

People,
Language, Literature, Culture, etc.

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PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE

The land of Tamil speech and people was in ancient times ruled by three famous lines of king, the Chera, Chola, and Pandiya. . The land ruled by them was called Chera Nadu (Chera country), Chola Nadu (Chola country), and Pandiya Nadu (Pandiya country) respectively.

The landmass covered by the present-day Kerala State in the South India formed a major part of Chera Nadu, the Central and Northern parts of present Tamil Nadu were the then Chola Nadu and the Southern part of Tamil Nadu was the Pandiya Nadu.

Tamils are of Dravidian origin. Many historians claim that the Dravidians, before the dawn of the history of the Tamils, were spread all over India. For various reason they split into small groups. Consequently, the original language also split into different languages. Tamil is found to have retained about 80 per cent of the features of the original Dravidian language.

There are three major sub-groups in the Dravidian family of language, namely, South Dravidian, Central Dravidian, and North Dravidian.

The languages of the South Dravidian sub-group is mainly,

1. Tamil
2. Malayalam
3. Kodagu
4. Kota
5. Toda
6. Kannada
7. Tulu

The languages of the Central Dravidian sub-group are mainly:

1. Telugu
2. Gondi
3. Konda
4. Pengo
5. Manda
6. Kui
7. Kuvi
8. Kolami
9. Nayki
10. Parji
11. Gadba

The languages of the North Dravidian sub-group are mainly:

1. Kurukh
2. Malto
3. Brahui

Tamil is spoken predominantly in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It is spoken also in several other Indian states. In addition, Tamil speaking populations are found in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, Fiji Islands and South Africa. Recent Tamil immigrants are found all over the world. The distribution of Tamil-speaking population found in the States of India according to the book 'Distribution of Languages in India in States and Union Territories', 1971, is given below:

State/Union Territory	Tamil-Speaking Population	Percentage
Andhra Pradesh	552,42	1.27
Assam & Meghalaya	2992	0.02
Bihar	15,167	0.03
Gujarat	15,995	0.06
Jammu & Kashmir	823	0.02
Kerala	505,340	2.37
Madhya Pradesh	28,735	0.07
Tamil Nadu	34,817,421	84.51
Maharashtra	233,988	0.46
Karnataka	990,409	3.38
Orissa	9160	0.04
Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.	6128	0.02
Rajasthan	3564	0.01
Uttar Pradesh	9222	0.01
West Bengal	21,454	0.05
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	14,518	12.62
Delhi	37,343	0.92
Lackshadeep, and Minicoy Islands	113	0.35
Manipur	834	0.08
Tripura	82	-----
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	11	0.01
Goa, Daman, and D	3347	0.39
Pondicherry	419,830	88.95
Nagaland	469	0.09
Arunachal Pradesh	638	0.14

TAMIL LITERATURE

The recorded history of the Tamil literature can be grouped broadly into seven periods. They are:

1. Sangam Period - 3rd Century BCE-2nd Century CE
2. Later Sangam Period - 2nd Century CE- 6th Century CE
3. Pallava Period - 6th Century CE-9th Century CE
4. Chola Period - 9th Century CE-12th Century CE
5. Nayak Period - 3rd Century CE-17th Century CE
6. European Period - 17th Century CE-19th Century CE
7. Present Period - 20th Century CE onwards

For our purposes, the Tamil literature may broadly be classified into:

- (i) Sangam Classics
- (ii) Bhakthi or Devotional Literature
- (iii) Ethics, and
- (iv) Modern Literature

- (i) Sangam Classics

The early Tamil literatures are called Sangam Classics. Though there are controversies over the time of the Classics, generally the period between 200 BCE and 500 CE is considered the period of Sangam. Sangam Classics are mostly descriptive. They describe nature, human feelings, love, lovers, husband-wife relations, war, etc. *Pathuppattu*, an anthology of ten poems, and *Ettuthokai*, a collection of eight anthologies, are two major Sangam Classics.

The following are known as *Pathuppattu*.

1. Thirumurukarruppadaï
2. Porunararruppadaï
3. Perumpanarruppadaï
4. Sirupanarruppadaï
5. Mullaippattu
6. Maduraikanchi
7. Nedunadvadaï
8. Kurinçippattu

9. Pattinappalai
10. Malaipadukadam

The following are known as *Ettuthokai*.

1. Narrinai
2. Kurunthokai
3. Aynkurunuru
4. Pathirruppathu
5. Paripadal
6. Kalithokai
7. Agananuru
8. Purananuru

In addition to these, there is another set of poems known as *Pathinenkizhkankku* that includes the following:

1. Naladiar
2. Nanmanikkadikai
3. Iniyavai Narpathu
4. Inna Narpathu
5. Kar Narpathu
6. Kalavazhi Narpathu
7. Thinaimozhi Aymathu
8. Thinaimalai Nurrayamathu
9. Aynthinai Aymathu
10. Aynthinai Ezhu pthu
11. Thirikadugam
12. Thirukkural
13. Asarkkovai
14. Pazhamozhi Nanuru
15. Sirupanjamulam
16. Mudumozhikkanci
17. Elathi
18. Kaynnilai

Many of the poems in this collection seem to belong to the post-Sangham Age. It is widely accepted that among these, *Thirukkural* was composed before the second century CE. The *Thirukkural* consists of 1330 Kural, which are short verses of seven words. Thiruvalluvar is the author of this book. This book consists of three major divisions, namely, Arathuppal, Porutpal and Inbathupal.

Arathupal deals with family life and ascetic life, which are called Illaram and Turavaram respectively. Perhaps this could be somewhat equated with the Sanskrit division Dharma (virtue). Porutpal deals with the rulers and the ruled and all the other aspects relevant to them. Perhaps this could be equated with the Sanskrit division Artha (meaning). Inbathuppal deals with love both premarital and extramarital. This could be somewhat equated with Kama (marital love). In short, *Thirukkural* is a very good guide for life and an excellent literary work to enjoy. This book has been translated into many Indian and foreign languages.

The famous Tamil work *Silappathikaram* belongs to the later Sangam period. Saint Ilango, a Chera prince, wrote this epic. *Silappathikaram* is the story of a chaste woman, Kannaki. All Tamil people know the story of Kannaki. The author, Ilango, says in the prologue that the work is based on the truth that (i) a chaste woman is worthy of worship even by great people, (ii) the Aram (Dharma) becomes the destroyer of the kings who do injustice and (iii) the fate inevitably makes one to suffer the effect of one's own actions. There is another epic known as *Manimekalai* by Sathnar, a contemporary of Saint Ilango. These two epics are known together as 'Twin Epics'.

(ii) Bhakthi or Devotional Literature

Bhakthi literature deals with religious philosophy, the history of saints, etc. Most of these are devotional poems. Religious teaching entered Tamil literature for the first time in *Manimekalai*. Sathanar the author of this book believed in Buddhism. The philosophy of Buddha is extensively discussed in *Manimekalai*.

After the 7th century CE, there was an acute fight between Saivites and Jainas as well as Saivites and Buddhists. The Nayanmars, the saints of Saivism, took many pains to spread and establish their religion all over Tamil Nadu. They were, to a great extent, successful in their attempt. Saivism as well as Vaishnavism clashed with Jainism and Buddhism. Consequently Jainism and Buddhism lost their ground in Tamil Nadu. Jains, Saivites, and Vaishnavites extensively used the medium of literature for the propagation of their religions. *Sivagasinthamani* is the outstanding work of Jains. *Kambaramayanam* is the most celebrated work of the Vaishnavites. *Thiruvacakam* is one of the most popular Saiva Bhakthi songs. Apart from these, there are many works for various religious groups.

(iii) Ethics

The major part of Thirukkural deals with morals. Literature was chosen as the best instrument to teach morals. The poetic works Naladiar, Nanmanikkadikai, Elathi, Sirupancamulam, Athiccudi, Konraiventhan, etc., are very popular in Tamil Nadu. Many memorize the verses of these works.

(iv) Modern Literature

Modern literature must be dealt with under two sub-headings:

(1) Prose and (2) Poetry.

It may be noted that prose writings have gained more popularity in this century. Prose style is chosen as a better medium for novels, short stories, essays, etc.

1. Prose: Prose literature may be generally classified into two components: (a) Novels and (b) Short stories.

a. Novels

The first novel published in Tamil was *Prathaba Mudaliar Sarithiram*.

Vedanayagam Pillai who lived in the 19th century wrote this novel. Now there are a number of novels in Tamil. Among the recent novelists Akilan, N. Parthasarathi, Jayagandhan, Sandilyan Ashoka Mitram and others are eminent writers.

Mu. Varadarajan's *Kallo Kaviyamo*, *Nencil Oru Mul and Akal Vilakku*,

Akilan's *Pavvai Vilakku* and *Nencin Alikal*,

Parthasarathy's *Kurincimalar* and *Ponvilangu*,

Sandilyan's *Yavana Rani*, *Kadal Pura*, and *Raja Muthirai*, etc, are excellent works in the sphere of Tamil novels. Also Akilan received the 'Gnana Peeth Award' for his novel, *Cithirappavai*.

b. Short Stories

Puthumaippithan was considered as an outstanding short story writer and paved the way for the future field of short story in Tamil. He was considered as king of short stories in Tamil. Jayakantan is one of the eminent and popular storywriters in Tamil. He is not only a storywriter, but also a novelist. His novels *Parisukkupo*, *Vazhkai Azhaikkiratu*, etc., are worth reading. Among his novels, *Akkinippiravesam* is extremely good. Another storywriter who deserves our appreciation is R. Sutamani. She has written many stories among which *Unam* stands unique. Jayasirpiyan, Sundara Ramasamy, A. Madhavan, Ashoka Mithiran, Nava Bharathi P. Pukazhenth, Puvai S. Arumugam and others are well known writers in the field of Tamil short story writing.

Apart from these stories, there are a number of stories published in several weekly and monthly magazines. *Kumudam, Anandha Vikadan, Kalaimagal, Kalki, Tiipam, Kungumam, Taay, Minnambalam* and several others are the journals that give primary importance to stories.

2. Poetry

The late poet Subramanya Bharathi popularly known as 'Bharathi' started a new era in the history of poetry. He used poetry as an instrument to arouse patriotism, and was successful to a great extent. His poetry went not only to the hands of scholars but also to the hands of common people. The complete works of Bharathi were published under the title *Bharathiyar Kavithaikal*. Among his works *Kannan Pattu, Kuyil Pattu* and *Panchali Sabadham* are outstanding.

Another poet the late Bharathidhasan, the beloved follower of Bharathi, is the most celebrated and outstanding poet in Tamil Nadu. He followed Bharathi in making Tamil poetry very popular and in using it as the best instrument to inspire people. But he deviated from Bharathi in many respects. Bharathi believed in God but Bharathidhasan did not. While Bharathi was preoccupied by the problems of the freedom struggle and other national interests, Bharathidhasan was particular in the development of the Tamil Nadu, Tamil language, Tamil people, and Tamil culture. Among his literary works, *Pandiyar Parisu, Kudumba Vilakku, Tamil Ilakkam* and *Azhakin Sirippu* are highly valuable.

Besides these two poets, Kannadhasan, Abddul Rahuman, Vairamuthu, Mudiyyarasan, Surada, Tamizh Azhagan, K. C. S. Arunachalam, Ponnadiyan, and Mu. Metha and others enrich the field of Tamil poetry. Kannadhasan's *Attanathi Athimanthi* and *Mangani* and Mudiyyarasan's *Pungodi* are excellent works. Sudhanantha Bharathi is a living poet in Tamil Nadu. Sri Aurobindo influences him. His work *Bharatha Sakthi* is very famous. This book won the Raja Rajan Award of 100,000 rupees.

Besides these works, there are a number of anthologies of poems published in this century. Several poems are being published in weekly and monthly magazines. *Mullaicaram, Kavidhai* and a few other journals give primary importance to poetry.

In this connection, mention should be made about the new or modern poetry. The modern poets, Pichaimurthi, Mani Vaidheswaran and others are interested in modern poetries. They are of the opinion that the Tamil literary field needs new experiments and new developments and they believe that their attempt may contribute something to the Tamil literature.

TAMIL GRAMMATICAL TRADITION

In general, grammar includes phonology, morphology and syntax. But Classical Tamil tradition seems to differ from this. The earliest grammar *Tholkappiyam* deals not only with phonology, morphology and syntax but also with personal and impersonal, internal and external aspects of life, beauty of literature, behavioral aspects of human life, Tamil linguistic traditions, etc., and this portion is termed Porulathikaram.

According to the tradition that Tholkappiyar followed a grammar is three fold:

- (1) Ezhuthu (sounds and letters),
- (2) (2) Col (words),
- (3) (3) Porul (meaning).

Later it was five fold:

- (1) Ezhuthu,
- (2) (2) Col,
- (3) (3) Porul,
- (4) Yappu (versification), and
- (5) Ani (beauty of literature).

Tholkappiyam:

Tholkappiyam, the earliest grammar available in Tamil, deals with phonology and morphophonemics in the first part known as Ezuttatikaaram. It deals with morphology and syntax in the second part known as Collatikaaram. In the third part known as Porulatikaaram, it deals with the subject matter of literature, some literary and linguistic traditions, etc. This grammar is considered to have been written in the early pre-Christian era.

Nannul: Next to *Tholkappiyam*, *Nannul* is the outstanding work in the field of Tamil grammars. Saint Pavananti who lived around the 13th century CE wrote this grammar. This grammar contains only Ezhuthu and Col. The first chapter Ezhuthu deals with phonology and morphophonemic, and the second chapter Col deals with morphology and syntax.

ARTS, ARCHITECTURE, etc.,

Art of Music

The ancient Tamils possessed a highly developed system of music and musical instruments. Their musical culture was at a high level. Works dealing exclusively with the science of music were written during the Sangam period, but were lost long ago. The *Silappthikaram* of the second century A. D. throws flood

of light on the music of the Tamils. Music in Tamil nomenclature is *isai*. They had five kinds of *Pans* (specific melody type), namely Mullai, Kurinji, Marudham, Neythal and Palai. Apart from this, they had seven musical notes, viz., Kural, Thuttam, Kaykkilai, Uzhai, Ili, Vilari and Tharam. These seven notes might be roughly equated with the seven modern musical notes *sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, and ni* (*saptha svaras* ‘seven notes’). Tamil books associate the following animals and birds with the *saptha svaras*: *sa* with beetle, *ri* with parrot, *ga* with horse, *ma* with elephant, *pa* with cuckoo, *dha* with cow, and *ni* with goat. Whereas the Sanskrit tradition of Bharata compare *saptha svaras* with the cries of animals and birds, viz., *sa* with peacock, *ri* with cow, *ga* with goat, *ma* with heron, *pa* with Indian nightingale, *dha* with horse, and *ni* with elephant. Through the Sangam works one can learn that the Tamils had many musical instruments. They had their famous yazhs (kind of harps). Sagotta yazh, Peri yazh, Siri yazh, Mahara yazh, Sengattu yazh, and are the names denoting different kinds of yazhs. Sagotta yazh was a stage instrument. Peri yazh was a large harp consisting of twenty-one strings while Siri yazh with seven strings. Among all yazhs, Peri yazh and Siri yazh seems to be very ancient. Music was always associated with dancing in ancient times. The treatment of music as an independent of its relation to dancing is found only in later works after *Silappathikaram*.

It appears that in the period of Nayanmars and Alwars, the native system of music was retained with some deviations. Some of the pans are still used in the recitals of the Devaram hymns. In the year 1943 the patron of Tamil language, literature and arts, Dr. Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar started the Tamil Music Academy at Chennai and thereby he attempted to restore and enrich the Tamil music.

Dance

Tamil is broadly classified into Iyal ‘prose’, Isai ‘poetry’ and Nadakam ‘drama’. Nattiyam or Kuthu is mainly concerned with dance. The ancient Tamils had two kinds of Kuthu: (1) Vethiyal and (2) Podhuviyal. Vethiyal is especially meant for royal families and Podhuviyal is meant for the public. Later on this convention had disappeared. Since the kings had slowly lost their power the arts patronized by them also gradually lost their glamour. Thus the Vethiyal type of drama became extinct. The Silappathikaram furnishes the legendary origin of dancing. The ancient Tamil country is the home of the classical dance known as Bharata Natyam. Drama and dance gradually emerged as two different branches. In 1960s and 1970s cinema overshadowed drama.

Drawing and Painting:

The kings also patronized the art of drawing and painting. All over Tamil Nadu one can see temples, small and big, and almost all the temples are decorated by drawings and paintings. The paintings at Cithannavasal near Pudhukkottai in Tanjavur district are worth seeing.

Architecture and Scripture

Tamil Nadu is famous for huge temples and marvelous Gopurams (temple towers). Raja Rajan, the Chola king (11 A.D.), constructed a temple in Tanjavur. This temple Gopuram is very tall and it is called Thanjaipperiya Koil, the big temple of Tanjavur. His son Rajendra Chola, who subdued the rulers of the region up to the river Ganges, constructed another big temple in Gangai Konda Cholapuram. Except that the Thanjai periya Koil is bigger in size than the temple in Gangai Konda Cholapuram, they are exactly similar. The former was named as Rajarajeswaram and the latter was named as Gangai Kondacholeswaram. These temples are famous for the huge Nandis 'bulls' and Lingams. The temples of Madurai Meenakshi Amman, Kanchipuram Varadharajapperumal, and Chidambaram Natarajar are worth seeing. The skill of Tamils in architecture and sculpture can be seen in these temples. The five Rathams (cars) carved in rocks at Mahabalipuram are extremely beautiful. There are also other works that show the skill of Tamils in sculpture. The Collections of Vighras 'icons,' statues, drawings and paintings, etc., found in the museums of Madras, Tanjavur, Pattiswaram and Kaverippumattinam deserve special mention.

SOCIO-CULTURE

Day-to-Day Life

The Tamils are mainly rice-eaters. Sambar, Rasam, and Thayir 'curd' or Mor 'buttermilk' is mixed along with rice. Potato, beans, carrots, cabbage, eggplant, okra, and other vegetables are the side dishes. The majority of the Tamils are non-vegetarians, though their intake is mainly vegetarian food. On special occasions a kind of sweet dish known as Payasam is served. After taking meals, they occasionally chew betel leaf and areca nut.

In urban areas, people favor the eatables (tiffin), Iddli, Dhosai, Puri, etc., and they drink coffee, tea or milk. In rural areas people take rice. Nowadays almost all the villages are being urbanized in this respect. Especially youngsters are fond of Tiffin in the morning times. It may also be mentioned that there are people in villages who usually take Kanchi (rice porridge) in the morning. Iddli, Vadai, Pongal, Upuma, Puri, Chappathi, Dhosai, etc., are the tiffin items. Iddli, Chatini and Sambar are more common items.

As far as clothing is concerned, Tamil men wear Veshti (worn in the so-called lungi fashion) and Sattai 'shirt' and women wear Pudavai 'sari', and Ravikkai 'blouse'. Men wear pants and shirts, too, though it's not very common. Boys wear Kal sattai 'half-pant' and shirt. Young girls wear Dhavani 'half-sari', Pavadai 'petty-coat', and Ravikkai. Some orthodox men adorn themselves with turbans.

Silk saris, namely, Kanchipattu pudavai woven in the town of Kanchipuram in Tami Nadu are famous for their durability and worn by ladies on special occasions. Ladies also wear a variety of ornaments. A few of them are, Modhiram 'ring', Valayal, 'bangle', Mukkuthi 'nose ornament', Thodu 'ear ornament', necklace 'neck ornament', Kolusi 'leg ornament', etc. Married women wear Tali 'mangala sutra' as the symbol for marriage. Generally men wear wristwatch, rings, etc. All these ornaments are made out of gold. In rural areas some people wear earrings, wrist-chains, etc. Almost all the people in the rural areas are agriculturists and agricultural laborers. The office-going people, daily wagers, business people and other laborers inhabit the urban areas.

When known persons meet, they exchange respect and affection by the Tamil phrase **vaanga vanakkam**. This **vaanga vanakkam** (please do come/welcome/greeting) is similar to namasthe or namaskar, the greetings words used widely in the North India. At the time of departure **pooy varukireen** or simply **varukireen** is used. Though this means in the Tamil society literally come but implies now I go and will be back to meet you again.

Festivals

There are a number of festivals observed in Tamil Nadu. Very famous festivals are Pongal, Deepavali and Karthikai. Among them Pongal is considered to be the special festival of Tamil Nadu and it is called Tamizhar Thirunal, the festival of harvest celebrated for four days in mid-January. . Pongal festival takes place towards the final stage of harvest.

The first day of Pongal is known as Bogi or Bogi pandikai. On that day people worship the Rain God. Also, all the old and unusable articles are burnt in bonfires. The second day of Pongal is the Pongal proper. On this day people worship the Sun God. The third day is Mattu Pongal. On this day they bathe the cattle and worship them, as they are the mainstay of farm life. The fourth day is known as Karinal or Kanum Pongal or Kanni Pongal. On this day villages assemble at a public place and many native games. They meet with their friends and relatives on this day. The young virgins pray to the god to get good partners and happy life

Deepavali is enthusiastically celebrated in both urban and rural areas of Tamil Nadu. It is believed that Deepavali is celebrated in memory of the demon Narakasuran who was killed by Lord Vishnu on the day of Deepavali. Symbolically this means god destroys evil.

Karthikai is commonly celebrated by all Tamils putting Diibam (lights) out every night throughout the Tamil month Karthikai. During this period people worship Lord Murugan also called Kartikeyan or Subramanyan son of Lord Siva.

Apart from these popular festivals, there are several other festivals such as car festivals in many villages and towns. Tamil Nadu is full of fairs and festivals in particular, car festivals.

There are also a number of folk deities who are worshipped with equal if not more fervor all over Tamil Nadu. Also the rituals and ceremonies that take place at birth, naming, ear boring, puberty, marriage and death differ from region to region, from caste to caste, and from religion to religion.

UNIVERSITIES IN TAMIL NADU

There are fifteen universities in Tamil Nadu engaged in the development of the Tamil language, literature, culture, etc. They are namely, Annamalai University at Annamalainagar, established 75 years ago; Madras University, which was established over 150 years ago; Madurai Kamaraj University at Madurai; Tami University at Tanjavur; Bharathiyar University at Coimbatore and Bharatidasan University at Tiruchirappalli and like. Apart from these universities, the International Institute of Tamil Studies functioning at Madras also works for the development of Tamil studies. There is also a technological university in Madras named Anna University. Mother Theresa Woman's University at Kodaikkanal and Gandhigram Deemed University are the other universities in Tamil Nadu.

Tamils have made significant contributions to Indian culture and the Independence struggle. People like V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and Poet Subramania Bharati are notable among them. In the sciences, Sir C. V. Raman and Professor Chandrasekhar received the Nobel Prize from Tamil Nadu. There are many novelists who have received the prestigious Sahitya Academy awards and Gnana Peeth Awards for their outstanding literary works.

Tamil Diglossia: Spoken and Written

There is a wide gap between spoken and written Tamil. Spoken Tamil is used for face-to-face communication or in informal occasions whereas written Tamil is used during official speeches and other formal occasions. Spoken Tamil is not generally written; thus, while writing, the written form is invariably used. While there is a wide gap between the two forms of Tamil, there are certain rules the use of that help the learner to derive one form of language from another.

Tamil studies in India and Srilanka

There are number of universities in India and Sri Lanka which have facilities for Tamil Studies. In India (excepting Tamil Nadu) and Sri Lanka the following institutions have programs for Tamil studies:

1. Punjab University, Chandigarh
2. Punjab University, Patiala

3. Delhi University, Delhi
4. Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh
5. Agra University, Agra
6. Lucknow University, Lucknow
7. Allahabad University, Allahabad
8. Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
9. Calcutta University, Calcutta
10. Osmania University, Hyderabad
11. Sri Krishna Devaraya University, Anantapur
12. Sri Venkateswara University, Thirupati
13. Karnataka University, Dharwad
14. Mysore University, Mysore
15. Calicut University, Chittoor
16. University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

In Sri Lanka:

17. University of Jaffna
18. University of Colombo
19. Peradeniya University

In the US there are about ten universities that have programs for Tamil language and literatures, and culture etc.