

# Chemmozhi

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CLASSICAL TAMIL

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# Chemmozhi

FROM CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CLASSICAL TAMIL

The Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil (CECT), established by the Government of India with a view to promoting the cause of Classical Tamil, has been functioning at the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore, a premier institution, already engaged in the task of developing Tamil through various programmes of its own. The Centre has mapped out various plans including preparation of definitive editions of forty one classical Tamil texts; translation of those works into English and other major European languages as well as into major Indian languages; making of visual episodes on Classical Tamil language, literature, epigraphy and architecture; development of material for the online teaching of Classical Tamil; writing of a historical grammar of Tamil; undertaking diachronic and synchronic studies of Tamil dialects; creation of a corpus of Classical Tamil texts; establishment of a digital library; study of India as a linguistic area; and promotion of multidisciplinary research in Classical Tamil – all of which will address the vital issue of the antiquity and uniqueness of Tamil.

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**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CLASSICAL TAMIL**

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தொட்டனைத் தூறும் மணற்கேணி மாந்தர்க்குக்  
கற்றனைத் தூறும் அறிவு.

As deep you dig the sand spring flows  
As deep you learn knowledge grows.

(Tirukkural, 396, Tr. Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati)



After the release of the first issue of **Chemmozhi**, there has been a wide response from scholars from within the country and abroad. The responses are encouraging and at the same time the expectations are very high. A modest beginning has been made through the Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil to have a consolidation of what constitutes the Classical Tamil and what has been done so far about Classical Tamil.

Whatever has been achieved in this regard upto March 2007 is reported in this issue. The preliminary versions of the Critical Editions of 23 classics have been received and they are thoroughly evaluated before being sent them for publication. A compendium of 18 English translations of Tirukkural with critical remarks has been completed for the first chapter Arattuppāl. An audio CD involving the traditional musical rendering of selected Classical Tamil verses has been produced in order to facilitate the teaching of ancient Tamil classics in an appealing manner with the fusion of art, music and poetry.

The library has been equipped with about 5000 books and 130 CDs containing the digital version of palm leaf manuscripts relating to Sangam classics.

The doctoral and post doctoral fellowships awarded last year to young researchers are being continued. The awards scheme is being examined by the Ministry for revision. Financial assistance for short term projects has been extended to seven scholars attached with different reputed institutions.

Several programmes such as meetings, workshops, national and international level seminars/ conferences have taken place. Serious attempts are being made to train and involve as many young researchers as possible in Classical Tamil studies. The modalities of engaging scholars from abroad interested in Classical Tamil are being worked out.

The Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil with all its activities and project staff will continue its work during the academic year 2007-2008.

Only these two  
arising  
from among high hills  
flourish  
venerated by the great  
destroy  
the darkness of the world  
surrounded by the noisy seas  
One  
a lightning-like  
singular disc  
the hot-rayed sun  
the other  
the unrivalled  
Tamil.

We know we have 'miles to go' before reaching our goal.

PROF. UDAYA NARAYANA SINGH  
DIRECTOR, CIIL

CHIEF EDITOR, **Chemmozhi**

ஓங்க விடைவந் துயர்ந்தோர் தொழவிளங்கி  
ஏங்கொலிநீர் ஞாலத் திருளகற்றும் - ஆங்கவற்றுள்  
மின்னேர் தனியாழி வெங்கதிரொன் றேனையது  
தன்னே ரிலாத தமிழ்.

# Chemmoshi

## PROGRESS IN MAJOR PROJECTS

A very recent review of the ten Major Projects assigned to several select bands of scholars reveals that considerable progress has been made in all of them and that the targets are within reach.

### 1 CRITICAL EDITIONS OF ANCIENT TAMIL WORKS

- ❖ Preparation of text (I phase) and commentary (II phase) of the forty one Tamil Classics has been assigned to twenty one scholars.
- ❖ The first phase of the work has been completed for twenty three classics and the remaining eighteen are nearing completion.
- ❖ Evaluation and finalisation of the manuscripts submitted for publication has begun.

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### 2 TRANSLATION OF ANCIENT TAMIL WORKS

- ❖ The works pertaining to evaluating and editing the extant English translations of all the forty one Classical Tamil texts have been assigned to about forty scholars. A significant quantum of output will be ready very soon.
- ❖ In course of time, a fresh translation of each of the forty one Classical Tamil texts will be undertaken.
- ❖ Translation of these Tamil classics into Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu and French is to be taken up immediately.

*A Compendium of eighteen English translations of Tirukkural is in progress. Its first part, Arattuppāl is ready for the press.*

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The Tamil version of Chemmoshi is also being brought out by the Centre.

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[www.ciil-classicaltamil.org](http://www.ciil-classicaltamil.org)

### 3 HISTORICAL GRAMMAR OF TAMIL

- ❖ Six scholars are engaged in the writing of chapters on Phonetics, Phonology, Noun Morphology, Verb Morphology, Particles and Syntax.
- ❖ One or two sections on each chapter will be ready very soon.
- ❖ Writing of a section of Syntax entitled *Beginnings of Finite System in Tamil* has already been completed.
- ❖ An interim progress report from all of the scholars has also been received.

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### 4 ANTIQUITY OF TAMIL: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

- ❖ The projects on Tamil Musicology, Pottery Inscriptions of Early Centuries, Sangam Age Coins and Seals, and Hero-Stone Inscriptions are in different stages of progress.
- ❖ An audio CD of ninety minutes duration containing musical rendering of selected Tamil classical verses is ready for release.

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### 5 DIACHRONIC & SYNCHRONIC STUDY OF TAMIL DIALECTS

- ❖ A preliminary report on the Historical aspects of Tamil Dialects has been received from the scholars working in this project.
- ❖ A compilation of about 1,100 references based on the published and unpublished articles, books, dissertations, theses, reports and seminar papers on modern Tamil and its dialects (social, regional and occupational), and inscriptional Tamil has already been completed.
- ❖ About 40,000 dialectal words collected from different sources have been computerised.
- ❖ A Bilingual (Tamil-English) questionnaire consisting of about 1,500 questions has been prepared for a pilot survey on Tamil dialects.

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## PROGRESS IN MAJOR PROJECTS

### INDIA AS A LINGUISTIC AREA

6

- ❖ The work on preparing a supplement to the *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary Revised (DEDR)* is in progress and expected to be completed by the end of October 2007.
- ❖ An interim progress report on the preparation of Dravidian contacts with Munda and Indo-Aryan has been received from the scholar working on it.

9

### CORPUS DEVELOPMENT FOR CLASSICAL TAMIL WORKS

- ❖ The basic planning for corpus development for ancient Tamil works has been done.
- ❖ The work will be started as soon as the definitive texts for all the forty one Tamil classics are prepared under the project on Critical Editions of Ancient Tamil Works.

### DIGITAL LIBRARY FOR ANCIENT TAMIL STUDIES

7

- ❖ Classification schedule has been designed exclusively for Tamil classical literature.
- ❖ Online classification on intranet site to derive automatic classification number for ancient Tamil subjects has been developed.
- ❖ Metadata for 3800 titles have been made available in the VTLS iPortal in both Tamil and Roman script.
- ❖ 130 CDs containing the palm leaf manuscripts of Sangam classics have been procured.
- ❖ Digitisation of documents has been started by using Minolta PS7000 scanner and 20 books have been digitised till date.
- ❖ The Project of Tamil-English Bilingual Thesaurus for the purpose of document indexing and retrieval in the field of Ancient Tamil Studies is in progress.

### VISUAL EPISODES ON CLASSICAL TAMIL

10

*(Ancient Tamil Grammar, Literature, Epigraphy, Architecture, Arts, Science and Technology, and Dravidian Family of Languages)*

The production script has been formally approved for the following fourteen episodes:

- ❖ Tolkāppiyam (four episodes)
- ❖ Dravidian Languages (two episodes)
- ❖ Development of Tamil coinage (two episodes)
- ❖ Tamil Grammatical Tradition (two episodes)
- ❖ Ancient Port Towns, Capital Cities and Trade Centres (three episodes)

### ONLINE TEACHING OF CLASSICAL TAMIL

8

- ❖ The course involves 300 hours of instruction with five modules namely, Akam literature, Puṇam literature, Kāppiyam (epics) literature, Aṇam literature and Grammar including prosody.
- ❖ The materials pertaining to the five modules have been prepared and the scrutiny is going on.
- ❖ Web designing has already been started.

Chemmozhi invites scholars in the field of Tamilology to contribute to the forthcoming issues their unpublished articles, notes and original findings, reviews etc., on Ancient Tamil Literature and the history of Tamil civilization.

- The Editor

## PROGRAMMES CONDUCTED

### MEETINGS

#### NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CLASSICAL TAMIL

The first meeting of the Committee for the Establishment of National Institute of Classical Tamil was held on 30 December 2006 at Chennai.

#### EXPERT COMMITTEE MEETING

Two meetings of the Expert Committee for the production of Audio CDs for Musical Rendering of selected pieces of *Tolkāppiyam* and Sangam verses were held from 20 to 21 February 2007 & from 19 to 26 March 2007 at Kalai Kaveri College of Fine Arts, Tiruchirappalli (Tamil Nadu).

#### TAMIL LANGUAGE PROMOTION BOARD

The third meeting of the Tamil Language Promotion Board (TLPB) was held for two days from 10 to 11 March 2007 at Anna University, Chennai.

#### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting of the Committee for the Critical Edition of *Tolkāppiyam* and *Iṟaiyaṅār Kaḷaviyal* was held from 21 to 23 March 2007 at University of Madras, Chennai.

The meeting of the Committee for the Critical Edition of *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* was held from 28 to 30 March 2007 at CIIL, Mysore.

### WORKSHOPS

A Workshop on the preparation of materials for *ONLINE COURSE IN CLASSICAL TAMIL* was held from 03 to 09 February 2007 at Scott Christian College, Nagercoil (Kanyakumari District).

A Training Programme cum Workshop on *CLASSICAL TAMIL RESEARCH FOR RESEARCH SCHOLARS* was held from 14 March to 13 April 2007 at International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai.

## PROPOSALS ARE INVITED

International Seminars/ Conferences on the following focal themes will be conducted in collaboration with the leading Universities in the country:

- \* The Contribution of the Bhakti Movement and Literature to World Culture
- \* The Contribution of Tamil to Indian culture
- \* The Indus Valley Civilization and the Indus Script
- \* The Role of Tamil in the Growth of Indian Literatures

### NATIONAL SEMINARS

#### ON CILAPPATIKĀRAM

20 – 22 February 2007

Dept. of Tamil, Government College  
Chittor, Palakkad (Kerala)

#### ON FOLK TRADITIONS OF SANGAM AGE

23 - 24 February 2007

Dept. of Folklore, St. Xavier's College  
Palayamkottai

#### ON SANGAM LITERATURE: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

15 - 16 March 2007

Dept. of Tamil, Queen Mary's College  
Chennai

#### ON CLASSICAL LANGUAGE IN SANGAM LITERATURE

22 - 23 March 2007

Dept. of Tamil, M.G.R. College, Hosur

#### ON ANCIENT TAMIL POETRY: MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

23 – 25 March 2007

Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture  
Pondicherry

#### ON INDIAN GRAMMARS

24 – 25 March 2007

World Tamil Studies, Thamizhur (Tirunelveli Dist.)

#### ON HISTORICAL GRAMMAR OF TAMIL

26 – 27 March 2007

Dept. of Linguistics, Bharathiyar University  
Coimbatore

### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

#### ON STATUS OF WOMEN IN CLASSICAL LITERATURE OF SANGAM AGE

08 – 10 March 2007

Dept. of Tamil, Mother Theresa University  
Kodaikkanal

For details, contact the Head,  
Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR SHORT TERM PROJECTS

Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil (CECT) encourages scholars by providing financial assistance if they come forward with an independent research proposal on topics relating to Classical Tamil. The following seven projects have been chosen for the current academic year:

1

### DEVELOPING COMPUTER CORPORA AND CONCORDANCE TO PERUṅKATAI AND CĪVAKA CINTĀMAṆI

**PROF. V. JAYADEVAN**

Department of Tamil Language  
University of Madras, Chennai

2

### BODY POLITICS IN SANGAM LITERATURE (AKAM)

**DR. B. PADMINI**

Department of Tamil  
Queen Mary's College  
Chennai

3

### A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TAMIL TIRUKKURĀL AND PRAKRIT VAJJALAGGAM

**DR. A. KARTHIKEYAN**

Department of Tamil Studies  
Tamil University, Thanjavur

4

### HISTORICAL LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF TAMIL VERBAL BASES

**DR. S. RAJENDRAN**

Department of Linguistics  
Tamil University, Thanjavur

5

### PROVERBS IN TAMIL CLASSICAL LITERATURE: A SEMIOTIC APPROACH

**PROF. S. D. LOURDU**

Folklore Resources and Research Centre  
St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai

6

### A STUDY ON THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE INDIGENOUS FOLK CULTURE IN CLASSICAL SANGAM LITERATURE

**DR. A. DHANANJAYAN**

Department of Folklore  
St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai

7

### A MONOGRAPH ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE IN TAMIL SOCIETY

**DR. T. DHARMARAJ**

Department of Folklore  
St. Xavier's college, Palayamkottai

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### DIACHRONIC & SYNCHRONIC STUDY OF TAMIL DIALECTS (Regional, Social and Occupational)

THE DIRECTOR, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Manasagangotri, Mysore – 6, invites applications in the prescribed proforma for the following positions:

SL. NO.	POSITIONS	NO. OF POSITIONS	HONORARIUM & CONVEYANCE
1	Senior Resource Person	05	Rs. 500 + Rs. 75/- per day
2	Junior Resource Person	22	Rs. 400 + Rs. 75/- per day
3	Proofreader cum Document Assistant	01	Rs. 400 + Rs. 75/- per day
4	Data inputter	02 (Tamil & English each)	Rs. 200 + Rs. 75/-per day

#### ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS:

##### For Position No. 01

M.A. and Ph.D. in Linguistics, and candidate should have studied Tamil as the first language at the degree level. The nature of work is to collect and compile regional, social and occupational vocabularies from the published and unpublished research works, from stories, dramas and novels published in Tamil and from oral literature.

##### For Position No. 03:

Same as for Position No. 02. The nature of work is to do proof corrections of the computerised materials and to maintain the field data received from the Junior Resource Persons.

##### For Position No. 02:

M.A. in Linguistics or Tamil or English. Those who have obtained M.A. in Tamil should have studied English as a second language at degree level and those who have obtained M.A. in English or Linguistics should have studied Tamil as the first language at degree level. The nature of work is to conduct field work in Tamil Nadu to obtain first hand information on Synchronic Tamil Dialects spoken in Tamil Nadu. They have to assist in analysing, compiling and comparing data with the existing Tamil Lexicon and Dictionaries. During field work, the researchers will be paid T.A. and D.A. as per the norm prescribed by the Director, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore.

##### For Position No. 04:

Minimum qualification is a pass in higher secondary examination with knowledge and experience in computer operations. Certificate obtained from reputed computer firm is preferred. The nature of work is to computerise the field data both in Tamil and English.

For more details and application:

[www.ciil-classicaltamil.org](http://www.ciil-classicaltamil.org)

## TAMIL LANGUAGE PROMOTION BOARD (TLPB)

### THIRD MEETING

MARCH 10-11, 2007

ANNA UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI

As an advisory body constituted by the Government of India, TAMIL LANGUAGE PROMOTION BOARD is expected to play an effective role in the promotion of all activities relating to Classical Tamil and also in the implementation of research projects of the Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil.

The Third meeting of the Tamil Language Promotion Board under the Central Plan Scheme for Development of Tamil was held for two days on 10 & 11 March 2007 at Anna University, Chennai. The meeting was attended by the following:

#### Chairman

Prof. V.C. Kulandai Swamy

#### Nominated Members

Dr. M. Nannan  
Dr. Iravatham Mahadevan  
Kavikkō Abdul Rahman  
Dr. Avvai Natarajan  
Kaviñār Erode Thamizhanban  
Dr. Perunkavikkō V. M. Sethuraman

#### Member Secretary

Professor Udaya Narayana Singh  
Director, CIIL, Mysore

#### Convener

Professor K. Ramasamy  
Deputy Director, CIIL, Mysore

#### Ex-Officio Members

Mr. S. Mohan  
Director (Finance)  
[Representing JS (L) & EA]  
MHRD (Govt. of India), New Delhi

#### Dr. A. Krishnamurthy

Secretary  
Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi

#### Dr. M. Rajendiran

Director  
Directorate of Tamil Development  
(Govt. of Tamil Nadu) Chennai

The Meeting began at 11.00 a.m. as scheduled under the chairmanship of Prof. V.C. Kulandai Swamy.

Mr. S. Mohan, Director (Finance), welcomed the distinguished gathering and observed that he was happy to note that the Central Institute of Indian Languages had taken sincere efforts to implement all the decisions taken

in the first two meetings of the Language Promotion Board. He was pleased to convey the information that the MHRD was satisfied with the progress made by the Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil and would be prepared to provide financial assistance for the schemes being planned by the CECT to promote the cause of Classical Tamil. He also assured the audience that the valuable suggestions given by the members of the Tamil Language Promotion Board would be duly conveyed by him to the Ministry for favourable consideration and implementation.

The members introduced themselves and the two new members, Dr. Iravatham Mahadevan, a nominated member and Dr. M. Rajendran, an ex-officio member, were introduced by the Chairman. The former is an epigraphist of international reputation, who has to his credit the most authoritative work on *Early Tamil Epigraphy* (2003), a Harvard University Publication; the latter is an eminent Tamil scholar presently heading the Directorate of Tamil Development of the Govt. of Tamil Nadu and also the International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai.

The address delivered by Prof. V.C. Kulandai Swamy, the Chairman of the Tamil Language Promotion Board, at once inspiring and thought-provoking, stressed the following points:

- \* The Director, CIIL, will have necessary administrative and financial powers to implement the programmes of the Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil taking into account the approved recommendations of the Board.
- \* As for the three National and International Awards whose creation was ordered by the Govt. of India, the





Board has made some recommendations for enhancing the award to Rs.5,00,000/- and reducing the number to one international award in the name of Tolkāppiyar and one national award in the name of Tiruvalluvar.

- \* The publication of **Chenmozhi** and the launching of a website are notable developments.
- \* The Honourable Minister for MHRD has approved in principle the suggestion by the Honourable Chief Minister, Govt. of Tamil Nadu that a National Institute of Classical Tamil be created in Chennai.
- \* The Tamil Language Promotion Board will continue to function in the present form.
- \* We have succeeded in establishing a tradition for the harmonious functioning of the Tamil Language Promotion Board and the Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil vis-à-vis the CIIL. If there are some gaps arising, they are not out of policy differences but because of lack of manpower and they will be closed.

The Members of the Board confirmed the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Board.

Professor Udaya Narayana Singh, in his presentation, extended warm welcome to all the members and presented an overall action taken report of the scheme.

Reports on what has been done so far specifically in each of the ten projects were presented by Prof. K. Ramasamy, Prof. P. Marudanayagam, Prof. G. Srinivasa Varma, Prof. Sam Mohan Lal and Dr. N. Nadaraja Pillai.



During the discussion, the following observations were made by the members:

- ❖ For the interdisciplinary research on the antiquity of Tamil, the expertise of Senior Epigraphist, Mr. Krishnamurthy, Dr. Era. Kalaikkovan and Dr. K. V. Subramanyam may be made use of.
- ❖ Visual Episodes may be released only after they are approved by the committee consisting of Erode Tamizhanban, Dr. M. Rajendiran and one more member of the Board to be nominated by the Chairman.

The following decisions were taken during the deliberations spread over three long sessions:

- \* The critical editions of forty one ancient Tamil texts and their translations into English, many of which are under scrutiny, will be released before the end of this year and the publication is to start in April 2007 itself. Publication is to be taken up after a review of the material by referees.
- \* Fifty visual episodes relating to ancient Tamil literature, grammar, stone inscriptions and icons will be completed during the next six months.
- \* International conferences/ seminars on the following themes will be conducted in collaboration with some of the leading universities in the country:

1. The contribution of the Bhakti Movement and Literature to world culture
2. The contribution of Tamil to Indian culture
3. The Indus Valley Civilization and the Indus Script
4. The Role of Tamil in the growth of Indian Literatures

- ❖ Extensive and in-depth research





will be undertaken on ancient women poets in Tamil comparing their works with that of their counterparts in the other classical languages of the world.

- ❖ A massive dialect survey, for which about 40,000 dialect words have already been identified and computerised and a bilingual questionnaire including 1500 questions have been prepared, will soon be launched.
- ❖ The first part of the historical grammar of Tamil assigned to six different scholars working on

phonetics, phonology, noun morphology, verb morphology, particles and syntax, will be ready for the press in the near future.

- ❖ The second issue of the quarterly newsletter called **Chemmozhi** will be released in April 2007. The CECT website ([www.ciil-classicaltamil.org](http://www.ciil-classicaltamil.org)) launched a few months ago will be constantly updated.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Prof. K. Ramasamy.

## FROM TAMIL CLASSICS

If the driver is good,  
the great wagon  
that's driven through the world  
only under escort,  
its wheels fitted well  
to its body,  
will give him  
a smooth untroubled road.

If the man doesn't know  
how to steer it  
it'll get stuck all day  
in the mire, its enemy,  
and trouble him  
Over and over again.

Tontaimān Iṅtiraiyan  
Puṇaṇḍīyā 185

### What She Said

The rains, already old,  
have brought new leaf upon the fields.  
The grass spears are trimmed and blunted  
by the deer.  
The jasmine creeper is showing its buds  
through their delicate calyx  
like the laugh of a wildcat.  
In jasmine country, it is evening  
for the hovering bees,  
but look, he hasn't come back.  
He left me and went in search  
of wealth. (Okkūr Mācātti, *Kuṟu* 220)

### What He Said

Be good to her, O North Wind,  
And may you prosper!  
There, among thin silver rills  
That look like hanging snake skins,  
high on the hill  
where herds of elk  
plunder the gooseberry  
in the courtyards,  
there  
lies my good woman's village  
of grass-thatched cottages. (Māyēṅṅaṅ, *Kuṟu* 235.)  
Tr. A. K. Ramanujan)

## DEVELOPMENT OF TAMIL COINAGE IN THE LIGHT OF EARLY COINAGE IN INDIA

Dr. R. Krishnamurthy

The system of commodity exchange is as old as the human society and the barter system has played undeniably a crucial role in the Indian economy ever since the primitive times. In fact, the urbanisation appears to have made its progress in conjunction with trade and commerce. The first urbanisation was witnessed in Mohanjodaro and Harappa in the Indus valley about three thousand years before Christ (U.K. Thakur, 1981). Sir John Marshall, who excavated these sites, suggested that accommodation for storing of merchandise on a large scale was indispensable as taxes had to be paid in kind and trade was done by barter system. The Indus people were quite familiar with metals like gold, silver, copper, tin and lead, but metallic currency was yet unknown to them. The reason could be the fact that wealth in those early days was computed in cattle and for smaller purchases there stood another unit which took various forms among different people, for instance, shells, beads, knives, bars of copper and iron, also cowrie-shells brought from the Maldive islands etc.

### PUNCH MARKED COINS

Almost from every ancient site from the Sundarbans in Bengal to Kabul in Afghanistan, and as far south as Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu thousands of punch marked coins belonging to the period between the sixth and second century B.C., were found. These coins are rectangular or circular flat pieces made of thin silver or rarely copper cut from a hammered sheet of metal and clipped to the proper weight. Features of the coins: the obverse side covered by a large number of symbols impressed by means of separate punches; though the reverse side is left blank in the oldest coins, there are minute punch marks; and both sides of some of the coins are covered with devices and some of them have figures of humans, arms, trees, birds, animals, symbols of Buddhist worship, solar and planetary signs etc.

### JANAPADA COINS

In ancient India, there were numerous political units called *Janapadas* derived from the Sanskrit word *Jana* meaning tribe. Later, this *jana* evolved into a number of independent units or families called *kula* and the association of number of such families formed the ruling Kshatriya tribes. Those who had wielded political power among them were known as *janapadins*, i.e., the ruling class in the *janapada*. Each *janapada*

had its own language and local gods and was free to follow its own intellectual and cultural life. There were sixteen *janapadas*, namely *Kashi*, *Kosala*, *Magadha*, *Avanti*, *Vatsa*, *Anga*, *Chedi*, *Kuru*, *Panchala*, *Matsya*, *Shurasena*, *Ashmaka*, *Gandhara*, *Kamboja*, *Andhra* and *Kalinga*. It is thought that during the period between circa 600 B.C. and 400 B.C. the *Janapadas* and *Mahajanapadas* rose to prominence and fought among themselves and were finally subdued by the Magadhan empire. From the available numismatic evidences, it appears that though a number of *janapadas* had only one symbol, there were *janapadas* like *Magadha*, *Kashi* (around the Varanasi district), *Koshala*, *Avanti* (Malwa and adjoining areas), *Ashmaka* (area in Godavari in Maharashtra extending into Andhra Pradesh) and *Vanga* (the western part of West Bengal) had four symbols in their coins. However, there are three distinctive orientations found in the four symbol coins: 1) two pairs of symbols, each placed opposite to the other, 2) a pair of one symbol and two different symbols, and 3) four distinctive symbols.



The five symbol punch marked coins were issued first from Magadha when it was still a *janapada*, but later its capital was shifted from Rajagriha to Pataliputra. Magadha gradually expanded by annexing the neighbouring *janapadas* and by the time of Asoka, the empire was expanded covering most of the country. Similarly, the imperial Mauryan expansion in all directions extended right upto Mysore and Kurnool in South India, which led to the interaction between north and south, particularly in terms of trade. Such trading activity, probably necessitated

the need for production and use of *janapada* type of coins, familiar in the north, in the Tamil speaking areas also.

### PANDYA PUNCH MARKED JANAPADA COINS

The available evidences confirm that among the three ancient Tamil kingdoms, only Pandya kingdom had issued silver punch marked coins, but the Cheras had used the Mauryan silver punch marked coins after die striking their bow and arrow symbol on the reverse side. The earliest silver punch marked coins issued by the Pandyas were three and four symbol *janapada* type coins.

The measurement of any weight in ancient period is based on *Ratti*, a seed of *Abrus Precatorius*. The

size and weight of the seeds vary according to the climatic and ecological factors under which the tree that produces these seeds grow. The average weight of one *ratti* seed is 1.823 grains and this is established by Major General Cunningham by weighing more than 1000 seeds obtained from various places of this country. As the weight of one grain is equal to 0.0648 gram, then, the weight of one *ratti* seed will be  $1.823 \times 0.648 = 0.1081$  gm. In Tamil region, *kunri mani* seeds available in small shops and country medical stores were used for weighing. The average weight of a *kunri mani* was found to be 0.110 gm with a small difference of 0.002 gm from the weight arrived at by Major General Cunningham. In ancient Pandya kingdom, *kunri mani* may have been used as a standard weight, because, for instance, the three symbol silver punch marked coin weighs 0.850 gm. However, it is noticed that the above three and four symbol Pandya coins do not follow the *kārshāpana* standard.



## PANDYA SILVER PUNCH MARKED COINS

Magadha was one of the largest states during the *Mahajanapada* period, and the rulers, when they shifted their capital to Pataliputra, started producing coins in different weights, which was the model for the later coinage of Nanda and Mauryan dynasties. These coins were known as *pana* in earlier literature and as *kārshāpana* in later literature. The silver punch marked coins are classified into two broader categories: local and imperial. The local or *janapada* coins have a fewer number of symbols and are found in a restricted area, whereas the imperial coins have five symbols on the obverse side and are found over an extensive area of the Indian sub-continent. The wide area of their circulation could indicate that they were issued by an authority (an imperial power) which had control over an extensive area. The sun and six armed symbols uniformly seen on most of the Imperial Punch marked coins are placed as first and second marks respectively (Rehan Ahamad, 1996). The *kārshāpana* coins bore five official punch marks and weighed approximately 3.4 grams and as Nanda and Mauryan empires became dominant for the whole of the Indian sub-continent, this was the main silver coinage to circulate in India for the next four hundred years. Dating of Pandya five symbol silver punch marked coins is very difficult and scholars have no uniform

opinion on this subject.

Some of the facts about the ancient Tamil coins are given here:

- The Pandyas, which appear to be the oldest among the ancient Tamil kingdoms of Chera, Chola and Pandya, may have existed as a *janapada* during the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

- The trade contacts between Tamil country and Northern India could have begun before the early historic period.

- Several hoards of silver punch marked coins belonging to Magadha-Mauryan period were found in the following places in Tamilnadu during the last hundred years: Mambalam (Chennai), Kayadi (Kancheepuram), Tondamanattam (Pondicherry), Kallakurichchi (Villupuram), Vembavur

(Tiruchirappalli), Kaniyankuttai (Dharmapuri), Navalai (Dharmapuri), Alampalayam (Coimbatore), Bodinayakkanur (Theni), Veerasigamani (Tirunelveli). Besides, hundreds of silver punch marked coins were discovered as surface finds from the river beds of Amaravathi in Karur and Vaigai near Madurai, which indicate the widespread diffusion of pre-Mauryan and Mauryan silver punch marked coins in all parts of Tamilnadu during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

- Many of the symbols of the silver punch marked coins of the Magadha kingdom and the Mauryan empire were adopted in the five symbol Pandya silver punch marked coins.

- Some symbols found on the coins from Kausambi (local issues) in upper India and coins from Eran-Vidish-Ujjain region (local issues) in central India are found on the coins issued by ancient Tamil kingdoms also.

- The Tamil kingdoms of the Sangam age appear to have benefited from the developments in the sphere of minting technology and coin metrology.

- The use of popular symbols confined to the north could have percolated to the south through trade guilds or by religious preachers during Mauryan and Satavahana rule in the Deccan region.

- The presence of ancient silver punch marked coins of Indian origin in many parts of Sri Lanka shows that even before the Christian era, Indian traders had contacts with Sri Lanka.

- No part of South India or Sri Lanka remained isolated from cultural and trade contacts with North India from the early historic period.

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## PROPOSALS ARE INVITED

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## ANCIENT PORT TOWNS AND TRADE CENTRES

Natana. Kasinathan

**A** *kanānūru*, one of the eight anthologies of Sangam literature, gives an exquisite description of a ship known as Vangam, which was very large in size having a capacity of taking many passengers and a lot of merchandise. It sailed in the deep water and its crew was familiar with the islands that they could encounter in its journey and was able to reach ashore with the help of the lamps that were seen on the terraces of the big houses built on the shore (*Akam*, 255: 1-8). *Puṇānūru* (30) describes a ship that entered into the port of Poompuhar without slacking its sails bringing precious merchandise from different parts of the world, namely Malaya, Ceylon, Arabia etc. Customs officials affixed the seal of the royal crest of the Chola Empire before unloading (*Paṭṭiṇappālai*, line 135).

**MAMALLAPURAM:** According to the indications of archaeological excavation, it appears to be the northern most sea-port of Tamilnadu with a brick structure on the North Western direction of the shore temples. This structure, datable to Sangam age, is built in north-south orientation having two parallel walls side by side, the gap of which was filled with thick clay. Recent Tsunami (December 26, 2004) has unearthed a massive brick structure near Atirana Chandesaragriham (cave temple) at Saluvankuppam.

**VASAVASAMUDRAM:** This port in Thondaimandalam - the joining point of Palaru with the Bay of Bengal, played a vital role during the pre and post Christian era. This port could probably be the Nirpeyar of Sangam Literature (*Perumpānāruppaṭai*, 319-321) and it was the chief port of Pallavas.

**EYILPATTINAM (SOPATMA):** This is one of the eastern coast ports located in Thondaimandalam in between Vasavasamudram and Arikamedu. It was the port of Oyman Nalliyakkodan who ruled Oyma Nadu having his

capital at Kidangil, the modern Dindivanam. The port appears to have been surrounded by a huge wall, hence named Eyil Pattinam (Matil Pattinam). The Sangam poet Nattattanar of Nallur has given an elaborate description of this port in the *Cirupānāruppaṭai*. Uruttirankannanar, another Sangam poet mentions that this port had a light house (*Perumpānāruppaṭai*, 320-323), which had helped the sailors to reach it safely. Nallur Nattattanar calls this place 'Tonnavilangai' and Ptolemy, the foreign chronicler, refers to it as 'Melange'.

**ARIKAMEDU:** The next active port, Arikamedu is found mentioned in foreign chronicles as Poduke. The archaeological potentiality of this site was first made known by Jouveau Dubreuil as early as 1937. According to the recent investigations at Arikamedu, 'the earliest known settlement at the site is in the Southern Sector dating perhaps from the second century B.C., by people whose pottery relates to the Iron-age (Megalithic) cultures of South India. Trade with the Mediterranean basin seems to have been at its height between Circa 50 B.C. and A.D. 50.' (Vimala Begley, 1982 - 1992)

**KAVIRIPUMPATTINAM:** Mentioned as 'Cabaris Emporium' by foreign chronicles, it was another predominant port in Tamilnadu especially in Chola Mandalam. *Paṭṭiṇappālai*, *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* give a graphic account of the town plan of this city and its busy activities with local and foreign merchants. According to *Maṇimēkalai*, the sea engulfed this great city, as it was cursed by Lord Indra when his festival was not celebrated.

**NAGAPPATTINAM:** Nagappattinam situated about 40 kilometers south of Kavirippumpattinam was one of the main ports in the two sea routes to India from China. This port is mentioned as 'Nikama' by Ptolemy, as 'Nagavadana' by I-tsing, as 'Pa-tan' by Marco Polo, as 'Malifattan' by Rashiduddin and as Narutapattana by Kalyani inscriptions of Dhammaceti. Its importance was very much felt during Pallava and Chola periods as the port of Kavirippumpattinam fell into disuse.

**TONDI:** There were two ports having the same name Tondi, one on the eastern coast and the other on the western coast during the Sangam period. The eastern



Ancient Port of Mamallapuram



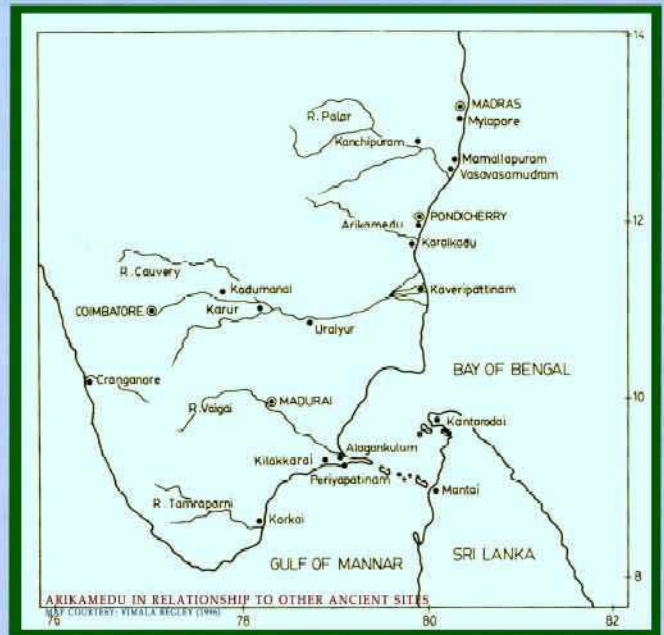
Mamallapuram

# Chemmozhi

coast Tondi belonged to Pandyas and the western coast Tondi to Cheras. The Sangam poet Ammooanar celebrated both the Tondis. There are references to Tondi of Pandya country in *Akanānūru* and *Cilappatikāram*. The vessels decked with spices namely Ahil, Sandalwood, Silk, *Sātikkāy* (nut mug), *Ilavaṅgam* (glove), *Kumkum* flower and Camphor from South East Asian countries reached Tondi port and unloaded them there. Thereupon those articles were transported to Madurai, the capital of Pandyas. However, the Tondi in the western coast could have served as a seaport to the collateral branch of the Cheras known as Poṟaiyar. *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* describes this Tondi as a village situated on the seashore.

**ALAGANKULAM:** It was a secondary seaport of Pandya kingdom but it lost its importance in course of time. Since Alagankulam lies at the confluence of the river Vaigai and the Bay of Bengal, it could be identified with the old Marungurpattinam. One of the important finds of Alagankulam excavation (1998) is a sherd datable to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., bearing the figures of three ladies. The scene of this is quite akin to the funeral procession scene of African paintings found drawn on the walls of the Tombs.

**KORKAI:** It was a secondary capital and an important port city of Pandyas and it was situated at the place where the river Tambraparani joins the Bay of Bengal. The Chroniclers have also left a few references to this. For instance, Ptolemy refers to this place as the country of Korkai. There is also a reference to Korkai in *Akanānūru* (verse 210).



**KUMARI:** Mentioned as one of the ports in *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, it was situated on Kumari, probably a river. The foreign chronicle mentions that those men and women who wish to spend their last days by leading a peaceful life come here and live. It also refers to the shrine of the goddess known as Kumari Deivam. (K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, 1976)

**NARAVU:** It was situated south of Mangalore seaport in Tulunadu which was ruled by Nannan. It is understood from *Patirrupattu* (10) that when the Chera ruler conquered Tulunadu, Adukotpattu Cheralathan was staying at the city of Naravu. *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* also mentions this port.

**MUCIRI:** Situated on the bank of the river Periyar in west coast, it was considered as the port emporium of Cheranadu like the Cabaris Emporium of Cholanadu and Korkai of Pandinadu. This port was frequently used by Yavanas and they are said to have brought gold in exchange for black pepper from Cheranadu. Muciri is mentioned in Valmiki's *Ramayana* as Murcipatanam. According to *Patirrupattu*, there was a market centre in Muciri where the pearls gathered from Muciri port were sold.

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Antonios Vasileiadis, a scholar from Greece, has made a few points of great importance for students of Tamil:

- The Kannagi legend has been referred to in Greek literature in the first century B.C.
- The Chera dynasty was noted in the fifth century B.C.
- Karikalan was mentioned in the first century B.C.
- Trade relationship was noticed between Greece and the West Coast including Tamilnadu in the Early Christian Century.

These findings will establish that the Sangam Classics and *Cilappatikāram* are more ancient than they are now reported to be.

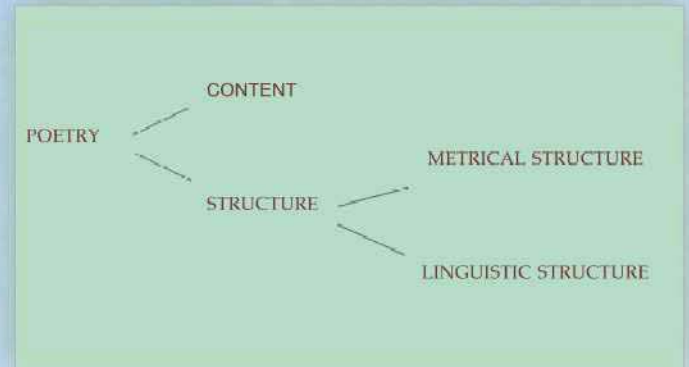
- V.I. Subramoniam (DLA News, Vol. 31 No. 4 April 2007)

## TAMIL GRAMMATICAL TRADITION FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN PERIOD

Prof. S. Agesthalingom

Tamil grammatical tradition has got not only a hoary and glorious past but a very productive and active present as well, not to mention the very lively middle period. It has seen many great grammarians and commentators during more than twenty centuries of its history. If Tamil grammatical tradition is considered not only one of the most ancient but continuous and uninterrupted as well, it is because of very many valuable works brought out from time to time by reputed scholars in the field.

conventional way as follows:



### ANCIENT PERIOD TOLKĀPPIYAM

Tamil grammatical tradition goes back to the days of *Tolkāppiyam*, the earliest extant work which belongs to the third Century B.C. This grammatical work is the culmination of the ancient linguistic and literary tradition of the Tamils which can be very well substantiated by numerous statements made by *Tolkāppiyam* both in the sections of grammar namely *Eḷuttatikāram* 'chapter on phonology', *Collatikāram* 'chapter on morphology and syntax', on the one hand and *Poruḷatikāram* 'chapter on poetics', on the other hand.

It has been pointed out by many that Tolkāppiyar's (author of *Tolkāppiyam*) statements like *enmaṇār pulavar* 'so say the learned men' (74.8) found in the sections on grammar and *yāppari pulavar* 'learned men of poetic composition' found in the sections on poetics clearly show that before his time there must have been a vast body of both grammatical and critical works not to speak of a great amount of literary works on which the grammatical and poetical traditions have been very soundly built. To our dismay all these very valuable works have been irrevocably lost. *Tolkāppiyam* is the only grammatical work found in the ancient period.

Tolkāppiyar's genius lies not only in propounding his own grammatical theories but also in consolidating the hoary traditions into a single monumental grammatical treatise dealing with both grammar and poetics.

In the Tamil tradition, it has been said that *Tolkāppiyam* deals with both grammar and social life of the Tamils and in this it is unique as it deals with the latter as a part of grammar. But many researchers have shown *Poruḷatikāram* does not deal with the social life of the Tamils as such but only with the life depicted in Tamil literature. Yet the question, why *Tolkāppiyam* brings poetics and grammar together unlike the grammatical works in other languages, arises in the minds of various scholars. The present author is of the opinion that Tolkāppiyar's poetics is concerned not only with various topics of literary criticism but also with the linguistic structure of poetry.

A study of linguistic structure also forms an integral part of poetic study. Poetry is the artistic form of linguistic composition and unless the grammatical structure of poetry and the language of poetry is well understood, the beauty of poetry cannot be appreciated. This can be shown in the most

In Tolkāppiyar's poetic analysis, linguistic structure is an integral part and hence it finds a very important place. It is true that people like Aristotle and others deal with the linguistic structure of poetry here and there, but it is Tolkāppiyar, who gives much more importance to linguistic structure taking care of sentence structure, its composition etc.

As a grammarian, Tolkāppiyar was able to understand the importance of linguistic structure and its role in the composition of poetry not to mention in other literary compositions namely prose, riddles, scientific treatises, folk literature, proverbs etc. It is probably not out of place to say that he is the first grammarian or the first literary critic in the world to take care of folk literature and to bring it under the orbit of literature Tolkāppiyar, in essence had a broad view of literature.

In *nūpa* 1336, he lists various kinds of compositions 1) *pāṭṭu* 'poetry', 2) *urai* 'prose', 3) *nūl* 'scientific treatise', 4) *vāymoli* 'folk literature', 5) *pici* 'riddles', 6) *aṅkatam* 'satire' and 7) *mutu col* 'proverbs'. These literary compositions have their own individual structures and they have to be analysed accordingly. Though Tolkāppiyar has brought all these seven kinds of compositions under one head namely *ceyyul* 'those which are composed or made', he separates *pāṭṭu* 'poetry' from others as the former has metrical structure whereas the others do not have.

Tolkāppiyar is not only a brilliant grammarian but also a bright literary critic. Unlike Aristotle and many others, he has come up with a comprehensive grammar describing language in a broad context of literature and society.

Poetic language is defined by scholars in different ways. Scholars like Coleridge would say that it is an articulate language. Some others say that it is a language of passion and emotion and still others contend that it is a language of deviation. Tolkāppiyar seems to think of poetic language as a language of deviation, that is, it is deviant from spoken / standard variety exhibiting certain deviations not only in the area of vocabulary or lexicon, but also in the areas of

The content of *Tolkāppiyam* is such that, judging by the time taken for the development of comparable literatures, it would not be rash to suppose that at least three to four centuries of a flourishing literary culture have preceded the date of its composition.

- Xavier S. Thani Nayakam (Journal of Tamil Studies, Sep. 1972, p.62)

morphology, syntax etc. and this has led him to derive the poetic language from the standard variety with the help of certain standard rules.

According to *Tolkāppiyam*, a grammar is not restricted to a particular variety of language. It should be broad based and in a position to take care of both poetic language and the language of the people, i.e. the spoken language also. Though *Tolkāppiyar's* primary concern was poetic language, he has rightly taken the spoken standard language (*centamil*) as basic and derived the poetic language by making use of appropriate rules.

There are several *nūrpās* which take care of this aspect (208, 234, 237, 288, 305, 316, 356, 481 and 483) and talk about the differences that one can find between the spoken and the poetic language. For example,

SPOKEN	LITERARY
<i>avvītai</i>	<i>āyītai</i>
<i>iravu</i>	<i>irā</i>
<i>iṇṇi</i>	<i>iṇṇu</i>

Similarly, *Collatikāram* has also got several *nūrpās* of this kind (18, 39, 51, 192). This shows that *Tolkāppiyam* is to be considered a grammar for both spoken standard variety of Tamil as well as for poetic language, taking the spoken standard variety as basic from which the literary language is derived by appropriate rules. In this connection, it has to be mentioned that the basic sentence structures are one and the same and the deviances that one can find in poetic languages can be taken care of by special rules. Poetic registers and several other aspects of poetic language are dealt with in *Ecuvōiyal*. Mention has to be made here that many grammars of the ancient period in the other parts of the world were exclusively concerned with poetic language alone. But, *Tolkāppiyar* realised the importance of spoken standard language and wrote an integrated grammar. It is not out of place to point out that only after the advent of structural linguistics, the importance of spoken languages was realised and thereafter grammars for spoken languages were written by linguists and others.

Traditional Tamil views on poetics are slightly different from others in that it is also a part of grammar. *viz.*, grammar of poetry. According to Tamil tradition, grammar is five fold - *eḷuttu* 'phonology', *col* 'morphology, syntax and to a certain extent semantics', *poruḷ* 'poetics', *yāppu* 'prosody' and *aṇi* 'rhetorics', and thus it is known as *aintilakkaṇam* 'five fold grammar'.

*Tolkāppiyam* deals with all these five under three heads namely *eḷuttu*, *col*, and *poruḷ*. In due course, *poruḷ* got divided into three aspects *poruḷ*, *yāppu* and *aṇi*.

As already mentioned, Tamil tradition has a long and continuous history and it finds more than fifty traditional treatises out of which ten deal with grammar in the strict sense of the word. *Tolkāppiyam* is the first treatise, which deals with the structure of Tamil language (grammar of Tamil) in two chapters and poetics in the third.

A broad outline of the contents of the three chapters of *Tolkāppiyam* will be published in the forthcoming issue. - **The Editor.**

## ON THE INDUS CIVILIZATION

Dr. Iravatham Mahadevan

Computer analysis has shown that the Indus texts possess only suffixes, not prefixes or infixes. This indicates that the Harappan language was of the suffixing type (like Dravidian), not of the prefixing type (like Indo-Aryan).

It is also necessary for well-founded research to look beyond the inscriptions and take the archaeological context into account. Let me again illustrate this with some well-known examples:

- \* The Indus civilization was urban in character. The Vedic civilization was rural and pastoral. There is hardly any description of city life in the Rig Veda.
- \* The Indus seals depict many animals but not the horse. The chariot with spoked wheels is also not depicted in the Indus art. On the contrary, these are among the main features of the society depicted in the Rig Veda.
- \* The Harappan religion, as far as we can make out from pictorial representations, included the worship of buffalo-horned male gods, mother goddesses, the pipal tree, serpents, and probably also phallic worship. Such modes of worship seem alien to the religion of the Rig Veda.

These examples (among many others) make it very improbable that the Harappan city dwellers were the same as the people of the Vedic culture.



Ruling out the Aryan authorship of the Indus civilization does not of course automatically make it Dravidian. However there is substantial evidence favouring that supposition. I mention the most important aspects of the evidence without going into details:

- \* The survival of Dravidian languages like Brahui in North India.
- \* The presence of Dravidian loan words in the Rig Veda.
- \* The substratum influence of Dravidian languages on the Prakrit dialects of North India.

The evidence indicates that Dravidian languages were once spoken widely in North India and one or more of Dravidian dialects could well be the language of the Indus texts.

(From the article "Towards a Scientific Study of the Indus Script" published in *The Hindu* dated February 04, 2007)



## IMPERSONAL NEGATIVE FINITE SYSTEM

Prof. R. Kothandaraman

The impersonal negative finite verb in Tamil is *illai*. *Tolkāppiyam* (Cēnāvaraiyam 222) refers to this finite verb as *viravu viṇai*, the verb that occurs both in human and nonhuman sectors. The verb *illai* is tense implicit (*kuṟippu viṇai*). The affirmative counterpart of *illai* is marked with the verb *iru* and *uḷ*, of which the former can be conjugated in all persons and tenses, and the latter is an instance of tense implicit base which can be conjugated into *uḷ-aṅ* (masc.), *uḷ-aḷ* (fem.), *uḷ-ar* (hum.pl), *uṇ-ḷu* (nh. sg), and *uḷa* (nh.pl) etc. Although *uṇṭu* is nonhuman singular tense implicit verb, it is used as impersonal verb as well. Pavananthi, the author of *Nanṇūl* (Sutra 339) identifies *uṇṭu* along with *illai* and *vēru* as impersonal tense implied finite verb. In post Classical Tamil, we come across *uṇṭu* functioning as impersonal predicate. For example, *peṇṭir-um uṇṭu kol* (*Cilappatikāram* 19.51), 'are there women folk?', *cāṇṭōr-um uṇṭu kol* (*Cilappatikāram* 19.54) 'are there noble persons?', and *teyvam-um uṇṭu kol* (*Cilappatikāram* 19.57) 'is there God?'

In Classical Tamil, the negative tense implicit verb *illai* occurs generally in locative syntax. The locative constituent occurring before the predicate *illai* is either explicit or implicit. Consider the following examples where locative is specified explicitly:

1. *varuvēn eṇṇa paruvam āṇṭai, illai-kol*  
(*Akanāṇṭūru*. 317.17,18)  
'is there no season during which he would come back'
2. *iruvarkaṭ kuṟam-um illai* (*Kalittokai*. 39.24)  
'there is no fault on both'
3. *pēr-ūr tuṅc-um, yārum illai* (*Narṇṇai*. 132.1)  
'there is none in the big town who is sleeping'
4. *paiyuḷ mālai, illai-kol, kātalar ceṇṇa nāṭṭ-ē*  
(*Narṇṇai*. 343. 7-10)  
'is there no painful evening in the country where our lover has gone'
5. *ṇik-ōr, vēṭṭuvar illai niṇṇ-oppōr* (*Puṇāṇṭūru*. 152.23,24)  
'there is no hunter here comparable to you'

The locative constituent is to be understood in the following examples from Classical Tamil:

6. *nīr mikir ciyāiy-um illai tī miṅiṇ*  
'where there is excess of water, it can't be checkmated'  
*maṇṇuyir niḷarṇ-um niḷal-um illai*  
'where there is excess of fire, there is no shelter for living beings'  
*vaḷi miṅiṇ valiy-um illai* (*Puṇāṇṭūru*. 51.1-3)

'where there is excess of wind, there is no strength (to withstand it)'

7. *uṭamp-oṭu niṇṇa-vuyir-um illai* (*Puṇāṇṭūru*. 363.8)

'there is no life that remains (for ever) with body.'

8. *kēṭpār uḷar-kol illai-kol* (*Narṇṇai*. 50.6)

'whether or not there are persons to ask for.'

9. *vāl-nāl vakai-y aḷavu ariṇar-um illai* (*Narṇṇai*. 314.2)

'there is none knowing the period of survival.'

10. *yār-um illai-t tāṇ-ē kaḷvan* (*Kuṟuntokai*. 25.1)

'there is no thief other than himself.'

As a matter of fact the affirmative counterpart of *illai* is identifiable as *uṇṭu*. This implies that the syntax marked with *uṇṭu* can be converted into syntax of negation by replacing *uṇṭu* with *illai*. This provides evidence to treat *uṇṭu* as an impersonal tense implicit verb just as *illai*. However, in modern Tamil, the tense implicit verb *uṇṭu* is very much in co-occurrence with nonhuman subject NP. Significantly, this is not the case with respect to the tense implicit verb *illai*. Since *uṇṭu* is a Be verb, it is expected to occur as a rule in locative sentence. This ruling leads to conclude that *illai* being negative counterpart of *uṇṭu* is also associated with locative sentence where locative NP will be either explicit or implicit.

The past negation in Classical Tamil is marked with impersonal finite constructions of *ceyṭaṇṇu*, *pāṭiṇṇu*, and *pāṭiṇṇu* types which are followed by *il-* based personal negative finite system. Consider the following examples:

*kēṭṭaṇṇ-ilaṃ* (*Narṇṇai*. 239.9)

'did not hear-we'

*kaḷaintaṇṇ-ilaṅ* (*Puṇāṇṭūru*. 77.7)

'did not remove-he'

*aṟintaṇṇ-ilaḷ* (*Narṇṇai*. 175.6)

'did not know-she'

*aṟintaṇṇ-ilar* (*Narṇṇai*. 27.6)

'did not know-they (hum)'

*āṭiṇṇ-ilaṅ* (*Narṇṇai*. 147.9)

'did not play-I'

*kūṟiṇṇ-ilar* (*Narṇṇai*. 130.10)

'did not say-they (hum)'

The impersonal tensed finite constructions noticed in these examples can be replaced by the impersonal past finite constructions of *ceyṭatu* and *pāṭiyatu* types followed by the impersonal tense implied negative construction *illai*. For instance, *aṟintaṇṇ-ilaḷ*, *āṭiṇṇ-ilaṅ*, and *kūṟiṇṇ-ilar* have alternative versions namely *aṟintat-illai*, *āṭiyat-illai*, and


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kūriyat-illai respectively. The alternative construction types are noticed to occur in Middle Tamil as evidenced in the example *niṅṅ-ai aṭaintat-ilai* (*Kantapurāṇam*. 7821). However, impersonal finite system of *ceytatu* type has the potentiality of being followed by *il-* based personal negation also. For example, *kēṭṭat-ilan* (*Cilappatikāram*. 23.32). Significantly, there are instances in Middle Tamil where the impersonal past finite system of *pāṭṭiru* type is followed by the impersonal negative predicate *illai* as evidenced in the following examples, *viṇaviṇṇ-illai*, and *tōṇṇiṇṇ-illai* (*Kantapurāṇam*. 6073). The situation is totally different in Modern Tamil where both *ceytanṇ-ilan*, and *pāṭṭir-ilan/ pāṭṭir-illai* types for instance, are completely ruled out. Instead, we come across only such constructions as *ceytat- illai* and *pāṭṭiyat- illai* types.

In Classical Tamil, there are nonpast negative finite constructions of *ceyallceyalt+ilan/ilal/ilar* etc., types

where *ceyallceyalt* type is an instance of nonpast finite construction being semantically identical with *ceyvatu* type. Consider the examples *tuṅcal-um ilar* (*Puṇāṇūru*. 182.4) 'will/do not sleep either - they (hum)', *viyattalum ilam* (*Puṇāṇūru*. 192.12) 'will/do not praise either-we', *uṅṭal-um ilar* (*Puṇāṇūru*. 182.3), 'will/do not eat either-they (hum)'. The *il-*based negative constructions in these examples are personal in character. However, there is no theoretical constraint that *ceyalt* type of nonpast impersonal finite system be followed only by personal negative system conjugated from *il-*. Notice the construction *aṇi-kari poyttal aṇṇōrk- illai* (*Kuṇṭokai*. 184.1) where *poyttal* is followed by the impersonal negative predicate *illai*. However, when *ceyalt* type of finite system is replaced by *ceyvatu* type, the latter is generally followed by the negative predicate *illai*. For instance, *uṅṭal-um ilar* has an alternative version namely *uṅṭat-um illai*.

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Tolkappiyam, Pattuppattu, Ettuttokai

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## DIRECTIONS AND THEIR NAMES IN TAMIL

Prof. S.V. Shanmugam

Words that are used to denote direction constitute an important semantic field in any language because they are used by all speakers of the particular language. The study of the history of names of direction in Tamil shows that there are two kinds of developments in semantic and lexical levels: (i) in Early Old Tamil, names of winds were the source of names of direction and (ii) in Late Old Tamil, a shift occurred and names of level of landscape became the source of two directional names (east and west) while the other two directions, north and south, reveal the cultural contact with Sanskrit.

The names of direction in Modern Tamil are *vaṭakku* 'north', *terku* 'south', *kiḷakku* 'east' and *mēṛku* 'west' (spoken Tamil, *mēkku*) and these are all native words having cognates in other Dravidian languages. Moreover, there are also words, *uttaram* 'north' and *tekkaṇam* 'south', which are used mostly in religious discourse and occasionally in poetry.

The words, *vaṭakku* 'north', *terku* 'south', *kuṇakku* 'east' and *kuṭakku* 'west' are commonly used in Old Tamil. But the words, *kiḷakku* (*Kuṟuntokai* 337.2) and *mēkku* (*Akanāṇṇūru* 143.5) < *mēṛku*) are found in Early Old Tamil, in the sense of level of landscape, below or lower and above or elevated place respectively and in the sense of direction in Late Old Tamil only. Following are some of the examples:

*uṇṇuṅkāl ticai kiḷakkukkaṇ amarntu*

'sit facing east while eating' (*Ācārakkōvai* 20)

In *Cilappatikāram*, another text of Late Old Tamil, the adjective forms are found in the sense of direction:

*kīḷtticai vāyil kaṇavaṇoṭu pukuntēṇ*

*merṛicai vāyil variyēṇ peyarkena* (23. 182-3)

'I (Kaṇṇaki) entered the Eastern gate with my husband and now leaving alone through the Western gate'

In the case of the words, *kīḷ* or *kiḷakku* 'east' and *mēl* or *mēṛku* 'west' the semantic change and lexical change due to the replacement of *kuṇakku* by *kiḷakku* and *kuṭakku* by *mēṛku* have taken place in the Late Old Tamil period.

All the words of direction in Old Tamil, *kuṇakku* 'east', *kuṭakku* 'west', *vaṭakku* 'north' and *terku* 'south' are etymologically related to the words of wind blowing from the corresponding direction: *vaṭakku* 'north' to *vāṭai* (northern wind blowing in the winter season), *terku* 'south' to *teṇṇal* 'southern wind' blowing in the early summer, *kuṇakku* 'east' to *koṇṭal* 'eastern wind' blowing in the rainy season and *kuṭakku* 'west' to *kōṭai* 'western wind' blowing in the summer season. These four words of wind, (*vāṭai*, *teṇṇal*, *koṇṭal* and *kōṭai*) are recorded in Old Tamil. The shortening of the vowel in \*vāṭ-akku > *vaṭakku* and \*kōṭ-

akku > *koṭakku* could be taken care of by sandhi rule in the Dravidian languages called the quantitative variation (see P.S. Subrahmanyam. *Dravidian Comparative Phonology*, 1983. p.156f) and the vowel change \*o > u in (\**koṭ-akku* to *kuṭa-kku* and *koṇṭal* to \**koṇ-akku* to *kuṇakku*) by sandhi rules \*i/\*e and \*u/\*o alternation (Ibid. p. 201f).

The reason for the lexical change (the loss of *kuṇakku* and *kuṭakku*) seems to be the change of perception of Tamil people, i.e., the change of relation from the direction of wind to the nature of landscape. In Tamilnadu, the level of land is lower in the east than in the west and so all the rivers in Tamilnadu are east flowing only. Since it is easy to identify the direction from the direction of flowing of the rivers, these names of direction might have been changed on the basis of the level of the landscape: *kuṇakku* to *kiḷakku* 'low level to east' and *kuṭakku* to *mēṛku* 'elevated level to west'. Since Tamil is having continuous literature, these nouns, *kuṇakku* and *kuṭakku* and the corresponding adjectives *kuṇa* and *kuṭa* are found even in later day writings, because the poets read old writings and used archaic words for various poetic effects.

Historically, the Modern Tamil inherited the two names of direction, *vaṭakku* (DEDR. 5218) and *terku* (DEDR. 3449) from pre Tamil period since they are found in all the South Dravidian languages. The other words, *kiḷakku* 'east' and *mēṛku* 'west' (the roots, *kīḷ* 'below' (DEDR. 1619) and *mēl* 'up' (DEDR. 5086) are found in all the Dravidian languages, but the nouns are found only in Tamil and Malayalam.

The two words of direction, *uttaram* 'north' and *tekkaṇam* 'south', found occurring in *Maṇimēkalai* and *Cilappatikāram* respectively, are also inherited from Later Old Tamil and they are borrowings from Sanskrit due to the contact of the Tamil speakers with the Sanskrit language and culture in the early period.



In his essay "Sailing to Byzantium: Prolegomena to a Poetics of the Lyric", Elder Olson categorically states that neither the ancients nor the moderns have said much that is valuable about the nature of a lyric, though there have been numerous abortive attempts at that. To be sure, what has been written about the lyric has finally proved to be a series of "bons mots on the character of the lyric poet, of startling analogies to the psychological or physiological effects of lyric poetry, ...of mere loci within a general discussion of literature which is concerned with the lyric only because the lyric possesses some characteristic in common with other forms" (Olson 215). All the modern disputations about the lyric have been, in Olson's view, declarations of individual predilections, or, as in the case of Ezra Pound's famous precepts for Imagists, definitions of a doctrine or a convention rather than of a lyric poem. He, therefore, takes it upon himself to propose an attempt to discover some index as to how, eventually, a poetics of the lyric might be arrived at.

Olson is fairly clear about what needs to be done and under what conditions it should be done. Any attempt towards a poetics of the lyric will be significant only in a philosophy in which the arts and sciences are held distinct from each other. And poetics in such a system cannot deal with every question which may possibly be raised about a work of art but only with those questions raised concerning it qua work of art. Questions about works of art may fall under many sciences, according to the manner of consideration. A question about a poem as an existent thing falls under metaphysics; a question about it as productive of social consciousness falls under politics. But neither of these questions would be poetic questions in the sense in which the term "poetic" is employed. Whatever answers could be found to questions about its being and political instrumentality would be mainly concerned not with the nature of poetry but with the relationship between poetry and something else. Two more statements that Olson makes besides his prior theorising would surprise those who are aware of what Tolkāppiyar has done to the lyric.

...[P]oetics as conceived here would not afford a series of recipes for making poems, nor a set of rules according to which they

must be made, for the very character of poetics is such that it must be subsequent to the inventive utilizations of the medium by the artist.

Properly taken, poetic questions would be concerning the poetic structure of a particular work, in the sense of inquiring what form has been imposed upon the medium of words. Such an enquiry, properly prosecuted, would terminate in a discovery of the parts of a work and of the interrelations through which the parts are parts of a whole. (Olson 217)

By the word *Lyric* the Greeks meant only that poetry that was sung to the accompaniment of the lyre. They had no general term to describe all personal utterances expressing the emotional response of the individual to his own world, which in fact, constitute a vast body of poetry which is neither epic nor dramatic. There were two types of such poetry – monodic and choral. In the

monodic, the poet spoke for the group with which he identified himself. Even during Homer's time, there were wedding songs, funeral dirges, paeans of thanksgiving and rustic chants of various kinds.

It was only when epic poetry declined that poets started choosing the contemporary world as a subject and lyric poetry began to flourish. For a few centuries the great names in poetry were those of lyricists such as Archilochus, Mimnermus, Sappho, Alcaeus, Solon and Pindar. Finally, it had to yield place to the drama which absorbing the lyric and the epic became the dominant form. The

famous Greek anthology is a collection of poems covering more than a thousand years most of which are short pieces called epigrams written in elegiac couplets. They include love poems, epitaphs, prayers, dedications, satires and numerous other kinds.

The importance of the musical accompaniment varied with the different types of lyrics. In the case of iambic poetry, originally satirical, it consisted of a few notes providing a background for the voice of the reciter. The elegy, chanted with the accompaniment of the flute for some time, lost the musical element. The light odes of

Even when a man has earned much  
Of whatever can be earned,  
shared it with many  
even when he is master of great estates,  
if he does not have children  
who patter on their little feet,  
stretch tiny hands,  
scatter, touch,  
grub with mouths  
and grab with fingers,  
smear rice and ghee  
all over their bodies,  
and overcome reason with love,  
all his days  
have come to nothing.

- Pāṇṭiyar Arivuṭai Nampi  
*Puṛaṇāṇṭūru*  
Tr. A.K.Ramanujan

Sappho and Pindar, sung to the accompaniment of an instrumental melody, were real songs. The instruments were few and harmony was largely unknown.

What Warren R. Castle, an authority on Greek literature, writes about it is worth knowing especially when we would like to compare it with ancient Tamil poetry:

Characteristic of all early Greek poetry is a kind of simplicity, sometimes almost naïveté, resulting partly from a tendency to treat subjects of universal interest only, and partly from a tendency to treat all subjects in general rather than in particular terms.... Through its entire range of effects, from the most delicate loveliness to the most sublimely tragic, Greek poetry is almost wholly direct statement, not the poetry of suggestion. Further, it does not attempt to communicate private or unique experience.... (Castle 93)

In comparison to what the Greeks have achieved in the dramatic form, their output of lyric poetry is meagre. But what is extremely disappointing is their theory of poetry. Plato believed that the poet is probably possessed by a madness and not in control of himself when he writes. Aristotle is universally praised as the first critic to attempt a systematic discussion of genres. But his *Poetics*, which makes a profound analysis of the nature and function of tragic drama, has very little on the lyric. Answering Plato's criticism of the poet as a mere imitator of appearances, his student claims that art is a kind of improvement on nature in that the poet is able to bring to completion what nature, operating with different principles of order, is still trying hard to complete. In the sixth section of *Poetics*, Aristotle promises to speak later of the poetry which imitates in hexameter verse and of comedy, but the work comes to an abrupt end after a comparison of the relative merits and limitations of tragedy and epic poetry.

Unlike Greek and Latin, Sanskrit has numerous polemical treatises written over a long period of time on many issues relating to drama and poetry. In Sanskrit also, as in Greek and Latin, there is no single dispassionate work that deals with the lyric comprehensively. As the main concern of *Nāṭyasāstra* is dramaturgy in its varied aspects, it shows little interest in the basic concepts of poetics.

A close study of Sanskrit poetics would reveal that there have been attempts at defining poetry in terms of *rasa* or *dhvani* or *alankāra*, *guṇa* or *rīti* or *vakrōkti*, each of the theorists from Bharata to Appayya Dīkṣita claiming pre-eminence or sole recognition for his favourite idea. It

cannot be denied that their writings have provided a number of brilliant insights into poetry, which have deservedly won the admiration of some of the leading Western aestheticians. But, at the same time, it has to be conceded that their endless debates and hairsplittings down the centuries have not led to a holistic view of the poem as a work of art or of the poetic process, not to speak of the name and nature of a lyric. It is the chief glory of Tamil poetics that it alone has been able to fully identify the salient features of a poem, emphasising the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts.

The theory of poetry as expounded in *Tolkāppiyam* witnesses to their success in unravelling the so-called mystery of poetic process and in pinpointing the essential elements of a poem besides cultivating their language as an extremely suitable medium of poetry.

In his *Ceyyul Iyal*, *Tolkāppiyar* lists seven literary forms and thirty four aspects of a poem. *Meyppāṭṭu Iyal* provides an elaborate account of eight *Meyppāṭṭu* which are further subdivided into thirty two. The section on similes (*Uvama Iyal*) is devoted to an analysis of the nature of a simile, its types, the contexts in which linking words are to be employed and the conventional restrictions and differences. There is a separate section on tradition (*Marapu Iyal*) which enjoins the poets to use words without violating traditional expectations and ends with a definition of a work of literature.

According to *Tolkāppiyar*, the 'limbs' of a poem are: *māttirai* (the phonic measure), *eluttu* (the phoneme or letter of alphabet), *acai* (the metrical syllable), *cīr* (foot), *aṭi* (the metrical line), *yāppu* (the metrical structuring), *marapu* (tradition), *tūkku* (rhythm), *toṭaivakai* (patterns of rhyme), *nōkku* (the total import of a verse), *pā* (metre), *aḷaviyal* (line limit of a verse), *tiṇai* (the akam and *puṇam*), *kaikōl* (clandestine and wedded phases of love), *kūṟuvakai* (utterance proper to a character), *kēṭpōr* (addressee), *kaḷan* (the backdrop or context of situation), *kālam* (divisions of time and seasons), *payan* (effect), *meyppāṭṭu* (poetic sentiments), *eccam* (that which is left to be understood), *muṇṇam* (designation of the addresser and addressee), *poruḷ* (thematic import), *tuṇai* (thematic sub-strand), *māṭṭu* (syntactical linkage), *vaṇṇam* (specific sound feature in verse), *ammai* (soothing effect through a succession of short soft words),

Bless you, friend. Listen.

Sweeter than milk  
mixed with honey from our gardens  
is the left over water in his land,

low in the waterholes  
covered with leaves  
and muddied by animals.

Kapilar  
*Aiṅkuṟunūru* 203  
Tr. A.K.Ramanujan

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*alaku* (choice of plain words and proper rhythm), *tonmai* (antique literary source interspersed with prose), *tōl* (edifying stories in felicitous diction and long elaborate narratives), *viruntu* (compositions of a novel nature), *iyaiipu* (narrative poems), *pulaṅ* (verses in the diction of common folk), and *ilaipu* (easy flowing style).

All the regulations, definitions and distinctions mentioned by Tolkāppiyar and the fact that a poem is called *ceyyu!* (what is done) make it clear that in his conception of the poetic process conscious labour plays a major role. The inner voice and the mysterious power of creation stressed by the Romantics have practically no place in the theory. This is very different from what the ancient Greeks and Romans thought about poetry but close to the doctrines of twentieth century western critics.

Tolkāppiyar states that of the materials of a poem only three things are very important: *mutal* (time and place), *karu* (the native elements) and *uri* (human feelings). The place is divided into four regions, each being presided over by a deity and named after a flower or tree. Mullai, a variety of jasmine, represents the forests overseen by *Māyōṅ*, the Dark one. Kuṛiñci, a mountain flower, represents the mountains overseen by *Cēyōṅ*, the Red one. Marutan, a tree with red flowers, stands for the agricultural lowland under the rule of *Vēntaṅ*, identified with Indra and Neytal, a water flower, for the seashore protected by *Varuṅaṅ*. Pālai, a green desert tree, according to later writers, represents Pālai or desert waste, ruled by *Koṟṟavai*, a goddess of war. The year is divided into six large time units, the six seasons and the day into five or six small units; morning, midday, evening, nightfall, the dead of night and dawn. Each of the five regions or landscapes is associated with an appropriate *uri* or phase of love and particular large and small time units with particular regions.

The *tiṅai* divisions that might have evolved out of the works of generations of poets and grammarians proved very beneficial to the Sangam poets. It is not easy to convert the mental state of a hero or a heroine in love into a poem. If a poet is to undertake a search for the proper situation, background and imagery required for the purpose, he may not be

As a little white snake  
with lovely stripes on its young body  
troubles the jungle elephant

this slip of a girl  
her teeth like sprouts of new rice  
her wrists stacked with bangles  
troubles me.

Catti Nākaṅār  
Kuruntokai 119  
Tr. A.K.Ramanujan

able to concentrate on the choice of words and phrases and on their right arrangement. The great Greek tragedians like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides derived this kind of immense advantage when they chose to dramatise the already available myths, legends and stories with exemplary plots. They could devote their entire attention to the writing of the dialogue for which they had to forge a style of their own. When there is a common situation provided by what Tolkāppiyar calls *mutal*, *uri* and *karu* acceptable to and understood by the poet and the reader, the evocation of the required feeling becomes easy to the poet and the identification with what the poem conveys to the reader.

In the absence of apt situations, characters and settings, the poet faces the danger of failing in his difficult task of evoking the desired feeling. What T.S. Eliot calls 'objective correlative' is very relevant here. By this he means "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion, so that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked". The different kinds of *tiṅai* and *tuṅai* and their *mutal*, *uri* and *karu* which Tolkāppiyar describes provide, though partially, various objective correlatives to be readily used by poets. From these well-defined sets of situations and backdrops, the poet can choose the one that is in accordance with the emotion he wants to convey. This enables him to turn his entire poetic energy to the diction of the poem and ensures

that his poem won't fail for want of a suitable objective correlative. On the other hand, it is *iraicci* and *uḷḷuṅai* which primarily help him to compose a poem that suggests much more than what it states.

All that Tolkāppiyar says about poetry and his inclusion of the concept of *nōkku* which demands that every word in a poem must contribute to the

With the festival hour close at hand,  
his woman in labour,  
a sun setting behind pouring rains,  
the needle in the cobbler's hand  
is in a frenzy

stitching thongs for a cot:  
swifter, far swifter,  
were the tackles of our lord  
wearing garlands of laburnum,  
as he wrestled with the enemy  
come all the way  
to take the land.

Cāttantaiyār  
Puraṅāṅūru 82  
Tr. A.K.Ramanujan

Excepting for those that apply it,  
Of what avail is the fragrant sandal mix  
To the mountain though born of it?  
If we think of it,  
your daughter is also like that to you.

Excepting for those that wear it,  
Of what avail is the exquisite white pearl  
To the sea, though born of it?  
If we ponder upon it,  
your daughter is also like that to you.

Excepting for those that pluck the seven strings,  
Of what avail is the sweet melody  
To the *yāl*, though born of it?  
If we reflect over it,  
your daughter is also like that to you.

Don't grieve for your intensely chaste daughter;  
She has gone with a great one she adores;  
Also that is the way that violates not virtue.

Cēramān Pālaipāṭiya Peruṅkaṇṅkō  
Kalittokai 8, lines 12-24.

meaning and significance of the whole, make it clear that he conceives a poem as an organic whole. In the West, Coleridge and the new Critics of the twentieth century following in his footsteps are known to have contended that a poem must be one in which the parts mutually support and explain each other, all in their proportion harmonising with and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. While reading a great poem, according to Coleridge, the reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Any reader of a Sangam poem would attest that this is his experience.

Some scholars have already drawn our attention to the similarities between the poem as defined by Tolkāppiyar and the dramatic monologues and dramatic lyrics written in English in the 19th and 20th centuries. He visualises every poem as a drama with the setting, time, theme, characters and incidents clearly delimited. Emotions and ideas are not presented as such but acted out in the speech of an important participant in the event mentioned. The poems of Robert Browning, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot are, to some extent, of this type. In fact, the dramatic monologue is widely considered the most potent poetic form in the twentieth century.

In the monologues described by Tolkāppiyar, not even the names of the hero, the heroine and her companion are mentioned. The conventional setting indicates the immediate context in which the given statement is poetically

uttered. No unnecessary detail about the character's identity or past is mentioned. Nor do we have to strain our imagination to respond to the feeling evoked by the voice. We are easily drawn into the centre of a consciousness without getting caught in superficial externalities. The poet's focus is on the subtleties of the character's thoughts and feelings, not on how one hero or heroine differs from another externally or with regard to his or her past.

The ideal modern poem is expected to be objective, precise, organically complex and as well-written as prose. Free from clichés and straddled adjectives, it should have the prose virtues of simplicity and hardness in a language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree. Edwardian and Georgian poetry was rejected because it lacked subtlety, complexity and depth. A poem of indirection, yielding more than one layer of meaning, is a product of excellent craftsmanship. Tolkāppiyar's insistence on the three aspects, *nōkku*, *payan*, and *eccam*, is clearly indicative of

his predilection for a poetry that works subtly, indirectly and suggestively. *Nōkku* demands every syllable, every word and every line to be in harmony with the poem as a whole. By *payan* is meant the implicit statement on the purpose of an object. Though *eccam*, which is of two types – *colleccam* and *kurippeccam* – is interpreted in diverse ways by the commentators, it is used to avoid explicit complete statements and to exploit the suggestive potential of the minimum number of words employed in the poem.

The concept of poetry as expressed in Tolkāppiyar's *Poruḷatikāram* and the practice of Sangam poets as evidenced in the still cherished anthologies would reveal that the ancient Tamils had a poetics of the lyric which Elder Olson was looking for but could not find in the well known languages of the world.

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## A MODEL UNTO ITSELF: CLASSICAL TAMIL LITERATURE

*Kamil Zvelebil*

The Dravidians, and in particular the Tamils, have contributed a great deal to the cultural riches of the world: Pallava and Chola temple architecture, Chola bronze sculpture, the dance-form known as Bharatanatyam, the so-called Carnatic system of music. But probably the most significant contribution is that of Tamil literature, which still remains to be “discovered” and enjoyed by the non-Tamilians and adopted as an essential and remarkable part of universal heritage. If it is true that liberal education should “liberate” by demonstrating the cultural values and norms foreign to us, by revealing the relativity of our own values, then the “discovery” and enjoyment of Tamil literature, and even its teaching (as a critical part of the teaching of Indian literatures) should find its place in the systems of Western training and instruction in the humanities. (p.xi)

It is, however, an entirely different matter if we consider carefully just one of the great literatures of the South: the Tamil literature. There, and only there, we are able to point out a whole complex set of features – so to say a bundle of diagnostic isoglosses – separating this Dravidian literature not only from other Indian literatures but from other Dravidian literatures as well. It is of course only the earliest period of the Tamil literature which shows these unique features. But the early Tamil poetry was rather unique not only by virtue of the fact that some of its features were so unlike everything else in India, but by virtue of its literary excellence; those 26,350 lines of poetry promote Tamil to the rank of one of the great classical languages of the world – though the world at large only just about begins to realize it.

All other Dravidian literatures – with the exception of Tamil – begin by adopting a model – in subject-matter, themes, forms, in prosody, poetics, metaphors, etc., – only the language is different; in spite of the attempts of some Indian scholars to prove that there were – that there must have been – indigenous, “Dravidian”, pre-Aryan traditions, literary traditions, in the great languages of the South, it is

extremely hard to find traces of these traditions, and such attempts are more speculative than strictly scientific. It is of course quite natural that in all these great languages oral literature preceded written literature, and there is an immense wealth of folk literature in all Dravidian literary as well as non-literary languages. (pp. 1-2)...

An entirely different situation prevails in Tamil literature. The earliest literature in Tamil is a model unto itself – it is absolutely unique in the sense that, in subject-matter, thought-content, language and form, it is entirely and fully indigenous, that is, Tamil, or, if we want [...], Dravidian. And not only that: it is only the Tamil culture that has produced – uniquely so in India – an independent, indigenous literary theory of a very high standard, including metrics and prosody, poetics and rhetoric.

There is yet another important difference between Tamil and other Dravidian literary languages: the metalanguage of Tamil has always been Tamil, never Sanskrit. As A. K. Ramanujan says (in *Language and Modernisation*, p. 31): “In most Indian languages, the technical gobbledegook is Sanskrit; in Tamil, the gobbledegook is ultra-Tamil. [Footnote omitted]”

There is an obvious historical explanation of the fact: the earliest vigorous bloom of Tamil culture began before the Sanskritization of the South could have had any strong impact on Tamil society. It is now an admitted fact by scholars in historical Dravidian linguistics that the Proto-South Dravidian linguistic unity disintegrated sometime between the 8<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Cent. B.C., and it seems that Tamil began to be cultivated as a literary language sometime about the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Cent. B.C. During this period, the development began of pre-literary Tamil (a stage of the development in the history of the language which may be rather precisely characterized by important and diagnostic phonological changes) into the next state, Old Tamil, the first recorded stage of any Dravidian language. The final stages of the Tamil-Kannada split, and

### TAMIL: CLASSICAL AS WELL AS MODERN

The Tamil language, like Janus, looks backward to the ancient world and looks forward to the modern world, with the Future still in its womb. It is both a classical language, shaping itself with logical precision and wondrous rhythm as a beautiful and befitting medium for poetry and philosophy, and a modern language shaping itself as a powerful and proper vehicle for the scientific and practical thoughts; for, unlike other classical languages, it has refused to die.

*Meenakshisundaran T.P., 1961. Collected Papers of Prof. T.P. Meenakshisundaran)*





the beginnings of ancient Tamil literature, were accompanied by conscious efforts of grammarians and a body of bardic poets to set up a kind of norm, a literary standard, which was called *ceyyul* – or the refined, poetic language – or alternatively *centamil* – the elegant, polished, high Tamil. The final outcome of these events – the creation of a literature of very high standard and of a rich and refined linguistic medium – found expression in the excellent descriptive grammar *Tolkāppiyam*, one of the most brilliant achievements of human intellect in India. (pp. 4-5)

Historically speaking, from the point of development of Indian literature as a single complex, Tamil literature possesses at least two unique features.

First, as has just been pointed out, it is the only Indian literature which is, at least in its beginnings and in its first and most vigorous bloom, almost entirely independent of Aryan and specifically Sanskrit influences. This primary independence of Tamil literary tradition has been, incidentally, the source of many conflicts.

Second, though being sometimes qualified as a neo-Indian literature which is both classical and modern; while it shares antiquity with much of Sanskrit literature and is as classical, in the best sense of the word, as e.g., the ancient Greek poetry, it continues to be vigorously living modern writing of our days. This fact was expressed in a very happy formulation by A. K. Ramanujan in his excellent book *The Interior Landscape* (1967): “Tamil, one of the two classical languages of India, is the only language of contemporary India, which is recognizably continuous with a classical past”. ...

The following are then the diagnostic, characteristic features of classical Tamil literature with regard to its subject-matter and thought-content. First of all, Tamil is probably the one ancient language of India that bears the reflection of the life of an entire people; that is, its heroes are idealized types derived from what we might even call “common folk”. Classical (i.e., the so-called *Caṅkam*) Tamil literature is not the literature of the barons; neither is it the literature of a monastic order; nor the literature of an *élite*, of a *nāgarika*; it is thus not the literature of a particular social class. One major type of Tamil classical poems reflects the life of ordinary though idealized men and women, not the life of a sacerdotal or ruling nobility, of a priestly class, of nuns, monks, or of any *élite* group or groups of society. The whole gamut of basic human experience is contained in what has been best in Tamil writing. In this sense, it is very different from all strata of Sanskritic literature – the Vedic literature which is the literature of the ruling barons, from the classical literature which is par excellence the literature of the “man about town”, of the *nāgarika*; it is also different from the Buddhist and Jaina texts, since these are mostly the literature of monastic orders, or monks and nuns. However, this does not mean that it is, in its finished form, as we have it, “popular” literature or “folk” literature. Classical Tamil literature is literature about and of people but not a *Volksliteratur*. It is typically a *Kunstdichtung*. (pp. 11-12).

[From: Zvelebil, Kamil, 1973. *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India*, Lieden: E.J. Brill.]

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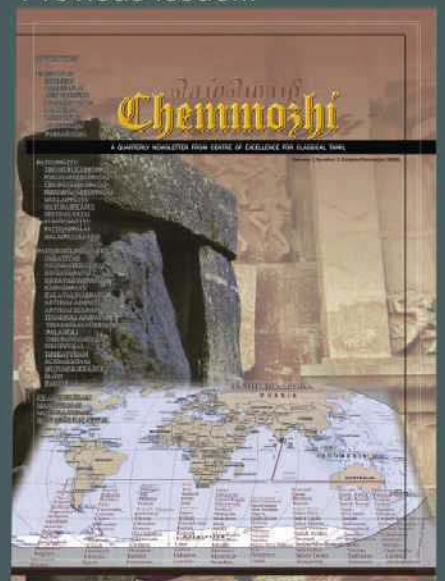
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A Mithuna couple engraved on a gold ring.  
Karur. ca. 2nd century A.D.

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ETTUTTOKAI

NARRINAI  
KURUNTOKAI  
AIÑKURUNÖRU  
PATIRRUPPATTU  
PARIPÄTAL  
KALITTOKAI  
AKANÄNÖRU  
PURANÄNÖRU

PATTUPPATTU  
TIRUMURUKARRUPPATAI  
PORUNARARRUPPATAI  
CIRUPANÄRRUPPATAI  
PERUMPANÄRRUPPATAI  
MULLAIPPATTU  
MATURAIKKÄNCI  
NETUNALVÄTÄI  
KURINCIPPATTU  
PÄTTINAPPÄLAI  
MALAIPATUKÄTÄM

PATINENKILKKANAKKU

NÄLATIYÄR  
NÄNMANIKKÄTIKAI  
INNA NÄRPÄTU  
INIYAVAI NÄRPÄTU  
KÄRNÄRPÄTU  
KÄLAVALINÄRPÄTU  
ÄINTINAI ÄIMPÄTU  
ÄINTINAI ELUPÄTU  
TINÄIMÖLI ÄIMPÄTU  
TINÄIMALAI NURRAIMPÄTU  
PÄLAMÖLI  
CIRUPÄNCÄMULÄM  
TIRUKKURÄI  
TIRIKÄTUKÄM  
ÄCÄRÄKKÖVÄI  
MUTUMÖLIKKÄNCI  
ELÄTI  
KÄINNILÄI

CILAPPÄTIKÄRAM  
MÄNIMÄKÄLÄI  
MUTTOILÄYIRÄM  
IRÄIYÄNÄR KÄLÄVIYÄL