Cankam tradition and compared it with alwars. The sitting, standing and reclining postures of Vishnu and their significance were well explained. He also explained that the architecture and sculptures displayed are a representation of religious and ideological concepts prevailing in India.

Date : 12.1.1995.

Speaker : **Prof. Dr. L.B. Alayev**  
Institute of Oriental Studies  
Rozhdestvenka, Moscow, Russia.

Chairperson : **Sri R. Tirumalai, I.A.S.,**

Prof. Alayev delivered a lecture on 'some difficulties in the interpretation of epigraphy while studying social relations in medieval south India. He discussed in detail about various inscriptions and their contents and tried to interpret the literal and technical meanings. He also raised a question how some of the inscriptions which were modified after one or two years by the rulers, were able to be put into practice. He also put forward some of the practical difficulties in reading south Indian manuscripts.

Date : 13.1.95

Speaker : **Professor OHNO TORO,**  
Osaka University of Foreign  
Studies, Japan

Chairperson : **Professor K. Rajavelu.**

Professor Ohno Toro spoke about a comparative study of the Mon version of Rama story with Kampan's Ramayanam.

Mon is a state in Myanmar and partly in Thailand. In this state it is believed that people adopted the Buddhism brought from Kancheepuram in South India. Mon language is not a total language like the Burmese and the Tai. It is to be noted that Mon language is classified like the Khasi spoken in Assam and the language of Munda spoken in Central India, as one of the Mon-Khmer language group.

The Mon Rama story is not subdivided into major sections such as Khanda or chapters. But it deals with major episodes like the birth of Ravana, the birth of Rama, his success in archery, contest and marriage with Sita, Rama's exile, Ravana's abduction of Sita, Jatayu's encounter with Ravana, Rama's meeting with Hanuman and Sugriva, the fall of Vali, Hanuman's journey to Lanka, fall of Ravana, Sita's ordeal by fire, Rama's reunion with Sita and their return to Ayodhya. Professor Tora compared in detail some of the salient features of both Mon Rama story and Kamparamayanam.

Date : 13.1.95

Speaker : **Dr.Helen Fraser**  
Department of Linguistics  
University of New England,  
Australia.

Chairperson : **Dr.P.R.Subramanian**  
Moli. Tiruvanmiyur.

Dr. Helen Fraser spoke on 'The Articulation of Tamil speech sounds'. Dr.Fraser has explained the articulation of Tamil speech sounds with the help of electropalatography, in which a false palate is constructed for the informant, the subject. This palate has electrodes embedded in its surface, which are connected by wires which come out of the corners of the mouth, through a multiplexer, to a computer. When the subject pronounces a word the computer displays a stylised picture of the palate. In this picture the top represents the front of the mouth, the bottom the back, and left and rights sides, the left and right sides of the palate. The computer screen displays zero when the tongue contacts an electrode and the uncontacted electrodes are represented by a dot. During production of the sound a series of snapshots of the palate are made with the help of the electropalatographical pictures. Dr.Fraser has explained the articulation Tamil speech sounds in detail. 22

Date : 17.1.95

Speaker : **Dr.Indira Peterson**  
Mount Holyoke College  
United States of America.

Dr. Peterson who spoke on the Kuravanci literature started her talk with her personal experience of watching dance dramas based on Kuravanci literature. She said that these dance dramas represent a perfect fusion of dance and drama.

Speaking generally on pirapantams, she commented that these works belonging to the 18th Century A.D. show a great interest on some particular type of people and portray their life style. Along with this the original balance of the human and the divine was also well explained. She also pointed out the similarities between the Magic Flute of Mozart and the Kurralakuravanci. Historically German missionaries may have taken such Kuravanci literature with them and these would have inspired Mozart to compose his song, the Magic Flute.

Date : 16.2.95

Speaker : **Prof. Dubiansky,**  
State University of Moscow,  
Russia.

Chairperson : **M.Iravatam Mahadevan, I.A.S.**  
(Retd.)

Prof. Dubiansky talked about 'some features of Tamil Kurinci poetry'. In his introduction he spoke about the importance of forests in Indian Culture. He pointed out that the shrub Kurinci and its comparison to the union in tamil poetry, has special significance. A girl attains maturity when she is around twelve years and the shrub Kurinci also flowers once in twelve years. He pointed out that this comparison is an ideal comparison. Further he also explained how some trees like Venkai, Katampu etc. are compared to the heroes, while Kurinci, Valli, Mango etc are compared to the heroines. The comparison of mountains in Tamil are always with men and things like small pools are often compared with females. He concluded that the flora in Tamil literature has specific significance to the psychology of the character with which they are compared.

