

**Subbiah Sivasankara Narayana Pillai,
Professor of Mathematics,
Annamalai University – 1929.**

1929 is indeed an unforgettable year in the annals of Annamalai University. It was in that year, a Unitary Residential University, on the East of an ancient temple where the Cosmic Dancer ever dances, was established on a vast campus, by the far-sighted vision of Sir Annamalai Chettiar. He travelled far and wide, gained knowledge of people and places, met distinguished scholars and educationists around the world, and planned to establish a University, on the model of Oxford and Cambridge. On his return, he bought extensive land for this purpose, on the East of Chidambaram. Even then, reconnoitering for selecting appropriate scholars, as teachers of the University, was very much in his mind. He scouted far and wide, to choose the best for every Faculty.

For the Mathematics Department, he chose a world renowned scholar and mathematician, Subbiah Sivasankara Narayana Pillai. Mr. Pillai was certainly a genius who solved difficult theorems on Numbers, which remained unsolved for years, and hobnobbed with world renowned compatriots in Mathematics. Stalwarts like Einstein and Oppenheimer admired him and invited him to their Institutions, but he declined to do so, stating that he had enough research to do in his own country!

However, on an invitation to deliver a Special Address, at Harvard University, he flew from Chennai on August 31, 1950. On the way, owing to the plane's engine failure, it crashed over the Sahara Desert, and Professor Subbiah Sivarama Narayana Pillai lost his life.

Subbiah Sivasankara Narayana Pillai was born in Vallam in Thirunelveli District. He had lost his parents early in his life. Many well wishers helped him to pass School and College. The Madras University recognized his work, admitted him at the University, and later, conferred on him the Honorary Doctor of Science Degree.

He joined Annamalai University, in 1929, as a Lecturer. In all, he had published 78 research papers, featuring his theoretical findings in Mathematics.

Today, sadly not many know him, and this write-up may certainly induce an interest in him. Judged by the scholarly dimensions of Professor Pillai, and his international reputation, what a great Centre of Learning, Annamalai University is where he served. We feel so proud of him.

(The writer acknowledges his indebtedness to Thiru. R. Sivaraman, Founder, Mathematical Forum, and to Dhina Malar, dated 21.08.2017, for inputs).
