ALLIED DISCIPLINES AND EDITORIAL WORK
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N.S., it has been frequently stated before, is not a mere historian, but is more than that. He has contributed serious and original thought and material on Political theory, Constitutions, Economics, Sociology, Philosophy and Law apart from literature – critical as well as creative – and thus has augmented the corpus of human knowledge. These arose partly out of the nature of the studies at the History and Politics Honours level at the Annamalai University at that time, but also the kind of teachers who taught and influenced him and then finally his own intellectual inclinations. There has been no objection to a person pursuing a particular course of study but there are eminent examples of Philosophers being mathematicians like Pythagoras, Plato and Bertrand Russell and historians being writers of fiction or poetry like Charles Kingsley and Lord Macaulay respectively. N.S has been a literary critic, psychologist, biographer, a commentator and editor of classics, editor of a journal, organizer of a learned Institute and innovative writer of essays besides being a poet.¹ The most interesting aspect of N.S.’ communication is that it has been through rather very different types of languages; English - at perhaps one of its best and Tamil at perhaps its most representative classical form modernised as far as necessary for current intelligibility.

N.S. made himself as much a specialist in Political theory as in History. In History, too his preference was to English Constitutional history, which has a large content of modern constitutional law. His study of British

¹ The long essay on ‘N.S. the man and his work’ in the II Festschrift presented to him in 1995 covers and unveils much of what N.S. was both as a man and as a writer. But obviously it could not touch on all points of N.S.’achievements, meet criticism and assess the man within that compass.
Imperialism as a special subject gave him access to international law – an opportunity he made the most of. The study of British paramountcy and its treaty relations with the Indian ‘native’ states gave him an opportunity to understand the History of India of the last two centuries, in its proper legal, constitutional and political perspective.

Thus equipped, this equal knowledge and acquaintance with History and Politics learned from stalwarts like C.S. Srinivasachariar and R. Bhaskaran, N.S. was naturally tempted to get out of the narrow straight-jacket usually intellectually borne by even the eminent local historians and see the wider world of international history, politics and sociology and go to the roots of all these matters. That is how he came to interest himself in the study of and writing on non-regional, non-national historical themes.

We shall order the other and allied disciplines in which he was interested and contributed to as Politics, Economics, Sociology, Philosophy and Law – besides of course Literature.

I. Politics (called Political Science) and Constitutions

In 1960, he wrote two books on politics. 1. *Elements of Political Science* and 2. *Modern Constitutions* - both with the joint authorship of Mr. Balakrishna Sastri of Andhra Pradesh. The books were elementary and textbook for graduate students, written as part fulfillment of a contract with a Madras publisher. But even in these small books, N.S.’ original hand can be seen especially in his treatment of ‘Sovereignty’ and the ‘World State’ and a discussion of federalism in the U.S.A. and in India. The previous year he revised R.N. Gilchrist’s famous book on ‘Modern Constituions’² (published

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² This book had already been once edited and revised by Prof. C.S. Srinivasachariar.
Apart from these works on politics in English, he wrote in Tamil (1973) a remarkable book called *Pandaiya Indiya Arasiyal Ātchi Nilayangal* (Ancient Indian Political – Governmental institutions). The Tamilnadu Text Book Society, Madras, commissioned this. The book was no translation and written in a style and approach entirely different from that of U.N. Ghoshal. It was the first Tamil book by N.S. to be considered ‘controversial’ by at least one critic whose nervous self-contradictions will be evident from his review of this work. The book is in 13 chapters, a conclusion, bibliography, glossary of Sanskrit terms with their meanings, lists of technical terms (English - Tamil and Tamil - English). It deals with ancient Indian (i.e. mostly Hindu – Buddhist) political institutions – the Mauryan in particular. There is really no controversy or discovery of factual error in the book by the reviewer, who is a learned person. The objection is for speaking ‘unpleasant’ truths and ‘deflating’ false prides.

In S.N.Balasundaram’s review of the book he uses the word ‘cross-bench mind’ in a deprecatory manner. In that context he refers to N.S’ mind: But the following observations by the Rt. Hon’ble V.S.S. Sastriar are worth noting and remembering: “The cross – bencher is not beloved of his tribe; but the cross bench mind is an ever present and ever growing need. Believe me, it is the crown and summit of liberal education. It would be an evil day when it becomes extinct”.

Ever since 1947 and ever since a Constituent Assembly was formed, N.S. being a known student of Political Science and Modern Constitutions –

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Durham’s Report and things like that – and being, as Derrett has remarked, a ‘forward looking patriot’ had been hoping for a constitution which would confer all the freedoms to the citizens of free India – the only freedom which the British granted India by the Indian Independence Act was ‘political’ freedom, which was all that they could grant; for by that Act they returned what they had taken. But there were other freedoms – freedom from fear, hunger, illiteracy, avoidable and curable disease, freedom from superstition and general social backwardness and evil practices like Sati, child marriage, subjection of women, better and more humane treatment of children, abolition of bonded and child labour and endless other problems – all these remained in their centuries old and hallowed places. N.S. expected these would not only be removed, on paper by the newly-to-be drafted constitution but implemented too, so that this country could become the land of the dreams of his college days. But that was not to be.

So, unable to repress expression he wrote much on political and constitutional and international legal matters.\(^5\) He was especially interested in the problems of democracy\(^6\) and secularism and socialism\(^7\). He wrote many articles on many aspects of democracy which, according to him is a form of social attitude, way of life and form of Government suitable, only for small and politically mature and fully educated patriotic societies; and unfit for large, politically illiterate, economically poor and socially backward societies who still harp on inequalities.

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5. N.S. learnt his constitutional and Industrial law at M.L. level with Dr.Alexandrovicz, Head of the Dept. of Law, University of Madras.

6. His study in the Annamalai Honours School of History with R.Bhaskaran had familiarised him with Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Bentham, Burke, J.S.Mill and Morley. It was a vast spectrum, which presented all aspects of democracy as a theory and in practice: the unitary as well as the federal types of it.

7. Marx to Laski–communist, socialist, Bolshevik, Fabian and other varieties of collectivist ideologies were also familiar to him.
N.S. was an unusual historian in the sense that he did not think it proper to confine his attention to antiquities, but must be interested in and must be prepared to pass judgment on current and recent affairs in world history. He put Seeley’s famous statement that history is past politics and politics is history in the making aside and he was equally interested in both.

II. Law

Thus he was interested in the history of India, Post – A.D.1800; and that made him take interest in subjects like democracy, secularism and socialism, which were put into the preamble of the 1950 Constitution of India. He has written extensively on Democracy, his chapter on ‘democracy’: Britain and India’ in the Hinduism at the crossroads of history provoked Mr.C.Rajagopalachariar (former Governor General of India) into making remarks like ‘Dharma corresponds to the Rule of Law and law as contained in the ‘Common Law’ and ‘all people behave alike, whether living in England or in Madras etc.’ N.S. completely disagrees with these two points of criticism because in his opinion to the Hindus the Dharmic law is like the Shariat of the Muslims and unalterable by human legislation while ‘law’ in the expressions ‘Rule of Law’ and ‘Common Law’ are man secondly romantic concept made and could be altered by human agencies; secondly the wishful ideal is ‘all men behave equally’ – an assumption on which the whole of electoral politics is built – but the fact is that no two men behave alike which is a scientific fact.

8. e.g.pp52, 173, 180, 181, 184, 188, 189 of Hinduism at the Crossroads of History; Ch. 14 of Essays in Sociology and Politics, the Political Philosophy of the Ancient Tamils, S.P last chapter; his contribution to the main paper presented to the seminar on ‘Parliamentary democracy and social change’ paper entitled ‘Definition of social change and its implications for Parliamentary democracy in India’ (25-27/11/1970); and so on.

Democracy, to N.S. is not a mere form of Government. It is a way of life and a matter of faith in the concomitant values of equality, liberty and fraternity, made famous by the French Revolutionaries. In a varna – caste ridden country these values are not only irrelevant but hindrances to the continuation of the native traditional culture. That is why he complains that the privileges, absolute discretionary powers and the Act of Preventive Detention etc., which follow the Preamble, belie the Preamble to the 1950 Constitution. Being bred on Plato who fell foul on a city – state Democracy which would execute the ‘wisest’ man in the land and on J.S. Mill who knew that the liberty of the individual is more important than that of the crowd, on K.R Popper who spoke of the meaninglessness of the ‘collective’ and Bertrand Russell who insisted on rational individual thinking, N.S. entertains notions on democracy which may run counter to the current practices in many large countries which call themselves democracies.

N.S. is familiar with the commentaries on the Indian Constitution (1950) from Ivor Jennings to Basu the great commentator on the Constitution. But he is sternly of opinion that the present Constitution, which has undergone nearly 100 amendments, needs no amendments but complete rewriting.

Another point to which N.S. draws pointed attention is to the fact that the Indian Constitution is not federal. In India minorities are religious as well as caste – based; mostly religious. Similarly a mixed economy in which ‘stateism’ is mistaken for ‘socialism’ is allowed to exist side by side with private economy managed by powerful capitalists. Thus goes N.S’ criticism of what he calls the ‘abuse of political terminology’ in the Constitution of India. To him reform of society of which avoidance of superstition, abolition of poverty, full literacy etc must by a long chalk precede the grant of adult franchise; for to make it otherwise is to place the cart before the horse. These
points are raised in his paper on ‘Inhibiting factors in Indian society’\textsuperscript{10}. Some might wonder how a patriotic mind can criticize adversely the institutions of one’s own country. But the following words of G.K. Chesterton may be considered. “I have passed the great part of my life in criticizing and condemning the existing institutions of my country. I think it is infinitely the most patriotic thing a man can do”.\textsuperscript{11}

III. Sociology

This is his favourite facet of historical studies. He believes more in studying the socio-economic factors, which make each society what it is, rather than mere political history concerned with wars, political diplomacy and royal or other political leadership succession. In fact his very first writing was in Tamil, and related to the study of the social life of the common people in the form of light essays and his doctoral thesis eschewed political history but concentrated on the powers of the ruler in relation to the subject as well as the social life of the common man: \textit{the Šaṅgam Polity}; and it was quite appropriate too that his best great work was the \textit{Tamil Social History}.

The basic motivation for his social history is his concern for his fellow human beings; the order of preference being the following; 1. Children

\textsuperscript{10} Vide Hinduism at Crossroads of History by N.S. pp 131 to 172. His views expressed here are in variance with those of D.E. Smith expressed in his ‘India as a Secular State’. And in this context again he objects to the abuse of political terminology. The Preamble to the Indian Constitution reads as follows: “We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic...... given to ourselves this Constitution”. Here N.S. objects to the mode of Government of India ever since 1950, January 26 being called socialist or secular or democratic. Of course there is no mention of the word \textit{federal} in it. That paper presented in a seminar at Madras Institute of Development Studies, made these points forcefully; and combines academic, political and sociological thoughts and it appropriately stands guard at the end of the collection of his essays on sociology-Hinduism at the crossroads of History.

\textsuperscript{11} vide. The Crimes of England by G. K. Chesterton.
2. Woman; 3. Old persons of either sex; 4. The naturally disabled, the crippled; 5. and then the adult person. All humanity comes under his care. Their welfare and history are his concern. Those who, for selfish or for other reasons harm or hurt them are his enemies. Good samaritanism leads the list of his virtues. Appeasing the hunger of the poor, clothing, sheltering and educating them take preference over even devotion to God. So he wants to know why there are so many sufferers in the world, what kind of mismanagement or criminal neglect, bad governance etc. has led to this? This can be known only by studying the history of the human race ever since its emergence as a separate species. Only history aided by anthropology, sociology and ancient law can reveal the truth. So he preferred the stress on the social aspect of human history.

After all he has written only the following material relating to sociology: 1. In 1956 he published his *Hindu Tripod* under the auspices of the Institute of Traditional Cultures, Madras with a foreword (1 page) by K.A.N. Sastri. 2. To this seven more papers were added and published as the *Hindu Tripod and other Essays* in 1976, with (9 pages) a long introduction by Dr. J. D. M. Derrett of the SOAS, London. This is a very thoughtful and critical piece; i.e. the introduction. 3. Again in 1993, three more and important papers were added to this and published as *Hinduism at the Crossroads of History* by the Kanishka publishing House of Delhi. The first edition of the single essay carried no preface by the author; but the second did; and Prof. Derrett remarked about it: 'your astringent preface reads well'.

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The *H.T.* (which we shall make stand for the associate essays also) along with the *Saṅgam Polity* made N.S.' reputation as an original type of writer irreversible. The difference between the two however is that the latter solicited simple approval and admiration for its academic correctness and originality of handling a fairly well-known theme; though none else was as thorough with the literary source material for that work as he was. But the reputation of the former is different. It provoked, angered, made some politely disagree fully or partially, irritated, pleased, delighted and led to all kinds of different reactions. In short while the *S.P.* made N.S. famous, the *H.T.* made him notorious or at least controversial. Dr. Derrett, though he wrote in a light vein wrote correctly when in a letter dt: 23. 2.1976, he wrote: "I do hope the book gets the notoriety it deserves".

The reputation or the notoriety of the work the (*Hindu Tripod*) is due to
1. The nature of the analysis of the Hindu socio-religious system and 2. his having dared to do it. His analysis is that Hinduism is not a mere religion, but a social system and a way of life and an attitude of mind; and it stands on three legs: 1. Caste; 2. The belief in the doctrine of karma (amounting to fatalism); and 3. The joint family. It is universally recognized by all anthropologists that caste (Varna variation and elaboration) is a Hindu speciality.14

We shall consider only the major ideas contributed to sociology by N.S. here; and the major critics who have either differed from or agreed with him. Prof. T. Embree, Dr. H. Herring, C. Badrinath, Philip Spratt, and G. V. Balachandran have reacted critically to N.S' thesis.

14. The distinction between varna (which is ever only four) and caste (jati), which even in 1909 in South India alone was nearly 3000 as *per* Thurston, is clear.
There have always been two ways of interpreting or explaining ‘Hinduism’; one is orthodox and true; the other is fashionable modern (confined of course to a few) and defensive. Apart from this there is another duality; and that is most orthodox scholars take a philosophical (which in the Hindu context mostly means theological or religio – philosophical) view, quote scripture and justify the system; a few (of whom N.S. is a prominent one) take a purely positive historical view of human action and point out the gap between theory and practice. The theory consists of so many scriptures that even contradictory moral positions can be justified by quoting some Hindu scripture or other; and the same scripture like the Bhagavad-Gītā can be quoted by persons holding opposite moral positions: this view is stressed by N.S. being essentially historical minded; he is of the view that people are to be judged by their ‘action’ and not by what they say public or, write in scripture or literature except when this latter kind of literature contains obviously historical verifiable truth.

Basing himself on these views N.S. wrote his H.T. when K.A.N. wanted ‘some’ manuscript from him, which could be published as a pamphlet by the Institute he presided over. N.S. wrote the H.T. manuscript within a matter of ‘three wakeful nights’\textsuperscript{15} The manuscript was revised, read through, approved and published as a pamphlet (64 pages) by K.A.N. Sastri. The moral force, which obliged N.S. to speak such frank truths (which are usually pushed under the carpet) is expressed in the quotation which ends the monograph: “I would ask my genteel readers, who cannot endure to have said what everybody nowadays thinks and feels, to remember a well - worn sentence of St.Jerome’s: “If an offence come out of the truth, better is it that the offence come than that the truth be concealed” (Thomas Hardy). This was

\textsuperscript{15} Vide p.86 N.S. \textit{Man and his work}: This book was later expanded into \textit{Hinduism at crossroads of History} by Kanishka publications, Delhi in 1992.
real hardihood on the part of a mere lecturer in a University. It was all right for world famous authors and Christian Apostles to say this but for a dependent teacher occupying as low a position as the population of his family at home was high, was surely not to be expected. But all the difference was wiped out by such an eminent historian like K.A.N.Sastri (who surely did not approve entirely of N.S’ thesis set forth in the *H.T*) having decided to publish it and preface it with such a magnanimous scholarly neutral one – page statement.

The book did not receive the sensational reaction, which in any other academic society it would have invoked. But there was substantial reaction and brief excerpts from which can be given to show how N.S. spoke out in print what many other scholars’ minds were merely thinking of or expressing *en passant*. Herebelow are a few excerpts.

1. K.A.N. summarized the content of the thesis as ‘a full explanation of the incompatibility of the modern industrialized Western values and to traditional, (non-alienated) Hindu values’. This is a very sound summary of the thesis of the *H.T*.

2. The *H.T* maintains that Hindu social system and its beliefs are the bedrocks on which Hinduism is stood; and it has stood there for ages. The social system stands on three legs: 1.caste; 2.the inflexible faith in *karma* (which in the unsophisticated popular mind easily degenerates into fatalism); The joint family.

Dr. Derrett who was one of the earliest to authoritatively pronounce on the theme wrote as follows:

1. “…… the points which you raise are obviously well worth raising. I wonder, if some of these are not well worth raising…”. In this context, to
substantiate and settle a controversial point one should point out that Mr. C.D. Deshmukh, the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Delhi wrote to N.S. that while he had no objection to caste and Karma theory being treated as three legs of the Hindu Tripod, he would not agree to the joint family being treated as the third leg or in fact any leg at all. He wrote, “The joint family is largely a matter of Hindu law although a current social institution and cannot be treated the same way”16. But Dr. Derrett contradicts this view of Mr. Deshmukh and agrees with N.S. and says in the letter mentioned above17 “I do not remember coming across the assertion that the joint family is at the bottom of the Indian disinclination to originate. I have felt that that was so far a long time and it certainly deserves to be said. I will go further than you. I think the multiplicity of roles learnt by the child in the joint family teaches the pattern of multiple thinking and reacting which facilitates the toleration of inconsistencies which elsewhere the world be called hypocrisy”.

2. In the *Indian Express* (Madras Edition) dt. 28.2.1976, there was a detailed review of the *H.T. and other Essays* which, *inter alia*, says: “In the whole volume, the first essay is perhaps the foremost of the series... Individual effort was stifled by the joint family...... This is a highly stimulating book. The author looks at Hindu life steadily and sees it whole. He is at once a philosopher, a historian, a sociologist, a psychologist and an ecologist...........” The inherent incapacity of the Hindu system to become modern is its inhibition to liberty of the individual due to the joint family, equality and fraternity due to caste, and varna. This is the sum total of N.S’ doctrine in his

16. In his letter dt. 5.4.1966. It is not clear what makes Mr. C. D. Deshmukh think that a legal institution will not be a social support system. In fact though Hindu law talks about the joint family, it merely mentions what already had existed for endless ages as a social institution. Law did not create it. In great parts of rural India especially in the more backward states of the North the joint family system is practically the norm.

17. Letter of Dr. Derrett dt. 26.7.1966
thesis; but he also goes somewhat beyond that point and points out that if Hinduism is modern by adopting (genuinely, not merely nominally) the French Revolutionary slogans, the system will cease to be Hindu—though it may perhaps retain the goodwill by keeping the old name, it will certainly lose its substance.

3. Dr. D. Anjaneyalu, noted author and journalist wrote on 15.7.1989 to N.S. as follows:

"The book was so stimulating and vigorously unconventional that I not only enjoyed reading it but benefited from every statement made by you.................It bristles with arguments and ideas, hypothesis and conclusions for new theories that any intelligent and unprejudiced reader is likely to emerge with a refreshingly new perspective... I can't agree with you more when you observe on varna and caste; "so long as there is untouchability—there can be no democracy in Hindu India..."

4. Prof. C.T. Krishnamachari, formerly Professor of Philosophy, Madras Christian College and a very learned man wrote on 16-5-1966. "I have now read with great appreciation your challenging booklet on the Hindu Tripod.... I agree with you that the collision between some old values and some new values is very real..." He added as a footnote the following; "what the patriotic modern Hindu who longs to combine somehow the fruits and prestige of western culture with the ancient heritage generally fails to do is to offer a penetrating criticism of the West. We fall between a pigheaded rejection of the West and a blind adulation. Schopenhauer's praise of the Upanishads is always mentioned; but not Hegel's devastating criticism of Hinduism".
5. On 17.8.1971, Prof Ainslee Embree of the U.S.A. (Centre for International Studies, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A) wrote: “I had the opportunity to read your Hindu Tripod. I did so with very great interest..........you seem to me to state rationally and cogently many of the things I was trying to say. I particularly enjoyed your humour on p.5. about some reactions to Schweitzer (I think you are the first scholar who has said in effect: “Yes – Schweitzer is correct”- and saw that it was not an insult and perhaps depending on one’s point of view high praise). And your analysis of toleration is first rate...Your dismissal of Panikkar on p.31 is witty and true.” He added,“I envy your students receiving this kind of insight into Indian culture instead of what you call (p.5.)one based on western premises and evaluations”

6. Mr. Badrinath, I.A.S., then Collector of Madras wrote to N.S. on 19.8.1969, on reading the H.T., in very enthusiastic language. “I have been reading your book the whole day today, with that pleasure which comes from shared belief......There is nothing, almost nothing in your conclusion with which I do not agree...... I am a little breathless that we should find ourselves holding similar view on Hindu polity.

7. Dr. Herring, formerly Director, Max Muller Bhavan, Madras wrote on 1.4.1991 to N.S. “In October 1969 I organized a seminar on ‘Gandhi and Social Change; you were the historian among the participants and I appreciated your contribution to the controversial topic very much: well grounded, very much to the point and – as was to be expected from the author of the Hindu Tripod – pungent and non- compromising” (emphasis added). But it was not everyone who agreed with N.S. on this thesis. We shall mention three different scholars who differed from him for different reasons.

18. Vide -The philosophy subsection of this thesis for N.S. 'views on 'tolerance'. 
8. Philip Spratt, an ex-Marxist turned extreme liberal in a letter dt. 9.2.69 had some reservations about N.S.’ thesis on the *Hindu Tripod*. He was of opinion that both jati (caste) and the joint family are on the way out and will soon be extinct. He emphasized his pet idea of Hindu Narcissism (egocentricity) of the Hindu. In fact N.S. never contended that caste and joint family would not go; he only said that as of today – ‘Hinduism’ being defined as it is now – depends on caste, joint family and the fatalist attitude. He has even said, ‘they may go; - but they are not going, as fast as some imagine – and when they go ‘Hinduism’ also will go; the name may be retained, even as in many places in India, some firms bear English names, though the owners have now become Indians’. Mr.P.Spratt reviewed the *H.T.* in the *Swarajya* dt. 3.6.1967 and entitled the review ‘is it immovable?’ In the review he said: “The attraction of the enigmatic subject is enhanced by a dryly humorous style. The sum total is a very worthwhile booklet”.

9. A.M.Ghose, the then coordinator of General Education at the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, wrote in a long review of nearly 8 columns of a large sized journal *Indian Book Chronicle* dt. 16.2.1977 and summarized the whole book in most of the review; in most part of the review except where he says that ‘the essence of Hinduism is a set of spiritual values’ and not what N.S. identifies which Mr.Ghose treats as ‘encrustations’; he seems to agree with N.S. But at the end he puts the expected question 1.Why has not the author, offered a clear presentation for the ills he mentions? The answer is obvious; the whole essay of N.S. is diagnostic and not prescriptive or curative. For the ability to cure and the right to prescribe do not belong to the intellectual but to the politician.

10. Now we come to the really fundamental criticism of the *H.T.* This is a matter of methodology and therefore of great importance to the theme we are considering. Mr.Balachandran, formerly Head of the Dept. of Politics and
Public Administration of the University of Madras in a review article published in the *Indian Year Book of International Affairs*, says that a non-rational, non-scientific system like the Hindu must not be judged by tools and methods inappropriate to this business of analysis – the tools and methods N.S. adopts being logical, rational... All the arguments of Dr. Subrahmanian’s essay are based on western assumptions. But he himself admits that, “Dr. Subrahmanian is not unaware that applying ‘alien standards’ for judging the Hindu tradition would be illogical and misleading (P.64); but still he makes it; and why? Because any analysis is bound to be logical and rational. ‘That a madman’s condition must not be studied by a sane man’ is the summation of Balachandran’s objection; which in short is an objection to analysis *per se* of the Hindu system. Extremely clever and learned arguments are brought before the reader of the booklet. He concludes by suggesting that ‘Dr. Subrahmanian believes that if the layer of western values were removed Hinduism would be clear, cogent and cohesive’. No; N.S. does not think so; he himself says he agrees that the Hindu system is ‘functioning chaos’. That it functions does not make it the less of a chaos. In *Prof. N.S: The Man and his work*, alter ego says the following: “That the lunatic is incapable of judgement cannot mean that the incapacity itself must be treated respectfully as a value. If logic must not analyse irrationality, then it must at least be conceded that non-reason can analyse nothing”.

Alter ego explains why N.S. wrote this pamphlet at all in the above-mentioned article. “N.S. soon reached i.e. in 1966 or thereabouts, the stage which the Buddha attained when he saw unspeakably human misery all around but could find no remedy therefor. N.S. saw the soul cramping iniquities of the social system to which he belonged and which seemed incorrigible to him. He discovered what was worrying him but could find no

answer”. This gives the background to the much-debated essay the *Hindu Tripod* which in one sense is perhaps the most important piece of writing he ever indulged in.

There are just four books, which bear N.S. impremateur and which deal with sociology: They are 1. *H.T. and other Essays*, which we have discussed at some length. In that book, apart from the first essay which naturally is the *H.T.* 2. the Hindu responses to medieval and modern Western challenges – a paper he presented at the SOAS International Conference – is included as the second. It anticipates to some extent what he is later on going to say in his *Meaning of Indian History*. It summarizes the techniques adopted by Hinduism to adjust itself to unavoidable external circumstances. 3. ‘Hinduism and secularism’ plainly points that the socio-biology of Hinduism is totally incompatible with ‘secularism’ which is a product of the industrialized modern west’ 4. ‘Democracy, Britain and India’ shows how the inseparable and native traits of Hinduism- the Tripod – will not permit its adoption of secularization. It is wrong to redefine secularism to suit Indian political convenience; 5. ‘Hinduism at the cross roads’ specializes in some of the above topics; 6. ‘Freedom India and the West (with special reference to France)’ is like essay 4 but instead of democracy, freedom one of its components is discussed *in extenso* here. 7. ‘Caste in the Tamil country’ is a typical piece of research based on personal observation and his intimate life with his rural countrymen, who uphold caste. 8. ‘Understanding Ancient India’ is a review of Charles Drekmeier’s *Kingship and community in Early India* and agrees largely with him; it was earlier published in the *Rāja Viḍhyā*. 9. ‘Inhibiting factors in Indian Society’ is a critique of the tendency on the part of Economists and Statisticians (and the politicians who depend on them for their facts and even ideas) to depend too much on empirical data (which may and are often wrong and therefore make revision of original estimates
necessary) but study history and sociology before formulating economic theories suitable for a country. Thus the book contains 9 essays. The second book *Hinduism at the Cross roads of History* (1993) includes the H.T.*and other Essays* along with three more very important essays, thus making the total 12. The three additional essays are. 1. The ‘Predicament of Man’ (Presidential address delivered in the NEHU on the assumption of his Professorship of History there); 2. ‘Non-conformism in Hindu Culture’; and 3. ‘Hindu Spiritual values and social life’. The *second* of these was a paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Institute of Historical Studies (Calcutta) in 1987. The *third* was presented to a philosophical conference held in Madras in December 1983.

The third book *Essays in Sociology and Politics* (1992) consists of 15 chapters: This is a fresh collection of old essays (i.e. essays written for different occasions at different times). But of these 15, too, three contain germs and enlargements of ideas already expressed in the second book noticed above. They are Hindu spiritual values and social life, which is the same, as essay No 4. of book, number two. The eleventh essay ‘India: a secular state’ examines, from a different angle the same theme ‘Hinduism and Secularism’. The fourteenth essay on ‘Democracy’ elaborates more theoretically the ideas contained in the essay on ‘Democracy, Britain and India’ in book No. two. ‘Non conformism in Hindu Culture’ also repeats the theme already dealt with in book No. two as essay no 3.N.S. as part of his wish to make each collection ‘self-sufficing’ explains these ‘repetitions’ of at least four or five essays already. But the real point is in these three collections of essays put together one gets N.S’ levels of higher thought in the fields of Law (law and social change), Art (Art and Criticism), Philosophy (Philosophy and social conflict, ‘Hindu spiritual values and social life’; concepts and role of tolerance in Indian culture, ‘Non-conformism in Hindu Culture’); but it
must be noted that everywhere he links every allied subject with history and the daily life of the common man. *The H.T. and other Essays* and the 'E.S.P.\(^{20}\)' carry learned, weighty and insightful introduction by Dr.J.D.M. Derrett and Dr.H.Herring respectively. They have examined with care and sympathy and critically too these two major works by N.S. 'The Phenomenon of change' essay\(^{21}\) No.7 in the *E.S.P.* is the key piece on which all the rest of N.S.' sociological thinking rests.\(^{22}\)

He has a most remarkable and typically sociological work to his credit and it is *The Brahmins in the Tamil Country* (1989). This is one of the books by N.S. which have received due attention but different readers have been differently affected by it. In that sense it attains the distinction of being one of his 'controversial' works. Among others it deals with the migratory theory, hydraulic civilizations, the conspiracy theory in history, the brahmin being

\(^{20}\) Rather unfortunately titled since it looks like introducing a prescribed or recommended textbook on Politics and Sociology to University examinees, which it certainly is not. The book is intended for adult, already well educated persons.

\(^{21}\) Dr.H.Herring in his letter to N.S.dt.29.6.1991 says: "A first glance on your essay 'The phenomenon of change' promises an intellectual pleasure as well as a challenge for the reading to come.

\(^{22}\) N.S.' essay on 'Tolerance' read in a Philosophy Conference received little tolerance from his colleagues in the profession, especially the Philosophers. When Mr.R.Balasubramaniam, who edited the volume on 'Tolerance' published by the ICPR, and put N.S.' paper as the first one in the collection of 9 essays on the subject after mentioning the views of the usual type of essays says frankly in his preface to that work: Subrahmanian strikes a discordant note. He does not think that there is any theoretical basis for the practice of tolerance in public and private behaviour in India. He maintains on historical grounds that 'the Hindus did not practice tolerance as a consciously worked out ethical policy'; In the case of Hindu India there is, observes Subrahmanian, 'really no evidence to show that tolerance was practiced as a consciously worked out ethical policy; ....Subrahmanian's views are undoubtedly provocative and his arguments disputable. But it must be remembered that there are quite a few scholars, though in a minority, who are in agreement with Subrahmanian.' This is just one instance to show how N.S.' moral, aesthetic values are deemed 'provocative and debatable' by the non – N.S. learned world.
mentioned by T.Veblan in his *The Theory of the Leisure Class* the magic – priest and the tribal chief axis (the prince-priest axis) the retributory theory, the comparison with the wandering Jew and the stateless priesthood; the principle of social snobbish hierarchism.

Many have remarked the praise that has been showered on the Tamil Brahmin community (P.15) and others the charge levelled against them (PP.138, 139). The references (PP 140-173) and the Appendices (PP 176-197) make the book complete and useful. A friendly but critical reader wrote on 22.3.1995 to N.S. – “The reasons for the migration of the Brahmins from the North to the South in three phases and the parts played by Visvamitra and Parasurama in this regard are original and most interesting.” A similar book would have created a sensation and sold like hot cakes in foreign countries;......This book deserves a place along with Abbe Dubois’ and Edgar Thurston’s works. This book shows how an unbiased historian can write the history of his own community with such an air of clinical detachment. The book is an expanded version of the lectures delivered by N.S. in the University of Madras on 31.3.1968 and 1.4.1968 under the auspices of the Krishnasámi Rao Endowment lectures. The lectures however stopped with the Vijayanagar period. The book brings it up to date.

IV. His contribution to economics never took the form of a book, but was mostly confined to the discussions on economic affairs – especially the issue of poverty in India – in the capacity of a member (1970 – 76) of the MIDS founded by Dr.M.Adiseshiah, who was a good friend of his. His ideas on how the economic and social condition of the people affect what is called ‘development ‘now were laid down in his paper on ‘Inhibiting factors in Indian Society’ in the *H.T. and other Essays*. He invented and spread the

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23. But many do not remember that ‘controversy is the price of progress’ (G.K. Galbraith).
slogan that 'poverty breeds poverty'; that even slaves can be emancipated only by the free and women's status raised only by men, the poor can be helped only by the rich. But the traditional caste and the newly organized middle class system prevent contacts among different sections of society; the rural – urban, the slum - aristocratic area gaps cannot be filled except by making the country a truly, genuinely secular state and caste made irrelevant for political purposes and the constitution rewritten to make mere and pious wishes into legally enforceable constitutional provisions. The filtration theory will not work in the Indian economy; the national wealth and the borrowed money will not percolate to the bottom, which needs them most.

V. His interest in psychology and psycho-analysis is reflected in his *Psychobiography of C.Subramania Bhārati*. He has always had a flair for logic – from Aristotle to modern logic through Bacon, Mill etc. He wanted to edit with exhaustive notes the *Nyāya Ilakkanam* (now in manuscript in his possession) by Muthukkumaraswamipulaver. But N.S. feels there is little chance of this dream being realized. The text is in verse and contains Aristotelian logic along with mnemonic words.

VI. Under the auspices of the INITHS he organized in Madurai his first seminar; and it was on ‘Self immolation in Tamil Society’ – and he edited the papers presented thereto. He himself wrote a long paper (34 pages in print) and included it in the collection. The subject was of great interest and it attracted specialists like Dr.A.Venkoba Rao to the seminar. Dr.Rao presented a paper on 'suicide'- a more straightforward title to the act. N.S.’ first poem in his *Echoes from the Heart* shows how much he was interested in the sociology of the subject.

VII. He is by nature an aesthete; loves symmetry and beauty and wishes to enquire into the grammar of the psychology behind this feeling. From
Aristotle's *poetics* to Burke's essay on aesthetics, Ruskin's views, Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde- he has extensively studied the history of art, especially pre-Christian pagan Greek and Roman and Renaissance. He disapproves of symbolic art. 'Art for art's sake', a phrase discredited by some social reformers, is approved by him as professionally and academically necessary and aesthetically acceptable. He wrote a book on *The Aesthetic of Drama and Stalin's Plays* (216pp) showing his opinion of drama as the best art form: i.e. the most complete one.

Though N.S. was essentially philosophically minded and thought poorly of organized religion and party politics (as practised in politically immature societies), he was not entirely uninterested in religion; he was a student of comparative religion; he wrote papers on the 'origin of Murugan' and a paper comprising the role of the Christ in Christianity and that 'of role of Sita in Srivaishnavism'. He wrote a paper on the influence of Sankara on South Indian Social structure and religious thought. He started writing a series of articles on the Hindu religion, with the intention of covering the whole subject from the beginning to now for the *Indumitran* in 1975-76; but wrote only 5 chapters on the subject. He did not pursue it further.

It has been noticed that N.S. started and ran an Institute of International Tamil Studies in Madurai and he was the Editor of the Journal of the Institute - *The Tamil Studies*. The quarterly journal began with its first issue in October 1981 Vol I No. I and was continued till April 1985 Vol V No. 2 – in all 13 issues came out. N.S. being the Editor wrote an editorial essay prefacing each issue; all the essays were concerned with the fortunes of historiography in Tamilnad during the past century and more. When these are put together they become an integrated critical account of the development of Tamilian Historiography with an emphasis on its current decay and deficiencies.