

## **Professor R. E Asher: The Ambassador of Tamil and Malayalam to the World**

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**1. Introduction:** Very few among the intellectuals are fortunate enough to have been characterized in literary fiction. Professor R. E. Asher (henceforth REA), presently the Professor Emeritus of Linguistics, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, is one among the exceptional linguists around the world being characterized as a Professor as he is in a recently published Malayalam novel *ārumallātta or ā!* 'one who is not anyone' written by Omana Gangadharan (2012). This characterization has resulted not only because of the novelist's familiarity with REA and REA's world-reputed scholarship in linguistics, but there exists something unique in REA that can be said in one line: **he is a Professor of linguistics with God's own signature on his heart in Tamil and Malayalam.** Therefore, in the Southern states of India, where the major Dravidian languages are spoken, he is known among many people other than the scholars, even the laymen who never might have been read anything by him, but many people know him as an intimate of his or her Tamil or Malayalam. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that he is the most popular linguist in India from Europe. His relationship with India of more than a half century of history of scholarship and friendship starts with his first engagement Tamil in 1953 and turned towards Malayalam in 1963 and still it is flourishing in both languages. He may still remember the feeling of the spine-crunching effect of the unsprung wheels of the bullock cart which bought his weighty Ferrograph tape-recorder to the Changan village of North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu during the summer of 1953; it was his first visit to India. Why did the then 29-years-old young Assistant Lecturer in Linguistics from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, come to the remote village in Tamil Nadu? It was none other than John Rupert Firth (1890-1960) 'the intellectual father of REA', the then head of the Department of Phonetics and Linguistics at SOAS who suggested to REA that he should be in a place where he would be immersed in a variety of Tamil that was free from the influence of literary style. It is Firth's philosophy of the inspiration of linguistic theory and description of language that made REA a most cited grammarian of the two languages in India by his two grammars, one for colloquial Tamil in 1982; one for Malayalam in 1997. In addition to these most cited grammars, his contribution to the advanced linguistic studies of Tamil and Malayalam has been consistent for half a century or more. A bibliographic review of and the citation

index of the standard publications of Dravidian languages and linguistics reveals that other than Kamil V Zvelebil (1927-2009) and Herman Gundert (1814-1893) no one from outside India have contributed as much REA contributed for Tamil and Malayalam respectively. In addition to his contribution on the advanced linguistic studies of Dravidian languages, REA is widely known to many as an intimate translator who made the modern literature of Tamil and Malayalam known to the English world. This note is about REA's contributions to Tamil and Malayalam, the languages of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, where he has a greater number of friends than anywhere else in the world, where he often visits; where the Beypore Sultan of Malayalam literature Vaikom Muhammad Basheer (1908-1994) once said about him "*Here there is a man*". REA's most recent visit to Tamil Nadu and Kerala was during January 2008 (for celebrations to mark the centenary of the birth of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer) and in November 2010 to receive the prestigious Bashir Puraskaram award respectively.

**2. Previous exposure to Tamil and Malayalam:** REA's visits to Tamil Nadu and Kerala start in 1955 and 1963 respectively. REA first learned Tamil from SOAS during 1953-45. There he followed the beginner's course put on by the then Lecturer in Tamil Capt. C. S. K. Pathy. His later fieldwork in Changam village of North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu during 1955-56 and 1963-64 helped him to progress further into Tamil and his research resulted in two grammars by REA, in 1982 and later another one with E. Annamalai in 2002. It is quite interesting to note that at the age of thirty-one he was appointed as a Lecture in Tamil (1957-65) at SOAS, University of London. His engagement of being in Malayalam is more diversified than Tamil. Before his first visit to Kerala he had a course in Malayalam phonetics with Mrs Eileen Whitley (1910-1988) at the SOAS, which made him interested in Malayalam not only because of Whitley's expertise in Dravidian phonetics but definitely the peculiar phonetic features of Malayalam, known among phonology specialists as "a phonologist's paradise". Apart from the phonetics of Malayalam, the politics of a number of speeches by V. K. Krishna Menon (1896-1974) in London sparked his interest in Kerala at his early age in the University of London during the 1950s. In addition to the phonetics of Whitley and the politics of Krishna Menon, the then fashionable interest in the comparative study of languages, which was further stimulated by a masterly talk to the Philological Society by the then champion of the field of comparative Dravidian Linguistics, Professor M. B. Emeneau (1904-2005) of the University of California; altogether these influences eventually made him approach Malayalam, the immediate sister of Tamil. Mr. Joseph Minattur a Malayalee post-graduate of the University of London took him through a series of readers prepared for the primary classes in schools of Kerala and made him literate in Malayalam. This is what Tamil and Malayalam were to REA before he visited

Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Therefore, he could read a number literary works before his first visit to Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

**3. Getting into Tamil and Malayalam:** REA's friendship with Tamil in India starts with his first field work during 1955-56 which later resulted as the publication of two grammars for Tamil in 1982 and in 2002, later with E. Annamalai and it is the first full account of the colloquial variety of Tamil. His interest in this was sparked by his work in 1953-54 with R. Radhakrishnan, who had been taken on by SOAS as Assistant in Tamil. It was Radhakrishnan who introduced him to one of his former teachers at the Chengam secondary school, M.K. Dharmeswaran, who looked after him throughout his stay there and taught him more about spoken and written Tamil. For the middle six months of 1954, he was in Madras, where he received much help from Professor Mu Varadarajan of Pachaiyappa's College, who among other things, taught him about Tamil Sangam poetry. For colloquial Tamil, his main helpers were T.C. Murugesan and M.S. Anand.

During 1963-64 he has conducted his second field research, which is shared between Tamil and Malayalam. Since 1957 onwards he had been working as a lecturer in Tamil in the Department of South Asia, University of London until he joined as a Senior Lecturer in Linguistics in the newly established Department of Linguistics and English Language, University of Edinburgh in 1965. REA spent during 1961-62 in University of Chicago to setting up Tamil studies there. In Chicago, he was reunited with T. Radhakrishnan. He also had the privilege of working with Professor T.P. Meenakshisundaram, whom he had first met in Madras. The beginning of prose fiction in Tamil was his early interest in Tamil. *A Tamil Prose Reader: Selections from Contemporary Tamil Prose with Notes and Glossary* co edited with R. Radhakrishnan in 1971 and *Some Landmarks in the History of Tamil Prose* in 1973 are the substantial outcomes of his interest on Tamil prose. REA co-edited two volumes *Proceedings of the First International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies* (held at Kuala Lumpur, April 1966) in 1968 and 1969 with Xavier S. Thani Nayagam et al. He alone edited (1971) the *Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies held at Madras, January 1968*). *A Tamil Prose Reader: Selections from Contemporary Tamil Prose with Notes and Glossary*, form Cambridge University edited by him with R. Radhakrishnan in 1971 is an ideal Prose reader to other languages. REA's friendship with Malayalis in India starts with Prof. K. M. Prabhakara Variar (?-2009) whom he first met in London. He introduced REA to Mr. C. K Nalina Babu and N. Unnikrishnan Nair. They were from Ernakulam, where he spent six months during 1963 and got a firm grounding in both spoken and written Malayalam from them. In Trivandrum in 1964 his studies of Malayalam were further advanced by his association with P. Somesekharan Nair, who later became Editor of the Malayalam

Lexicon. Later his Malayalam was further advanced in 1967 when Achamma Coilparampil acted as his teaching assistant at a Summer School in the United States.

In 1993 there is a historical meeting held at Ajantha Hotel Eranakulam, Kerala where REA first met Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai (1912-1999), the father of great narrations in Malayalam. It was a good beginning, where the humility of Thakazhi conquered REA by visiting him at the hotel rather than simply responding to REA's letter to get a convenient day for him to visit Thakazhi's home. Thakazhi, too, was surprised to know that at the time REA had already read many of the works by Thakazhi even in Malayalam. Thus began an enduring and highly valued friendship between Gringley-on-the-Hill, a small village in England, and the great Thakazhi of Kerala, and REA never visited India after that without arranging to go to see him in Thakazhi. In 1975 REA completed the translation of Thakazhi's "tōṭṭiyuṭe maṇṇ" into English as *Scavenger's Son* (1975) which he further revised in 1993 and added an introduction. His friendship with Basheer is an epic-like relationship, which starts with the bitter taste of peculiar Kerala green chilies which REA had from Basheer's home, and Basheer himself called that incident as 'cry of bitterness' on REA's first visit to his home. REA translated Basheer's three masterpieces under the title 'Me Grandad 'ad an Elephant!': *Three Stories of Muslim Life in South India* into English in 1980. In addition to these three stories REA later translated a further story by Basheer entitled 'Anal haq' into English. His latest translation of a Malayalam novel is K. P Ramanunni's *Sufi paranja katha* as *What the Sufi said* in 2002 in collaboration with Sree N Gopalakrishnan. REA's English translation of Tamil and Malayalam literature altogether is a vindication of the presence of good literature in Indian literature that REA himself disputed with Salman Rushdie when Rushdie commented that the only good Indian literature was in English! By the subsequent English translations from Tamil and Malayalam REA proves that English is a good enough language by which good literature written in languages other than English are can also be made accessible to the readers who do not know any language around the world other than English. Therefore, people like Rushdie will be shown to be mistaken. There is no second opinion about REA's translations from Malayalam to English. M. N Karassery, one of REA's friend from Kerala give an instance. Basheer first wrote his classic *bālyakāla sakhi* in English at Calcutta and then in Malayalam, the former remains unpublished. REA never had a chance to see it before he translated the same as *Childhood Friend* into English in 1980. When Karasseri could see both, he was surprised to see that what Basheer wrote in English and what REA translated are almost same! If we come across the editorial and administrative responsibilities which has been successfully performing during the period of 1990 to the present day, when he was heavily involved in contributing to Tamil and Malayalam studies,

there is no way other than being surprised or take him as a role model of how an academic shall be. During the successful period of the substantial contributions to Tamil and Malayalam he was the Dean of the Faculty of Arts (1986-89) and the Vice-Principal of the University (1990-93) in the University of Edinburgh. In addition, he proved his unequal editorial excellence by editing the entries for India, Pakistan and Ceylone for *The Penguin Companion to Literature: 4* (1969) the path breaking 10 volumes of *The Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (1994), *The Atlas of the World's Languages* (ed. with C. Moseley 1994) and *Concise History of the Language Sciences from the Sumerians to the Cognitivists* (ed. with E F K Koerner, 1995) etc. Now he is at the finalising stage of the 20 years long work of the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* with 2 volumes (with J. Laver forthcoming). A few statements about his editorial wisdom are an imperative. For authors, REA is a most comfortable editor who never practices Procrustean solution to the incoming draft by the author. Instead, he helps the author to make the draft more accessible to the reader other than overdoing the content and language like other editors often do. Therefore, for readers REA is a neutral facilitator to make the draft written by the author easily comprehensible. Eventually, for serious researchers and even popular writers in linguistics around the world the voluminous works edited by REA are the first and last sources of reference. Many of the voluminous volumes of encyclopedias edited by him are costly but the hard work behind these works were autobiographical to him!, including he had an instance of shocking experience of selling the ship when he sailed more than half the way to its destination in relation to Robert Maxwell's decision to sell Pergamon during the development of *The Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (1994); the former initiated it but another publisher published it.

**4. Immersed experience:** Other than translations of Malayalam literature into English REA wrote a good number of substantial literary reviews and nirūpana about Tamil and Malayalam literature. The profound scholarship which he showed in the Renaissance literature of French was his literary base; however he never over-attributed the same to Tamil and Malayalam literature. On the contrary, he revealed the intrinsic renaissance content of modern Tamil and Malayalam literature based on the highly balanced and deeply immersed review of the modern history of Tamil and Malayalam literature. *The Tamil Renaissance and the beginnings of the Tamil novel* (1970) and the *Renaissance of Malayalam Literature* (1989) are ideal illustrations of his balanced treatment of the subject. This exceptional balance of the treatment of subject is not the result of his outsider's objectivity. On the contrary, it is his highly subjective immersement in the Tamil and Malayalam language, literature and culture through scholarship and friendship. This being in the life-worlds of Tamil Nadu and Kerala made him an undisputed literary reviewer of Tamil and Malayalam to the world and to the languages communities of both. Regarding his

repeated experience of unsuccessful punctuality to him by his many Malayalee friends, once he stated that, "I am very late to understand to distinguish the subtle differences of Malayalam expression of 'may come' and 'certainly come' which are not expressed in English". He perceived Tamil and Malayalam and its literature not through colonial eyes, therefore he never had been in a need of any label like post-colonialism for his constant engagement with these literatures. There is no doubt that Basheer was his hero. Once he mentioned that Basheer deserves deep study and he often dismisses any attempt to put Basheer in any camp of writing like socialist realism which was prevalent at the time. And of course, one of the unique features of Basheer which REA often states is the *uninfluenced essence* of Basheer. Basheer was well versed in English, even though if anything influenced Basheer from English it must be only REA. About REA Basheer told that "*Here there is a good human being*". The most unique coir-like feature of REA's relation with Malayalam and Kerala is interwoven with scholarship and friendship. His relationship with Thakazhi is the best illustration of this. Both Thakazhi and REA share a common life-world experience of the agricultural background of their families. Therefore REA and Thakazhi often talked simultaneously about agriculture and the French novelist Zola by whom Thakazhi was much influenced. Being a linguist, REA's interests range widely literature from Renaissance historiography in French to Malayalam. Once he mentioned about it: "If we do research into language because it is language above all that distinguishes man from other species, then it is in the creative use of language in literature that we find the fullest extent of this distinction". REA translated complete Tamil poetical works of C. Subramania Bharati in to English for T.N. Ramachandran (ed.1989), *Bharati patalkal* published by Tamil University. His latest work in the field of Tamil prose fiction is the translation of the complete short stories of Pudumaipitthan -- to be published in 2 volumes later this year by the Central Sahityhy Academy.

**5. Linguistic studies and grammar:** Asher entered into the field of grammatical and linguistic study of Tamil and Malayalam during the 1960s. It was an important decade in the history of linguistic studies of Malayalam marked by the introduction of modern linguistics in Dravidian languages by T. P. Meenakshisundaram (1901-1980), S. Agesthalingom, M. S Andronov, Kamil V Zvelebil for Tamil; L. V. Ramaswamy Ayyar (1895-1948), V. I. Subramoniam (1926-2009) and A. C. Sekhar for Malayalam. During these decades many descriptive studies and pedagogical grammar on Tamil and Malayalam came out and yet no effort had been made to write a comprehensive grammar of Tamil and Malayalam except few efforts made by Thomas Lehmann (1989) and Andronov (1990) for Tamil and Gundert (1851), A. R. Raja Raja Varma (1863-1918) (1982) and etc. The rate of citation appears now that REA's *Tamil Grammar* in 1982 and the later *Colloquial Tamil* with E Annamalai in

2002 are the most cited grammars in standard literature. The century-old *Kēraḷa Pāṇinīyam* (1896) by Raja Raja Varma in 1982 remained the first and last source of Malayalam grammar even with many inadequacies. Asher's grammar of Malayalam (1997) planned with S. Velayudhan and completed with T. C. Kumari filled the need as the standard reference and most cited grammar of Malayalam. This is the first work on Malayalam which made the linguistic peculiarities of Malayalam accessible to the global theoretical trends of linguistics. All the reviews on it by Sanford Steever (1999), William Bright (1999) and A. G. Menon (1999) are unanimously agreed that clarity of analysis and the comprehensiveness of coverage characterise this grammar. A primary search of citation index of Tamil and Malayalam in the Google scholar shows that after publication this grammar of Malayalam is more cited in standard linguistic literature than any before it. The citation index of two advanced standard publications *Dravidian Languages* by Bh. Krishnamurti (2003) and the recent advancement of the *South Asian Languages: a Syntactic Typology* (2012) K. V. Subbarao explicitly show REA's two grammars for Tamil and Malayalam are the most cited sources of reference grammars in Dravidian. Therefore, it can be safely argued that REA's grammars of Tamil and Malayalam are a turning point in the history of linguistic studies in Tamil and Malayalam. Prior to and after this grammar, REA wrote a number of substantial articles on the different linguistic aspects of Malayalam. The unique feature of these articles is that none of these articles are written in terms of the then fashionable trends of linguistics. On the contrary, all these articles deal with the fundamental untouched aspects or the advancement of fundamental aspect of Tamil and Malayalam like the classification of verb of Malayalam (1969), verb of spoken Tamil (1966) and nouns in Malayalam (1989), agreement in Malayalam (2003) etc. Therefore, all of these articles remain as original sources of reference irrespective of current trends. These articles with the articles on literature by him were translated into Malayalam and published together as *Malayāḷa bhāṣā pathanaṅṅal* edited by S. Velayudhan and M. M. Basheer in 1989. The review by REA in 1969s about the publication of the *Malayalam Lexicon* from the University of Kerala edited by Suranad Kunjan Pillai (1911-1995) during 1965-70 gave international reputation and strengthened local support to the project. REA was a reviewer of most of the standard publications that appeared in English about Malayalam language and literature. REA's reviews introduced most of the publications about Malayalam language and literature by K. M George, Ayyappa Paniker (1930-2006) and Krishna Chaitanya to the world. He wrote about Tamil and Malayalam in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1967, in the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* in 2008. In the *Dictionary of Oriental Literatures* (1974). REA wrote about O. Cantu Menon, Kathakali, P. Kesava Dev, Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, N.

Kumaran Asan, Kuncan Nampyar, P.C. Kuttikrishnan, K.M. Panikkar, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, Vallattol Narayana Pillai, C. Sankara Kurup, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Tullal, Tuncatt' Ezuttacchan and M.T. Vasudevan Nair etc. In addition to his 1981 editorial effort with Eugénie J. A. Henderson for the *Towards a History of Phonetics: Papers contributed in honour of David Abercrombie* REA's pioneering contribution to the historiography of the history of linguistic studies of Dravidian languages also shall be mentioned. It was none other than REA who first explicitly revealed Francis Whyte Ellis (1778–1819), an English civil administrator who proposed the idea of Southern Indian family of languages fifty years before Robert Caldwell. There are two pieces of writings about Ellis by REA in 1969 and 1994. The former deals about unpublished fragment of his "Commentary on Tirukkural" and the later is the first and brief and biographical sketch of Ellis. *'The contribution of scholars of British origin to Tamil studies, and the study of Tamil in Britain'* (1968), *250 years after: some aspects of Ziegenbalg's study of Tamil* (1969), and his obituary about M. B. Emeneau, the note about Hermann Gundert, Robert Caldwell, Jules Bloch (1994), and *The contribution of scholars of British origin to Tamil studies, and the study of Tamil in Britain* (1968) are his contribution for the historiography of Dravidian linguistics. *Some structural similarities between Tamil and Japanese* in 2000 is an advanced article is an advanced contrastive analysis of Tamil and Japanese language without any over-statement. Based on the stated contribution, there is no doubt we can say that REA is the ambassador of Tamil and Malayalam language and literature to the world.

**7. Awards and honours:** None of the awards and honours which he received so far affected his humility. Once you get a chance to have few moments with him, you will definitely feel that the distinct humility of this distinguished scholar is above his scholarship. REA occupied the prestigious position of the President of the International Association of Tamil Research in two consecutive terms of 1983-87 and 1987-90. He was a Visiting Assistant Professor of Tamil (1961-62) at the University of Chicago, Visiting Professor of Tamil and Malayalam (1968) at the Michigan State University, United States and Subrahmaniya Bharati Fellow (1984-85) at the Tamil University Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. In 1983 Kerala Sahitya Akademi honoured REA as a fellow for his services to Malayalam Language and Literature. In 2007 India's National Academy of Letters honoured him as an Honorary Fellow in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Indian literature. During 1995-1996 REA was the first occupant of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer Chair, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala. Recently, in 2010, the Pravasi Trust awarded the prestigious Basheer memorial award to REA.



**6. Friends in South India:** A list of his friends from India other than the names cited above will be quite surprising. G. Paneerselvam, who was one of his friend while he was doing his first field work in Tamil Nadu. Once, REA recollected that he used to accompany him to political meetings and even in an occasion REA gave an address in Tamil at a Congress Party gathering! Mu Varadarajan and Akilan (P.V. Akilandam (1922-88); Rajaji (1878-1972) whom REA met at Madras and he who presented a novel by his friend Kalki to RAE, Karunanidhi whom he met in Chengam during 1955 when he was a young up-an-coming politician; E. Annamalai with whom he wrote an excellent grammar for Tamil in 2002; V. Abdulla, with whom he translated and edited *Wind Flowers: Contemporary Malayalam Short Fiction* for Penguin Books in 2004; Antony Puthenpurackal, Vienna; Ayyappa Panikar, REA reviewed many of his works and contributed his English translation of 'balyakālya sakhi' to the anthology he edited entitled *Twentieth Century Malayalam Literature*; Sukumar Azhikode who named REA as a *dēshādana* bird to Kerala; Babu Mather, member of the Board of Trustees of Pravasi Doha and Member of the Award Committee for the Basheer Puraskaram ; M. M. Basheer, who edited the Malayalam version of REA's collected articles; 'Elizabeth Menon, London, with whom his most recent meeting was in Trivandrum in [May/June 2013](#), when they both chanced to be staying in the Mascot Hotel at the same time. K. M. George, whom he first met in the United States and who often encouraged him; N. Gopalakrishnan with him he translated K. P. Ramanunni's novel *Sufi paranja katha* (2002); Joseph Mundassery, to whom Thakazhi introduced him; M. N. Karassery with whom REA wrote an article about Malayalam in the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (2008); D. C. Kizhakkemuri (1914-99) who published most of his works in Malayalam, D.C.'s son Ravi D C, who continued this; T. C. Kumari with help from whom he completed the Malayalam Grammar; Suranadu Kunjan Pillai, whom REA met very often at Trivandrum and gave review support to his great works; the Sanskritist Kunjunni Raja, who is the first Professor from India he met in London and whom he also saw a number of times in Madras; Madhavi Kutty (1934-2009), whom he met in Mumbai; Mammooty, whom he first met at a chance meeting in a shop in Edinburgh, Mini Krishnan who helped him often at Oxford University Press, Chennai; K. P. Mohanan and P. Latha who provided information for the phonology part of his grammar in 1997; K. P Narayana Pisharodi who spared time to clarify a number of doubts about Malayalam to REA; Omana Gangadharan who featured REA in her recent Malayalam novel; Paul Manalil, S. K Pottakkatt, K.M. Prabhakara Variar who introduced REA to Kerala, K. P. Ramanunni; V. C. Harris, P. P. Raveendran and D. Vinayachandran were his colleagues in the School of Letters when he spent a year as the first holder of the Basheer Chair at M.G. University, Kottayam; G. Sankara Kurup (who had a house in the street where he lived in Ernamulam in 1963); V. I.

Subramoniam for whom he had great respect and he was the host for REA whenever he visited Thiruvananthapuram; N. Somasekaran Nair who was his chief guide in Ernakulam in 1963 to learn Malayalam, Tara Mohanan []; M. T. Vasudevan Nayar, whom Basheer introduced to REA in 1963 as 'a very promising young writer'; and S. Velayudhan who left untimely before completing the Malayalam grammar project with him.

**7. God signed on your heart in Tamil and Malayalam:** Now he is at the age of 86 we are sure that still he must remember the sound of the spine-crunching effect of unsprung wheels of bullock cart which he experienced on his first visit to India in 1953. Sixty years have passed since this first visit to India. There is no other scholar around the world like REA who still contributes for Indian languages. His writings on *Hindi*, *Sanskrit Grammatical Terms* and *Sandhi* in *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (1944) prove that it is not his priority but human limitation of time which prevented him not much contributed for other Indian languages. We hope that the Government of India will confer a Padma Award on him for his exceptional contribution to Indian languages. Let it be a navathi (90<sup>th</sup> birth day) gift to him from India. Even without any of these recognitions, what else does he need other than being in the mind of the people in India? This is in contrast to what is he paraphrased about his academic career "There's divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how will". Dear Professor rather than the divinity, it is your constant will to being in the life- world of Malayalam and Tamil through scholarship and friendship that placed you where you are. You acquired the goodness of Tamil and Malayalam. On behalf of divinity we should say that you are the European blessing on Malayalam and on behalf of our nation and 104 million Tamil and Malayalam speakers around the world we proudly say that you are the first true ambassador of Tamil and Malayalam to the world.