

# Know About Your Mother Tongue Tamil



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It is a basic fact that human beings live in groups. Language is a necessary instrument for inter-group and intra-group communication. It is the strongest bond in any social group and mark of group identity. Language is essential for the purpose of socialization of human beings. Mother tongue is that language with which one is emotionally identified and attached. It is the language through which one expresses one's basic needs, ideas, thoughts, joys, sorrows and other emotional feelings. Mother tongue is the language, which, if one loses and adopts another language, one may become intellectually alive but grow emotionally sterile.

Educationists, Linguistics and psychologists are of the opinion that mother tongue is best suited as a medium of early education as it aids concept formation and promotes creativity. But in an alien country where the facility to learn one's own mother tongue is not available, it is quite natural for the settlers to make their wards learn local language(s). It is the case with many of the Tamils who settle in a foreign country. However, it may not be very difficult or impossible task to provide an opportunity to their children to learn their native language Tamil, at least in their homes. Learning a language, especially one's own mother tongue is not a burden. Carrying a load of sandalwood may be a burden to a donkey. To a human being the aromatic factors of the language may compensate the load factor. It is, therefore, imperative on the part of Tamil speaking parents to facilitate their children to learn their language.

Now let us discuss a few merits and excellence of our mother tongue in order to motivate the learning of our language. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Tamil perhaps is the only example of an ancient classical tongue, which has survived as a spoken language for more than 2,500 years with its basic structure almost unchanged. Among the many languages, Tamil is the

earliest to develop into a cultural language with literatures of its own. Tamil literature falls into three great divisions iyal (poetry), icai (music) and natakam (drama). Such a division is rarely found in any other language of the world. Tolkappiyam (ancient book) is the



earliest grammatical work available in Tamil; it is considered to belong to 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and is thus the oldest not only in Tamil but also in all the Dravidian languages. From this great work we understand that it was preceded by centuries of literatures and grammatical treatises.

The earliest available literatures of the Tamils belong to the Sangam period, which is roughly estimated to be from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C to 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. There is a tradition that three literary academies of the Tamils flourished one after the other in ancient Madurai, Kapatapuram and later Madurai. The literatures available to day belong to the third academy or Sangam, while the works of the earlier academies were lost in the floods. Love and war form the themes of the ancient Sangam classics; they reflect the ancient culture, refined emotions and noble aspirations of the Tamils. Innumerable works are produced in Tamil in the last 20 centuries. Great works like the Tirukkural, Cilappathikaram and Kamba Ramayanam are well known all over the world.



Tamil is a classic as well as a living language. Many foreign scholars have worked on and appreciated the wealth of Tamil language and literature. Dr.Caldwell, Dr G U Pope, Rev. Beschi and many others have made the Tamil language and its literature known to the world. Therefore it is an obligation on the part of every Tamilian, wherever he lives, to learn his mother tongue and thereby to preserve and develop his culture and identity.

