

# Tamil Script and Students

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## Introduction

During one of my lectures, I asked the listeners, writing ஜூலை on the Board. Many answered "the language is Sanskrit." Since ஸ்ரீ, ஜ, ஸ, ஷ, ஹ, கூ were once used to write Sanskrit in Tamil Nadu, they are under the impression that all the words containing the above grantha script of Tamil Nadu are Sanskrit. This gives a clue to teach the various scripts that are being used to write Tamil and the various forms and compositions of the glyphs and characters of Tamil Script and Roman Script in school level. This article deals with the various variations of Tamil and Roman Script at the present day, under use for writing TAMIL.

## Tamil Script

The total number of Tamil primary letters as per grammer is 30, 18 being mey and 12 being uyirmey. The other 18 x 12 = 216 uyirmey and one aydham are subsidiary making the total as 247. The Tamil Matrix runs 12 uyir and 1 mey in the rows and 18 uyirmey in the columns. Aydham is conveniently placed in the gap left with, in the first place of column and first place of row.

## TAMIL MATRIX

|    |   |    |    |    |    |    |       |       |     |       |       |    |
|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|----|
| ஃ  | அ | ஆ  | இ  | ஈ  | உ  | ஊ  | எ     | ஏ     | ஐ   | ஓ     | ஔ     | ஔள |
| க் | க | கா | கி | கீ | கு | கூ | கெ    | கே    | கை  | கொ    | கோ    | கௌ |
| ங் | ங | ஙா | ஙி | ஙீ | ஙு | ஙூ | ஙெ    | ஙே    | ஙை  | ஙொ    | ஙோ    | ஙௌ |
| ச் | ச | சா | சி | சீ | சு | சூ | செ    | சே    | சை  | சொ    | சோ    | சௌ |
| ஞ் | ஞ | ஞா | ஞி | ஞீ | ஞு | ஞூ | ஞெ    | ஞே    | ஞை  | ஞொ    | ஞோ    | ஞௌ |
| ட் | ட | டா | டி | டீ | டு | டூ | டெ    | டே    | டை  | டொ    | டோ    | டௌ |
| ண் | ண | ணா | ணி | ணீ | ணு | ணூ | ணெ    | ணே    | ணை  | ணொ    | ணோ    | ணௌ |
| த் | த | தா | தி | தீ | து | தூ | தெ    | தே    | தை  | தொ    | தோ    | தௌ |
| ந் | ந | நா | நி | நீ | நு | நூ | நெ    | நே    | நை  | நொ    | நோ    | நௌ |
| ப் | ப | பா | பி | பீ | பு | பூ | பெ    | பே    | பை  | பொ    | போ    | பௌ |
| ம் | ம | மா | மி | மீ | மு | மூ | மெ    | மே    | மை  | மொ    | மோ    | மௌ |
| ய் | ய | யா | யி | யீ | யு | யூ | யெ    | யே    | யை  | யொ    | யோ    | யௌ |
| ர் | ர | ரா | ரி | ரீ | ரு | ரூ | ரெ    | ரே    | ரை  | ரொ    | ரோ    | ரௌ |
| ல் | ல | லா | லி | லீ | லு | லூ | லெ    | லே    | லை  | லொ    | லோ    | லௌ |
| வ் | வ | வா | வி | வீ | வு | வூ | வெ    | வே    | வை  | வொ    | வோ    | வௌ |
| ழ் | ழ | ழா | ழி | ழீ | ழு | ழூ | ழெ    | ழே    | ழை  | ழொ    | ழோ    | ழௌ |
| ள் | ள | ளா | ளி | ளீ | ளு | ளூ | ளெ    | ளே    | ளை  | ளொ    | ளோ    | ளௌ |
| ற் | ற | றா | றி | றீ | று | றூ | றெ    | றே    | றை  | றொ    | றோ    | றௌ |
| ன் | ன | னா | னி | னீ | னு | னூ | னெ... | னே... | னை. | னொ... | னோ... | னௌ |

## Grantha Script of Tamil Nadu

|    |    |     |
|----|----|-----|
| ஐ  | ஐ  | ஐா  |
| ஸ  | ஸ  | ஸா  |
| ஷ  | ஷ  | ஷா  |
| ஹ  | ஹ  | ஹா  |
| கூ | கூ | கூா |

## Unicode

In unicode, we like to have all the above 277 letters plus c. Since this system admits one set for one letter, though this contains one, two or three characters like, L, Ḷ, ̣Ḷ. Though this matrix is not taught in First Standard book, this finds place in the introductory chapter itself.

## Typewriter and TAB

Typewriter and TAB permits character and glyph. I suggest a different way introducing the 277 letters of Tamil and Grantha.

### UYIR

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| அ | ஆ | உ | எ | ஒ | ஐ |
| ஆ | ஈ | ஊ | ஏ | ஓ | ஔ |

### MEY

|   |   |   |   |   |     |
|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| க | ச | ட | த | ப | ற   |
| ங | ஞ | ண | ந | ம | ... |

### GRANTHA

|   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| ஐ | ஸ | ஷ | ஹ | கூ | யூ |
|---|---|---|---|----|----|

### GLYPHS

|     |    |    |    |    |     |
|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| .   | ஈ  |    |    |    |     |
| ᳚   | ஊ  |    |    |    |     |
| ᳛   | ஋  |    |    |    |     |
| ᳜   | ᳝  |    |    |    |     |
| (r) | ஃ  |    |    |    |     |
| கு  | சு | டு | து | பு | று  |
| கூ  | சூ | டூ | தூ | பூ | றூ  |
| ங்  | ஞ் | ண் | ந் | ம  | ... |
| ங்  | ஞ் | ண் | ந் | ம  | ... |
| ய   | ரு | லு | வு | மு | ளு  |
| யூ  | ரூ | லூ | வூ | மூ | லூ  |

This matrix, at least, will not threaten the students. The 278 letters get generated from 30 + 10 Tamil letters, 6 grantha letters and 36 uyir mey u and uu. One of the recommendation of the Tamil Internet 2000 at Singapore was to drop the last 36 figures and use only ன், கூ attached

to the main letters. This proposal is conveniently forgotten by the INFIT Committee. But this is persued by the Government of Tamil Nadu in the high level TAMIL VALARCHI MANDRAM of Tamil Development Department. One day or other this proposal may find the light of the day.

## Script for TAM and TAB

Uyirmey characters are generated by typing main letter and uyir.

த்த, ந்த, are generated by typing தத and ந்த. These aspects should be taught in the Computer book, written in English or Tamil for Tamil Nadu. The plus two books for Computer Science have completely forgotten this aspect.

Probably, this has lost sight of the authors and reviewers of those books, because in English mechanical Key Board is repeated for Computers also, where as it is not the case in Tamil KeyBoard. Students should be taught to type as follows. At least, a note on the resolutions adopted in the Tamil Internet 1999 at Chennai, should be included in the Text books.

அகர மஉதல எழுஉத் தளலஆம் ஆதஇ  
பக்வன் மஉதறறஏ உலகஉ.

கறறத னஆலாய பயன.என் கஒல் வஆலறஇவன்  
நறறஆள் தஒழஆ ரளனஇன்.

மலர் மஇசஐ ஏகஇன.ஆன் மாஆண்டஇ சஏர்நதஆர்  
நஇல பஇசஐ நாடஉ வஆழ்வஆர்.

A little practice in this direction by writing, will make input easier in the Computer desk top printing. This form of script may be introduced in 6th class itself.

## Unique feature of TAM and TAB

The unique feature of TAM and TAB is the elimination of shift key. In English, shift key is essential for the caps to begin the sentence and some words like place name, proper name, etc. Thus Tamil has excelled English. Without undergoing vigorous training in the mechanical key board, Tamil input is possible with in a week, as experienced by Prof. Ananthakrishnan. It is high time for the other Indian Languages to break Ku\$ttaksharams into individual letters following Tamil Script and do away with the Shift Keys.

## Phonetic Key Board

English follows Tamil grammar in the way it generates its uyirmey characters.

க ஓ ட உ ம உ ட இ ச அ ண ம உ க அ ன  
K O D U M U D I S A N M U K A N

People read English very easily, where as they tumble to read Tamil, though both are of same principle. It may take two or three days to break the inertia in reading Tamil in the above style, which had already been used in TAB and TAM. Standardisation of phonetic key board is in the agenda of the third Tamil Internet Conference now being held in Kulalumpur.

## Change over from and to Roman Characters

Roman characters are used for many languages of Europe and Malaysia. The present day demand is to render Tamil poems or prose in Roman Script. Letter to letter equivalents are not available for Tamil to Roman. Particularly short and long vowels could not be represented by Roman letters. Tamil has three X, Z, [ and five ], Q, S, M, O. There are many types of Transliteration methods are in use now.

1. Use of Lower Caps and Caps and other symbols
2. Use of diacritical marks as in Tamil Lexicon of Madras University
3. Use of diacritical marks with some phonetic adjustments as in Tamil Etymological Dictionary of Deveneyappanar.

All the above three methods should be taught to the students at the higher secondary level.

1. Use of Caps and Lower Caps

This is used mechanically to transfer from Tamil to Roman and Roman to Tamil. Mostly practised for computers. Not found used for academic purposes.

|   |    |   |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| a | i  | u | e | o | ai |
| A | I  | U | E | O | au |
| k | c  | T | t | p | R  |
| g | n- | N | n | m | n  |
| y | r  | l | v | z | L  |

2. Use of diacritical marks

This is found mostly used for academic purposes. Learned journals, dictionaries and seminars use this type of Transliteration only. Epigraphy Departments of State and Central Governments use this type of diacritical marks for the past 100 years.

|   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| a | i | u | e | o | ai |
| ā | ī | ū | ē | ō | au |

|   |    |   |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| k | c  | ṭ | t | p | r  |
| ñ | ñ̃ | ṇ | n | m | ṇ  |
| y | r  | l | v | ḷ | ḷ̣ |

3. Use of diacritical mark - Pavanar way.

Pavanar modified the above system introducing pb, td, es, etc. to get near equivalent sound. Practiced only in the Tamil Etymological Dictionary Project of Government of Tamil Nadu.

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| a | i | u | e | o | ai | kg | cs | ṭḍ | td | pb |    |
| ā | ī | ū | ē | ō | au | ñ  | ñ̃ | ṇ  | n  | m  | ṇ  |
|   |   |   |   |   |    | y  | r  | l  | v  | ḷ  | ḷ̣ |

## Popular Transliteration

Place names and personal names in vernacular are written in Roman Script in a different way in Roman Script. Short and Long vowels are differentiated in writing. It is the readers ability to identify them properly. Once All India Radio, in its English News announced: தண்ட யுத பணி was elected as the Vice Chairman of the Legislative party". தண்டாயுதபாணி was read as தண்ட யுத்த பணி from the Roman Script.

So many methods are being tried but no standardisation has emerged so far. Use of double vowels is tried by Newspaper but in vain. Only for aa it is alright. ee, ii, oo, uu do not sound well.

t or d for letter (தமிழ் L) and th and dh for the letter R are used in practice. zh is equivalent to ழ.

It is better that some committee is appointed to recommend some standardisation. Major draw back is for long vowels. th, dh, zh may be allowed to continue. a i u e o may take a dash at top for long vowels. ல, ள may be written as l and ll. ..., ண, ந, ன, ஞ may be written as . In lead letter press, these letters have to be cast and used. a i e o u l n n n n n are ten new letters to be cast. In Computer generation one dash and one dot at top and bottom of the letters to be added to generate the above 10 letters like that of uyirmey in Tamil.

While calling the names in the attendance register, written in Roman characters mislead names of the students putting the teacher in an embarrassment position. The standardisation should be issued as an order of the Government of Tamil Nadu, which may be followed by the other Governments like Government of Singapore, Ceylon, Malaysia and India.

|               |                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Azhagar malai | ViiramaNi                   |
| AarumuganEri  | VivEgacinthAmaNi            |
| yErkAdu       | Thamizhp palkalaik kazhagam |
| Thiruthani    | KaLanjiya mayyam            |
| ThadAgam      | ThingaluUr                  |

## Ancient Tamil Script

Whether we teach the above scripts or not, we have to necessarily teach the growth and Development of Tamil Script from Tamil Bramin, Vattezhuthu, Tamil (late period) and grantha

prevalent in Tamil Nadu. This will help our students to say that the scripts found on the walls of Temples are Tamil and not to blink before those temple walls. The correct period will be 9th standard, when this will not be included for the Final examination. Students may pick up something without the fear of the examination.

## Conclusion

In fact, various types of script are being followed in different departments. It is high time that the youngsters are given some training in the class room itself, so that when they go to different departments, the script used there will not baffle them. Particularly, 6th standard, 9th standard and 11th standard may be chosen to introduce (1) the TAB letters, (2) Roman scripts for conversion from Tamil to English and vice versa and (3) growth of Tamil script.