

Prof Amrit Srinivasan

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I have known Dr S. Palaniappan, the President of the South Asia Research and Information Institute (SARII) since 2007 and have watched him sustain its activities over the years, both through personal example and a capacity for identifying important trends and themes in the global scholarship on the region. The academic and community network SARII has built up through his efforts goes a long way towards justifying its ultimate mission of creating a permanent structure, where scholars on South Asia can affiliate themselves, avail of research archives and have more regular conversations with one another across disciplines. Logically, the very successful annual seminar format SARII has pursued for 12 years can now be extended along institutional lines. Any financial support given to SARII is money well spent since it benefits both the expert and the lay public especially the diaspora from the region, which participates enthusiastically in these annual seminar events.

Dr Palaniappan's research commitment and integrity is matched by extraordinary organizational skills. A rare combination, these qualities ensure SARII's future success. Dr Palaniappan's meticulous and innovative work on Tamil language, texts and culture has been consciously presented both before the US and Indian academic circles to provide a rallying point for critical appreciation across national borders. His work is provocative, intended to change the terms of discourse for future scholarship on South Asia and the Tamil region in particular.

Dr Palaniappan's dreams for SARII have the support of an excellent and visionary team, led by Mr Paul Pandian who has given selflessly of his time and resources in the cause of greater knowledge dissemination on South Asia as a cultural region. In today's conflicted times, SARII needs to grow and democratically represent both powerful diasporic and host US community interests through a variety of research programs and affiliations with institutions of higher learning. As a professional academic involved with universities and research institutes for over 40 years, I strongly support SARII's public initiative in the field of education and research as the need of the hour in the changing knowledge scenario worldwide.

Amrit Srinivasan is a senior social scientist from India whose research interests lie in the comparative study of knowledge and culture. Prof Srinivasan studied social anthropology at Cambridge University UK, where she completed her doctorate on the *devadasi* of Tamil *Bhakti* Hinduism. A temple professional, the *devadasi* was

disempowered and evicted from public office and people's homes by women's 'reform' movements, set into motion by imperial India.

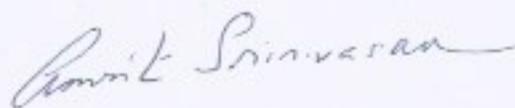
Prof Srinivasan's research methodology encourages the combination of standard field ethnography with indigenous theory and oral history that made her thesis a classic in academic social science. At the same time, given the multidisciplinary work context of IIT Delhi, her research transgresses narrow subject boundaries. Her influence over a broad spectrum of scholars both at home and abroad is testified to in the much cited journal publications that have emerged from her early research.

Her edited volume "*Knowledge Tradition Text: Approaches to Bharata's Natyasastra*" (SNA 2007), brought together scholars from diverse disciplines to reject a long-standing bias against the theoretical study of the technical and the practical or applied literatures of India. Scholars, according to her, have erred when they focus only on the normative, dharma or 'religious' literatures within Indology as central to the Sociology of India.

More recently, over the last decade she has explored the implications of the new technologies and male cultures of youth violence, India's professional service traditions under conditions of the New Knowledge Economy and disappearing traditional skill-based professional opportunities, particularly for women and the laboring poor. In her forthcoming book, Prof Srinivasan revisits her research preoccupations with women, not only as a subject of study but also as a disruptive methodological device. Women now move beyond substantive discussions of justice, equity and human rights to expose the structure of power and epistemic bias within a rapidly transforming urban Indian middle class.

Honours and Awards

Prof Srinivasan has been the recipient of many research and Visiting Professorship awards. Most recently, she was honoured with the Ministry of Culture's prestigious Tagore National Fellowship for Cultural Research Award (2015-17). In 2010, she was nominated to represent women on the MHA GOI's National Integration Council. In 2009, she was deputed ICCR's Visiting Professor at Tel Aviv University's East Asian Studies Department, Israel. In 2006 (June-July), she was a Visiting Fellow in Faculties of Arts & Informatics, University of Wollongong, NSW Australia. In 2005 she was an Invited Member, Expert Committee, Science & Society Division, Dept of S&T (GOI). Earlier she was the recipient of the Commonwealth Scholarship Award, the Shastri Indo-Canadian Fellowship and the Charles Wallace Fellowship Awards.



Prof (Ms) Amrit Srinivasan, PhD Cambridge
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