Conclusion
CONCLUSION

Without fear of contradiction, it can be said that ‘The Thina Thanthi’ is the leading daily news sheet in Tamil Nadu. Started in 1942, during the war years, this paper has shown phenomenal progress in a short period of time and has won the largest readership of any single vernacular daily in the whole of India. No other paper incorporates in its newscast such a vast spectrum of matters of public interest, Politics, Economics, Societal issues, Commerce, Trade, Entertainment and spirituality. To Si. Pa. Aditanar goes the credit of making ‘The Thina Thanthi’ an integral part of everyday life in Tamil Nadu.

Born on 27.9.1905, Aditanar evinced keen interest in the Fourth Estate even in his formative years. At age 15 he won a prize for his contribution to a Calcutta based newspaper. As a student also he was preoccupied with the ambition of his boyhood, to start a newspaper. In London, as a student of Law and Economics, he contributed articles and cartoons to magazines in India and Africa and supplemented his income. At Singapore, his first port of call after becoming a Barrister, he had the starting of a newspaper as his priority. Braving strong opposition from his family, Aditanar crossed the Rubicon
at Madurai with his first daily, ‘Madurai Murasu’. He had two ambitions. One was to run a daily in Tamil that would set new standards in vernacular journalism. The other objective was to serve the cause of Tamil to the best of his ability.

When the daily ‘The Madurai Murasu’ ran into trouble, Aditanar launched his weekly ‘Thamizhan’. The first issue hit the stands on the 23rd August 1942. Concurrently plans were also afoot for the starting of a Tamil Daily. So, ‘The Thanthi’, the fore runner of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ was launched as a daily on 01.11.1942. Aditanar stopped publication of ‘Thamizhan’ in 1944 so that he could expend all his energy on making his daily one of the best in India. Thanks to his efforts, his paper has won the distinction of being the most widely read newspaper in Asia. The Madras edition appeared in 1944. In 1947, Aditanar started ‘The Thinathaal’ in Salem and in 1948, ‘The Thina Thoothu’ in Tiruchi.

At this point of time, there was a great shortage of newsprint. So Aditanar decided to make his own newsprint. He started the ‘Sun Paper Mills’ near Aryonayagipuram (Cheramahadevi) overcoming a series of teething troubles. This unit grew from strength to strength. Besides supplying all the newsprint ‘The Thina Thanthi’
needed, newsprint made by this mill met the requirements of a large number of dailies and periodicals in Tamil Nadu. Here again, the credit goes to Aditanar, who overcame one hurdle after another before making this concern what it is today.

All the editions registered spectacular growth. In 1958, all the editions were given the common name Thina Thanthi. In 1965, the paper celebrated its silver jubilee. Starting with Madurai Murasu, 'Thina Thanthi' and 'Thamizhan', Aditanar soon presided over a vast newspaper empire, the like of which was not seen in India at any time.

After 35 years in the Newspaper business, Aditanar felt bold to enter politics in a big way, mainly because of the great interest shown by his second son Sivanthi Aditanar in the Newspaper Industry. As early as 1959, Aditanar handed over managerial charge to Sivanthi Aditanar. The enterprising Aditanar launched five more editions from Nellai, Salem, Coimbatore, Vellore and Cuddalore. The Pondicherry edition was the tenth in a long line. From humble beginnings in 1942, this paper has grown to the extent of simultaneously publishing ten separate editions each morning from ten different centres.
No other vernacular paper has won this distinction - ten editions from ten centres. This must be a world record even for English papers. This something all Tamils should be proud of.

Aditanar wanted his paper to be a composite package rich in variety. It is more than a carrier of news. It is also a medium of entertainment unthought of by others. Film News, Sport Reports, Medical Hints, Spiritual Messages, Reviews, Market Information, Pictorial Serials, General Knowledge, Cartoons, Jokes (illustrated), Articles and Short Stories went hand in hand with Political News, International New, Regional and Local events. The paper also flashes news connected with elections earlier than the rest. Its Astrological feature is a favourite with all readers as also are the Interviews with V.I.P. (mostly film stars).

Aditanar set great store on cartoons and caricatures. The cartoons, which appear every morning, are in fact conveyors of symbolic meaning. No other newspaper publishes cartoons on its first page everyday like ‘The Thina Thanthi’. Aditanar’s master plan for ‘The Thina Thanthi’ included features that were not news oriented but recreational in nature. And he wanted all these to be part of the daily fare for all readers. Two jokes (illustrated), ‘Channakiyal sol’
(illustrated) and ‘Adipandaaram sings’ (also illustrated) form part of Thina Thanthi’s daily fare. Daily, bi-weekly and Weekly Astrological forecasts also find place in the paper.

Besides catering to every taste in the form of skits, detective stories and short works of fiction, Aditanar has also a children’s corner in his daily. For more than 42 years, the illustrated serial Kanni Theevu (Adventures of Sindbad) has been a daily feature in ‘The Thina Thanthi’. As for the exhaustive interviews periodically featured in ‘The Thina Thanthi’ the subjects have always been outstanding achievers in different fields of endeavour - Politics, Art., Literature, Science, Industry, Sports and the World of entertainment.

The Short Stories, published in ‘The Thina Thanthi’ have domestic themes, involving relationship between husband and wife, parents and children as also Romantic involvements. Some stories are thrillers featuring supernatural agencies, a genre favoured by about 25% of the readers.

According to Aditanar, a newspaper should not only be a medium of news carriage. It should also fill the reader’s leisure with soothing recreation, with this in view, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ issues periodic supplements which contain stories and articles of societal
import. On a weekly basis, there are two Supplements. Besides two supplements every week, ‘the Thina Thanthi’ issues numbers on special occasions. Deepavali Number, Pongal Number, Christmas Number and also an Independence Day Number come under this category.

It could be said that the supplements issued free with the paper on specific days of the week, account for its immense popularity. On Fridays it is either the Velli Malar (Silver Supplement) or the Golden Supplement - Thanga Malar. On Saturdays, the supplements are Illaingar Malar (Youth) or Muthucharam (a collection of pearls). On Sundays, the supplements are either supplement or Kudumab Malar (Family). In general, these supplements are packed with General Knowledge pieces, Employment News, Film News, Reviews besides short stories and topical reviews and articles. In the supplement, for instance, there is such varied fare for every taste that it makes absorbing reading. The Kudumba Malar (Family special) has such features as General Knowledge tips, Culinary suggestions, Short stories, Serials and Haiku type versification. No wonder it is the favourite of women everywhere.

‘The Thina Thanthi’s projection of news, particularly news about political happenings, has set new standards in communicative
journalism. The head line, while epitomising the news to follow, merges with the main body of the news spread and because of this its news casts are the best understood in Tamil Nadu. Even before independence, the paper played its role in rousing patriotic fervour in Tamil Nadu, highlighting the role played by Gandhiji in our freedom struggle. As for its casting of War news, the maps, the arrows and the diagrams that accompanied the news spread were highly instructive. Besides enlightening its readers on the great price we had to pay for our freedom, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ also took care to caution its readers on the need to preserve this freedom by acting as responsible citizens.

‘The Thina Thanthi’ has never failed in its main duty - to keep its readers posted with the latest news, national and international. After India became free, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ kept track of all that its first Prime Minister did in the service of India. Nehru’s photograph always adorned the paper’s first page and every event he was connected with was front page news.

‘The Thina Thanthi’ also projected news about happenings in Tamil Nadu. The Anti-Hindi Agitation, an epoch making event, received full coverage in the columns of this paper. As this protest against the imposition of Hindi was an indication of the Tamil
Renaissance, Aditanar, a fervent votary of the Tamil cause, flashed news about the agitation on the first page with headlines fashioned in a manner that enthused the agitators.

In the same way ‘The Thina Thanthi’ also carried news about Indira Gandhi, her assumption of office, the liberation of Bangladesh, operation Blue Star, the Emergency, comeback after a stunning defeat and finally her death at the hands of her own security guards - ‘The Thina Thanthi’ followed every episode in an eventful life and reported everything faithfully. It did the same for Rajvi Gandhi, his meteoric rise at a young age and untimely death at Sriperumbudur. It has also kept its readers well informed of the careers of all the chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu from Rajaji to Karunanidhi. Subsequently it covered the tenure of M.G.R. and Jeyalalitha with telling effect.

‘The Thina Thanthi’ has also carried authentic news about the important happenings over the past 50 years - the Indo-Pak wars, the Coup in the Maldives, the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, the assassination of Kennedy, the execution of Bhutto and the disintegration of Russia. It also reported the demise of great leader - Rajaji, Periyar, Annadurai, Kamaraj and M.G.R. in a poignant way.
As one with an intimate knowledge of popular preferences, Aditanar knew that for most people, cinema was the favourite, least expensive recreation, and so he made news about the tinsel world an important feature of ‘The Thina Thanthi’'s News spread. He gave his readers all that they wanted to know about the Film World and its leading lights. So, the columns of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ featured a wide spectrum of Film News, ranging from ‘shooting schedules’ to reviews, commentaries, interviews and titbits. The interviews with leading film personalities have been a special feature of this paper. ‘The Thina Thanthi’ also offers little insights regarding the private life of stars, their hobbies, recreations, tastes and preferences.

Not only films on show but those in the making are also commented on. While the former are reviewed critically, the films on the anvil also receive attention. Readers are provided some advance information on the cast, theme, highlights, and even the musical score. On Tuesdays and Fridays, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ floods its columns about news from the film world, pictures from forthcoming films and extra titbits being special features. There is also a lively Question / Answer feature in which the editor answers questions raised by readers on cinema. On occasions popular film personalities - Directors, Actors,
Technicians and other V.I.P.'s answer questions sent to them through 'The Thina Thanthi' and every reader who poses a question has the chance of getting a reply in his favorite paper.

To Aditanar goes the entire credit for making 'The Thina Thanthi' the most widely read vernacular daily in India. His phenomenal success rests on one basic factor- his understanding of the common man and of what his preference. Whatever he did for his paper, he did with the interest of his readers in view. He was meticulous in the choice of letters, their shape and size, which combined in a word, the basis of a sentence. Every headline was so fashioned that it arrested attention instantly. The news spread was in the language familiar to the common man and, for this reason, it hit the target every time. Even in translations the equivalents were chosen from words and expressions known to most people. It could be said that the growth of 'The Thina Thanthi' as a newspaper coincided the growth of self-awareness and self reliance in Tamil Nadu. From 1956, on which year 'The Thina Thanthi' led the rest in net sales; it has been one continuous story of success.

'The Thina Thanthi' occupies a position in The Fourth Estate unapproached by any daily in Tamil Nadu because it is the only
paper that gives the reader what he wants in the language known to
him. Any one, picking up ‘The Thina Thanthi’ for the first time,
becomes an avid reader of the newspaper thereafter. No wonder it has
drawn praise from scholars, seers, statesmen, stars artistes, artisans and
academicians. It is the paper that has made the common man in rural
India conscious of his rights. By keeping the common man well
informed, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ and its founder Aditanar have done a
great service to India’s democratic polity.

Totally distancing itself from Sectarian ideologies based on
caste, creed or politics, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ owes allegiance to only
one principle viz., service to Tamil and Tamils. By sticking to this
principle, he has made ‘The Thina Thanthi’ the People’s Paper. This
is an achievement of a very high order, unsurpassed by anyone before
or after him.

The Aditanar Legacy

Tamil Nadu has never been the same after Aditanar started
taking interest in its affairs. It could be said that he was the very first
to act upon the belief that others besides the educated urban elite had
a place in the scheme of things. He destroyed the hypocritical notion
that public opinion was what the privileged segments of society thought.
That the beedi worker, the rickshaw puller, the road layer, the sweeper, and the meaniest artisan labouring in rural anonymity also had the right to information and the right to express an opinion, was vindicated by Aditanar’s efforts to inculcate the reading habit among the semi-literate rural folk. Subsequent events have proved him right. No longer do the urban elite decide the outcome of elections. The (people’s) power centre has shifted to villages. Aditanar and his ‘The Thina Thanthi’ have brought this about.

Just by being himself, by preferring the language of everyday conservation for his paper, Aditanar has brought about a great change in the Tamil mind set. The synthetic structures of the prudish urbanites have given way to straightforward, simple, instantaneously identifiable words and phrases. Tamils have to thank Aditanar for proving that Tamil expressions can be more forceful and elegant without Sanskritized interpolations.

Aditanar deserves praise for proving that the common man is as good if not better than the ‘uncommon’ elite or poor are entitled to respect, to the good things of life.

That his legacy is well taken care of by the Prince of Sport Patrons is most gratifying. It is just as well that Mr. Sivanthi
Aditan, a multifaceted genius, keeps away from politics. He is too good for politics, who cold never fit in. Sivanthi Aditan is the Pride of Tamil Nadu, a role model for aspiring young men and an inspiration to all who believe in self Respect, Probity, Decency and Morality.