

A BRILLIANT SCHOLAR

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Introduction

Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Singarayer David is a renowned 20th century scholar a product of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Although everyone knows Fr. H. S. David as a priest, teacher and researcher, only few had the opportunity to interact with him both academically and spiritually. Fr. H. S. David was very active in his scholarly and social work as we knew him during our school days at St. Patrick's college, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. The way he has promoted education among needy people, his simple life style, the contribution and impact he had made through his exceptionally skilled research on languages have inspired us to a very great extent. Though, the first named author of this article had seen some of his books during his school days (1966 - 1978), he could not value and appreciated their contents, since it was extremely difficult at that age to read and understand the high standard of literature and information contained therein. However, this has troubled him later and prompted to search Fr. H. S. David's scholarly work and place them in archive, so that anyone who excels in the field of languages can continue his noble and highly skilled research work. The authors of this article would like to pen down some of the valuable information they have gathered over the past few years, within the scope of their limited endeavours about Fr. H. S. David's achievements and scholarly work.

Parental Background and Formal Education

Fr. H. S. David was born on 28th June 1907. He was the eldest son of Abrahampillai David and Elizabeth of Thumpalai, Point Pedro, Jaffna. He had his primary and secondary education at St. Patrick's College, Jaffna, Sri Lanka from 1913 – 1924. Fr. H. S. David was fortunate to have his father Mr. A. David on the teaching staff of St. Patrick's College, Jaffna, Sri Lanka during his entire student days. Mr. A. David served as a language teacher at St. Patrick's College, Jaffna, Sri Lanka for 36 years [1, 2].

Teaching and Higher studies

After completing his secondary education, as a young and enthusiastic person he enrolled himself as an external student to read for his degree in history at University of London, through University College, Colombo, as it was then called. He continuously excelled in his studies and obtained a first class honours degree in History gaining gold medal for excelling in Economics and History, being top student among the external students. With his remarkable achievement in this level, he could have easily entered the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service at that time. Instead he chose to serve God almighty and decided to become a priest. He entered St. Bernard's seminary and was ordained a priest on 19th December 1931 [1, 2].

He joined the teaching staff of St. Patrick's College, Jaffna, Sri Lanka in 1936 and served for 31 years (1936 to 1967). In 1947 he obtained his Master's degree in Indo-Aryan languages. While serving as a teacher at St. Patrick's College, Jaffna, Sri Lanka, he spent 4 years (1948 - 1952) in UK to complete his postgraduate studies. He obtained his PhD in 1952 from University of London for his work titled 'A critical study of Tolkappiyam, with special references to the Eluttatikaram'[1, 3, 11].

Research and Publications

During his teaching career at St. Patrick's College, Jaffna, Sri Lanka he came to know Fr. Gnanapragasar of Nallur who initiated the Tamil lexicon. Unfortunately Fr. Gnanapragasar passed away in 22nd January 1947 before he could complete his work. Fr. H. S. David continued his mission and worked on the lexicon, tracing the roots and links in Aryan, Dravidian and Euro languages to the Tamil languages [1].

Fr. H. S. David has published several books and scholarly articles throughout his career. According to the article written by A Dominic [2], Fr. H. S. David entrusted his personal library prior to his demise in 1981 to his nephew Mr. M. Philipneri, a senior lecturer at the Palali Teacher's training College, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Before Mr. M. Philipneri left for Guayana in 1985 (4 years after Fr. H. S. David's death) he handed his uncle's PhD thesis and some of the books to Jaffna Catholic Library [1]. He also left some of Fr. H. S. David's books with Mr. Ulaganathan, the Grama Sevaka at Palali. These books were destroyed in 1987 during the civil war.

It is very important to trace all the documentary evidences that Fr. H. S. David has claimed through his valuable research done throughout his lifetime. This will help not only for future researchers who are interested to continue his research, but also to maintain his identity in history. At present some of his work are traceable and some are not. However, authors of this article strongly believe that it could be available among academic community/institutions around the world.

The recent Google search revealed that some of his publications are available around the world [4], including Harvard University, University of Wisconsin, and University of Virginia. Table 1 illustrates the publication list and the relevant source where the information gathered.

Table 1: List of publication authored by Fr. H S David

Title	Publication	Information gathered from
The Tamil book of proverbs.	Tamil Culture, Vol.9, no.2 and vol.10, no.4	Citation from Prof. S. Vithiananthan's review article [3]
An etymological and comparative lexicon of the Tamil language, Part I, ஸீலா கதை	Jaffna 1970	Citation from 'Land of Letters' by Dr. J T Xavier, Skyline Printers, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, 1977.
An etymological and comparative lexicon of the Tamil language, Part II, Maintan	Jaffna 1972	Citation from 'Land of Letters' by Dr. J T Xavier, Skyline Printers, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, 1977.
An etymological and comparative lexicon of the Tamil language, Part III, நளா கதை	Jaffna 1973	Citation from 'Land of Letters' by Dr. J T Xavier, Skyline Printers, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, 1977.

An etymological and comparative lexicon of the Sinhala and Tamilzh , Part IV, <i>மங்கையர்க்கரசி</i>	Jaffna 1974	Citation from 'Land of Letters' by Dr. J T Xavier, Skyline Printers, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, 1977.
An introduction in English to the Etymological and comparative lexicon	Vol 2, Part 2, 1974, Colombo : Spartan Press	Harvard Library
Some contacts and affinities between Egypto-Minoan and the Indo-Dravido-Sumerian culture.	Tamil Culture Vol. IV:169-175, 1955.	A Comprehensive Bibliography of the Indus Civilization and Related Subjects and Areas, Published by University of Hawai'i Press (Honolulu), Asian Perspectives, 1974 - Volume 16, No. 1.
Some further contacts and affinities between the Egypto-Minoan and the Indo (Dravida)Sumerian culture.	Tamil Culture, Vol. V:56-65, 1956	Citation from Prof. S. Vithiananthan's review article [3]
The exact conation between the Harappan and Sumerian cultures and their probable date: could either of them have been Aryan?	Tamil Culture, Vol. V: 298-314: 1956	Citation from Prof. S. Vithiananthan's review article [3]
The earliest Tamil poems extant.	Tamil Culture, 1955	Citation from Prof. S. Vithiananthan's review article [3]
A critical study of Tolkappiyam, with special references to the Eluttatikaram,	Thesis submitted to the University of London for the Ph.D. degree, 1952	Citation from Prof. S. Vithiananthan's review article [3]
The Gnaanam-Daaviid Cankam's criticism and appreciation of Dr. J.T. Xavier's work The land of letters: whence came Sinhala here?	1978	Harvard Library
The Beatiful (People) in the Beautiful (Land)	Not known	தும்பளை தாவீது அடிகளின் 100வது பிறந்த தினத்தை முன்னிட்டு வெளியிடப்படும் நினைவு மலர் (2007), வெளியீடு: கலாநிதி. சி. தாவீது அடிகளின் நினைவுக்குழு தும்பளை, பருத்தித்துறை.
All of us, Ceylonese, are kith and kin (<i>ஓம் முருகா</i>)	Not known	தும்பளை தாவீது அடிகளின் 100வது பிறந்த தினத்தை முன்னிட்டு வெளியிடப்படும் நினைவு மலர் (2007), வெளியீடு: கலாநிதி. சி. தாவீது அடிகளின் நினைவுக்குழு தும்பளை, பருத்தித்துறை.

Literature survey further revealed that few of his other scholarly work were authored by Gnaanam Daaviid Cankam. Table 2 illustrates the list scholarly work authored by Gnaanam Daaviid Cankam and the relevant sources where the information gathered.

Table 2: List of publication authored by Gnaanam Daaviid Cankam

Whence came the recent pogroms here?	Yaalzhnakar : Gnaanam-Daaviid Cankam, 1977	தும்பளை தாவீது அடிகளின் 100வது பிறந்த தினத்தை முன்னிட்டு வெளியிடப்படும் நினைவு மலர் (2007), வெளியீடு: கலாநிதி. சி. தாவீது அடிகளின் நினைவுக்குழு தும்பளை, பருத்தித்துறை. and University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries
<i>We stand for</i>	The Cankam, 1978	தும்பளை தாவீது அடிகளின் 100வது பிறந்த தினத்தை முன்னிட்டு வெளியிடப்படும் நினைவு மலர் (2007), வெளியீடு: கலாநிதி. சி. தாவீது அடிகளின் நினைவுக்குழு தும்பளை, பருத்தித்துறை. and University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries

Professor S. Vithiananthan in his review article titled ‘Tamil Studies in Ceylon; a review essay of 1968’ [3] has referred Fr. H. S. David’s work. It is interesting to note the following referred sections in his article.

“Rev. H.S. David has made a critical appreciation of the Tamil books of proverbs, Pazhamoli Naanooru [5]. This work is one of the eighteen minor classics. The author of the article discusses the peculiar diction compared to the sangam works, the common structure of the stanzas, their arrangement, and gives an appreciation of the proverbs.”

“Father H.S. David, director of Oriental Studies and History, St. Patrick’s College, Jaffna, establishes connection between the Egypto-Minoan culture and the Indian cultures and then discusses the contacts between Sumerian and Egypto-Minoan civilizations in an article which he contributed to the Tamil Culture [7]. In another volume of the same journal he establishes some further connections between the Egypto-Minoan and the Indo (Dravido) Sumerian culture [8]. In another article, he traces the exact connections between the Harappan and Sumerian cultures [9]”

“In an article entitled ‘The Earliest Tamil poems extant’, Farther David discusses the dates of some early poems [10]. From historical background, obsolete diction, the old grammatical pattern of the nominal system, the peculiar adverbs, the archaic verbal system, the ancient-syntactical and other features he concludes that in Kuruntokai we possess the earliest poems extant in Tamil, with the exception of some poems of Puranaanooru and Akanaanooru and the Narrinai occupies an intermediate position as regards the time of their composition. Father David submitted a thesis on A critical study of Tolkaappiyam with special reference to the Eluttatikaaram[11]”

Proficiency in Languages

It is widely believe that Fr. H. S. David's unique scholarly research work was strongly supported by his professional knowledge in several languages. Throughout his lifetime he mastered 33 languages which consisted of 14 European languages, 5 Semitic and other languages and 14 Indo-Asiatic Dravidaryan (Ardra) languages. The Table 3 shows the details of the languages he studied and the respective ages [13].

Table 3: Details of languages Fr. H S David studied

No.	Language	Age in years	No.	Language	Age in years
European languages			Indo-Asiatic Dravidaryan (Ardra)		
1	English	6	20	Tamil	5
2	Latin	10	21	Sinhalese	18
3	French	14	22	Sanskrit	29
4	Greek	24	23	Vedic	31
5	German	33	24	Hindi	33
6	Dutch	36	25	Kannada	40
7	Lithuanian	41	26	Pali	40
8	Spanish	42	27	Prakrit	41
9	Portuguese	42	28	Avestan	41
10	Italian	43	29	Telugu	43
11	Danish	44	30	Malayalam	44
12	Norwegian	44	31	Brahui	60
13	Swedish	44	32	Tulu	62
14	Russian	67	33	Kui	62
Semitic and other Languages					
15	Hebrew	53			
16	Malay	58			
17	Assyrian	61			
18	Sumerian	61			
19	Arabic	63			

Summary

Literature survey available so far has shown the amount of scholarly work that Fr. H. S. David has contributed in tracing the roots and links in Aryan, Dravidian and Euro languages to the Tamil languages and Lexicon, and how fruitfully he continued the work of Fr. Gnanapragasar of Nallur. The works of Fr. S. Gnanaprakasas deserve greater attention by the entire world of scholarship. Fr. H. S. David's publications contain much useful material for etymological research. Although Fr. H. S. David's scholarly work has already been recorded in history, it is important that his work should be continued to fulfill his ambition and vision.

Acknowledgment

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