CHAPTER IV

LANGUAGE AS AN ISSUE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF LANGUAGE PROMOTION ASSOCIATIONS

Invocation of past as an intellectual activity marked the beginning of new historical consciousness in colonial Tamil Nadu. It created a sense of passion for their language, culture, history and heritage among the intellectuals, heralding an era of associational activities.¹

The establishment of academies, schools and institutions for the development of Tamil was not a new phenomenon. Since ancient times, Tamil received official status and royal patronage. During the medieval period, with the fall of Tamil kingdoms, it lost its political position and fell into oblivion.² Since then, it was patronized and promoted by religious mutts, mercantile and landed gentry. Thanks to the modern technology, in nineteenth century Tamil once again emerged out from her fallen status to a place of worthy praise and practice. Though it did not regain its royal status, nevertheless it enjoyed popular appreciation and privilege.³

In this chapter, I will discuss the developmental activities centred around the language and the politics of institutionalising Tamil. Establishment of chairs, introduction of Tamil into university curriculum, instituting Lexicon committee and the demand for Tamil University will be analysed in its broader perspective. Proliferation of academies and their activities also will be delineated particularly with reference to Madurai Tamil Sangam and Tanjai Karanthai Tamil Sangam. An attempt will also be made to throw some light upon Tamil publication activities.

Language politics or politics of language was critical to the understanding of colonial Tamil Nadu. Language had remained throughout as one of the primary

² K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar, Delhi, 1975, p. 115.
³ Ci. Pa. Balasubramaniyan, Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru (History of Tamil Literature), Madras, 1959, pp. 6-7.
factors in shaping and moulding Tamil ethnic-cultural identity.\(^4\) It was integral to the Tamil way of life and its history of politics. Though the political use of language began much later in the modern period, stentorian claims were made by early Tamil bards and minstrels on the basis of cultural self-sufficiency. Iyam Narithanar, the author of *Puraporul Venpamalai* (fifth or sixth century A.D.) audaciously declared that ‘Tamil was the community which came into existence with sword even much before the earth reached its present form and shape.’\(^5\) Subsequently, in the commentary to the Iraiyanar *Agapporul* (in the late seventh century A.D.), the author had advanced the most bombastic proposition which was later known as ‘Theory of Lemuria’ about the ancient abode of the Tamils. According to this theory, a huge land mass existed in the pre-historic times connecting Australia in the east to Africa in the West. The land extended about 7000 kilometres south from present Kanyakumari, where the early Tamils were said to have flourished with a civilization of great splendour. From this land the putative Pandyas alluded to have established Tamil academies to advance the cause of their mother tongue—Tamil.\(^6\)

This kind of flamboyant assertions and rhetorical claims were not rare phenomena in Tamil literary tradition. In fact, such allusions figured as recurrent themes in many of the Tamil literary treatises. The Saiva-Vaishnavaite literary canons and five major and minor epics\(^7\) also continued to subscribe to such allusions with candour and alacrity, thus making the theory an integral part of Tamil history.\(^8\) The concept of Sangam tradition played a significant role in generating Tamil language consciousness in the modern period. The rediscovery of ancient Tamil classics and their mass production for public use further intensified the process of identity formation on the basis of language. Nambi Arooran described the spurt in literary activities in the late nineteenth century as the result of intellectual awakening which led to the outbreak of Tamil renaissance in the following century.\(^9\)

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The establishment of Nangam Tamil Sangam (Fourth Tamil Academy) in 1901 at Madurai was considered a crucial event in retrieving the fallen status of Tamil marking an era of intense literary activism. Subsequently, many more literary clubs, associations, reading rooms, libraries, and societies were founded throughout the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu. These associations largely functioned as facilitating agencies in creating access to Tamil knowledge and learning at a cheaper or free of cost. These associations showed a tangible result in their endeavour in a short span of time. They were solely run by voluntary efforts and local financial support. The traditional elites took the lead in setting up Tamil associations at their own risk with meager resources and slowly gained local support and acceptance, while the modern intellectuals showed no interest and kept largely aloof from such linguistic activities. However, when the movement became popular in the 1930s they extended their support and co-operation. Congress leaders and professional elites emphasized the need for educational instruction through mother tongue and began to work for translating many of the English works into Tamil.

The idea of setting up language associations was not purely the result of European influence but the mode of their functioning reflected a pattern of evangelical organizations. The Tamil associations initially invested their efforts in preparing pamphlets, running journals, organizing public discourses on literary topics, celebrating Tamil festivals and conducting classes and exams. Many Saiva Siddhanta Samajams openly urged the members to imbibe the spirit of Christian missionary zeal in promoting the cause of Tamil and Saivism. Maraimalai Adigal, the well-known Saiva, pure Tamil protagonist presiding over the third South Arcot District Conference on Saiva Siddhanta in Kadaloor said, “We are responsible for the fallen status of our language, culture, history and religion. We failed in our mission to protect our religion and safeguard our heritage as handed down to us by our beloved ancestors.... We need to rise to the occasion to launch a crusade against all cascading influences and diabolic forces to save our culture from imminent destruction. Otherwise our heritage will soon be thrown overboard... if we don’t emulate the

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Christian missionary zeal in protecting our religion and culture, otherwise it will be corrupted by outlandish and exotic influences.”¹¹ [emphasis mine].

Similarly, Na. Mu. Venkatasamy Nattar (1877-1947) also emphasized the urgency to follow the Christian missionaries' example in advancing the cause of Tamil and Saiva religion on the tenth anniversary of Karanthai Tamil Sangam held between 12th-14th June in 1924.¹² Arumuga Navalar (1820-1872) a well-known Saiva Tamil scholar was instrumental in adopting the missionary approach in promoting Saivism and Tamil. Navalar, the product of Jaffna Methodist School had a hand in the translation of Bible with Rev. Percival and realised the need to reach out to the local masses in generating consciousness about their rich heritage of language, culture and religious tradition. He set up a number of schools in Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu to educate the masses about their religion and language. He also prepared a number of texts in fine prose style explaining the greatness of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy and Tamil literary tradition. His style was simple, conversational, homely and incisive to the point.¹³

Navalar started Saiva Meygnana Prakasa Sabai (Society for the Enlightenment of Saiva Siddhanta) in 1853 at Chidambaram, wherein the singing of Devaram and reciting of Tiruvvasagam were taught (these two works constituted the core of Saiva canonical literature). He also revived the tradition of chanting hymns from Tamil Vedas (Saiva canonical literature) in the temples.¹⁴ Thus the organized efforts to disseminate Tamil knowledge and learning grew by leaps and bounds and reached its high water mark in 1929 with the setting up of Annamalai University for the Tamil speaking areas of the Madras Presidency.

Initial Efforts

Access to education had remained throughout as a matter of privilege in the history of Tamil Nadu until modern times. It was considered as a prerogative of the upper strata of the society. Traditionally Brahmins had infallible hold on Sanskrit

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¹⁴ S. Sivapasasundaram, Arumuga Navalar, Jaffna, 1950, pp. 53-54.
learning and showed considerable mastery on Tamil as well. The caste Hindus like Saiva Vellala, Mudalis and Chetis had a modicum of access to Sanskrit learning particularly with reference to Agamic principles, but had a relative edge over them in the art of Tamil learning. Generally the large section of the society had to be contented with a meager skill of reading and writing. Since literary learning largely remained confined to the circles of microscopic minority, there did not occur any need for massive production of texts for circulation. However, things began to change slowly with the coming of European missionaries in the late nineteenth century for evangelical activities. The missionaries realized the need for producing gospel literature for preaching purpose, which prompted them to set up printing presses. They also undertook the task of educating their newly converted souls who were mainly drawn from the lower rung of the society, thereby exposing them to new social possibilities.

The first band of missionaries reached the Malabar coast in the beginning of the second half of the sixteenth century from the Iberian Peninsula. Initially, they established their headquarters in the vicinity of Cochin and began their missionary activities in the local surroundings. They had to face severe opposition and failed to make any progress in their endeavour. On the contrary, they found the fishermen community of the pearl coast of southern Tamil Nadu was quite open to the gospel and willing to take their religious instruction. The missionaries realized the need for the mastery over local tongue to continue their pastoral work. Fr. Henri Henriques (1520-1600) who came to Tuticorin in 1555 showed a remarkable progress in grasping the local customs, manners, traditions and idiom. He prepared a small prayer booklet entitled *The Doctrines of Christian Faith* which was eventually translated into local idiom, what they called *Malabarica Lingua* (Tamil), entitled as *Tambiram Vanakkam*. Interestingly, the *Tambiram Vanakkam* was printed in 1576 at Lisbon in Roman characters, thereby Tamil became the first South Asian language to enter into the domain of print world. However, *Tambiran Vanakkam* did not meet the local

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19 Sambandan, *Achchum Patippum*, p. 36.
requirements as it was printed in Roman characters. Fr. Jouveau Gonsalvez made an attempt to prepare Tambiram Vanakkam in a press at Quilon with Tamil characters. He could not succeed in his effort, as he was not able to prepare a uniform type setting for all Tamil characters. Similar attempts were made in Europe at many places but could not make reasonable success until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

C. J. Beschi of Society of Jesus made considerable progress in preparing a pliable typesetting for Tamil characters. Constantinus Joseph Beschi (1680-1746) came to India in 1706 for pastoral work, systematically learned Tamil from Subramaniya Kavirayar a well-known local pundit. He showed a high degree of proficiency both in poetic and in spoken Tamil and produced a number of works of original quality.

Beschi's scintillating contribution to the growth of modern Tamil may be delineated in three respects. Beschi took up Tamil nedunkannakku (alphabets) for a thorough paleographic analysis wherein he highlighted its nature or scientific arrangement, time value and sound perfection. Nevertheless, he also suggested some reformation measures with regard to the structure of alphabets so as to accommodate them for a proper typesetting. He also posited the inclusion of dots to differentiate consonants from sonants. All his findings and recommendations concerning the modernization of Tamil prose and grammar, brought out in a manual entitled as Tonnool Vilakkam, were published in print by Madras Education Society in 1840.

Beschi was the first scholar to study the diglossia situation in Tamil, the Kodun-Tamil (colloquial language) and Sen-Tamil (Refined Tamil). He had undertaken the study of Tamil orthography and published a work in Latin called A Grammar of the High Dialect of Tamil Language Termed Shen Tamil, to which is added an introduction to Tamil poetry. Later in 1822 Benjamin Guy Babington translated it into English for the benefit of Madras civil servants.

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20 Ibid., p. 38.
23 See Benjamin Babington, A Grammar of the High Dialect of Tamil Language Termed Shen Tamil, Madras, 1822, pp. xi-xix.
Beschi was responsible for introducing lexical preparation on scientific lines. His *Sathur Agarathi* (Quadruple Dictionary) was traditional in content but modern in style. *Sathur Agarathi* consisted of four divisions dealing with *Peyar* (meaning of the word) *Porul* (synonyms) *Tokai* (technical terms) and *Todai* (alliterative phrases). It was prepared on the basis of alphabetization, giving more importance to reference than mnemonic purpose.²⁴ Beschi made an attempt to improve the prose style of Tamil by introducing simple sentence pattern. *Vedavilakkm, Veditar Olukkan* and *Paramarthagurukathai* were considered to belong to this literary genre.

Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (1682-1719) of German Lutheran mission came to India on a similar purpose and rendered a yeoman service in transforming Tamil into a pliable medium for modern communication and publication.²⁵ Unlike other missionary scholars Ziegenbalg paid utmost empathy to Tamil knowledge system and Tamil literary corpus. He showed keen interest in understanding the cultural differences of various caste groups and their linguistic variations. Ziegenbalg was the first scholar to prepare a catalogue of Tamil literary works with brief sketches about each one of them. His *Bibliotheca Malabarica* (1708) contained a description of Tamil books in his possession. In the third part of his book he gave a relatively complete account of Tamil literature describing its content, meter and the genre it belonged to. He wrote extensively in German and Latin to explicate and interpret the high standard of Tamil cultural life and their moral values to European audience.

Ziegenbalg established a full-fledged printing press in Tranquebar (a place situated at the estuary of Kaveri) and a small paper mill at the Poriyar in the vicinity.²⁶ He also inaugurated the process of translating Bible from its original source by giving special importance to internal cohesion. However, the task of translating Bible went on for about a century. Almost all the denominational churches that came to South India played an equal part in it.²⁷ J. P. Fobricious, C. T. Rhenius, J. S. M. Hooper, P. R. Hunter, Percival and Hosington and a host of others worked earnestly to bring out Bible in the standard Tamil. The process of translational activities obviously brought

²⁵ See for biographical information *It Began at Tranquebar* by Arno Lehman, Madras, 1971.
²⁶ Ibid., pp. 87-88.
²⁷ See for further information Sarojini Packiamuthu, *Viviliyamum Tamilum* (Bible and Tamil), Madras, 1990.
about western influence in sentence structure, word formation, text pattern and transformed Tamil into an effective idiom for prose writing.28

As has been argued, the advent of missionaries in the late seventeenth century was by itself a significant event in the history of Tamil Nadu. Though it did not bring any immediate perceptible change in the socio-cultural milieu, they made a slow and steady progress in their mission by establishing churches in the coastlines. At the turn of the eighteenth century they became a force to reckon with. The eighteenth century marked the beginning of changes in the traditional mode of intellectual life. The Protestant missionaries who came during this period concentrated on winning souls from all strata of society. Having experienced the important role played by the press in the reformation they put printing technology into effective use.29 It was true that printing technology came much earlier to Tamil Nadu and in a way it was an epoch making event. Nevertheless, it didn’t help in bringing immediate social transformation partly owing to poor literacy and partly because the technology was used for restricted purposes by missionaries and East India Company. Similarly the translation of Bible was also taken up by Lutheran Missionaries with a great zeal to repeat the German experience in Tamil Nadu. By this time Tamil was getting exposed to Christianity in a quite active manner and some of the Western scholars both from Protestant and Catholic missions took an abiding interest in the language, literature and culture and translated many Tamil texts into European idioms for further analysis.30 The missionary religious activities by this time got integrated with Tamil literary legacy. Fr. Beschi and Rev. Ziegenbalg rendered a commendable service in modernizing Tamil. The missionary initiative and colonial intrusion undoubtedly created a new social awareness, cultural aspirations and identity consciousness, which paved the way for Tamil literary renaissance and social upheaval in the following century.31


29 Achchum Patippum, pp. 83-86.


Organizational Efforts in the Nineteenth Century

Missionaries and East India Company servants almost played an identical role in restructuring Indian society along Western lines at least in the initial stages. They did not see a unity of purpose in their endeavours as both came to India with different notions of interest. Nevertheless, they operated in tandem at times as dictated by circumstances. The company tried its level best to distance itself from identifying with the missionary agenda.\(^{32}\)

At the turn of the nineteenth century the East India Company virtually established its sway almost in all Tamil speaking areas of Madras presidency after eliminating local and European powers from the scene. The Company showed keen interest in mapping, cataloguing and decoding local customs, manners and habits for administrative purposes.\(^{33}\) Based on the Bengal experience the Company covenanted servants were engaged in preparing manuals, monographs and reports regarding local language, culture and history. Colin Mackenzie, N. E. Kindersley and F. W. Ellis were some of the well-known Company servants who made a spectacular initiative in this direction.\(^{34}\)

Colin Mackenzie (1753-1821) toured throughout the southern part of India and collected palm leaf manuscripts from various Indian languages, relics, copper plates and other relevant matters. His collections were purchased by the Company subsequently for about a thousand pounds and housed in Government Oriental Manuscript Library. It was neatly catalogued by Rev. Taylor into seven volumes.\(^{35}\) N. E. Kindersley (1757-1831) mainly concentrated on the translation of Tamil gnomic literature such as from Avvaiyar, Veeraparakirama Pandiyar and Kumaraguruparar.\(^{36}\) F. W. Ellis (1763-1838) wrote a seminal commentary to Tirukkural and translated many epigrams of Avvaiyar. Ellis was also instrumental in setting up a special department in Fort St. George to study Tamil literary works. The East India Company

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took an initiative to found a college for Madras civil servants along the lines of Fort William College, Calcutta. The college began to function since 1812 and took an active part in modernizing Tamil for public use. In the same year F. W. Ellis launched the Madras Educational Society with Company aid to study and publish Tamil literary works.

The Society functioned almost like the Asiatic Society of Bengal, concentrating on compiling, editing and printing local Hindu religious texts. Unlike the church missions the Madras Education Society obtained the services of local pundits who worked under the supervision of civil servants in translating and preparing texts. Madras Education Society was not only engaged in translating Tamil works but also translated many works to Tamil. Chidamparam Pandarathar translated *Manusmriti* into Tamil based on the work of William Jones. Similarly many Sanskrit *smritis* and sacred texts were translated into Tamil. Tandavaraya Mudaliyar, T. Kalyanasundara Iyer and Arangasamy Iyengar translated *Gita* and *Gita Govinda* into prose Tamil. The task of translating many Sanskrit works was undertaken with a view to creating a unity of opinion in interpreting legal texts for administrative purpose throughout the company administered areas.

Madras Education Society functioned as a facilitating agency in producing basic grammar and elementary texts for Madras civil servants. The Society’s chief translator Tandavaraya Mudaliyar rendered a valuable service by translating a host of vernacular works. *Kadamanjari* (collection of stories), *Vetri Verkai* (A didactic work), *Mudurai* (a popular ethical epigram) and *Uлага Needi* (moral codes of a layman) were rendered into English by Tandavaraya Mudaliyar. He also translated English novels and dramas into Tamil such as *Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest* and *The Paradise Lost*. Besides this, the Society sent its employees to various parts of the province to collect palm leaf manuscripts and cull information from various sources. Muthusamy Mudaliyar managed to collect C. J. Beschi’s manuscripts from various church headquarters and brought out a detailed biography. He also published *Tonnool Vilakkam* (a work on Tamil grammar) in 1846. Kottaeyur Sivakolundu

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40 Ibid., p. 52.
41 Ibid., p. 54.
Desikar, Muthu Nainappa Mudaliyar, Vedagiri Mudaliyar and Ramanuja Kavirayar collected a corpus of manuscripts and published many Tamil literary works from them. However, these pioneering efforts were not up to the standard, which were once again to be collated and corroborated with other sources by eminent scholars like Damodaram Pillai and U. V. S. Swaminatha Iyer, before bringing them into print.

Apart from Madras Education Society, missionary organizations like SPCK (Society for Propagation of Christian Knowledge), Jaffna Methodist Mission and Madras Religious Society were also involved in publishing various Tamil literary and modern prose works. The rise in demand for textbooks as a result of expanded educational activities created a conducive environment for book publishing. The Madras School Book Society started in 1850, mainly concentrated in preparing textbooks for school students particularly in native mediums. Many prominent scholars were invited to write books for school children in vernacular idiom. Rev. R. Caldwell wrote a book on the Barathakandathin Puradanam (Antiquity of Indian Continent). G. U. Pope authored a book on the Ingilanthin Charithiram (History of England). Henry Morris wrote a book on the Ulaga Charithiram (History of World). Muthukrishna Pillai wrote a book on Indu Desa Charithiram (History of Hindu Nation). Besides this the Society constituted a special committee to verify textbooks prescribed for the schools. The Society also undertook the task of translating English novels and dramas that were part of the school curriculum. In course of time the culture of textbook publishing became a lucrative business as it yielded a rich profit to the publishers.

It may be argued that throughout the nineteenth century, Tamil was patronized and promoted by missionary societies and Company authorities. It grew with governmental support and was treated as one of the mediums for local administrative purpose. No considerable associational initiative was forthcoming from the indigenous intellectual quarters to enhance the interest of Tamil. Nevertheless, isolated attempts were made sporadically by individual scholars whose contribution had an enduring influence in stimulating local initiative for further research. Arumuga

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42 A. M. Paramasivanantham, Pattonpatam Nurrantil Tamil Urainatai (Tamil Prose in nineteenth Century), Madras, 1966, pp. 3-4.
43 For further details see History of Indian Journalism, Publications Division, Government of India, 1955.
Navalar, Damodaram Pillai, Vedagiri Mudaliyar had brought back the forgotten literary corpus for public use through their pioneering efforts. Intellectual consciousness to safeguard indigenous culture, literary heritage set to have begun with a proclivity to promote mother tongue education what was then called as vernacular education. The spirit of introspection and the desire to retrieve the cultural glory of mother country became an issue of importance only in the late nineteenth century. The passion of the tongue initially started with a desire to promote mother tongue education, which grew over the period into an issue of 'language pre-eminence'.

G. Subramanya Iyer (1851-1921), the putative founder of the Hindu (1878) and Swadesamitrarn, the first Tamil daily, took the initiative in creating awareness about the education in mother tongue. He started an agency called The Society for the Dissemination of Useful Knowledge in 1883 to achieve his goal. The main objective of the organization was to create an access to all sorts of scientific knowledge in the medium of the people. The Society opened its branches in various places throughout the presidency. It conducted debates, discourses, and lectures with a view to disseminate latest scientific knowledge to ordinary people. Pamphlets, tracts and booklets were prepared about various basic scientific issues in spoken language and were distributed to rural people.

The Society also launched a journal called Vivekachindamani in 1892 to achieve the basic objective of the Society. C. V. Swaminatha Iyer (1860-1930), the chief editor of this journal made a notable contribution in writing scientific issues in simple language for the benefit of rural masses. Vivekachidamani was the first Tamil journal to devote itself for matters concerning science and technology. The journal had created a column for women and students. Vivekachidamani published articles concerning day-to-day scientific events in an interrogative style like 'why do seasons change?', 'how does rain come?', 'why does eclipse occur?', 'where did moon get its light?', and 'what causes common cold?'. These articles generated a special interest among the ordinary non-English educated public. Since 1898 it also introduced a...

46 See for biographical details Gurumalai Sundaram Pillai, G. Subramaniya Iyer Charithiram, Gurumalai Sundaram Pillai, 1907, Madras.
47 Vivekachindamani, vol. IV, January 1896, pp. 4-6.
48 For biographical details refer Hindu Nesan Anubandam (Annual Issue), 1936, Madras.
49 Vivekachindamani, vol. XXIV, April 1916, pp. 4-6
column for public queries germane to scientific issues. Society for the Dissemination of Useful Knowledge was also involved in creating political awareness among the masses. G. Subramanya Iyer wrote a simple pamphlet *Congress-in-Ilachiyangal* about the aims and objectives of Congress in Tamil and distributed it free of cost. Later, he wrote *Congress Vina-Vidai* (Congress: Question and Answer), a booklet published by the Society. The Society for the Dissemination of Useful Knowledge functioned in many of the rural areas as an office for Congress activities. The Society lost its vigour and momentum during the First World War and met with a slow death.

During the period many pioneering attempts were made to establish associations of recommendatory nature to promote the use of Tamil in public life. Thennattu Tamil Sangam was undoubtedly the result of such an endeavour. The Thennattu Tamil Sangam of Madras was founded in May 1890. Justice Sadasiva Iyer, Somasundara Chettiyar (owner of a book house), Sanda Maarutham, Somasundara Naicker (a well-known Saiva protagonist), N. Kandasamy Pillai (a school teacher), T. Saravanamuthu Pillai (a deputy librarian of Presidency College), S. Ramasamy Pillai (Madras School Textbook Society) and M. S. Rangachari (of Public Register Office) set to have involved in this effort. It was also reported that they had a formal meeting in the Cosmopolitan Club, Egmore, Madras, to frame the basic tenets, principles and objectives of the Sangam. They also decided to launch a journal in Tamil to realize their objectives. But the Sangam failed to function after its initial inception. Subsequently, Justice Sadhasiva Iyer one of the founding members of the Thennattu Sangam took an initiative to start Arya Dravida Bhasa Sangam with a view to promote the interests of Sanskrit and Tamil as well. He believed that in British Raj, neither Tamil nor Sanskrit alone could flourish without the aid of each other. Tamil and Sanskrit, as languages of the people and the repository of Indian heritage can withstand the overarching influence of English. However, he failed to succeed in his

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52 Ibid., p. 27.
55 Ibid.
attempt on account of ideological differences among the founder members. In 1899, he made another attempt to establish Dravida Bhasha Sangam in Madras, which also did not survive for long.56

Similar attempts were made throughout the presidency in the late nineteenth century. None of them could succeed as they failed to evoke adequate intellectual response. In the meantime Jaffna Tamil Sangam started functioning since 1883, which devoted its energy in collecting manuscripts and enhancing library activities. Its scope and activities were highly limited and did not make any impact outside Jaffna.57 It may be also noted that during this period the new Saiva movement came up with their own Saiva Siddhanta Samajams to promote the cause of Saivism and Tamil. Saiva Siddhanta Samajam (1883), Palayamkottai Saiva Samajam (1886), Tiruchirapalli Saiva Siddhanta Sabai (1891) paid some interest in promoting the cause of Tamil.58 However, their focus was mainly to do with the restoration of Saiva Tamil liturgical works. Many religious mutts like Tirupannanthal, Dharmapuram, and Tiruvavadurai paid attention only in printing and publishing religious literature. In fact no sincere intellectual effort was made particularly in the nineteenth century to start an organization for the promotion of Tamil linguistic tradition, language and culture. Unlike Bengal, Tamil Nadu did not see great social changes in this period and whatever the events that took place in this period was preparatory in nature and failed to evoke both popular and intellectual response.59 Conversely, since the beginning of the twentieth century, things began to change radically owing to social and political awakening heralding an era of renaissance.

Resurgence of Cultural Consciousness and Rediscovery of Tamil Literary Works

It may be argued that the emergence of Tamil identity consciousness and the intense pride over cultural heritage was largely the result of the publication of Tamil classical works. It was considered as a watershed development in the intellectual history of Tamils as it offered them language fixity, historical authenticity and a

56 A. Chidambaranar, Tamil Sangankalin Varalaru (History of Tamil Academies), Tirunelvelly, 1948, p. 46.
57 P. S. Mani, Karl Marxin Ilakiya Itayam, (Literary Heart of Karl Marx), 1986, Madras, pp. 66-74.
58 Siddhanta Pon Malar (Golden Jubilee Souvenir), Tutukudi, 1933, pp. vi-x.
cultural possibility. Tamil intellectual and cultural status was mainly justified by the fact that they had been the creators of a great cultural system and rich literary tradition. Instances of ideas, events and achievements were cited from Tamil literature as reliable evidence to their lofty cultural claims and assertions. The publication of Tamil classics had not only altered the mental perception of Tamil intellectuals but also substantially influenced the European understanding. The retrieval of Tamil literary works has opened up new possibilities for the reconstruction of the history of Tamil civilization in the light of new evidences. Many European scholars revised their opinions about the cultural antiquities and the intellectual contributions of Tamils. Max Muller, the most acclaimed sanskritologist of nineteenth century, went on record that the study of Tamil literature would certainly yield rich dividends in the construction of Indian philosophy. He remarked, “In South of India, there exists a philosophical literature which, though it may show clear traces of Sanskrit influence, contains also original indigenous elements of great beauty and of great importance for historical purposes. Unfortunately few scholars only have taken up, as yet, the study of the Dravidian languages and literature, but young students who complain that there is nothing left to do in Sanskrit literature, would, I believe, find their labours amply rewarded in that field.”

Coincidental to the development was that many Tamil scholars began to claim cultural supremacy over Brahmins even in matters of religion. It was an unique event in the history of modern India where for the first time the Brahmin ideology was challenged in the domain of religion itself. However, this issue was not touched by many historians owing to inexplicable reasons. P. Sundaram Pillai, the father of modern Tamil historiography assiduously advanced the theory that the Saiva Siddhanta was the original religion of the Dravidians. He wrote as early as 1895, “there was a period, lost altogether in hoary antiquity, when the native Dravidian religion... was alone in vogue. The first foreign influence brought to bear upon the primitive form of worship was that of the Vedic religion.” Interestingly enough, many European scholars also contributed considerably to the enhancement of such an argument. Rev. Hoisington, a well-known American missionary of Batticola observed

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in his introduction to the translation of Sivagnanabotam into English, Saiva Siddhanta philosophy was the product of Tamilian wisdom.\textsuperscript{63} Julian Vinson, a well-known French Tamilologist, commented that Saiva Siddhanta philosophy was basically non-Aryan in character and quite indigenous to the Dravidian culture.\textsuperscript{64}

Finally, G. U. Pope was responsible for making this theory popular through his remarks. He categorically declared, “Saiva Siddhanta philosophy was the choicest product of Dravida intellect,” ... and the “brainchild of Tamil wisdom.”\textsuperscript{65} He analysed the basic features of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy and remarked, “most elaborate, influential, and undoubtedly, the most intrinsically valuable of all religions in India.”\textsuperscript{66} He noted that Saivisim was the old pre-historic religion of South India and that it was essentially existing from pre-Aryan times and in course of time northern—Vedic, Brahminical—influences were introduced over the native Dravidian religion of Saivisim and eventually the Tamils adopted to a great extent the Vedic forms of worship.\textsuperscript{67}

The idea of religious conflict ostensibly was scriptural and philosophical. The Saiva Siddhantins believed in the almighty power of Siva and subscribed to the Agamic principles.\textsuperscript{68} Whereas the Smartha Brahmins observed Vedic rituals and believed in Monism or Advaidam. Both Vedic and Agamic literature were in archaic Sanskrit and a part of it was available as derivative discourses in Tamil. Central to the issue was the question of identity where the Saiva Siddhanta protagonists argued that their religion was the original product of Tamil land and they were the original inhabitants of this land and also held the view that the Smarta Brahmins were Aryan in race who had come to Tamil land to impose their superstitious beliefs upon Dravidians.\textsuperscript{69} It was an effort on the part of the Saiva Siddhantins to challenge their monopoly of Brahmins and lay claim over temple related ritual authority. Justice Party introduced a series of legislation in the 1920s while it was in power to open up

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    \item \textsuperscript{63} H. R. Hoisington, Sivagnana Potham, Dharmapuram, 1979 (first published in 1870), p. 7.
    \item \textsuperscript{64} “An European Orientalist on the Agamanta”, in Siddhanta Dipika, vol. X, no. 12, June 1910, pp. 473-78.
    \item \textsuperscript{65} G. U. Pope (tr.), The Tiruvasagam, Oxford, 1900, p. ix.
    \item \textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p. lxxiv.
    \item \textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p. lxxv.
    \item \textsuperscript{69} “The Fifth annual Report Submitted by the Standing Committee to the Saiva Siddhanta Conference at Tituchinopoly”, Siddhanta Dipika, vol. XI, nos. 3-4, 1911, pp. 113-18.
\end{itemize}
the temple administration to all caste Hindus.\textsuperscript{70} Saiva Siddhanta movement, originally a caste organization intending to share power with Brahmins in the portals of temple, used anti-Aryan sentiments to garner political support. It was neither able to challenge the ritual status of Sanskrit nor the priestly position of the Brahmins in matters of religion. Nevertheless, the movement succeeded to a large extent in consolidating its hold over various religious mutts throughout Tamil Nadu and became the champion of protecting ‘Tamil Hindu cultural practices’.\textsuperscript{71}

Coming back to the question of Tamil literary works that it occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century when both paper and palm leaves were in use.\textsuperscript{72} Why did first of all it have to be rediscovered? Who were responsible for this achievement? Under what circumstances did this happen? And why did this assume great historical significance? Were some of the key issues inextricably linked to the resurgence of Tamil cultural consciousness. The crux of the matter was the problem of continuity and connectivity. The development of Tamil literary tradition was not unilinear, irregular and riven with contradictions, ruptures and contentions. There was no continuity in its evolution and it did not follow any path of uniformity, unity and order. Its growth was uneven and filled with fissures, gaps and slippages.\textsuperscript{73} The ancient literary tradition of Sangam Age set to have flourished in the early Christian era under the patronage of Tamil triumvirate. The secular universal and bardic traditions of Tamil literature did not last long and have gone out of use with a fall of heterodox sects.\textsuperscript{74} The shift should have occurred in the literary tradition between sixth and eighth century AD giving way to the religious and individual hymnody of the Saiva and Vaishnava Bhakti movements. The transition was so drastic that it got reflected in all aspects. Everything changed-the language of old Tamil became middle Tamil, prosody themes, thought pattern, structure of sentiments, genre and motivation.\textsuperscript{75} The classical heritage was only preserved by exclusively erudite scholars. Whereas the commentators, poets and teachers seemed to have shown no interest at all. The long cherished classical works were almost thrown overboard

\textsuperscript{70} C. J. Baker, \textit{The Politics of South India}, 1920-1937, Delhi, 1976, pp. 53-54.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 133.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Tamil Literature}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{73} K. Sivathamby, \textit{Literary History}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{74} Mayilai Cine Venkatasamy, \textit{Samanamum Tamilum}, Madras, 1954, pp. 27-33.
\textsuperscript{75} Kamil Zvelebil, \textit{Tamil Literature}, p. 53.
unscrupulously. The pundits of the later periods were not even sure of the nomenclature of the bardic corpus, which became a forgotten pre-Bhakti culture.\textsuperscript{76} The sanskrit culture slowly but steadily established invincible supremacy over Tamil intellectual life. It had radically altered the cultural taste and literary outlook paving way for new types of aesthetic sensibility.\textsuperscript{77} In this period scholastic high-flown type of derivative, imitative, exclusively religious and Sanskrit-oriented works were produced with the support of Saiva or Vaishnava monasteries, which wielded a considerable clout and influence over the society. No work of secular or non-religious character was produced and all the works almost toed the line of the dominant ideology of the period. \textit{Kalladam} of Kalladanar (tenth century AD) was perhaps exceptional in this regard. It was written in a classical style of \textit{Agam} genre showing deliberate archaism.

Yet another factor which needs to be considered in this context was the dominance of resurgent brahminical Hinduism which exercised a decisive power and authority in regulating intellectual activity.\textsuperscript{78} The Saiva and Vaishnava scholars of the medieval period ostensibly tabooed all secular literary texts as irreligious and unworthy of reading. All the Sangam works were proscribed and its circulation of copies were stopped. The ban was almost total as Brahmins and Saiva Vellalas had the key to the knowledge. Even having agnostic works as Jain and Buddhists in possession was considered as unethical and improper. Under the intellectual taboo, access to all literary texts of non-religious nature was denied and the great scholars were even unaware of the Sangam classics and had invested their time and energy in studying and rutting medieval religious texts.\textsuperscript{79} The access to secular literature was so scarce that after \textit{Sivagachintamani} (late tenth or early eleventh century) there was no trace of epic tradition ever since. Subsequently, Vaishnavaite literature was also tabooed to a certain extent as unworthy of reading. The ban that was imposed in the medieval period was almost in vogue till nineteenth century.

While commenting about the literary situation of the late nineteenth century Tamil Nadu, Charles Gover wrote in his introduction to \textit{The Folk Songs of Southern}

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    \item \textsuperscript{76} S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, \textit{History of Tamil Language and Literature}, Madras, 1988, pp. xxx-xxxi.
    \item \textsuperscript{78} K. Sivathamby, \textit{Literary History of Tamil}, pp. 43-44.
    \item \textsuperscript{79} A. M. Paramasivanatham, \textit{Pattonpatam Nurrantil Tamil Urainatai}, pp. 25-26.
\end{itemize}
India, 1871, that "It is almost impossible now to obtain a printed copy of any early Tamil book that has not been systematically corrupted and mutilated, to meet the views of those whose livelihood depends on the rejection by the public Dravidian literature and its acceptance of the Puranic legends." Further he went on to explain the state of ideological dominance in Tamil in the following words, "For a while the fight (between indigenous literary tradition and Aryan importations) was evenly maintained, but the foreign element progressed till almost the whole written literature of the country became Brahmanic. Indigenous poetry fell into undeserved contempt or, where that was not possible, was edited so unscrupulously that the original was hidden under a load of corruption." 

Finally, when the scholars of traditional type began to show interest in the ancient literature, they clubbed all the pre-Bhakti works into one 'lump' and designated them as Sangam corpus ignoring enormous differences in form, content, language, prosody theme, and motivation. Thus, reducing the literary products of fairly long period into one flat level group was undoubtedly a gross mismanagement or otherwise, what Kamil Zvelebil rightly observed as "triumph of ahistoricity". Given the historical context of the late nineteenth century Tamil Nadu, the act of editing and printing early classical works from the old palm leaf manuscripts was viewed as a radical departure heralding an era of intellectual activism. Printing as a social and intellectual activity radically altered the relationship between men of learning and the system of ideas. It not only enlarged the scope for intellectual enlightenment but also facilitated the percolation of new ideas into the social domain.

Publication of the classic works through print gave a new fixity, history and identity to Tamil. The task of printing old classics from its fragile manuscripts was by no means an ordinary enterprise, which required tremendous energy, intellect and investment. The manuscripts were ill protected against the ravages of time, climate, termite and natural situation, even tracing and collecting these manuscripts was a Herculean task. The problem of deciphering these manuscripts needless to say was a mind-boggling job. Written before some score of years in an illegible running hand

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81 Ibid., p. 6.
replete with copious errors without any punctuation mark, the verses overlapping each other, these manuscripts posed inexplicable troubles to the editor. As these *ettuchuvadis* (books of palm leaves) were copied from time to time by different scribes, the possibility of errors taking place could not be ruled out. The accuracy of the texts further could not be verified in the absence of original copy. Moreover, the editor had to encounter problems of missing verses, mis-spelling, slippages and interpolations in the manuscripts. Since there was ample scope for discrepancy, the editor had to refer and look for as many copies as possible to compare and collate and to avoid mistakes before final execution.\(^8^4\)

The publication of Tamil works from manuscripts albeit was undertaken much earlier by Madras Education Society and other missionary organizations, the movement got a new thrust with an involvement of indigenous scholars in the late nineteenth century. Many pioneering scholars like Arumuganavalar, Malavi Mahalinga Iyer and Ramasami Pillai brought out many basic grammatical works to the limelight. The process of retrieving Tamil works reached its high water mark with the coming of C. W. Damodaram Pillai and U. V. S Swaminatha Iyer who made a seminal contribution in this direction with final execution.

C. W. Damodaram Pillai of Jaffna (1832-1901) took up the task of editing, printing Tamil works as his personal commitment and rendered a valuable service to the cause of Tamil by publishing them.\(^8^5\) He brought out all his works after a careful corroborative analysis, which made all the difference from the earlier publications. Starting with the publication of *Needi Neri Vilakkam* in 1853 (a minor didactic work of sixteenth century AD) he went on to publish score of books in the ensuing four decades. He paid special interest in grammatical works as had been the tradition and brought out *Tolkappiam*, the source book of Tamil orthography. *Tolkappiyam* consisted of three sections namely *Eluttu* (letters) *Sol* (words) and *Porul* (subject matter) which had six commentaries written between tenth - fourteenth centuries AD by Kalladanar (tenth century AD), Senavaraiyar (thirteenth century AD), Nachinarkinniyar (thirteenth century AD), Deivasilayar (thirteenth century AD), Perasiriyar (fourteenth century AD), Illampooranar (fourteenth century AD).\(^8^6\)

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\(^{85}\) See for biographical details Ibid.

\(^{86}\) Narasimhan, *Uraiyasiriyargal*, Annamalai Nagar, 1975
Damodaram Pillai published the sections of Tolkappiam with various commentaries at different time intervals. Besides this, he was also instrumental in bringing other three grammatical works Veerasoliyam of twelfth century AD in 1881, Iraiyanar Agaporul of eighth century AD in 1883 and Illakkana Vilakkam of eighteenth century AD by Vaidhyanadha Desikar in 1899. It was almost incumbent on the publishers to give high priority for the publication of grammatical works as it would enrich the scope of the language.

Damodaram Pillai did not confine to the grammatical works but published other literary works as well. He took Kalithogai, one of the eight anthologies, which said to have been written in sixth century AD, for a thorough analysis and comparing with more than ten manuscript copies, published in 1887. He got into a critical situation while he was printing Chulamani, one of the five minor epics (tenth century AD). After completing the printing of three hundred pages he had to once again restart the whole process as he found much better manuscripts and brought it out as a fine edition in 1889. C. W. Damodaram Pillai stressed in his writing that Tamil must be treated as an independent classical language and was pliable for all public use.\(^{87}\)

He was one of the pioneering scholars to draw upon tempting analogies about the historical antiquity of Tamil on the basis of its literary heritage and cultural ‘self-sufficiency’, which became in course of time the central features of Dravidian ideology.

Following his footsteps U. V. Swaminatha Iyer made a sterling contribution to the reconstruction of Tamil literary history and his path breaking findings constituted the core of literary wealth. As a literary critic, editor, prose writer and a grammarian, he opened up new language possibilities by transforming Tamil into an apt medium for the expression of all thoughts and ideas. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer was endowed with a rare sense of intellect and remarkable grasp over Tamil literature, which came in handy to him in his editing and preparing old manuscripts for publication. He meticulously used his experience of traditional learning and teaching in modern environment to his advantage especially in preparing notes and paraphrase for all his edited works.

\(^{87}\) C. W. Damodaram Pillai, Veerasoliyam, Madras, 1881, pp. viii-xvii.
He always took care to furnish a prologue containing biographical information and basic details about the work, a glossary of obsolete and difficult terms and an index to other references cited in the commentary. He demonstrated the rare combination of intuition and perspiration in his pursuit of printing and publishing. Though he did not see any of the early classical works in its original form, somehow he was confident that it may be possible to obtain them from a number of manuscripts from various parts of Tamil Nadu, which made him to undertake tours in search of them. He also strongly believed that with the sufficient number of manuscripts copies, however mutilated and fragmentary, they may be a correct and full text could be produced through corroborative analysis. In his letter to the Directorate of Public Instruction, Madras, seeking financial assistance to his project, he gave a graphic account about the nature of his job and the way in which he was able to succeed in printing those texts. He also furnished details about the number of manuscripts that he used for editing each one of the works. He consulted as many as twenty manuscripts for editing Sivagachintamani (one of the five major epics). But he did the same job with four manuscripts in editing Ainkurunooru (one of the eight anthologies). He altogether edited and published around forty works including eight most valuable Sangam classics. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer did not show much interest in the politics of cultural nationalism. Nevertheless, he recognized the immortal qualities of Tamil and argued for the intense use of it for educational and administrative purposes. More than anyone else he made a valuable contribution to the restoration of Tamil from its fallen state through his enduring efforts and made it worthy of classical status.

Madurai Nangam Tamil Sangam

Passions of the tongue or the love for the language was an issue closely related to the emergence of cultural consciousness which is said to have made its political manifestations in the late nineteenth century. The constitution of geography, and the composition of demography of Madras presidency was an indispensable element in stimulating identity consciousness. Prior to the colonial rule, the Tamils as a cultural group never lived in a cosmopolitan (multi-linguistic) environment. This created a situation of cultural crisis in which, as a matter of fact, they had to assert their

89 Government of Madras, G.O. 600 (Educational), 6 September 1905.
linguistic pre-eminence and cultural uniqueness. Rediscovery of Tamil literature and
the resurgence of interest in Tamil literary activities provided the necessary impetus
for the establishment of language associations.

Language organization came to receive prominence at the dawn of the
twentieth century largely to meet rising intellectual needs and to accelerate the
process of Tamil renaissance. Language forums primarily functioned as facilitating
agencies in printing and publishing books and journals, imparting educational
instructions and conducting exams and other concerned activities. The Madurai
Tamil Sangam officially began to function on the 14th September 1901. The formal
consecration ceremony was performed between 33 ¾ Gatikas to 36 7/8 Gatikas with a
symbol of Capricorn and the star Chaitra on the Dhasami Sunday, Sravana month in
the Pillavai year of Salivagana 1823 corresponding to Tiruvalluvar year 1932 at
Sethupathi school main hall. The Sangam came to be designated as Nangam (fourth)
Tamil Sangam to signify the historical continuity of lost heritage. The idea of setting
up the Sangam for the promotion of language was not an uncommon phenomenon in
the Tamil cultural world. As it had been already explained many preliminary attempts
were made in this regard but the results were far from satisfactory. Pandithurai Devar
of Pallavanatham Jamin of Sethupathi lineage of Ramnad declared his intention after
serious consideration to set up a Tamil Sangam at Madurai in the Madras Presidency
Political Conference held between 21st May to 23rd May 1901. Significantly, the
conference was held at Madurai, where most of the prominent Tamil scholars were
present. Pandithurai was motivated by Tamil and Saiva intellectuals including Saint
Gnaniyar of Tirupadiripuliyur mutt to set up an organization for the promotion of
Tamil. Saint Gnaniyar of Tirupadiripuliyur mutt wielded a great deal of influence on
Sethupathi family, encouraged them to patronize art and culture.

The Madurai Nangam Tamil Sangam started functioning from the beginning
with a press, book depot, library, and preservatory for manuscripts with calligraphists
and with a full-fledged school for imparting educational instructions on classical
Tamil. The Sangam mainly thrived at the munificence of Pandithurai and Sethupathi

91 David Packiamuthu, *Printing and Publishing in Tamil, 1700-1900*, Proceedings of the Fifth Tamil
Conference, Madras, 1982, pp. 7c-21,7c-37.
family of Ramnad, Chettiyar community (a miniscule business caste group doing extremely well in business in Southeast Asia) and local kings and jamindars. At times, aid came as far as away from Raja of Darbanga and Baroda. In course of time the local elites also began to show keen interest in meeting the Sangam’s needs. The Sangam had drawn its by-laws, goals and aims prior to its inception and was established with a great vision and purpose.

The Sangam took special care to meet its objectives and published every year an evaluation report about its objectives. The Sangam primarily functioned as a society to promote and safeguard the interests of Tamil and Tamil language. It raised its voice time and again against the misuse of Tamil in the public sphere. Particularly it took special care to appraise the mistakes committed in the Tamil school textbooks prescribed by the Directorate of Public Instructions and duly got it rectified as well. The main objectives of the Sangam were:

- To establish a Tamil college to promote higher learning.
- To collect old manuscripts from various parts of the country.
- To publish all the manuscripts after carefully editing them.
- To translate English and Sanskrit works with a view to increase the inflow of foreign knowledge into Tamil.
- To run a journal to facilitate greater intellectual interaction.
- To conduct Tamil exams of high standard to improve the quality of learning.
- To conduct literary discourses in order to create a love for classical works.
- To promote higher research in Tamil studies to expand the scope of Tamil knowledge system.
- To extend support to scholars to produce relevant and new works for the benefit of Tamil language learning.

The Sangam charted its working plan for every year in advance and discharged its duties according to the set timetable. Apposite resolutions were periodically passed to meet new requirements. The formal authority of the Sangam

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95 Ilankumaran, Madurai Nangam Tamil Sanga Varalaru, p. 63.
was vested upon the Sethupathi family of Ramnad. The formal founder Pandithurai held the post of presidentship till his death in 1911. Followed by P. Subramanya Iyer, who acted as a president for the next two years, Bhaskara Raja Rajeswara Muthu Ramalinga Sethupathi took charge in 1913. He remained as president till his death in 1928. Thereafter, Arasar M. Dinakara Bahadur and Shanmugarasa Raja Rajeswara Naganatha Sethupathy held the position respectively until 1967. 98

The Sangam established a college for imparting instructions on classical Tamil within its premise in which students were admitted from all communities across the Tamil province. Narayan Iyengar rendered a valuable service as a principal in running the college for about three decades. Ramanuja Iyengar, Sivagnana Pillai, Appan Iyengar, Nallasivam Pillai, Sundaresa Iyer served as instructors for more than three decades. 99 The college imparted instructions on classical literature, poetry, grammar, rhetoric and exordium on semantics. Besides this, elements of arithmetics, logic and Sanskrit were taught as ancillary subjects. The Sangam offered a degree somewhat equivalent to Baccalaureate, to the successful candidates who completed the course. Many Tamil associations also established similar colleges for imparting instructions on classical Tamil. They also almost followed the syllabus of Madurai Tamil Sangam. The college remained as a premier institution for the instruction of Tamil until the establishment of the Department of Tamil Studies at Annamalai University in 1931. 100

Madurai Tamil Sangam made a special arrangement since 1905 to conduct higher-level examinations for private candidates and it opened its centers across the Tamil province from Trivandrum to Madras including one in Jaffna and Colombo. Candidates were admitted at a nominal fee to sit for the exams. 101 Syllabi for the exams were given in advance with the prescribed materials. Sentamil, the journal of Madurai Tamil Sangam, periodically carried relevant information for the students. Specimens of the questions and other tips for the exams were published. Certificates of merit were issued to those who have cleared the exams and special honours and awards were conferred upon meritorious candidates. 102

98 Ilankumaran, Madurai Nangam Tamil Sanga Varalaru, Appendix - 4.
99 M. Valarmathi, Tamil Vallal Pandithurai, pp. 52-53.
It was considered a matter of prestige and privilege to sit for the exams conducted by the Madurai Tamil Sangam. Erudite scholars like Na. Mu. Venkatasami Nattar, N. Devaneyan, Sangu Pulavar, Sivasubramanya Navalar, Ramanuja Iyengar and Harihara Iyer were well-known products of the Madurai Tamil Sangam who have cleared the exams with excellent records. Besides this, many university educated professional and legal luminaries also showed interests in the exams conducted by the Tamil Sangam. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, T. Chengalvarayan Pillai, R. P. Sethu Pillai, Vibulanandar and a host of such scholars have fared this exam well.103

The Sangam conducted three higher level exams namely i) Pravesapanditham (F.A. Exam); ii) Balapanditham (B.A.); iii) Panditham (B.A. Hons). The syllabi for the exams were designed by an academic committee of versatile scholars constituted for this very purpose. The curriculum was changed every ten years with a view to update the syllabi. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, Pandithamani Mu. Kathiresa Chettiyar, S. Somasundara Bharathi and S. Krishnaswami Iyengar were some of the members who worked in this committee at various points in different capacities.104 For the F. A. Exam (Pravesapanditham), the syllabus was framed to inculcate basic knowledge on all literary forms, grammatical rules, poetic genres and other literary traditions. Similarly, the B.A. (Balapanditham) syllabus was also prepared with a view to impart instruction on prosody, rhetoric and exordium on semantics. The questions for B.A Hons (Panditham) were mainly set to test the in-depth knowledge and mastery over Tamil classical literature, poetry, grammar and prose writing. The intricate part of the exam was that the students would be asked to write poetry based on classical prosody with rhythmic pattern.105

Madurai Tamil Sangam paid greater attention in collecting and preserving old manuscripts from the very beginning. It maintained a preservatory cell to safeguard old manuscripts from imminent destruction. Special experts were appointed to collate, compile and edit them for print. Se. Ra. Subramanya Kavirayar, Se. Ra. Kandasamy Kavirayar, Se. Ra. Arunachala Kavirayar rendered a valuable service as examiners in

103 Ilankumaran, Madurai Nangam Tamil Sanga Varalaru, p. 49.
104 V. Sundaram, Tavathiru Gnaniyar Adigal, Madras, 1972, pp. 15-16.
105 For details about the syllabi see Ilankumaran, Madurai Nangam Tamil Sanga Varalaru, Appendix, pp. 150-52. See also Iramdam Andu Sanga Tirumanangal, December 1903, Sentamil, vol. II, 1904, pp. 124-28.
neatly editing and printing them. As the Sangam had its own press it took a special care to print new books without spelling mistakes and other errors.

The Sangam had published about eighty works before 1945 of which 23 were prepared from the old manuscripts collected from various places and prominent among them were Aintinai Aimpatu with commentary, Neminatham with commentary, Nanmanikadigai with old commentary, Tiruvarunai Kalampakam. All of these works were published in the first decade of the twentieth century and went on to see a number of editions. Madurai Tamil Sangam brought out number of books from the articles, which were previously published in the journal of Sentamil as they had a popular appeal. Prominent among them were Pattinapallai Araychiyurai by Maraimalai Adigal, Kadaivallalgal Kaalam (period of the last seven patrons) by S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, Velir Varalaru (history of Velirs) by M. Raghava Iyengar, Setu Nadum Tamilum by Ira. Raghava Iyengar, Tamil Noolgalum Tamilagamum (works of Tamil about Tamil Nadu) by S. Somasundara Bharathi.

Madurai Tamil Sangam took a decision in its second annual conference to set up a committee of scholars to prepare a multi-purpose monolingual lexicon on scientific lines. Under the leadership of Pandithurai Devar all the leading scholars of Tamil from Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu were included in the committee and the nature of the work and responsibility of each of the scholars was systematically defined in advance. However, the committee did not start the work afresh, but decided to pursue the work left by late N. Katirvel Pillai as he had already completed the necessary groundwork. The first volume of the lexicon was published in 1910 and the rest of the two volumes were brought to circulation in 1923 and 1924. The lexicon was called as Madurai Tamil Sangam Tamil Agarati or Katirvel Pillai Agarati. It was well received by the public and went on to see five impressions within a decade of its publication. This was the first monolingual dictionary prepared on scientific lines by furnishing all relevant details such as etymology, synonyms and usages. It had more than 10,000

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108 M. Valarmathi, Tamil Vailal Pandithurai, pp. 31-43.
entries and set a tone and tenor for further improvement in the field of lexicon preparation.  

Madurai Tamil Sangam also decided in as early as 1902 to prepare a multi-purpose Tamil encyclopedia. But this plan did not take-off owing to differences of opinion. In the meantime, Singaravadivelu Chettiyar of Madras, an independent scholar approached the president of the Madurai Tamil Sangam for aid to publish his encyclopedia work entitled Abidanasintamani, it covered various aspects of Tamil culture, literature, epics, puranas, rituals, customs, manners and social values in about 1640 pages. The work was thoroughly examined by the scholars of the Tamil Sangam and necessary corrections were suggested. It was eventually published with an aid of its president Pandithurai in 1910.

Sentamil, the journal of the Madurai Tamil Sangam, played a crucial role in disseminating new ideas and stimulating passion for Tamil research. Sentamil, as an academic journal, had maintained a fairly high standard in its content, objectivity in its research and creativity in its presentation. Its language was neither archaic nor puristic but was simple incisive to the point. Its style almost reflected the general trend of the day. Sentamil started coming since 7th December 1902 till today except some gaps in 1950s and 1960s. Sentamil was a mine of information with regard to the Tamil culture, history, society, literature, aesthetic sensibility and religion. It was the first journal of its kind in Tamil and remained committed throughout, to the promotion of Tamil studies. Unlike other Tamil academic journals it was never in want of materials for publication. Its mode of presentation and standard of argument was far superior to all its counterparts as eminent scholars of high repute wrote it. It also maintained consistency in its approach and did not give space for unnecessary polemics. It neither took up an atavistic stand nor conservative point of view in matters of Tamil cultural antiquity, language pre-eminence and literary heritage. Nevertheless, Sentamil was largely seen as a journal subscribing to the primacy of Sanskrit culture. Such a view arose as the result of its early editors like R. Raghava Iyengar, M. Raghava Iyengar, P. Narayana Iyer who +were very well-known for their pan-Indian view.

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Sentamil appeared every month in about 64 to 80 pages covering a range of issues from literary criticism, poetic appreciation, epigraphic presentation, historical research reviews of books and monographs and general announcements. Madurai Tamil Sangam had constituted a committee of scholars to look into the content of the journal and most of the articles were written by the scholars of the board. In February 1927 according to the Sangam registry there were about 175 scholars in the board who were capable of writing articles on any issues.112

Sentamil was sent all over the places wherever Tamils lived in considerable numbers, including Fiji islands, Malaya, Burma, Caribbean Islands and South Africa. In spite of its wide circulation, the number of subscribers to the journal never crossed 1000 owing to its high standards.113 The annual subscription for the journal was three rupees and rupees four for the readers abroad. The journal had a great appeal among the students and they were given 50% reduction in subscription.114 As it had been already indicated, many of the serial articles of this journal were later published in books. These books were generally prescribed to university curriculum. Initially the journal devoted most of its space for literary, historical and cultural matters owing to intellectual necessity. In course of time it opened up its columns for the articles of public concern such as science and technology, agriculture, coinage of technical terms, importance of mother tongue education and expansion of literacy along with translated articles from Sanskrit and English.115

Sentamil as a pioneering academic journal set a precedence as to how matters of culture and language and history should be presented and published in a pliant prose style. Madurai Tamil Sangam played its own part in retrieving the oblivious Sangam tradition and by setting up a role model for the future association to follow.

112 A. Chidambaranar, Tamil Sangangalin Varalaru, pp. 120-21.
113 Madras Administrative Report for the year 1928-29 (Education), pp. 116-17.
114 See Sentamil, vol. IV, 1905, cover page.
115 A considerable shift in the topical interest could be noticed whenever there was a change in the editorial board. During the tenure of Pandithurai Devar as president (1902-1911), the journal maintained a very high standard in terms of quality, standard and subject. To get a clear idea about the overall content of Sentamil see Pavoorchatram Rajagopal Subramanian, Annotated Index to Centamil.
Tanjai Karantai Tamil Sangam

Tanjai Karantai Tamil Sangam also started with similar objectives to advance and promote the cause of Tamil learning and research. But it varied to an extent in its methods and strategies to accomplish its objectives and aims. The idea of starting an association at Tanjore came into prominence during the Ninth Annual function of the Madurai Tamil Sangam held between 1st and 3rd May 1911. But it got actually materialized after three years with the local efforts. The Sangam was formally registered on 01-05-1914 with T. V. Umamaheswaran as its president. He held the presidency until his death in 1941, followed by I. Kumarasamy Pillai, N. Kandasamy Pillai worked in that capacity until 1947. The Sangam had constituted an executive committee under T. V. Umamaheswaran to look after the day-to-day administration. Na. Mu. Venkatasamy Nattar, N. Swaminatha Pillai, L. Ulaganatha Pillai, R. Venkatachallam Pillai and N. Kandasamy Pillai were the other members of the committee. Pettachi Chetiyar, Gopalaswamy Raghunatha Sethupathy Rajaliyar and D. Pannerselvam of Justice Party were the main patrons of the Sangam.

Its primary objective was as envisaged in its charter to restore the fallen status of Tamil to its former glory and expose its pre-eminence and immortality to the works through a meticulous research. To create a pure Tamil language style, to generate passion for Tamil literary classics to stimulate language tradition to celebrate Tamil festivals in order to protect its cultural tradition and to conduct public discourse for the proliferation of Tamil knowledge and learning were its other objectives.

During the initial period the Sangam only engaged in conducting public meetings and organizing local Tamil classes. But it soon realized the importance to promote Tamil research activities and to work for the amelioration of Tamil studies. Accordingly, Tamil Polil, a monthly academic journal, was started with an immediate effect.

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Tamil Polil came to circulation since April 1925 as a Tamil academic journal devoted to Tamil research activities. The journal went on without any break until 1967 and again started circulating from 1979 till today. The journal emphasized in its very first issue, in accordance with its nomenclature, the need to celebrate its beauty and spread its fragrance throughout the world. Tamil Polil, as an academic journal, almost followed the pattern of Sentamil. Its general focus was to promote Tamil interests vigorously and safeguard Tamil heritage from the influence of foreign elements. In this regard, it considerably varied with Sentamil. It followed a policy of cultural romanticism and linguistic purism. Its language was chaste, incisive and impregnated with deliberate purism.

The articles that appeared in Tamil Polil could be classified into three major sections such as research-oriented articles, creative writing and articles of general interest. Reconstructing the history of Tamil Nadu on scientific lines reached its significant stage in the 1920s as a result of unearthing valuable epigraphic, numismatic and literary sources. During this period, many important historical works were published by noted historians. K. Srinivasa Pillai’s Tamil Varalaru (1922), M. S. Ramaswami Aiyangar and B. Seshagiri Rao’s Studies in South Indian Jainism (1922), S. Krishnasamy Iyengar’s Some Contributions of South India to Indian Culture (1923), Sesha Iyengar’s Dravidian India (1925), P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar’s History of Tamils, K. A. Nilakanda Shastri’s The Pandyan Kingdom (1929), and Colas (1932) were some of the works which generated a special interest on Tamil historiography. Different viewpoints and opinions were advanced about the new research findings. Tamil Polil opened its columns for Tamil atavistic scholars to put forward their views as well. Most of the important historical research articles were published in Tamil Polil between 1925 and 1937. Their approach was essentially based on logical consistency, instrumental rationality and cultural romanticism and betrayed, at times, scientific reasoning. Nevertheless, they added extra material to the corpus of Tamil history. At the same time many Tamil pundits wrote about various interesting aspects of Ancient Tamil social life as reflected in Tamil literary works and inscriptions. M. V. Ulagaooliar, a Tamil pundit at Kumbakonam Government College, wrote an article

on *Tamilarum Aadaiyum* (Tamils and cloth making) wherein he delineated the development of textile industry by tactfully using the insights provided by Tamil literary works, temple inscriptions and folk songs.\(^\text{123}\) Similarly, K. Somasundara Pillai (Tamil pundit at Mannargudi High School) wrote *Tamilarum Kappal Tolilum* (Tamils and shipping industry) where he explained the evolution of shipping technology in Tamil Nadu by using seventeen different terms to denote ship and vessel.\(^\text{124}\) C. M. Ramachandra Chettiyar wrote an article on *Sakkai Kkootu* in which he studied the development of Tamil folk dance on the basis of inscriptions and Tamil literary sources.\(^\text{125}\)

*Tamil Polil* frequently carried articles concerning the latest discovery of inscription in various temples particularly in Tanjore district about Chola dynasty. Until 1945, *Tamil Polil* had published around 24 inscriptions, two copper plates of Rajendra Chola in full and seven inscriptions partially. These articles were mainly contributed by Sundara Vandaiyar, K. Somasundaram Pillai and T. V. Sadhasiva Pandararath.\(^\text{126}\) T. V. S. Pandarathar had brought about more than 40 technical terms to public use from the old inscriptions. He extensively used epigraphic sources in writing his books on *Pandiyar Varalaru* (History of Pandiyas, 1940), Pirkala Cholar Varalaru (History of Later Cholas, 1949) that appeared as series of articles in *Tamil Polil* before its publication. Articles on chronological research were extensively published in *Tamil Polil*. They mainly focused on reconstructing the Tamil literary history on the basis of newly unearthed sources. Vengadarajulu Reddiyar, Na. Mu. Vengatasamy Nattar, Avvai S. Thuraiyam Pillai, K. Somasundaram Pillai wrote many articles on the chronological aspects of Tamil ancient history.\(^\text{127}\)


Tamil Polil allotted considerable space for the articles of creative nature, such as literary criticism, textual analysis, book reviews, critical appreciation of poems and stories that increased in size and number after the 1940s. Argumentative articles and rejoinders were also published in Tamil Polil. M. N. S. Somasundaram Pillai wrote about 38 rejoinder articles of 350 pages between 1932 and 1935 in Tamil Polil against P. Subramanya Shastri’s Tolkappiyam Sollathikaram (1929). He admitted that he was writing at the behest of Karantai Tamil Sangam to demolish all false claims and pretensions wherever they emanate from.\textsuperscript{128} P. Subramanya Shastri argued that ‘Tolkappiyam had extensively borrowed ideas, rules and conventions from Sanskrit sources and systematically reconstructed them to meet Tamil requirements.’\textsuperscript{129} Subramanya Shastri previously published his contentions as a series of articles in Sentamil between 1926 and 1927. Shastri’s views were largely contested on communal lines and M. N. S. Somasundaram Pillai attempted to challenge the pre-eminence of Sanskrit culture in his rejoinders.

Tamil Polil showed keen interest from the beginning in creating new technical terms to convey modern and scientific ideas. He strongly argued that the purity of the language should not be compromised while creating new technical terms for public use. People must be educated about the necessity to use indigenous terms to convey modern concepts. The editorials of Tamil Polil consistently emphasized the need to explore new indigenous terms to express modern ideas, as Tamil was extensively copious and rich in vocabulary.\textsuperscript{130} T. V. Umamaheswaran, the President of Karantai Tamil Sangam speaking in the Tamil Conference of Madras Presidency held at Nellai (modern Tirunelvelly) between 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} June cautioned the Tamil scholars about the importance of safeguarding the integrity of the language. “Tamil had long since been deprived of her status and lost her pre-eminence in the public life. She had been recently restored from her sunken status. Coining of new technical terms must be done with utmost care and concern. Utility should not spoil the beauty of the

\textsuperscript{128} M. N. Somasundaram Pillai, “Vedhachalaiyer Poli Maruppu” (a rejoinder to the contention of Vedhachalaiyar), Tamil Polil, vol. VIII, 1932, pp. 68-80.
\textsuperscript{129} P. Subramanya Shastri, “Tolkappiya Araychchi” (Tolkappiyam research), Sentamil, vol. XXII, 1924, pp. 272-81.
\textsuperscript{130} For instance see lead article by C. Venkatachalam Pillai (the editor of the journal), vol. VII, 1931, pp. 1-7.
language... sanskritisation of Tamil is not the solution to de-anglicise Tamil. All foreign elements must be resisted with an equal vigour and vengeance.\textsuperscript{131}

Sami Velayudham Pillai, E. Mu. Subramanya Pillai, Pavvai Manicka Naicker contributed number of articles on medicine, science and technology to \textit{Tamil Polil}.\textsuperscript{132} They introduced variety of jargons of pure Tamil, which were very close to the original meaning. Some of their usages in course of time became very popular. \textit{Tamil Polil} was not only concerned with Tamil research activities but also raised its voice in favour of Tamil welfare activities. The editorials of \textit{Tamil Polil} long decried the ill-treatment meted out to the Tamil pundits in terms of salary and other service conditions and urged the government to take necessary steps to ameliorate their professional position and treat them on par with other teachers.\textsuperscript{133}

\textit{Tamil Polil}, as the organ of the Karantai Tamil Sangam, always took a stand on all social and political issues germane to Tamil people and language. \textit{Tamil Polil} published number of articles between 1925 to 1928 emphasising the need to establish a university for the promotion of Tamil studies. It intensely argued for the promotion of Tamil music movement and published a score of articles explaining the importance of singing in Tamil and popularizing Tamil songs. N. Devaneyan, K. Vellaivaranar, C. Lakumana Pillai and T. K. Chidambara Mudaliar used the pages of \textit{Tamil Polil} to highlight the excellence and exquisiteness of Tamil musical tradition.\textsuperscript{134} Vibulanantar, a well-known Tamil musicologist, used the columns of \textit{Tamil Polil} to communicate his critical research findings about ancient Tamil acoustic techniques and other features of ancient instruments.

He made a concerted effort to reconstruct ‘Yal’, a putative ancient Tamil instrument, which fell into disuse much before 12\textsuperscript{th} century AD. Though he was not able to succeed in his endeavour, his research findings brought out a corpus of new information about Tamil melody system, Raga classification (Panmurai), Tonal values and acoustic techniques. His findings were initially published as series of articles in

\textsuperscript{131} T. V. Umamaheswaram Pillai, “Chennai Makana Tamilar Manadu”, (Presidential address to the Tamil conference), vol. X, 1934, pp. 142-58.
Karantai Tamil Sangam, which subsequently appeared as a book entitled as \textit{Yal Nool} under the auspices of Karantai Tamil Sangam in 1947.\footnote{For instance see Vibulanantar, “Pannum Tirunum”, (melody and tonal values), \textit{Tamil Polil}, vol. XVI, 1940, pp. 391-98; “Kulalum Yalum” (flute and lute), \textit{Tamil Polil}, vol. XVII, 1941, pp. 26-30; “Ennum Isaiyum” (number and music), \textit{Tamil Polil}, vol. XVII, 1941, pp. 67-71.}

Unlike Madurai Nangam Tamil Sangam, the Karantai Tamil Sangam actively involved in mobilizing popular support to protect and promote Tamil interests. As many of the executive members of the Karantai Tamil Sangam had political affiliation with Justice Party, they took a partisan stand and viewed language issues with communal motives. Karantai Tamil Sangam not only supported Tamil University Movement but also mobilized resources to keep the tempo of the campaign high.\footnote{C. Vedhachalam, “Tamilum Tamil Palkalaikalagamum”, \textit{Tamil Polil}, vol. I, 1925, pp. 180-85.} The Sangam wielded considerable pressure through its representatives on Annamalai University to record the minutes of Academic Council and Senate meetings in Tamil.\footnote{C. Vedhachalam, “Tamilum Tamil Palkalaikalagamum”, \textit{Tamil Polil}, vol. VI, 1930, pp. 223-26.}

Karantai Tamil Sangam was instrumental in organizing a conference of Tamil pundits in 1927 at Tiruchirapally to highlight their grievances. The conference passed a number of resolutions including the appointment of Tamil experts in archaeological departments and regional registrar Office for bookkeeping and promotion of Tamil pundits on the basis of seniority.\footnote{S. Senthil Kumar, “Karanthai Tamil Sanga Varalaru”, \textit{Karanthai Tamil Sanga Seithimalar Sirapithal}, vol. II, no. 7, Tanjore, 1990.} T. V. Umamaheswaran Pillai, the President of Karantai Tamil Sangam, took an abiding interest in convening special Tamil conferences to create a language consciousness.\footnote{T. V. Umamaheswaran Pillai, “Chennai Magana Tamilar Maanadu” (presidential address in Presidency Tamil Conference), \textit{Tamil Polil}, vol. X, 1934, pp. 142-58.}

Elango Mantram, an auxiliary of Karantai Tamil Sangam, periodically conducted literary festivals in the name of a particular ancient Tamil poet to popularize his or her works. \textit{Tamil Polil} made an extensive coverage of these events with vivid description and furnished the full text of the literary discourses. Karantai Tamil Sangam also took an active role in spearheading an anti-Hindi agitation in 1938 against the introduction of Hindi into the school curriculum.\footnote{S. Danakodi, “Namatu Sangamum Tamil Valarchiyum”, \textit{Katturai Polil}.} A contingent of 500 volunteers were sent by the Karantai Tamil Sangam from Tanjore under the
leadership of I. Kumarasami, one of the executive members, to participate in the massive agitation held in Madras during July and August of the same year.\textsuperscript{141}

Karanthai Tamil Sangam concentrated mainly on ameliorating the cultural status and social dignity of Tamils so as to advance the cause of Tamil historical antiquity. The Sangam succeeded in getting a Government Order passed in favour of using the Tamil honorific ‘Thiru’ in place of ‘Sri’ of Sanskrit. The question about the use of Tamil honorific was initially brought to the fore in 1925.\textsuperscript{142} N. Murugaiah, a Tamil pundit argued in the pages of \textit{Tamil Polil} that Tamils should adopt ‘Tiruvalar’ as honorific before their names since it was the traditional practice as found in \textit{Periyapuranam} (one of the Saiya canonical texts of the eleventh century AD). T. V. S. Pandararathar buttressed the argument with a corpus of epigraphic references. He argued that the term ‘Thiru’ was used as a prefix to the royal title of Maravarman Sundara Pandiyyan of the Later Pandyas as recorded in the inscription dated 1219 AD.\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Tamil Polil} also extensively used this ‘Thiru’ as honorific and urged Tamils to renounce all non-Tamil and foreign honorifics and titles.

Karanthai Tamil Sangam took special measures to inculcate group awareness and language consciousness among the Tamils. Public meetings, social gatherings, mass processions, poetic recitations, cultural celebrations were organized frequently to engage the general crowd in the public sphere. Karanthai Tamil Sangam introduced the celebration of Valluvar Day on every January 15\textsuperscript{th}, the author of the most respected Tamil work, \textit{Tirukkural}. It became over the period a general festival of all Tamil organizations and Tamil Nadu government also declared it as an official festival. Similarly, the Karanthai Tamil Sangam made an attempt to popularize the celebration of Vadhabikkondan Day on October 31\textsuperscript{st}. But it failed to evoke the popular support and went into oblivion.\textsuperscript{144} It was argued that Sirutondar, one of the canonized 63 saints of the Saivaite order led the army of Narasimha Varman I up to Chalukkian capital, Vatapi, defeated the ruler Pulakesin II and set the city to flame on

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{143} T. V. S. Pandararathar, “Enatu Araychiyil Sila Seithigal” (snippets from my research), \textit{Tamil Polil}, vol. VII, 1932, pp. 536-39.
\textsuperscript{144} “Tamil Seithigal” (Tamil News), \textit{Tamil Polil}, vol. XIII, 1938, pp. 488-90.
October 31st 642 AD. It was rather depicted as a victory of Tamil forces over Aryan imperialism.

Like other Tamil organizations, Karanthai Tamil Sangam ran a school and college for imparting instruction on Tamil, brought out a number of works from the old manuscripts, organized public discourses and celebrated annual functions. More than anyone else, Karanthai Tamil Sangam increasingly deployed popular pressure tactics and mobilisational politics to advance the cause of Tamil. It gave a populist dimension and people orientation to intellectual issues and esoteric questions by linking it with primordial concerns.

Other Parallel Efforts

Establishment of associations and organizations for the amelioration of Tamil had reached its crucial phase in the beginning of the twentieth century. Apart from Madurai Nangam Tamil Sangam, Tanjai Karanthai Tamil Sangam, a multitude of literary societies, reading rooms, culture clubs and agencies for the promotion of language sprang all over Tamil Nadu. Almost by 1920s each of the Tamil towns had at least one literary club linguistic agency to enhance Tamil activities. Many of the major associations launched their own journals and fortnightlies. The Salem Tamil Sangam was established in 1907 with the effort of J. M. Nallasamy Pillai, 'a well-known Saivaite scholar', when he was working as a district munsif at Salem. The Sangam was engaged in conducting literary discourses, running libraries and arranging evening Tamil classes. The Madras Presidency Tamil Sangam was established almost during the same time by C. R. Namachivaya Mudaliyar, a well-known Tamil school textbook publisher, and T. Ramakrishna Pillai, a member of the Academic Council of the University of Madras. T. Ramakrishna Pillai took the task of publishing Rev. Caldwell’s path-breaking work *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages* with new revelations in 1908. Similarly, the Kovai Tamil

146 Madras Administrative Report for the year 1911-1912, Madras, p. 143.
Sangam was founded by C. Tiruchitrumbalam Pillai in 1915. Sivasubramanya Kavirayar, A. Kandasamy Pillai and C. M. Ramachandra Chettiyyar worked for the expansion of the Sangam activities. Kovai Tamil Sangam functioned in tandem with Saiva Maha Samajam and launched a literary magazine called Kongu Malar in 1933, which was known for its high standard and quality. Putuvai Tamil Sangam, Takkalai Tamil Sangam and Nagai Tamil Sangam came out with their own journals Tamil Makavu, Sentamil Malar and Tamil Pani respectively. Some associations like Melaisivapuri Sammarga Sabai, Tennintiya Tamil Sangam of Nellai and Chennai Manavar mantram ran schools and colleges for imparting Tamil instruction and conducted higher-level examinations. Moreover, many clubs, known as ‘Kazhagams’, were started at different places to promote a particular poet’s ideas and works. Kamban Kazhagam of Karaikudi was well known in this respect for its commitment to the propagation of Kambaramayanam.

Started as an informal literary gathering under the stewardship of T. K. Chidambaram Mudaliar (1888-1954) in Tenkasi, what was known as ‘Vatta Totti’, emerged as a formal organization in 1944. Kamban Kazhagam of Karaikudi organized every year Kamban festival in the first week of April. Seminars, debates and public meetings were organized during this occasion and the final function was conducted at Nattarasan Kottai, the birth place of Kamban.

Similarly, many such clubs were established to popularize the works of various Tamil poets across Tamil Nadu. Large number of such Kazhagams came into being to disseminate the ideas and philosophy of Tiruvalluvar, the author of the immortalized Tamil work Tirukkural. These clubs adopted various ingenious methods to propagate the knowledge of Tirukkural. The South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society Ltd., Tinnevelly, one of the leading publishing limited in Tamil Nadu, introduced an attractive diary in 1932 with a couplet of Kural in each page for the whole year. The process was repeated every four years after the completion of 1330 Kural couplets. The Publishing Society brought out in 1934 a beautiful edition of Tirukkural ‘2x2.5 inches size’ for massive circulation. It also came up with a number of commentaries and explanatory works both in Tamil and English to

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149 A. Chidambaranar, Tamil Sanga Varalaru, p. 126.
151 The Kamban Kazhagam of Karaikudi published ever year the souvenir of its annual celebrations.
disseminate the essential features of Tirukkural. It was reported in the souvenir of its 1008th publication that the Society had sold more than two lakh copies of different versions and editions in 1942, which crossed more than one million copies in 1975.152

Annamalai University introduced the practice of giving Tirukkural as a souvenir to all the participants of the annual convocation address. This practice became in course of time an integral part of Tamil cultural tradition.153 Tirupanantatal Saiva Mutt took an abiding interest in propagating the ideas of Tirukkural through various means. The Mutt got 1330 couplets of Tirukkural engraved on the walls of the Sanctuary hall of the Meenakshi Amman Temple at Madurai.154

In the meantime, many Tamil intellectual groups came forward to enhance the study of various Tamil knowledge systems such as Siddha medicine, local astrology, Tamil arithmetics. Siddha vaidhya or Tamil medicinal system became popular in the late nineteenth century and many efforts were undertaken to restore its practice in the public life. Vallal Pandithurai, Raja of Panagal and the ruler of Tanjore, extended their patronage for the advancement of indigenous medicine system.

_Vaitya Sarasankragam_, a well-known work on Siddha medicine, was brought out by Muthukarupan Pillai, a court physician of Ramnad, in 1868. He gave a vivid description about various properties of medicinal plants and offered ingenious solutions to treat insect bites. As this book went out of print, Pandithurai made an arrangement to publish it with new information under the auspices of Madurai Tamil Sangam in 1907. He gave an introduction to this work by highlighting the importance of safeguarding the knowledge of indigenous medicine.155

Pundit S. S. Anandan, a scholar of high repute, established the Association for Siddha Medicine in 1927 at Madras. He wrote a number of pamphlets explaining how Siddha medicine could be used for treating various diseases. He also conducted a monthly, _Maruttuvan_, which brought out newly unearthed information from various sources.156 Kovilpatti Sivagnana Yogiyar started a journal called _Ayurveda baskaran_,

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152 _Kazhagathin Ayirathu Ettavatu Veliyittu Vila Malar_, pp. 5-31.
153 Ibid.
155 Muthukarrupan Pillai, _Vaitya Sarasankragam_, Madurai, 1907, “Preface” (pages nos. not mentioned).
156 See for instance _Maruttuvan_ (a siddha medical journal), vol. II, no. 1, 1923.
which came in simple and ordinary Tamil so as to meet public requirements. Generally, Tamil medical journals followed a different style of Tamil, which could only make sense to the readers who were familiar with the subject. Dr. R. S. Pathi, Chinnasamy Naidu and Dr. Velusamy Pillai were some of the intellectuals who published a corpus of materials about a Tamil medicine as found in old manuscripts and Tamil literary works. C. S. Murukesa Mudaliar, a well-known siddha medicine expert, organized a state level conference on siddha medicine to promote the practice and learning of this knowledge system. The conference passed a number of resolutions including seeking state support and recognition for practising Siddha medicine. The government also gave its approval as a matter of policy for practicing alternative medicine system. It gave full aid to set up two colleges for siddha medicine at Palani and Palayamkottai to impart training.\(^{157}\)

It may be gauged from the amount of advertisements, which appeared in the Tamil journals and magazines during the second quarter of the twentieth century about various siddha medical products, that it became a part of general use of ordinary masses and they had a fairly good knowledge about its utility. Apart from medical journals, articles about siddha medicine and its use appeared frequently in all kinds of journals including academic journals like Sentamil Selvi, Tamil Polil and Sentamil. The native newspapers report for the year 1934 recorded that about seven Siddha medical journals in Tamil were in circulation with the copies ranging from 300 to 800.

The passions of the tongue or affection towards language was not only confined to the restoration of the pristine glory of Tamil culture but also went on to transform Tamil into an apt idiom for scientific use. Nevertheless, the process had to face severe challenges and impediments before making any tangible improvement.

As it had been already argued, the attempt to modernize Tamil albeit starting in the late nineteenth century reached its logical culmination only in the beginning of the twentieth century. C. Rajagopalachari (1879-1972), a reputed Tamil scholar and veteran of national movement, emphasized the need to modernize Tamil by creating new language possibilities. He initiated the process of coining technical terms for

\(^{157}\) Tamarai Selvi, Tamil Marutuvu Italgal (Tamil Medical Journals), Doctoral thesis submitted to Department of Tamil, University of Madras, 1983, pp. 9-17.
scientific use. With a band of English educated Tamil intellectuals, he formally opened up a society for the coining of Tamil scientific terms in 1915 at Salem. He plausibly opined that given the richness of the language everything could be expressed in Tamil. In fact, he went on to set an example by drafting some essays on elementary chemistry in Tamil. His intention was to demonstrate that all scientific and technological ideas could well be articulated in Tamil. His articles on science and technology were later published under the title *Tinnai Rasayanam* in 1946. He also translated a number of stories, novels and essays from Sanskrit and English to Tamil with a view to create new cultural taste and language sensibility. His style was simple, crisp and conversational but it was sharp and incisive to the point. He preferred popular terms to flamboyant vocabulary and deliberately avoided rhetorical usages in his writings.

In the meantime, the Madras Presidency Tamil Association had constituted a committee to look into the matter of coining technical terms with the government support under the presidency of P. Srinivasachari. In 1934, the committee brought out a volume of 10,000 technical terms pertaining to various subjects including science and technology, health, agriculture, astrology, architecture and mechanics. The committee’s findings were strongly criticized by pure Tamil activists. *Tamil Polil* and *Sentamil Selvi* termed it as a ploy to sanskritise Tamil. Never was there a unity of opinion with regard to the formation of technical jargons. Scholars were always sharply divided on ideological lines. The “purists” argued that the originality, chasteness and classicality of the tongue by no means should be damaged for the sake of coining new terms, whereas the “cosmopolitans” emphasized the importance of efficacy, economy, expediency and inter-translatability. On the other hand, the nationalists argued for maintaining cultural unity with Sanskrit by coining new terms.

Maraimalai Adigal, originally known as S. Vedhachalam, a ‘confirmed classicist’, was responsible for spearheading *Tanitami Jyakkam* (Pure Tamil Movement). Although attempts were already made in this direction, Maraimalai

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Adigal was the first to declare a movement for linguistic purism in 1915 and thereupon went on to expunge and eliminate Sanskrit terms firstly from his works later in other treatises.\(^{161}\) With a view to homogenize, standardize and sanitise Tamil, he importunately argued for the use of classical and archaic terms. In his endeavour to expunge Sanskrit terms from Tamil, he launched a lonely battle with a handful of esoteric intellectuals. He prepared a Manual of Sanskrit loan words and its equivalent terms in Tamil, which he got published in 1937. His daughter also took an interest in this endeavour and prepared glossaries, dictionaries for various subjects to meet new requirements. Maraimalai Adigal set out an example by publishing two novels *Kumutavalli, Kokilampal Kaditangal* in chaste and pure Tamil.

In spite of his impeccable command and creative style in Tamil, Maraimalai Adigal could not capture popular imagination through his writings.\(^{162}\) Whereas his compatriot T. V. Kalyanasundaranar (1883-1953), C. N. Annadurai (1909-1968), P. Jeevanandam (1907-1963) held the people at the command of their tongue and pen with a simple and plain language, C. Subramania Bharati was extraordinarily successful in his endeavour, by his use of simple and plain language in a poetic genre. He took recourse neither to rhetoric usage nor to flamboyant expression, but brought about social transformation by directly appealing to the emotions and sentiments of the people. His language was spontaneous, mellifluous and lively, overflowing with passion and commitment.\(^{163}\) The purists could not succeed largely in their endeavour as their language was obsolete, unintelligible, and dreary and did not appeal to the emotions and feelings of ordinary people. Nevertheless, the spirit of linguistic purism and “Gallicism” continued to impinge upon the making of new technical jargons.

Mention must be made in this context of a journal of science in Tamil, which lived for a short time. Justice Sadhasiva Iyer, the founder of Tamilian Education Society, started a journal in 1917 under the able editorship of A. Madhaiyan called *Tamil Nesan* exclusively to disseminate scientific knowledge in the language of the people. Though the journal was in circulation only for ten years it made an indelible


impression in the domain of Tamil journalism by opening up a field of specialization.\textsuperscript{164}

The main objective of this journal was to disseminate the ideas of modern arts and the knowledge of western science through vernacular idiom (meaning mother tongue), “knowledge is key to progress and prosperity. Our people can achieve material success only when they are trained along western scientific lines.”... “It is our endeavour to stimulate the scientific temperament in our people by explaining the elementary aspects.” The journal argued that social transformation could be achieved only when the people were given scientific education through their mother tongue.\textsuperscript{165}

In the beginning \textit{Tamil Nesan} brought articles only of scientific value. Over the period, it opened its space for translated articles of western genres such as novels, sonnets and other forms. \textit{Tamil Nesan} usually carried articles of all the major branches of science. Essays on health, agriculture and horticulture were given priority with an intention to meet the expectations of the ordinary masses. Significantly enough most of the articles of the journals were written by well-known scholars from various departments of the government and University of Madras. A. C. Raghava Iyengar, T. V. Narayana Iyengar, T. S. Subramanya Iyer, P. V. Pavanantham Pillai, S. Sundaresa Iyer, K. Srinivasachari, K. Subramanya Pillai and a host of others contributed valuable articles to this journal. Besides this, editors Madhavaiah and Pe. Na. Appusamy, published articles, which they have translated from English sources.

\textit{Tamil Nesan} followed its own style, which was simple, flowing, and impregnated with meaning. In the later period it brought out a list of technical terms, which were prepared by Tamilian Education Society. Tamilian Education Society also worked in tandem with the society for the creation of Tamil scientific terms in many respects, particularly field-oriented programmes.\textsuperscript{166} The Society also published a number of pamphlets on the topics of technology, agriculture and health. Various agencies and government departments rendered a valuable support in their endeavour.

\textsuperscript{164} Tamil Nesan, vol. I, 1917, pp. 7-11.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., vol. III, 1919, pp. 3-9.
Culture of Book Publishing

The culture of book publishing is said to have developed into a major intellectual activity in the beginning of the twentieth century. This was facilitated by the expansion of print capitalism and the spurt in Tamil literary activities. The culture of book publishing was initially undertaken with the support of religious associations, political organizations, and literary societies and public patronage, which over the period assumed some of the character of the industry. Nevertheless, it did not grow beyond a point as a big publishing house with a large capital by a network of showrooms and sales depots. It remained more or less a prototype industry. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer discussed persuasively this phenomenal change in his autobiography.\(^\text{167}\) He published most of his classical works with social support and public patronage and sought governmental assistance for his enterprise.\(^\text{168}\) By 1920s things changed radically and publishers began to make a modicum of profit. Particularly, the publishers of school textbooks earned handsome profit in their venture.

The transition from patronage to market was a significant change as it altered the social practice of book publishing. It brought in new values, approaches and attitudinal change regarding the selection of the matter for publication. Book publishing as a cultural practice began to reflect people’s expectation and present demands.\(^\text{169}\) *Talapuranam*, family history and temple chronicles were yielding place to novels, school textbooks and classical works. During this period, books were largely produced to meet the rising demand from various circles. A variety of explanations might be furnished as to why there was a steady increase in the demands for books. Rise of intellectual consciousness, literacy, widespread literary, political and cultural activities gave an impetus to the Tamil publishing enterprise.\(^\text{170}\)

As already indicated, Tamil academies like Madurai Nangam Tamil Sangam and Tanjai Karantai Tamil Sangam undertook the task of publishing old books from manuscripts as a part of their service to Tamil. Many publishers came out during this


\(^{168}\) G.O. 600, Government of Madras (Educational), 6 September 1905.


\(^{170}\) *Talapuranam* is one of the literary forms written in eulogy of the preceding deity of the temple. Census Report, Madras, 1911, vol. II, pp. 130-31.
period to solely publish Tamil books. Prominent among them was the South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, Tirunelveli, generally known as 'Kazhagam'.

Kazhagam was formally founded by T. V. Viswanatha Pillai, V. Thiruvarangam Pillai and M. Diraviyam Pillai in September 1920 at Tirunelveli for the promotion of Tamil and the propagation of Tamil’s religion Saivism. A branch of the Kazhagam was immediately opened in Madras with V. Subhaiah Pillai as its agent. Interestingly enough Kazhagam was founded on a commercial line with a working capital of 50,000 rupees comprising 5000 equity shares (each value of Rs. 10) to achieve its charitable purpose. It was the only private limited concern in existence, in whole of South India, for the purpose of publication of books. Its memorandum had a unique stipulation that one half of the annual net profit of the Society should be set apart for charitable purposes and that the dividend to the shareholders should in no case exceed 6 % per annum. It had also been laid down that in case of liquidation, the entire assets of the Society will be transferred to the charitable institutions maintained by it and that the shareholders will have no claim even to the share amount contributed by them.

Kazhagam since its inception paid utmost attention to achieve its primary objectives. It took the charge of maintaining 'The South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Sangam' and 'The Tennintiya Tamil Sangam' of Tirunelveli to promote the cause of Saivism and Tamil. Besides this, Kazhagam also maintained three libraries, two in Madras and one in Tirunelveli, to promote Tamil research and learning.

Kazhagam, as a pioneering publisher in the world of Tamil book publishing, set a standard, quality and proficiency in book production. Kazhagam was largely a successful publisher in spite of its commitment to the social cause and proved the economic viability of Tamil book publishing. Kazhagam published 1007 works until 1961 which covered a range of subjects dealing with philosophy, religion, philology, literary criticism, fiction, juvenile literature, semiotics, grammar, poetry and

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Its significant contribution to the promotion of Tamil was the publication of ancient Tamil works. Kazhagam published Eight Anthologies, Ten Idylls, Eighteen Minor Works, Five Major Epics and three parts of Tolkappiyam with all its commentaries. It also published number of guides and explanatory works prepared by eminent scholars to facilitate the study of ancient classics. Most of the classical works and their commentaries had already seen ten editions, making clear its importance to the Tamil intellectual life. Kazhagam had established a board of scholars to undertake the task of preparing commentaries to various literary works, which hitherto did not have such ones. Choolamani, Perungathai, Thirumanthiram, Thanigaipuranam, Nanthi-Kalambagam, Thirukkutralak-Kuravanchi, Chandra Vilasam and Samudra Vilasam were some of the works for which no commentaries were available other than the ones, which were published by Kazhagam. It adopted a number of ways and means to promote the interests of Tamil, bringing out many English translations of ancient Tamil works with a view to facilitate Tamil studies abroad. Silappatikaram by V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, Golden Anthologies of Sangam Poems in three volumes by R. Balakrishna Mudaliar, Sips from the Sangam Cup by A. V. Subramaniam were some of the prominent works. As a facilitating agency it showed a keen interest in getting republished many of the enduring translations of Sangam literature, which have long since gone out of print. G. U. Pope’s Naladiar and Kural, Rev. Lazarus’s Tirukkural and E. Charles Gover’s Folk Songs of Southern India were some of the notable works of this category. Kazhagam also published remarkable English works pertaining to Tamil studies.

It did not confine itself to the publication of Tamil works but also took an active interest in disseminating the ideas and values of various works of ancient Tamil literature. It conducted a number of seminars and public discourses to generate interest in the study of ancient literary works. A series of conferences were conducted in cities and towns across Tamil Nadu on particular classical literature with a view to bringing out various aspects of ancient social system and cultural practices. They

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174 In commemoration of its 1008th publication Kazhagam brought out a souvenir in 1962.
were published in the course of time as collected papers on a particular literary work. There were about six such conferences organized between 1940 and 1945.\footnote{Conferences on Tamil classics such as \textit{Purananooru}, \textit{Silappatikaram}, \textit{Kalittogai}, \textit{Kuruntogai} were conducted in this period. And many other conferences were also organized for minor Tamil genres such as \textit{Ula}, \textit{Parani}, and \textit{Kalampakam}.}

As a society for the promotion of Tamil culture and its welfare it took active role in safeguarding Tamil interests. It established a society for the preservation of Tamil in 1937 through which it vehemently fought against the introduction of Hindi into school curriculum in the late 1930s.\footnote{\textit{Kazhaga Atchiyar Pavalavila Malar} (platinum jubilee souvenir of the managing director), Madras, 1972, pp. 45-46.} Kazhagam also formed a forum for the welfare of Tamil scholars in 1943; its main objective was to secure the rights of the Tamil pundits who were not treated on par with other teachers either in terms of salary or in the matters of promotion and it consistently raised its voice until the problem got sorted out in 1968.\footnote{Ibid., p. 53.}

Kazhagam's major contribution to the enhancement of Tamil research was the launching of \textit{Sentamil Selvi}, a well-known academic journal. \textit{Sentamil Selvi}, as an academic monthly, came to circulation in 1923 and still continues to represent the intellectual quality of research. \textit{Sentamil Selvi} almost followed the pattern of the other leading academic journals \textit{Sentamil} and \textit{Tamil Polil} and maintained high quality, standard and originality in approach. Articles to the \textit{Sentamil Selvi} were contributed by a board of scholars who were known for their impeccable erudition in Tamil. K. Subramanya Pillai, Na. Mu. Venkatasamy Nattar, A. Chidambaranatha Chettiyar, Pandithamani Mu. Kathiresa Chettiyar, N. Devanayan, Maraimalai Adigal, S. Somasundara Bharati, K. P. Sandosham and Pa. Vai. Manika Naicker were some of the main contributors who gave a lead in the Tamil research activities.\footnote{See for the literary activities of \textit{Sentamil Selvi}, P. Dakshinamurthy, \textit{Sentamil Selviyin Illakkiyapani}, Chennai, 1999.} Subscribing to the idea of linguistic purism, \textit{Sentamil Selvi} adopted a high-flown style and willfully resisted all foreign influence. It preferred archaism to volunteerism, excellence to expediency, purity to pliability and introduced a neo-classical style of writing. \textit{Sentamil Selvi} carried a number of articles on technical terms emphasizing the need to safeguard the language, culture and its originality.\footnote{See for instance Pavvai. Manicka Naicker, \textit{Udal Nala Koorugal} (physiology), \textit{Sentamil Selvi}, vol. XI, 1933, pp. 33-36.} It consistently argued
for the restoration of Tamil to its pristine glory and insisted that the pre-eminence of the language should not be compromised at any cost.

Development of Modern Tamil Lexicography

Lexicon as a repertoire of language came into prominence in the eighteenth century since the coming of Europeans on the scene. It became an indispensable tool to understand the meaning in a bilingual situation. Missionaries showed a keen interest in preparing bilingual dictionary from the beginning with a view to gain command over the ‘native language’. Efforts to prepare dictionaries were started as early as the late sixteenth century by Henri H. Ques (a Portuguese missionary). Following him, Ziegenbalg (a German missionary) prepared a Tamil-Latin dictionary in 1712. However, the breakthrough came only when C. J. Beschi alias Veeramamununivar brought out a monolingual lexicon called Satur Agarati based on scientific principles. It may be noted here that Tamil had a long lexical tradition which was something similar to Sanskrit. The early Tamil lexicon Tivakaram by Seyantan of ninth century A.D. was written in a poetic metre for mnemonic purpose and the words were classified into twelve sections but without an alphabetical order. C. J. Beschi in his dictionary classified the Tamil entries into four sections viz., nouns, verbs, technical terms and rhetoric, arranged them alphabetically and compiled them in a prose style for the purpose of reference. It was a monumental work as it laid the foundation for the evolution of Tamil prose. He was also instrumental in bringing diglossia within the purview of Tamil lexicography.

In course of time a number of bilingual dictionaries were prepared in Tamil for religious, political and commercial purposes by various agencies. Prominent among them was the most comprehensive Tamil-English bilingual dictionary by Miran Winslow published in 1862. He was supported in his effort by a body of scholars from Jaffna and included both literary and spoken words numbering 67,452. The unique features of the dictionary was that words, phrases and idioms related to the head word were given in the same entry and proper grammatical notes were also

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183 For further details K. Kailasapathy, On Art and Literature, chapter I.
furnished along with it. Nevertheless, Winslow's dictionary was far from meeting the standards of the modern lexicography.

The need for a dictionary came to be felt very strongly with the result of the extended literary and publishing activities particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century. The recently started Tamil Associations also realised the importance of preparing a lexicon. But they had neither the resources nor expertise to execute such a gigantic task. The task of publishing a systematic Tamil dictionary was first mooted by Rev. G. U. Pope in 1905 while he was a lecturer of Tamil in Oxford University. In a letter to Sir Frederick Nicholson, a honorary fellow of the Madras University and an ICS officer of Madras cadre, G. U. Pope communicated his intention to prepare a Tamil lexicon as he was in the possession of a great deal of material that was required for a lexicon.\textsuperscript{184} He conceived a plan to enlarge the scope of Winslow's Tamil-English bilingual dictionary by adding new features with fresh materials and publishing it through Clarendon Press.

Accepting G. U. Pope's proposal in full, the University of Madras expressed its willingness to publish it as a University lexicon for which the government of Madras sanctioned Rs. 10,500 promptly to carry out the work. But the proposal was turned down by the Secretary of State in London citing the involvement of a large sum of public money and the poor health of G. U. Pope.\textsuperscript{185} In the meantime, many concerted efforts were made in this regard by Tamil intellectuals albeit in small measures. P. Ramanathan brought out the twentieth century Tamil lexicon with 10,341 words. Rangasamy Naicker published a Jubilee dictionary in 1910. Madurai Tamil Sangam also brought out the much-improved Tamil lexicon, which was original in its scheme and exhaustive in its treatment, etymology, alphabetisation and literary quotations being its main features.\textsuperscript{186} But all these were monolingual dictionaries and the desideratum was the bilingual lexicon.

After the death of G. U. Pope in 1908 the materials gathered by him for Tamil lexicon were brought down to Madras and handed over to the University of Madras. Since 1911, fresh proposals were submitted to the government impressing upon the need to undertake the task of preparing a Tamil lexicon and Rev. J. S. Chandler took

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\item \textsuperscript{184} Nambi Arooran, \textit{Tamil Renaissance}, p. 117.
\item \textsuperscript{185} G.O., Education (confidential), 30-A, 17 January 1907.
\item \textsuperscript{186} Madurai Tamil Sangam Agarati, p. xiii.
\end{itemize}
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the lead in this endeavour. The Madras government also considered the publication of Tamil lexicon as a matter of great importance as there was no suitable dictionary to assist the administrative authority and civil service academy in London.\textsuperscript{187} The need for a dictionary was felt strongly in many quarters. Realising the need, in 1912 the government constituted a committee under the chairmanship of J. S. Chandler to look into the matters of preparing a Tamil lexicon. The members of the committee, for this purpose, were drawn from the University of Madras, Madurai Tamil Sangam, Church of South Indian Mission, Church of Ceylon Mission and the Education Department of the government of Madras. But no representation was given to traditional scholarship which was strongly criticised by various Tamil academies. The \textit{Madras Mail} suggested the names of Mahamahapadaya U. V. Swaminatha Iyer and T. Selvakesavaraya Mudaliyar of Pachaiyappa's College to be included.\textsuperscript{188} \textit{Sentamil} gave a suggestion that the committee should be enlarged so as to accommodate more experts.\textsuperscript{189} The government sanctioned Rs. 100,000 for the execution of this project, which was to be completed within five years.

The representatives of other principal Dravidian languages, pointing to the liberal patronage extended to Tamil, urged the government to render similar support for the enhancement of other Dravidian languages. M. A. Alasingaracharyar, a Canarese Pundit at Madras Christian College opined, it might be cost-effective and more useful if the government could have considered a Dravidian linguistic dictionary. Writing in \textit{Madras Mail} he continued, "The government may be pleased to consider the compilation of a Dravidian linguistic dictionary, comprising the words of all the four Dravidian languages arranged together in alphabetical order with corresponding spellings and meanings in English side-by-side."\textsuperscript{190}

The preparatory work of the Tamil lexicon was initially begun by Madurai Tamil Sangam and was eventually shifted to Madras University Senate House for administrative purposes. Regarding the functioning of the committee severe criticisms were leveled by the press and the public as it failed to produce tangible results. Various aspects concerning the committee were seriously strictured by Tamil and

\textsuperscript{187} G.O., Education, 638, 11 September 1911.
\textsuperscript{188} Cited in Nambi Arooran, \textit{Tamil Renaissance}, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Sentamil}, vol. X, 1912, p. 478.
\textsuperscript{190} Cited in Nambi Arooran, \textit{Tamil Renaissance}, p. 114.
English journals. Doubts were raised time and again about the scholarship of the members, which led to frequent changes in chairmanship of the committee. Between 1913 and 1926, there were as many as five appointed to the committee as chairmen. Efforts were made by the members of the Senate House of the University of Madras to scuttle the Tamil lexicon project by pointing to the enormity of cost and the inability of the committee to produce tangible results. Questions were also raised about the undue patronage extended to Tamil at the cost of other Dravidian languages. For an example, while S. Satyamurthy mooted a resolution in 1921 emphasising the need to promote all Dravidian languages on par, in the course of his resolution, he remarked "The Tamil lexicon had been a veritable white elephant to the University. The expenses of preparing the book had enormously gone up and yet its completion was not yet in sight. The government of Madras has washed its hands off the concern finding that the cost of the venture was something enormous. Why should the University go on spending on the book? Let the University instead provide for the development of the study of South Indian languages that thus the University might become a truly national institution." However, his resolution was defeated at the end.

The committee began to show tangible results since 1924. The first volume with 23,000 words came out in the month of October 1924. Since then the rest of the volumes appeared at regular intervals. The last supplementary volume appeared in 1938. It may be said that one of the important contributions of the University to the Tamil language was the publication of the Tamil lexicon. Begun as early as 1913, the lexicon was the product of the sustained labour of a number of scholars who had worked on it for about a quarter of a century. Tamil lexicon consisted of six volumes, apart from a supplementary one, and had 1,17,762 entries consisting of 4,351 pages.
Demand for a Tamil University:

The demand for a Tamil University apparently began with the passing of Andhra University Bill in 1924. But the desire to have a centre of eminence for Tamil research and learning was long overdue. This fact might be gauged from the manner in which the Tamil associations impressed upon the University of Madras to treat Tamil as a classical language since the inception of the twentieth century. 194

In view of the extended power granted by the Indian University Act of 1904, the University of Madras authorities sought to reorganise the courses of study with an object of specialisation at the undergraduate level. Decisions were made in the Senate meeting held in March 1906 to introduce new two years intermediate courses in the place of then existing F. A. examination and to reorganise the B.A. courses so as to give room for specialisation by cutting short the time ‘unduly’ spent on the learning of vernacular. 195 English was retained as a compulsory course both in intermediate and at B.A. levels since it was considered as the chief need of every average student.

The changes that were introduced in the curriculum at different levels under the new regulation were obviously biased against vernacular instruction. The stepmotherly treatment meted out to the mother tongue caused serious resentment in the indigenous intellectual circles. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai (1866-1946) a well-known protagonist of Tamil University movement took the initiative to protest against the ill-conceived proposal adopted by the University of Madras with regard to the teaching of the vernacular. He wrote a lead article entitled “Abolition of Vernacular Education” in his Tamil journal Gnanapodini by explaining the nuances of the problem in pliant Tamil. “The newly proposed amendments pertaining to the vernacular instruction were totally against the spirit and tradition of the University culture. Tamil and other Dravidian languages have been taught since the beginning of the University days.... In view of the growing demand, the University is well within its jurisdiction to take ameliorative actions to update the course and alter it accordingly. But it cannot forsake its responsibility for the sake of quality and specialisation... Whatever may be the merit of the case by resorting to retrogressive

194 Time and again Tamil associations passed special resolutions requesting the University authorities to take due care for the promotion of Tamil on account of its classical nature. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai collected signatures of 1500 Tamil pundits and submitted a memorandum to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in 1907 seeking Government to treat Tamil as a classical language in the University course.

195 Madras University Calendar for the year 1905-06, p. 73.
measures the University has done a great disservice to the people whom it intended to serve." M. S. Purnalingam Pillai met the president of Madurai Tamil Sangam and urged him to take up the case with the government under the auspices of the Sangam. Promptly Madurai Tamil Sangam decided to send Pandithurai Devar, its president, as its representative to plead before the government to take up suitable measures against the reprehensible regulations advanced by the University of Madras. The Sangam also adopted a resolution by condemning the discriminatory nature of the regulation and urged the University authorities to take necessary palliative measures.

Vivekabanu, a monthly journal from Madurai highlighted the complex nature of the language grouping in the B.A. optional courses. It pointed out that under the present regulations, the optional language group had been made difficult since the classical languages had to be studied invariably along with the vernacular. "The grouping of the Dravidian languages along with Sanskrit will pose insurmountable trouble to the student who wanted to study only his mother tongue." The Tiruvalluvar Tamil Sangam, Salem, in December 1906 at a meeting resolved to memorialise the government of Madras and expressed its disaffection against the regulation as it intended to de-promote the study of vernacular, thereby treating it as mere patois. Many petitions and representations were made to the Governor of Madras seeking his intervention in this matter. This was a first intellectual effort on a large scale to fight for the cause of the language in the public sphere. Though they did not succeed in their endeavour, their desire to secure a rightful and respectable place for vernacular in the University curriculum grew rapidly leading to a demand for Tamil University in the late 1920s. In spite of mounting pressure from the press and the public, the University authorities did not make any change in the regulations and brought into implementation for the academic year 1911-12. Thereupon a number of committees were constituted by the Senate members to look into this matter. The recommendations of these committees were mainly pertaining to the improvement of overall courses and emphasised the need to promote Sanskrit learning, as it had been the fountainhead of all India knowledge system.

197 Ilankumaran, Nangam Tamil Sanga Varalaru, pp. 52-54.
199 Cited in Nambi Arooran, Tamil Renaissance, p. 82.
200 Ibid., p. 85.
Things began to change rapidly with the passing of Mysore University Bill (1916), publication of Communal Manifesto (1916)\(^{201}\) and the introduction of Montague-Chelmsford reforms (1919). In the meantime, the growing communal consciousness based on caste identification began to reflect even in the matters of academic importance. The district conference of Justice Party held on March 30\(^{th}\) - 31\(^{st}\) 1918 at Thanjavur adopted a resolution by squarely blaming the partisan approach of the Senate of Madras University as a major impediment to the inclusion of Tamil into the University curriculum. The resolution read thus, “the improvement of the Dravidian languages had received a setback in the University during the regime of the Sanskritists and recommended that the government should nominate for the Vice-Chancellorship of the University shortly to fall vacant a non-Brahmin or a European gentleman having a pronounced and genuine sympathy for the Dravidian languages.”\(^{202}\) It may be noted here that Sir. P. S. Sivasamy Aiyar was the Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1916 to 1918 and was succeeded by Justice F. D. Oldfield.

Similar resolutions and speeches were made in many literary and political meetings. For instance, C. M. Ramachandra Chettiyar, while giving his presidential address to the Third Annual function of the Kovai Tamil Sangam remarked, “The intentions of the University of Madras were quite evident as it wanted to serve a particular group interest at the expense of the vast multitude of this land... If the national academy (meaning Madras University) wanted to follow the policy of ‘unteachability’ with regard to vernacular, how else the indigenous culture would grow?”\(^{203}\) He also asked if the University was not interested in vernacular let it treat

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201 At a conference held in Madras on the 20\(^{th}\) November 1916 and attended by several non-Brahmin gentlemen of position and influence both in Madras and in mofussil towns, it was resolved that measures be taken to start a company for publishing a newspaper advocating the cause of the non-Brahmin community, and also that a political association be formed to advance, safeguard and protect the interests of the same community. In accordance with this, a Joint Stock Company was started under the name of ‘South Indian People’s Association’ for conducting a daily newspaper in English, Tamil and Telugu respectively, and also a political association was formed under the name of ‘The South Indian Liberal Federation’. The South Indian People’s Association issued what was generally known as ‘Communal Manifesto’ or ‘Non-Brahmin Manifesto’ addressed to the non-Brahmin gentlemen throughout the Presidency under the signature of its Secretary, P. Theagaraya Chettiyar. The ‘Communal Manifesto’ called upon the non-Brahmin intellectuals to work for the amelioration of their fellow brethren and the expansion of British rule, then “their future as British subjects will be brighter and more prosperous than it is today.” For more details about the ‘Manifesto’, see Appendix II, Saraswati S., *Minorities in Madras State*, New Delhi, 1974.


203 The presidential address was published in full in *Satvam*, vol. II, no. 2, July-Aug 1916, pp. 65-62.
Tamil as a classical language since it has a tolerably high quality of literature of at least two millennia old.²⁰⁴ Echoing the same sentiments, the non-Brahmin conference held in June 1919 at Tiruchirapalli, passed a resolution demanding that Tamil should be treated as a classical language as it had a rich literary tradition and cultural heritage and should be treated on the same footing as Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit.²⁰⁵ The resurgence of interest in the Tamil literature with the rediscovery of its classics played its part in stirring up a consciousness of the past glories among Tamil intellectuals.

Simultaneously, the spread of the national movement with its intention to galvanise the masses created a new situation for the use of vernacular as an effective medium for political purpose. Protagonists of Indian culture and the defenders of Sanskrit learning began to realise the importance of imparting vernacular instruction. They saw in the learning of vernacular, the possibility of rejuvenating the national culture. S. Satyamurty, a prominent Congress leader and a strong advocate of Sanskrit learning, took the most pragmatic view and mooted a resolution in 1923 in the Senate house seeking for the inclusion of vernacular instruction as a compulsory subject both in the intermediate and in B.A. courses. He forcefully argued, “If the University was not to be a mere exotic plant but if it was to take its proper place in the surging national life of the country, its undergraduates should be in touch with the masses of the people around them. They could not do that unless they had a vital touch with the literature of their own mother tongue.”²⁰⁶

The assumption of power by Justice Party under the Diarchy Regulation in 1921 proved to be a watershed development as it radically altered the power structure. By introducing the Special Madras University Act in 1923, the Justice Party struck the very nerve centre of the Madras University. In accordance with the new regulation, functions of the Syndicate, Academic Council and councils of the affiliated colleges were brought under the direct control of the Senate. Under this regulation membership of the Senate was almost doubled by making it highly representative in character. Such a move neutralised the anti-vernacular elements in the Senate House. In the meantime, the language consciousness was slowly but steadily beginning to gain political recognition. The bifurcation of Congress Party of the Presidency along

²⁰⁴ Ibid.
²⁰⁶ Quoted in Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance*, p. 106.
linguistic lines was undoubtedly reflective of this fact. The burgeoning Andhra movement successfully pushed through the University Bill in 1925 at the Madras Legislative Council. All these developments not only contributed to the growth of Tamil patriotism but also gave legitimacy to its claims. The University of Madras introduced vernacular instruction as a compulsory subject to both intermediate and B.A. courses for the academic year 1926-27 with a view to meet the Tamil aspirations.

In view of the increasing demand for a separate university the Madras government constituted a thirty-five-member commission in May 1926 under the chairmanship of Raja of Ramnad. The commission was asked to examine the nature of the jurisdiction, location, sources of fund, mode of functioning and the lines on which the university should be founded. The commission toured across the Tamil districts and heard various opinions. There was unanimity of opinion with regard to the establishment of Tamil University except its location as each party pressed forward their own claims. Doubts were also raised about the functioning of the University in view of growing communal tension. Surprisingly, Maraimalai Adigal, a staunch pure Tamil activist, opposed the formation of Tamil University on the ground that as of now "the need for it has not yet ripened." Finally, the committee submitted its report in March 1928 unanimously recommending for a 'federal affiliative' type of University with six principal centres across the state. While the proposal was under due consideration of the government, Sir M. A. Annamalai Chettiyar came forward to shoulder the responsibility of establishing a University for Tamils. He offered to place the Meenakshi College, the Sanskrit College and all its properties for the establishment of a University at Chidambaram. He also agreed to make a one-time capital endowment of 20 lakh rupees. It was promptly accepted by the government and the Bill was introduced on September 8, which became subsequently an Act on 1st January 1929.

207 David Arnold, Congress in Tamil Nadu, 1974, Bombay, pp. 40-42.
208 Madras University calendar for the year 1926-27, pp. 79-82.
The Annamalai University began to function from the academic year 1929-30. Annamalai University made vernacular instruction a compulsory subject for B.A courses. In 1930, it introduced a degree course on music with special emphasis to Tamil music. It was the first Indian University to offer a degree on music.\textsuperscript{212} In July 1931, Annamalai University instituted a B.A. Honours course in Tamil studies. It may be noted here that the University of Madras introduced B.A. Honours course in all principal Dravidian languages in 1932. In 1934, a special Tamil research centre was established under the guidance of Prof. Somasundara Bharati. Subsequently the centre was transformed into a full-fledged department of Tamil Literary Linguistic Studies in 1952. Parallel courses like \textit{Siddhanta Vituvan, Ilakkiya Vituvan} and \textit{Ilakkana Vituvan} on the model of Sanskrit were instituted in 1940.\textsuperscript{213} A two-year BoL degree course in Tamil was introduced in 1944. Thus within the span of fifteen years Annamalai University was able to develop different branches of Tamil studies. In a short period, it transformed Tamil into a subject worthy of higher research and learning. The fact of the matter was that the Annamalai University made a scintillating contribution to the development of Tamil studies compared to the long existing University of Madras.

In its commitment to introduce Tamil as a medium of instruction initially at the intermediate level, the Annamalai University adopted a scheme to award prizes for the best Tamil textbooks. Prizes worth about 1000 rupees were announced with a view to stimulate interest in the field of translation. Every year such incentives were given from logic to inorganic chemistry.\textsuperscript{214} Similar motivating methods were also implemented in creating interest on Tamil music. Prizes were given for the best Tamil ‘kirtanas’ (songs) based on the ancient \textit{pan system}. All these songs were subsequently compiled by the University and published with notation for public use.\textsuperscript{215}

Annamalai University also endeavoured to publish old Tamil classics with proper commentaries, paraphrase notes and concordance. P. A. Subramanya Shastri’s \textit{Tolkappiya Sollatikaram} (1931), T. K. Chidambaranatha Pillai’s \textit{Kambaramayanam} (1937), Na. Mu. Venkataram Nattar’s \textit{Silappatikaram} with commentary (1938) and K. Vellai Varanar’s \textit{Panneeru Tirumurai} (1946) were some of the enduring

\textsuperscript{213}Nambi Arooran, \textit{Tamil Renaissance}, pp. 136-37.
\textsuperscript{214}\textit{The Annamalai University Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1929-54}, pp. 178-179.
\textsuperscript{215}Ibid., p. 181.
publications of the University in Tamil. It may be said that in the first two decades of its existence, Annamalai University did a commendable job in establishing various branches of Tamil studies, patronising musical, publicational and translation related activities and promoting high standard of Tamil research. In this respect, it may be said to have fulfilled the purpose for which it was founded.

In the preceding pages an attempt was made to study a new development in the public sphere in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, viz., the development of modern Tamil language promotion associations. The advent of Europeans in general and the missionaries in particular marked the beginning of a cultural transformation in Tamil society. Missionary effort to modernise Tamil, though predicated on the evangelical lines, created a possibility for a range of intellectual activities. Printing as a facilitating agency played its part, though on a limited scale, in accentuating this process. It was the process of colonial modernisation, which enabled the Tamil society to grapple with new possibilities and intellectual challenges and identity questions. Rediscovery of Tamil classics and the subsequent spurt in literary activities created a spirit of renaissance in the beginning of the twentieth century. Imbued with a pride in the glorious past, the Tamil intelligentsia founded language associations, started academic journals and published Tamil classics with a view to restore Tamil from its fallen position to its pristine glory. Preparation of Tamil lexicon with state aid was undoubtedly the result of the official recognition accorded to the linguistic potentials of Tamil and the demand for a Tamil University was the natural outcome of the agenda of the Tamil intelligentsia, the promotion of Tamil language which was central to the process of the growth of a new Tamil identity consciousness.