XIII. THE ALPHABETIC ARRANGEMENT.

I.

One great contribution of Nacciperkkiniyar is the explanation he offers for the arrangements of sounds in the Tamil alphabet. Because, he assumes though without reason that Tolkappiyar specifically refers to that particular order in which the sounds occur in the Tamil alphabet. According to him, the short vowels are mentioned first before their long vowels because one has to speak of one unit before proceeding to speak of two units of length. He raises the question whether the sounds of two units may not be stated first and sounds of one unit mentioned later. Here he goes into the philosophical disquisition which denies that there is anything like the number two which is after all is a combination of one with one. Any number more than one is an illusion perhaps meant only for conventional usage. Things counted remain as separate units and in such units there are only individual things where we do not get anything with an inherent characteristic feature of being two. Perhaps the monist in him is peeping up its head, in this discussion.

So far, his explanations refers to an arrangement
of the short vowels before respective long vowels. But this does not explain why ə preceded ə i ə etc. The explanation for the ə i ə following ə a ə is that both of them are similar in number (probably he means by this only quantity) articulation and meaning. The articulation is similar because Tolkāppiyar adds that both result from the opening of the mouth. The similarity in meaning arises out of both these sounds occurring as demonstratives. ə i ə and ə u ə however are different as front vowel and back vowel or as palatal and labial. But they, as demonstratives form one group occurring in all the five gender numbers. Hence the order ə a ə, ə e ə and ə u ə. ə e ə follows ə u ə because ə e ə is articulated similar to ə a ə + ə i ə. ə ai ə because of its nearness in articulation becomes after ə e ə. So does ə au ə after ə o ə on similar grounds. Though they ə ai ə and ə au ə have no related short vowels, they are yet placed in that order because of the resemblance of articulation. The question may arise why ə o ə should not go before and occur along with diphthong ə ai ə. The reply is that ə o ə occurs as a word only in combination with a consonant and that even then only in the solitary word ə no ə. Because of this absence of any importance though a monothong it is relegated
to a position after dipthong. Č ai Ĵ, Č a Ĵ, Č i Ĵ
Č u Ĵ and Č e Ĵ form a pattern of quadruples of bases as
demonstratives and interrogatives occurring as vowel alone
without combining with consonants to be followed by nouns
like korran etc. Č a Ĵ, Č a Ĵ, Č u Ĵ, Č u Ĵ, Č e Ĵ
Č e Ĵ, Č o Ĵ, Č o Ĵ and Č au Ĵ resemble also in form
Č i Ĵ, Č i Ĵ and Č ai Ĵ do not resemble in form. This
shows that in Naccinarkkiniyar's time that Č i Ĵ was not
written as Č Ł Ĵ. When these long vowels suffer an
extra lengthening (alapetai) the long vowel and short vowel
become harmonised in such places. The demonstrative Č a Ĵ,
Č i Ĵ and Č u Ĵ when lengthened into Č ā Ĵ, Č ā Ĵ and
Č ā Ĵ there is similarity or identity of meaning and of
behaviour in sandhi as we learn from uyirmayankiyal. He
points out that Tolkappiyar always refers to these sounds
without disturbing the order here mentioned.

II.

Proceeding to discuss the consonants, he
points out that the plosives are followed by their respective
nasals because of their resemblance in the articulation and
their behaviour in sandhi. The order of these plosives and
their respective nasals follow the place of articulation. The velum and the root of the tongue at the extreme point, articulating give $\ell k$, and $\ell n$; the centre of the palate and the centre of the tongue give $\ell e$, and $\ell n$ $\ell r$, $\ell n$; the front of the palate and the front of the tongue give $\ell t$, $\ell n$, $\ell t$ and $\ell n$ in that order in different places coming gradually to the front portion of the mouth. The labial articulates $\ell p$ and $\ell m$. Because $\ell r$ and $\ell n$ are similar in articulation and because $\ell n$ at times becomes $\ell r$, they are placed together. Because they are the Tamil sounds perhaps in the sense that they are occurring in Tamil, they are placed at the end.

The semi vowels precede these. Among these $\ell y$ has the first place because like vowel it is a voiced sound with the vibrations of air from the throat coming and forcing on the palate. $\ell r$ does not resemble $\ell y$ in articulation but resembles it in sandhi; (ff. 362) therefore it is placed adjacent to $\ell y$. $\ell l$ and $\ell v$ resemble neither in articulation nor in sandhi but in a number of places like Kolvalitu and Kalvalitu they cluster together, therefore they are placed together. It may be stated in
passing that it is surprising that Naccinärkkkiñiyar who real-
ises this should refuse to treat the statements about clus-
ters being applicable to any two juxtaposed words. \( \mathcal{L} \, \mathcal{I} \, \mathcal{J} \) and \( \mathcal{C} \, \mathcal{I} \, \mathcal{J} \) have no relationship whatever; but the metrical resonance in the statement yaralavalala (ff. 21) instead
inspired Tolkäppiyar to put them together.

In this explanation of Naccinärkkkiñiyar there are some difficulties. One is that he is confusing the written script with sound, especially when he is referring to the shapes of letters like \( \mathcal{L} \, \mathcal{I} \, \mathcal{J} \), \( \mathcal{C} \, \mathcal{I} \, \mathcal{J} \) etc. The second is that in considering the sounds per se it will not be proper to take into consideration the meaning or their behaviour in sandhi; for these can be spoken of only in words. Words symbolize the meaning as a whole though made of sounds, which as such do not go to symbolise anything. Therefore, these difficulties drive away any meaning from his explanation. Therefore Givaññamunivar is rejecting all these considera-
tions as foreign to the grouping of sounds into classes.

It is articulation alone that should decide whether any
sounds form a class or not. Thirdly the fact of the vowel
\( \mathcal{C} \, \mathcal{O} \, \mathcal{J} \) occurring only with \( \mathcal{C} \, \mathcal{M} \, \mathcal{J} \) and forming a monosyllabic word should not at all be considered in this discussion of
arrangement of sounds. Again to argue on the frequency of \( \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}} \) and \( \underline{\text{v}} \underline{\text{J}} \) clustering together is also to confuse the issue. The most startling argument however is that based on metrical pattern of assonance when he explains the reason for placing \( \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}} \) after \( \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}} \).

III.

Givañānamunivar gives the following reasons for the arrangement of sounds in the Tamil alphabet. The place of articulation preceding from the root of the tongue to the lips is responsible for the order of consonants \( \underline{\text{k}} \underline{\text{J}} \) to \( \underline{\text{m}} \underline{\text{J}} \). The only difference between Naccinarkkiniyar and Givañānamunivar here is that Givañānamunivar refuses to admit anything other than articulation as an argument. \( \underline{\text{y}} \underline{\text{J}}, \underline{\text{r}} \underline{\text{J}}, \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}} \) and \( \underline{\text{v}} \underline{\text{J}} \) according to him are articulated at the back of the palate, at the centre of the palate, at the teeth and the lips respectively and therefore their order follows this order of their articulation. \( \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}}, \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}}, \underline{\text{r}} \underline{\text{J}} \) and \( \underline{\text{n}} \underline{\text{J}} \) are placed at the end of the alphabet to show that they are special to the Tamil language. But this does not explain \( \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}} \) coming after \( \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}} \). Givañānamunivar explanation is the \( \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}} \) is unimportant since it is only an alternate for \( \underline{\text{1}} \underline{\text{J}} \) in Sanskrit.
One may pause here to consider this argument of Civaṇānāmunivar. One who refuses to accept anything except the articulation should not bring in the consideration of importance and unimportance of sounds especially when that value depends on foreign language like Sanskrit. \( \sim l \) and \( \sim l \) are phonemes in Tamil unlike in Sanskrit. But in fairness to Civaṇānāmunivar one has to admit that all the commentators seem to appeal to Sanskrit usage as a conclusive argument in all these matters and Civaṇānāmunivar cannot escape this superstition.

There is one other difficulty in Civaṇānāmunivar's explanation, that is, with reference to the articulation of \( \sim y \). Probably he follows Nānūl where it is stated that \( \sim y \) is articulated at atina atianam. atina if it is not the soft palate and may be taken to mean the hard palate behind the alveolar region. This may be alright because \( \sim y \) is a palatal consonant as contrasted to \( \sim r \) which is alveolar. This is the very usage of Nānūl itself. Ilakkanavilakkam objects to the statement in Nānūl on the ground it contradicts experience. Pavanānghi uses atimal with reference to the front portion of the tongue. Even then the statement is not clear, because it is difficult to differen-
tiate the places of articulation for \( \text{e} \ y \ \text{J} \) and \( \text{r} \ \text{J} \).

The way in which Civananamunivar uses the term \( \text{iti} \ \text{annam} \) and \( \text{annam} \) suggests that \( \text{ati\imath} \) is at the back of \( \text{iti\imath} \ \text{annam} \). If \( \text{iti\imath} \ \text{annam} \) is the central palate \( \text{ati\imath} \ \text{annam} \) can be only the soft palate in this arrangement. Probably Ilakkanavilakkam understood \( \text{Nammul} \) only in this sense for otherwise its objections cannot be valid. What Civananamunivar meant was probably that \( \text{e} \ y \ \text{J} \) was a palatal consonant and \( \text{r} \ \text{J} \) was an alveolar in that sense the order is not disturbed. That Civananamunivar however takes the word \( \text{ati\imath} \ \text{annam} \) in the sense of velum is clear from his explanation of the articulation of \( \text{e} \ \text{k} \ \text{J} \) as occurring at \( \text{ati\imath} \ \text{annam} \).

IV.

Passing to the consideration of the arrangement of vowels, he first points out that the vowels as a class precede the consonants because the former could occur independently of any other sounds, whilst consonants cannot be pronounced except with the assistance of \( \text{a} \ \text{J} \). This is the statement generally made by all the ancient commentators in Tamil. But we will consider this a little later when explaining the terms \( \text{uyir} \ 'vowel' \) and \( \text{may} \ 'consonant' \). The \( \text{a} \ \text{J} \), \( \text{i} \ \text{J} \) and \( \text{u} \ \text{J} \) are also placed in that order.
according to the place of articulation. Civanānamunivar may not have had in his mind the vowel triangle especially defined by Dr. Russells. \( \text{I} \) is articulated by the muscular action at the back of the root of the tongue and \( \text{I} \) is a palatal vowel and \( \text{I} \) is the labial vowel. This explains why they are placed in that order which is the same as the order of place of articulation. Their respective long vowels are the combination of two respective short vowels, a combination like mixing water with water. The question arises if the long vowels are no more than two short vowels, the rules relating to the short vowels then should be applicable to long vowels. Civanānamunivar explains that since the rules are applicable only to short vowels as such standing as separate units, those rules cannot be applicable to a combination of short vowels. alapetāi cannot be considered to be a separate sound as in Sanskrit, because in Tamil they do not go to form words different from the words formed from their respective long vowels. It may appear that he is contradicting himself when he is bringing in an argument based on word formation to which he has taken objection to, when used by Maccinārkkkiniyar. He perhaps is trying to express in a way what the modern linguist refer to a phoneme. His argument will amount to saying that alapetāi is not a phoneme in Tamil.
\[ e \] according to him is a combination of \[ a \] and \[ i \]. \[ o \] is similarly a combination of \[ a \] and \[ u \]. Therefore \[ e \] and \[ o \] and their respective long vowels follow the \[ a \] and \[ u \] and their long vowels. \[ ai \] is the combination of \[ a \], \[ y \] and \[ i \] and therefore it is placed after \[ e \] because of similarity. \[ au \] is a combination of \[ a \], \[ v \] and \[ u \] and therefore it is placed after \[ o \]. His foundation for all this argument is Padanjali's Bhasya and the commentary of Kayyana where the comparison of Narasimha is given to sandhi aksharas as conjoint sounds. Givanānamunivar does not stop there but proceeds to interpret Tolkappiyam also in terms of this, Sanskrit idea.

We have already discussed these sutras, so we need not explain at length his interpretation. The difficulty in his interpretation is clear. This explanation assumes \[ y \] or \[ v \] coming in the heart of vowels, \[ ai \] or \[ au \]. Here again he takes refuge in Mahabasa where the existence of the consonants \[ r \] and \[ l \] is admitted after \[ u \] by Patanjali. But Patanjali does not state \[ y \] and \[ v \] are in \[ ai \] and \[ au \]. Givanānamunivar however argues that Patanjali must have
implicitly admitted this. He forgets to open his ears and listen to the pronunciation of the Tamil vowels \( \text{e} \) and \( \text{O} \) which are not diphthongs in Tamil; nor are they, even in Sanskrit, if the modern pronunciation is taken in to consideration. As Āraṇa Cāṇmuganār points out there is no sign of any articulation of \( \text{y} \) and \( \text{v} \) in \( \text{ai} \) and \( \text{au} \) respectively. Gīvānānāmunīvar's argument for placing \( \text{r} \) and \( \text{n} \) at the end of the alphabet is as already stated, that they are peculiarly Tamil sounds.

On this basis the short \( \text{e} \) and \( \text{o} \) should have also been placed at the end of the Tamil alphabet; Naccinārkkinīvar was not always thinking of Sanskrit like Gīvānānāmunīvar who boldly asserts that to those who have not understood Sanskrit works, the nature of Tamil can never be clear. It was because of this that the introduction to Tolkāppiyam according to him describes Tolkāppiyar as aintiram niraṁta Tolkāppiyam. His explanation for the place of \( \text{e} \) and \( \text{o} \) in Tamil alphabet is that these sounds are not confined to Tamil alone and they occur in Prakrits and also in the chanting of Samaveda according to a particular school. That is why their place in Tamil alphabet is not at its end.
It is clear that Civananamunivar is following the Sanskrit arrangement of the alphabet only explaining in addition the respective position of $\underline{\text{r}}$ and $\underline{\text{n}}$ and $\underline{\text{l}}$ and $\underline{\text{t}}$.

Venkatarañjulu Reddiar's explanation as far as $\underline{\text{a}}$, $\underline{\text{i}}$, and $\underline{\text{u}}$ is concerned does not differ from Civananamunivar but he once again introduces the conception of the importance of placing $\underline{\text{a}}$ first because it requires no attempted articulation except the opening of the mouth. But he forgets that in addition to the opening of the mouth there must also be voicing. Again he brings these conception of importance with reference to the vowels $\underline{\text{a}}$, $\underline{\text{i}}$, and $\underline{\text{u}}$ which because of this importance become demonstratives $\underline{\text{e}}$ is according to him articulated at the place where $\underline{\text{i}}$ is born. Probably he means by that statement that $\underline{\text{e}}$ and $\underline{\text{i}}$ are front vowels. He adds, however that $\underline{\text{e}}$ is at times an alternate form of $\underline{\text{i}}$ in such words as civappu and cevappu etc. $\underline{\text{e}}$ is relegated because of this unimportance, to a place after $\underline{\text{i}}$. He does not stop with giving examples in Tamil but proceeds to quote from Kannada and Telugu as well, for this kind of alternation. He does not show alternation was as
old as the language or its alphabet. It will be seen here that he unlike Civaṅañamanunivar does not accept \( \text{ṣ e} \) and \( \text{ṣ o} \) as diphthongs, though he feels that in Sanskrit they are clearly diphthongs. It is not clear where he hard their pronunciation as diphthongs in modern usage. He relies on only sandhi rules in Sanskrit. If this means that historically once upon a time, they were diphthongs he may be alright. As he himself admits in all the cases, he is merely repeating Kērala Pāṁiniyam. \( \text{ṣ o} \) is \( \text{ṛ} \) a back vowel like \( \text{ṣ u} \) and the alternate of \( \text{ṣ u} \) in words like tulai and tolai and therefore according to him it is relegated to a place after \( \text{ṣ e} \). \( \text{ṣ ai} \) is a combination of \( \text{ṣ a} \) and \( \text{ṣ i} \) whereas \( \text{ṣ au} \) is a combination of \( \text{ṣ a} \) and \( \text{ṣ u} \). It will be seen here also that he does not agree with Civaṅañamanunivar that \( \text{ṣ y} \) and \( \text{ṣ v} \) occur in \( \text{ṣ ai} \) and \( \text{ṣ au} \) respectively.

Proceeding to explain the plosives and the corresponding nasals, he follows both Civaṅañamanunivar and Naccinārkkiniyjar, depending on their arguments that their orders in the alphabet follows the order of the articulation of the sound. \( \text{ṣ y} \) is placed first amongst semi vowels on grounds similar to that mentioned by Naccinārkkiniyjar.
He says that ṣ ṟ and ṣ 1 ṟ according to the order of articulation should appear in the order as ṣ 1 ṟ and ṣ ṟ but because ṣ 1 ṟ does not occur in Sanskrit it is relegated to the last position. ṣ 1 ṟ must then precede ṣ ṟ. It was relegated to the last position after ṣ 1 ṟ because according to Venkatarājulu keddār it is not an independent sound in Sanskrit. ṣ ṟ which occurs in Sanskrit takes precedent over ṣ 1 ṟ and ṣ 1 ṟ. ṣ ṟ being a labio dental consonant comes after the dental ṣ 1 ṟ. Then come ṣ 1 ṟ and ṣ 1 ṟ in the Tamil alphabet according to the place of articulation. He could have simplified the statement by first explaining the sounds common to Tamil and Sanskrit alphabet, according to the order they occur in Sanskrit; then explaining the position of ṣ 1 ṟ, ṣ 1 ṟ, ṣ ṟ and ṣ ṟ which are peculiar to Tamil.

VI.

The one objection to this kind of explanation is that it explains the Sanskrit alphabet rather than the Tamil alphabet. Probably it is implied in this kind of explanation that the Tamil alphabet i.e. arrangement including the Tamil script were borrowed from Sanskrit and to this
alphabet system, sounds and scripts peculiar to Tamil were added at the end except in the case of \( \text{e} \) and \( \text{i} \) which naturally preceded their respective long vowels. In the absence of this implied statement being clarified the whole explanation is so confusing. Venkatarajulu Peddiar also brings, like Naccimarkkinyar, an argument based on importance and non importance.

VII.

This conception of \( \text{inam} \) 'class' as already pointed out is one of the aspects of the ancient study of phonology. Pavananti states that in the alphabetical system the sounds beginning from \( \text{a} \) to \( \text{n} \) form by twos to fourteen classes, if we remove \( \text{ai} \) and \( \text{au} \) which form into two different classes respectively with \( \text{i} \) and \( \text{u} \). This implies that, what are called semi vowels form also thus into three classes viz. (1) \( \text{y} \) and \( \text{r} \) (2) \( \text{v} \) and \( \text{l} \) and (3) \( \text{l} \) and \( \text{l} \). The absurdity of this arrangements is pointed out by Sivanarammunivar. In the interpretation of the later day commentators of Nannul all the six semi vowels are taken to form only one class instead of three.

Pavananti himself explain the implication of
the word **inam**. It is based on similarity of one or more of
the following, namely, (1) the place of articulation, (2) the
method or way of articulation (3) their quantity, (4) their
meaning and (5) their shape. Śvayiläinātar, the earliest of
the commentators explains the conception of class which
reference to the sounds of the alphabet, as elucidated in the
following tabulation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sounds Based on the forming similarity of a class of the place of articulation.</th>
<th>Method of Articulation</th>
<th>Similarity of Shape</th>
<th>Similarity of Quantity</th>
<th>Examples of Similarity of Meaning</th>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Maccinarkkaniyar seems to follow this school of thought except when the latter group the six semi-vowels into three different classes.
VIII.

In giving this explanation for the order of the sounds, in the alphabet one important thing may be mentioned. \( \text{ṭ} \) is first stated to be at the beginning of the alphabet in the very first sutra and therefore the author could have restricted to the statement that thirty sounds are those beginning with \( \text{ṭ} \). \( \text{ṭ} \) is stated as the end in the same sutra. This is unnecessary for understanding the thirty sounds. But \( \text{ṭ} \) is the characteristic sound of Tamil. Therefore it is pointed out that its mention make it clear that what the author is speaking is not the Sanskrit alphabet but Tamil. Tolkāppiyar mentions \( \text{ṭ} \) as the last sound in the Tamil alphabet. This, sufficiently explains that \( \text{ṭ} \) is placed at the end. But there is another explanation in the edition of Naccinārkkiṇiyar. "Because of its importance in occurring as masculine suffix it is mentioned. The importance is that man alone is capable of attaining salvation." The explanation is out of place here for one thing; for another no Hindu can agree to this proposition that man alone can reach salvation. Naccinārkkiṇiyar is a Hindu and therefore he cannot have written this statement. It is also found in Ilampūranar's commentary and because Naccinārkkiṇiyar is in
the habit of transcribing Ilampūranar's commentary wherever he
does not differ from him, a copyist or student familiar with
both the commentaries perhaps after learning both the comment-
taries by heart made the mistake of introducing this statement
of Ilampūranar commentary into Naccinārkkiṇīyar's work. It
is only the digambara jains that accept the view. It is not
so very clear that Ilampūranar was a digambara jain.

IX.

The question next to be solved is why the
group of plosives are mentioned first, why the nasals mentioned
second and why the semi vowel is mentioned last. It is a
convention amongst these commentators to explain the order
in which things are mentioned. Naccinārkkiṇīyar reasons out
of his imagination. He takes the initial sound as his basis
for argument. Because four plosives \( \sqrt{k} \), \( \sqrt{c} \), \( \sqrt{t} \) and \( \sqrt{p} \) occur initially, the plosives are placed first;
\( \sqrt{n} \), \( \sqrt{n} \) and \( \sqrt{m} \) that is three occur as initial
among nasals, therefore they are mentioned next. From amongst
the semi vowels only two viz \( \sqrt{y} \) and \( \sqrt{v} \) occur as
initials. And, that is, why they are mentioned third. Ilam-
pūranar gives the same explanation with reference to the
plosives and nasals but not with reference to semi vowels. In addition it has to be pointed out that he does not specify which four, three and two occur as initial among the three groups respectively. He also adds that this order depends also on the frequency of the occurrence, of these initial sounds. Therefore in this case of the three groups of consonants it is the specification of the individual sounds that has to be taken as the contribution of Naccinarkkiniyar.
THE ALPHABETICAL ARRANGEMENT

REFERENCE.

1. I B. p. 18
2. IX pp. 24 and 25
3. VI ff. 82
4. VII p. 22 (ff. 12)
5. VI ff. 79
6. IX p. 25
7. III p. 34
9. I C. p. 8
10. IX. p. 24
11. VI. p. 37.
12. VI. ff. 71
13. VI A. p. 25
15. I A. p. 7
16. I B. p. 31
17. I A. p. 12