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Tholkaappiyam reviewed

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The Great Tamil Grammar Tholkaapiam is still very much valid with respect to the Tamil -99 keyboard. This paper tries to appreciate some of the aspects and apply the same to the present day elementary education.

1. எழுத்தெனப் படுப
அகர முதல
னகர இறுவாய முப்பஃதென்ப
சார்ந்துவரல் மரபின் மூன்றலங்கடையே
2. அவைதாம்
குற்றிய லிகரம் குற்றிய லுகரம்
ஆய்தம் என்ற
முப்பாற் புள்ளியும் எழுத்தோரன்ன.

The letters are 30 starting from a to na.. Kutriyalugaram, Kutriyaligaram and Aaydham are other three secondary letters represented by three small dots. Then Aaydham was represented only by a small dot and not like the present three dots ஃ.

The Tamil 99 keyboard aptly represent the first suuthiram of Tholkaappiyam. This contains only the thirty letters mentioned in Tholkaappiyam. No other letters other than mey dot, comma and full stop. The letters are generated by phonetic method and hence all the 246 letters are neatly printed.

There is no shift key required to produce Tamil letters. This is a major break through in typewriting. In English, sentence starts with capitals and all proper nouns require caps and hence English cannot compete with Tamil. As it is, any body may choose to dispense with capitals and there is no compulsion to retain capitals in English. I see most of the E-mail letters without capitals without any change in the meaning. This system may be generalized and practiced by all.

ஆ ஈ ஊ ஐ ஏ ள ற ன ட ண ச ஞ

அ இ உ எ க ப ம த ந ய

ஒள ஓ ஒ வ ங ல ர ழ

All 30 letters are arranged as above. Let us compare them with traditional arrangement.

அ இ உ எ ஓ ஐ

ஆ ஈ ஊ ஏ ஓ ஒள

க ச ட ப ற வல்லினம்

ய ர ல வ ழ ள இடையினம்

ங ஞ ண ந ம ன மெல்லினம்

Tholkaappiyar says அ to ன and it is possible only if idayinam comes in between vallinam and mellinam. The present Matrix in primary school is not Tamil based where ழ ள ற ன which are not in Sanskrit are grouped at the end.

15. மெய்யின் இயற்கை புள்ளியோடு நிலையல்

All mey letters have dot over their head. This has to be read along with suuthiram 17.

17. புள்ளி யில்லா எல்லா மெய்யும்

உருவருவாகி அகரமோ டுயிர்த்தலும்

ஏனை உருவோடு உருவு திரிந்து யிர்த்தலும்

ஆயிரியல உயிர்த்தலாறே

Mey letters will have top dot. Letter without top dot are basic letters in the agaram row. All other letters will have some distortion. Let us see them as they are.

க் க கா கி கீ கு கூ கெ கே கொ கோ கை கௌ

It is high time to know how the Tamil letters appear in the days of Tholkaappiar, which we shall take up after a few paragraphs.

18. மெய்யின் வழியது உயிர் தோன்று நிலையே

mey+ uyir= uyirmey. uyirmey acquires the qualities of uyir and not mey.

Only in Tamil 99 keyboard mey is followed by uyir to generate uyirmey. This Phonetic system simply follows English. In other words English is following Tholkaappiyam.

Thiru Kondal Mahadhevan suggested this type of script reforms for Tamil in KONGU SEPTEMBER 1974. க ஓ ண ட அ ல ம அ க ஆ த ஏ வ ன. Nobody cared by then.

Our Computer Engineers have silently accepted this suggestion and implemented giving a great honor to Thiru Kondal Mahadevan.

25. ங ஞ ண ந ம ன என்னும் புள்ளி முன்னர்த்

தத்தம் இசைகள் ஒத்தன நிலையே

30. மெய் நிலை சுட்டின் எல்லா எழுத்தும்

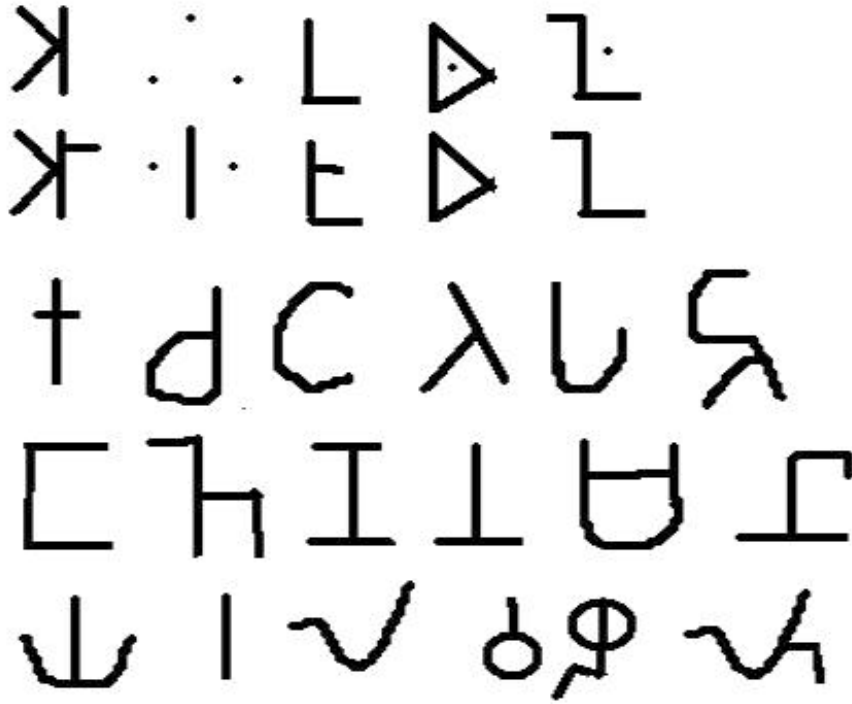
தம்முன் தாம் வருஉம் ர ழ அலங்கடையே

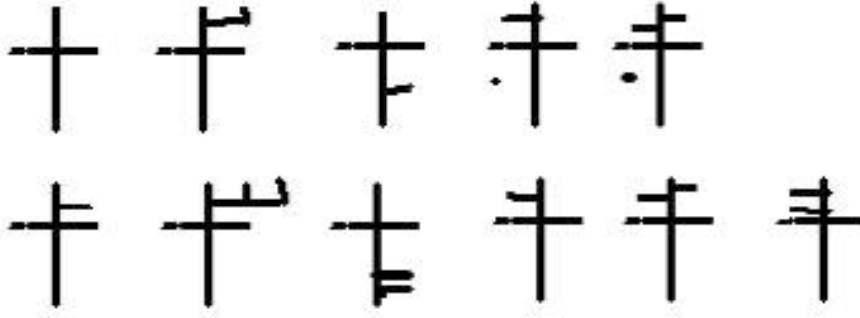
After 6 nasal mey characters, their corresponding vallina characters will follow. This formula has been well utilized in Tamil 99 Keyboard. The facility of automatic generation of top dot over nasal characters when followed by corresponding vallinam is a boon.

Out of 18 mey letters, 16 letters leaving ற and ழ all repeat after mey. Here also it is not necessary to put top dot for the mey letter. But this facility is available for all letters. The occurrence of this type is more in Tamil writing and hence we save lot of strain to the pointer finger of the left hand.

Suuthiram 25 and 30 are best utilised here. The difference is very much felt by the users of mechanical typewriters where the top dot is placed in the dead key that too for the little finger of the right hand.

Having taken Tholkaappiyam, let us have a look at the letters of that period.





அ	இ	உ	எ	ஓ	
ஆ	ஈ	ஊ	ஏ	ஔ	
க	ச	ட	த	ப	ற
ங	ஞ	ண	ந	ம	ன
ய	ர	ல	வ	ழ	ள

There were only 10 vowels during Tholkaappiyar times. 5 short and 5 long vowels. ஐ and ஔ were not existent then. They were later insertions during recopying year after year. Tamil, Braagirudham, Magadhi, Arta maagati, Pali were many popular languages co-existent all over India by that time. All these Languages had one common script as shown above. Tamil had a few characters specially suite to it. The common script was called Brahmi in the North and Tamil in the South or Tamil Brahmi as some scholars call it. All the above scripts are found around the Rule of ASHOKA the great by B.C.300.

The Sanskrit was developed as a scholarly language with out script for a very long time and the common man is not permitted to use it or even hear it. The First Sanskrit Inscription appears at Girnar in Gujarat State around 285 A.D.

க	கி	கு	கெ	கொ
கா	கீ	கூ	கே	கோ

Let us have a look at the modifications taken place during the generation of consonants. க basic letter with out any change representing அ row.

கா	கி	கீ	கெ	கே	கை	கொ	கோ	கௌ
----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

Please see the figures. The above letters have changing factors at the top. They have become separate glyphs in due course of time.

கு கூ

These two rows only do not have a separate glyph. Please see the above figures again. They have their changing factor attached at the bottom of the letters. While writing continuously in palm leaves they became extensions of the main letter and hence became the part of the main letter. Hence for these two letters alone 36 figures are required.

கு கூ டு து பு று

கூ சூ டூ பூ றூ
ங் ணு ணு நு மு னு
நூ ணூ னூ மூ னூ
யு ரு லு வு ழு ளு
பூ ரூ லூ ழூ ழூ ளூ

The basic letters are uyir 12 + mey 18, total being 30. The glyphs are 10.

· ா ி ° ெ ே ை ெ-ள plus 2 if we choose to take two glyphs for the two rows referred above.

The GOTN calendar represents two months as ஜூன் ஜூலை. These are English words written in Tamil-grantha script. They are taught only in the first standard textbook of GOTN. These symbols are not found in any other language including Sanskrit.

Who is to approve this? Definitely GOTN.

Then what is our role? Simply preparing the mind for the change.

When is this proposal likely to be approved?

Department of Tamil Development and Culture of GOTN have constituted a High Level committee as TAMIL VALARCHI MANRAM with Honorable Chief Minister of GOTN as Chairperson and Honorable Minister for Education as Vice-Chairman. During the last tenure of the present Chief Minister, She had appointed a committee to go into the details of the reforms required for the Tamil script for the better dissemination of knowledge through Tamil. The committee has submitted its report long back. The decision of the GOTN is awaited.

What is the relevance of this paper at this time?

It is Education. So far in Tamilnadu a student can pass all classes and courses without having a chance to see the Tamil script at all with firm decision to be a local illiterate and not a much useful citizen to Tamilnadu. To change this situation, the GOTN has recently passed an order introducing Tamil in all schools, as subject in third part with the name SCIENCE TAMIL.

With the radical change in the ௨ ௨௭ rows, the total number of script gets reduced to 30 plus 10 glyphs in place of 76. This is a major break through in elementary education the learners will find it easy to learn the script in a shorter time.

Two important questions arise-

How about the old generation trained with the old script?

What will happen to the present books in old script?

The present generation may be allowed to continue to use the present script for their handwriting till their life. New script will be used for typing and printing their manuscript.

The old books may find their reprints soon. Till then, chart showing the 36 changed characters with equivalents may be pasted in the old books for the new generation to follow. There will not absolutely be any problem in the change over.

The major setback for the change over will be the mindset of the highly educated people. Ordinarily educated people and students will welcome the change. Once I gave a script with modified letters to a friend of mine, who was a poet, writer and a printer.

He found it very difficult to start reading. Immediately I asked his son who was in his eighth standard. To read. He has done the job very quickly. You too may experience this soon.

செய்தக்க அல்ல செயக்கெடும் செய்தக்க

செய்யாமை யானும் கெடும்

கொக்கொக்க கலிம்பும் பருவத்து மற்றதன்

காத்தொக்க சீர்த்த விடத்து.

The TI 2000 Singapore Conference had included this item in the final resolutions of the conference. This TI 2003 Conference may also recommend this proposal to the GOTN in a stronger note.