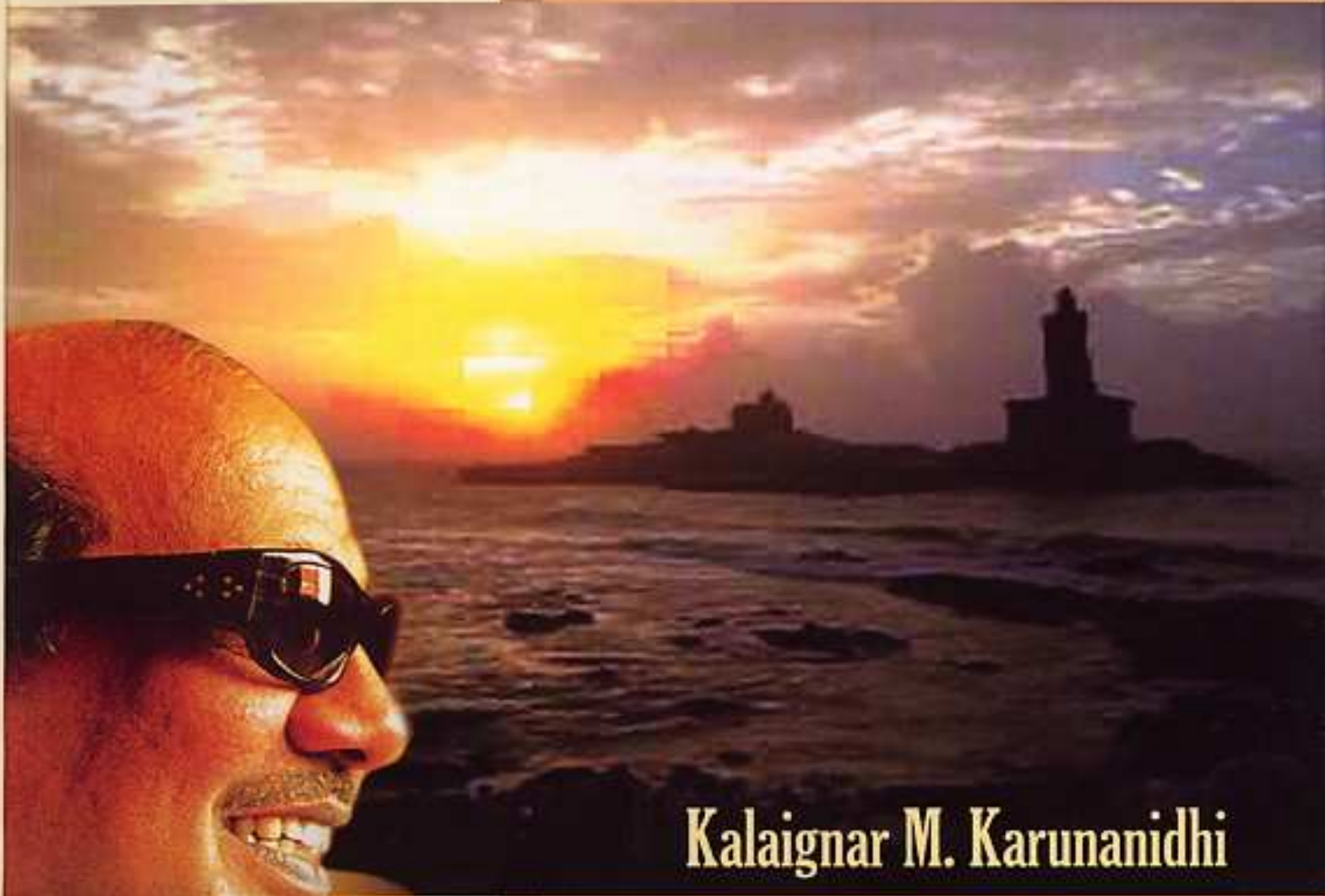


Classical Tamil Historical Milestones



Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi



Central Institute of Classical Tamil
Chennai

**Classical Tamil:
Historical Milestones**

Epistles to the Young Tamil Enthusiasts

Classical Tamil: Historical Milestones

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CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF CLASSICAL TAMIL

Kamarajar Salai, Cheppakkam

CHENNAI

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Classical Tamil: Historical Milestones

Preface

From days of yore, a number of learned men of letters have contributed to the development of Tamil, a classical language of most ancient origin. For the past two hundred years or so, research in Tamil has noticed a phenomenal growth in various forms. As a result of this scholars around the world have come to realise the importance and worth of this great language, Tamil. In 1902, the Tamil scholar Parithimarkalaingar declared that Tamil is a classical language. Even before that in 1856, the foreign scholar Robert Caldwell brought to the notice of the public through his publications that Tamil is a primary, independent classical language. What the scholars in Tamilnadu and countries abroad have been saying for about 150 years that Tamil possesses the characteristics of a classical tongue has been historically recreated, with necessary evidences, by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, Kalaingar.

Through his speeches, writings and governance, Kalaingar stands out as a prominent historian. His epistles, addressed to blood-brothers meant to arouse and awaken the young minds, deserve to be embossed in letters of gold. This book, entitled *Classical Tamil: Historical Milestones*, traces the historical events that led to the declaration of the classical status for Tamil. These epistles are written with the same stylistic beauty and vitality characteristic of his earlier works *Tolkāppiyap pūnkā*, *Kuralōviyam*, *Caṅkattamiḷ* and *Kālap pēlaiyum kavitaic cāvīyum* and others.

Kalaingar, who has brought home the greatness of Classical Tamil through his works based on research, has now come forward to declare the efforts taken for a century with the Central Government in his book *Classical Tamil: Historical Milestones*.

This publication that presents the history of Tamil is bound arouse the enthusiasm of the younger generation and motivate them for interest in Tamil research.

The Central Institute of Classical Tamil feels most honoured in publishing Kalaignar's book that was instrumental in the creation of this Institute.

On behalf of the Institute, we thank Hon'ble Chief Minister Kalaignar for his acceptance to our undertaking this publication.

Chennai-5
17/06/2010

S. Mohan
Director

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Classical Tamil: Historical Milestones

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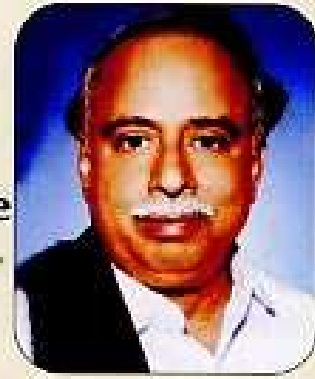
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1

A Welcome Arch to the Classical Tamil Conference

25/12/2009



My dear blood - brother,

You might think that I have come down for taking some rest. No, no, not at all for rest! My real intention is to use my leisure for composing letters to you that might serve as a decorative welcome arch to the Classical Tamil conference for which preparations are under way. These are the stones heaped by me for the construction of such an arch! Including the second world Tamil conference organized by Arignar Anna in 1967, when he was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, so far eight world Tamil conferences have been held. The most successfully organized second world Tamil conference held in Chennai was an eye-opener to people in many ways. Arignar Anna spoke thus with pride:

The greatness of Tamil, the language of the Dravidians, has come to occupy a special place in the comity of nations. The special features of Tamil—its classical eminence—has been appreciated by learned linguists. Tamil is very ancient in its origin. Extremely rich in vocabulary and expression, it is a right medium most suited to conveying nuances of abstract ideas and thought with a high degree of precision and accuracy. Tamil is a native well undefiled. Its linguistic resources are vast: the language can accommodate with consummate ease, long prose narrations, sharp comments, explanations and discussions. It is

manifestly true that Tamil is a pure, sweet and beautiful language. We live at a happy moment when this truth is realized by the world at large.

We have now announced that the conference that is to be held in Coimbatore for five days from June 23 to 27, 2010 will be known as "World Classical Tamil Conference." The preliminary work for the organization of the conference has been completed. The dates and the venue should befit the occasion. We have formed twenty-one committees of learned scholars in various fields. We wish that the seminars of the conference should educate the next generation of young scholars, the plenary sessions kindle and arouse finer feelings for serious study and research, exhibitions remain memorable spectacles, and public parade and pageantry demonstrate our primordial culture and civilization. The conference to be held is the first of its kind. More than a hundred years ago, a lone voice was raised that Tamil should be granted the status of a classical language. Over a period of time that single voice became the unified voice of the Tamil country. Tamil scholars and savants, those in public life too raised their voice, and at long last, the Government of India declared Tamil is a classical language on 12/10/2004. That day is a red-letter-day in the annals of the history of the Tamil country. The voice was raised not today or yesterday but a century ago. On the occasion of the announcement of the world Classical Tamil conference, it is most appropriate that we recall to our memory the incidents of the past that led to the famous declaration and share our joy with our kith and kin.

In 1903, the Tamil scholar V.K. Suryanarayana Sastri, known as Parithimarkalaigñar, concludes his book *The History of the Tamil Language* with these words:

We will show that like Sanskrit, Latin and Greek, Tamil is also a primary classical language. Among the most

languages of a country, that which leads the family of languages and that which is the most valuable of the whole lot is accepted as primary language. According to this logic, Tamil occupies a leading status among Telugu and other languages. From among the languages current in a country, that which can stand on its own without seeking any help from other languages is pure/independent language. The general rule is that such a language aids other languages without seeking aid from or without being affected by them. Without the help of Tamil, languages like Telugu cannot exist; but Tamil can and does function smoothly without any help from other languages. This has been acknowledged by all linguists.



06.06.1870 - 02.11.1903

Having demonstrated its uniqueness, Parithimarkalaignar raised the question, "What is a classical language?" and gave a firm reply:

A pure language that is the result of a highly evolved culture should be termed a classical language. What is truly vital is that Tamil has a well-codified philosophy of literary composition. A language which constantly renews itself with appropriate figurative expressions and that which can convey ideas without any ambiguity is a developed and mature language. This is a marked feature of Tamil. The vocabulary should keep pace with the growth and change in civilization and thus enrich itself. Whenever new words are coined, borrowing from other languages should be avoided. Tamil is in

possession of such a quality; hence it is a language that maintains its purity. That Tamil is a classical language needs no further proof. Apart from all this, from time immemorial great Tamil poets have declared that it is a classical language. By any consideration it can be maintained with utmost certainty that sweet Tamil, the greatest among the southern languages, is a pure, independent, primary classical language.

Thus more than a hundred years ago, Parithimarkalaingar established beyond doubt that Tamil is a classical language. After a good deal of sustained research, he arrived at this conclusion which he kept emphasising till the end of his life. In an article entitled "Primary and Independent Classical Language," published in 1902, in the monthly issue of the journal *Chenthamizh*, edited by Prof Raghava Iyengar, Parithimarkalaingar contended, "Sweet Tamil, the finest of the southern languages, is undoubtedly a primary, independent classical language. It is wrong to equate such a renowned language with other local vernaculars. Laws should be framed accepting Tamil as a classical language among the southern languages, even as Sanskrit is held a classical language among the northern languages." Even after long years of deep research, he held on to the same view which he emphasised time and again.

That is why on 16/11/2006 I issued an order to nationalise the house with an area of 2508 square feet, bearing Door No: 4-219 in which Parithimarkalaingar lived in the village Vilacheri near Thirupparunkundram. The government took over the property from a private party at a cost of rupees 3 lakh, 84 thousand and 534 on 1/12/2006, spent rupees 7 lakh, 90 thousand for renovating the old house and converted it into a memorial installing a bronze bust statue at the entrance to the house. On 31/10/2007, I formally declared open the reconstructed house and unveiled the statue. I

inspected the historical records, rare photographs and signed in the visitors' book with these words:

"Long live the Tamilian who was the first to raise his voice claiming classical status for Tamil."

The DMK government has honoured Parithimarkalaighnar in various ways, as he was the first Tamilian who said that Tamil deserved to be classified as a Classical language. The Government nationalised all the works of Parithimarkalaighnar and granted a cash award of rupees 15 lakh to the surviving legal heirs of his family. The United Democratic Alliance Government released a special postage stamp in memory of Parithimarkalaighnar, in deference to the wishes of the Government of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

Since there was no work in Tamil on the theory of drama, Parithimarkalaighnar, after painstaking research in Tamil, Sanskrit and English, brought out a book on the art of drama. During his tenure as a teacher, the University of Madras planned to remove from its syllabus Tamil and other Indian languages. Parithimarkalaighnar and Thiru Poornalingam Pillai went to the houses of all Tamil savants and took every effort to stall this plan. Tamil continued as a language prescribed for study. The man who laid the deep foundation for the propagation of Tamil as a classical tongue, the one who initiated the century-old struggle for Tamil lived only for 33 years. In the history of the Tamil language, his name finds a permanent place.

Suryanarayana Sastriar, also known as Parithimarkalaighnar, exposed the fraud perpetrated by the Sanskritists. The relevant passage from his book *The History of the Tamil Language* is worth recalling for the benefit of all Tamils, especially those who are the followers of Periyar and Anna.

"The Sanskritists understood the customs and manners of the Tamils and introduced their Sanskrit works which

imposed their beliefs. They created imaginary tales and puranas on the temples and holy centres of Tamil Nadu with a view to spreading their ideology. They introduced the varnasrama system that was alien to the Tamil mind. They gradually established the caste hierarchy of Antanar, Aracar, Vanikar and Velalar. See what Kapilar Akaval tells the Aryas, 'You have brought into this country the caste system as though the castes had been marked since creation.' They got into the good books of the Tamil kings and got themselves appointed lords and ministers of the king's cabinet by displaying their cleverness. They acquired rare ideas and words of wisdom from the Tamils, translated them into Sanskrit and introduced these as originating from Sanskrit."

Do not these words, written a century ago with substantial evidence, clearly echo the thoughts of Periyar and Anna? That was the reason why I named Suryanarayana Sastriar the first Tamilian Paraithimarkalignar and wrote honouring him, with all my heart.

With Love,

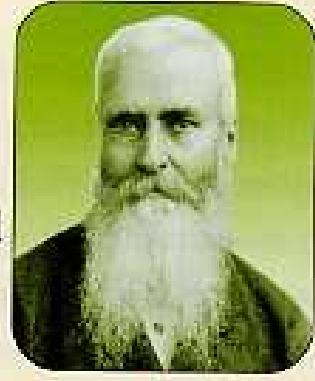
Mu. Ka.



2

**The Uniqueness of
Dravidianism as
Demonstrated by Caldwell**

26/12/2009



07.05.1814 - 28.08.1891

My dear blood - brother,

If the first Tamilian to proclaim that Tamil is a classical language is Parithimarkalaignar, the first foreigner to say so was the great scholar, Robert Caldwell. Half a century before him, it was Francies White Ellis (1777-1819) who proclaimed to the world at large that the Dravidian languages including Tamil had their independent existence. In 1856, forty-five years before Parithimarkalaignar declared in 1902 that Tamil was a classical language, the great scholar Caldwell, giving conclusive proof, established in his famous incomparable magnum opus, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages:

Tamil, which has attained a high and singular position for itself as a classical language among all Dravidian languages, apart from living after rejecting all Sanskrit words found in it, is also capable of growing without even needing a bit of their assistance. The ancient or classical dialect of the Tamil language, called Centamil or correct Tamil, in which nearly all the literature has been written, contains exceedingly little Sanskrit; and differs from colloquial dialect, or the language of prose, chiefly in the sedulous and jealous care with which it has rejected the use of Sanskrit derivatives and characters, and restricted itself to pure ancient Dravidian sounds, forms and roots.

Tamil, on account of its melodiousness, purity, strength, and beauty is capable of attracting all intellectuals and making them feel that it is more precious than life. Many are the foreigners who have thus been enamoured by it. Chief among them is Caldwell. He came to India from Ireland in 1838 at the age of twenty-four as a religious preacher sent by the "London Society of Religious Volunteers." Thus, after becoming the Archbishop of Tirunelveli, he wrote a book on the history of Tirunelveli based on his research which included a study of several hundreds of palmleaf manuscripts, and Sangam literature and an involvement in archeology that led to the discovery of coins with the fish emblem which belonged to the Pandya period. Caldwell is the one who coined the phrase "Dravidian Languages."

The books of Caldwell, based on deep research, gave encouragement to the non-brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu. It is because of his love for Tamil and its culture and civilization that Arignar Anna installed his graceful statue on the Marina during the second World Tamil conference. The statue of Robert Caldwell given by the Church of South India was unveiled by the multilingual scholar Thiru K. Appadurai at a function presided over by Thiru M.A. Manickavelar, the then Chairman of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Council. The pronouncement of Dr Caldwell (who shone as a symbol of fame founded on a great depth of scholarship) that Tamil is a classical language is a golden leaf in the history of classical Tamil and is like the discovery of a treasure-trove of precious stones. The resolution that Tamil is a classical language, passed with finality and firmness by the Saiva Siddhantha Maha Samajam in 1918, itself is worthy of being remembered with joy and satisfaction by Tamil enthusiasts and admirers. The details of the resolution are as follows:

Under the auspices of the Saiva Siddhantha Maha Samajam, an assembly of around 400 Tamilians gathered on Friday (15/3/1918) at 5-45 pm in the Hall of Pachayappa's Arts College in order to pass certain resolutions regarding the Tamil language. Many pundits,

vidwans as also British graduates graced the occasion. After Sandler M.A., chairman of Tamil Lexicon Committee, presiding over the function, expressed a few remarks on the greatness of Tamil, Resolution 1 was taken up.

Resolution 1

Among the Dravidian languages, the language known for its antiquity, grace and majesty is the most exalted and unique classical Tamil. It is a naturally formed language which is in vogue even today. Rich in diverse literary genres, with outward beauty of linguistic form and richness in content and message, possessing a matchless variety of rare compositions, it should be accepted with pride as a language which is deservedly classical standing on par with such classical languages as Sanskrit, Arabian, and Persian. Thiru K. Subramania Pillai, M.A., M.L., tabled the resolution. He further remarked that some Sanskrit Upanishads have mentioned the hoary tradition of the Tamil tongue. The ancient work on Tamil grammar, Tolkappiyam was written much earlier in time than the Sanskrit grammatical work of Panini. The letters and words of the Tamil language have evolved from natural sounds. Seconding the resolution R.P. Sethu Pillai, B.A., maintained that Tamil is comparable to any other exalted classical language in the world. Though many scholars concede that Tamil is a pure language and a southern language, they express the doubt that since it is in current usage, it cannot gain the status of a classical tongue. Such people betray their ignorance as to what constitutes a classical language. A language that represents a highly evolved culture and civilization is verily a classical one. Unlike many other languages which lack a grammatical basis, Tamil has a firm foundational grammatical text in Tolkappiyam. Many British scholars have accepted this view. The literature of Tamil, rich and variegated in form and content, and subtle in its Akam/Puram distinctions represents its hoary tradition and culture. The fact that Tirukkural has been translated into many

modern European languages witnesses to the greatness of that language. Just as the other classical languages have mothered many languages, Tamil is also the mother of all other Dravidian languages: Kannada, Malayalam, Tulu, etc. Since the grammar of a language derives itself from its literature, the literature of Tamil should have predated Tolkappiyam written 2500 years ago. This would mean that Tamil is more ancient than other classical languages. All these home truths should lead the world accept Tamil as one of the most excellent of classical languages. Others who spoke supporting the resolution include the editor of Tamil Kalanchiyam, Iswara Iyer and Pundit Thirumathi Alarmelmangai. The reputed Tamil scholar Maraimalai Adigal, well-versed in pure Tamil, has noted about this meeting held in Pachayappa's College in his diary entry dated 12/3/1918 that he was requested by Thiru K. Subramania Pillai to deliver a speech at the meeting to be held on 15/3/1918 in which the government was to be urged through a petition to accept Tamil as a classical language. I am delighted beyond measure to highlight the efforts taken by Melachivapuri Sanmarga Sabhai for bringing to light to the world at large the inherent beauty and greatness of the Tamil language. The Sabhai passed a resolution on 6, 7/5/1918 that Tamil should be treated and accepted as an independent classical language. This resolution finds place in the tenth annual report of the Melachivapuri Sanmarga Sabhai dated 25/4/1919. I quote the resolution:

The ninth anniversary of this Sabhai was held on Chitrai 23, 24 of kalayukthi year (Saturday, Sunday 6, 7/05/1918) under the chairmanship of Rao Bahadur T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai, formerly deputy collector of Devakottai. During the function prizes were distributed to students. Tamil vidwan Brahmasri Sundareswara Iyer, Tuticorine lawyer Sriman S.S. Bharahi, B.A., B.L., Madurai lawyer Sriman J.M. Nallasami Pillai, B.A., B.L., the scholar in two languages, Tamil and Sanskrit,

Sriman M. Kathiresan Chettiar, Palavankudi teacher Sriman Kumara Veeraiyar and others gave valuable lectures. Resolutions were passed that Tamil should be treated as a classical language; it should be made a subject for I.C.S. examination. These resolutions were forwarded to the representatives of the Government, the Governor of Madras Presidency, and to the universities of Madras, Calcutta, Bombay, Allahabad, Banaras, Punjab and to other universities.

The service rendered by Thanjai-Karanthai Tamil Sangam for the cause of classical Tamil can never be forgotten by the Tamils. The Sangam was founded in 1911 by Thiru T.V. Radhakrishana Pillai and others who had great love, besides learning, for Tamil. Right from its start until his death, Thiru U.V. Umamaheswaram Pillai served the institution with great distinction. That is why on 18/2/2006 when a special commemorative postal stamp was released at the Kalaingar Hall of Anna Arivalayam, honouring him I spoke thus:

This is the moment when Umamaheswaranar's name should come to our mind, more than anyone else's. Next to Parithimarkalaingar, the name that we recall is that of Umamaheswaranar. It was he who was instrumental in proposing the resolution in Karanthai Tamil Sangam that in 1917 Tamil should be proclaimed a classical language. Otherwise we would have had no basis for raising the issue with the central government.

The seventh and eighth anniversaries of Thanjai-Karanthai Tamil Sangam were held on 24/5/1919 and 25/5/1919 under the presidentship of Thirukoilur Adinam, Thirupattirupuliyur Thirugnaniyar Mutt's head Thiru Sivashanmuga Meignana Sivachariar, in the presence of Thiru T.V. Umamaheswaram Pillai, Tamil scholar Venkatasami Nattar, Thiru T.N. Gurumurthy Pillai,

Thiru T. Koorathalvar and others. A resolution was passed that the University of Madras should change its policy and accept the truth that Tamil is an independent classical language and give it the pride of place it richly deserves. This resolution was tabled by the member of the Tamil Sangam Thiru T.A. Sabapathy Pillai and seconded by Thiru M. Appavu Mudaliar. This resolution was unanimously passed and sent to the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and the Governor of the state. It marks a milestone in the history of the Tamil country since this was the first resolution raised by an institution. In continuation, the ninth anniversary of Thanjai-Karantjai Tamil Sangam was held on 21/8/1920 under the chairmanship of M. Somasundara Bharathiar. Regretting the lackadaisical attitude of the University of Madras, a resolution was passed unanimously that the University should make the study of Tamil language compulsory and take necessary steps to introduce Tamil as the medium of instruction. Thiru V.A. Sagaraya Pillai moved the resolution and Thiru I. Kumarasamy Pillai seconded it.

In 1921, when the Governor of Madras Presidency paid a visit to Thanjavur, on behalf of Karantjai Tamil Sangam, a delegation led by Rao Bahadur V.A. Vandaiyar met the Governor and tendered an appeal to make a public announcement that Tamil has been raised to the status of an independent classical language.

The eleventh anniversary of Karantjai Tamil Sangam was held on 18/11/1922 and 19/11/1922 under the chairmanship of Thiru K. Subramania Pillai. During the function a resolution to this effect was passed: Viswabharati should accord the status of classical language for Tamil and include it in their syllabi. For writing a history of ancient India, original and truthful facts are to be obtained only from Sangam literature. Knowledge of this rich treasure-house should be made available to the peoples of all the cultured nations of the world. On 22/9/1923 and 23/9/1923 under the Presidentship of Pethachi

chettiar the twelfth anniversary of Karanthai Tamil Sangam was held. A resolution was passed urging the Indian government to include Tamil as a subject for the I.C.S. examination since Tamil possesses all salient features of a classical language. In the silver jubilee celebrations held on April 15, 16 and 17, 1938, Thiruppatirupuliyur Gnaniyar Adigal in his presidential address, expressed his deep sense of regret and anguish that the Indian government has not given the respect due to Tamil and has not treated it as a classical language.

Thus we see that right from the days of the Tamil scholar Umamaheswaranar, the efforts taken by Karanthai Tamil Sangam for pleading for attaining classical status for Tamil represent a glorious chapter in the history of classical Tamil.

With Love,

Mu. Ka.



3

**Fifteen Evidences
Provided by
Devaneyya Pavanar**

27/12/2009



07.2.1902 - 15.01.1981

My dear blood - brother ,

A conference of non-brahmins was held at Town Hall, Trichy on June 22, 1919. Those who participated in the conference were advocate Thiru T.C. Thangavelu, Rao Bahadur O. Kandasamy Chettiar, Thiru T.A. G. Rajarathnam, Thiru T.V. Subramaniam, Diwan Bahadur P. Ramaraya Ningar, Maharaja of Ramanathapuram, Maharaja of Kollangodu, Zamindar of Thottappanayakanur, Thiru T.R. Marudamuthu Moopnar and others who were in the forefront of the non-brahmin movement. At the conference resolutions regarding establishing a separate constituency for non-brahmin voters, communal representation, intercaste marriages were passed. Another important resolution ran as follows: "Tamil, which is rich in ancient literature, should be recognized by the University of Madras and the Civil Service Examiners as a classical language on the same footing as Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit." Our Justice Party ancestors belonging to the non-brahmin movement thus took the initiative in passing the Classical Tamil resolution in 1919 and the Karanthai Tamil Sangam under the Chairmanship of Tamizhvel Umamaheswaranar did it last in 1923.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a highly respected freedom fighter, multilingual scholar well-versed in Urdu, Arabic, Hindi, Persian, Bengali and English, and the first education minister in the Nehru administration who introduced the scheme of free education and established IITs, while inaugurating Sahithya Akademy on

15/3/1951, spoke thus: "The fourteen languages recognized by the Indian Constitution include Sanskrit and Tamil. Sanskrit is, of course, in a class by itself, and is rightly recognized as one of the most developed of classical languages. Tamil also has a rich and ancient literature and its poetry has been and deserves to be translated into foreign languages. We must remember that Tamil is really a classical language, and most of the achievements of Tamil which entitle it to recognition belong to a past age." He made it clear that Tamil is a classical language.

In 1955, an All India Conference of Oriental Scholars was held at Annamalai University on December 26, 27, and 28. In his Presidential address, Prof T.P. Meenakshisundaranar referred to Hon'ble Minister Maulana Azad's speech and reiterated his words, raising a question: My appeal is only to give effect to this recognition and if this Oriental Conference of Scholars is not going to give this recognition, who else would?

The next stage in the history of classical Tamil began in 1966. After persevering research and study Devaneyya Pavanar published a rare book in English, titled, *The Primary Classical Language of the World*. With unquestionable and unambiguous evidences, he established the fact that Tamil is a highly developed classical language of Lemurian origin.

Evidences of the Primary Classicality of Tamil

1. Lemurian origin of Tamil
2. Phonological simplicity of Tamil
3. Cathollicity of Tamil
4. Tamulic substratum of the Aryan family of languages
5. Morphological purity and primitiveness of Tamil
6. The presence of the words 'amma' and 'appa' in almost all great languages in some form or the other

7. Absence of Nominative case-termination in Tamil
8. Separability and significance of all affixes in Tamil
9. Absence of morphological gender in Tamil
10. Absence of arbitrary words in Tamil
11. Traceability of Tamil to its very origin
12. Logical and natural order of words in Tamil
13. Absence of dual number in Tamil
14. Originality and natural development of Tamil
15. Highest order of classicality of Tamil

Pavanar's findings with incontrovertible evidence won the acclaim of Sanskrit and western scholars. By way of honouring Pavanar's genius and his efforts to get the classical status, the DMK government established the "Directorate of Senthamizh Sorpirappiyal Agaramudali Project" and appointed Devaneyya Pavanar as its first Director.

Pavanar followed in the footsteps of the formidable Maraimalai Adigal in protecting Tamil from the influences of other languages and founded an institution named "World Tamil Kazhagam." Though Pavanar was a Christian, he was beyond all caste, creed and religion: he was a Tamil at heart. Hence, he gave sweet, pure Tamil names to his children: Nachinarkinia Nambi, Siluvai vendra Selvarayan, Arunkalaivallan Adiyarku Nallan, Madanthavirtha Mangayarkarasi, Manimanra Vanan, Painthamizh valartha Pandian. He had an enviable level of proficiency in twenty-three languages. By way of honouring his memory the DMK government nationalized all his works and bequeathed a sum of twenty lakh rupees to his descendants. It honoured him by getting the Central Government release a commemorative postal stamp on 18/2/2006. A memorial was built in his native village Sathamangalam in Madurai district

and a full-sized statue was installed on 30/10/2007 at a cost of rupees thirty-nine lakh and sixty thousand. I did all this on behalf of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Then there was a long gap of inactivity. Neither the Tamil enthusiasts nor the Tamil organizations took any effort to raise an upsurge of great ideas. The efforts taken by my dear friend MGR at the fifth World Tamil conference held in Madurai in 1981 to raise Tamil to the status of a classical language are described at length by Manavai Mustafa in his book *Classical Language: Appearance and Reality*.

On the second day of the fifth World Tamil Conference, there was a symposium under the Presidentship of Justice Maharajan. Thiru Manavai Mustafa spoke at length on the after effects of the government's lack of recognition of Tamil as a classical language. Thiru MGR asked him to send a petition to the government on this issue. In 1982, Mustafa sent a petition for consideration by the government but none was intimated about what action was taken by the Government on it. Again in 1984, thanking the government for awarding him 'kalaimamani,' Mustafa wrote reminding it of his earlier request regarding the recognition of Tamil as a classical language. The file was closed with the remark that if Tamil is granted the status of a classical language, it will be listed as a dead language. This fact Mustafa mentions in one of his works expressing his deep regret and heartfelt sorrow. Even after such a fate befell, none raised the voice in conferences or any symposia placing the demand for classical status for Tamil.

It is said that such a demand was placed before the then Prime Minister of India, Thiru Narasimha Rao, but he concluded his speech without making any reference to the demand. Pulavar T. Sundararajan, general secretary, Tamil Sangam, Chennai mentions this most regretfully in one of his articles.

The DMK Government can feel justifiably proud of making in 1970, Manonmaniam Sundaram Pillai's song beginning with the line

"நீராருங் கடவுடுத்த நிலமடந்தைக்கு எழிலொழுகும்" a state prayer, an invocation to Mother Tamil. The DMK Government will spare no effort and leave no stone unturned for protecting the interests of the Tamil people and the Tamil language. For example, soon after assuming charge for the fourth time in Tamil Nadu, it created a separate Ministry for the Department of Tamil as the official language and Tamil culture. It started functioning on 13/5/1996 with Dr Tamizhkkudimagan as its minister. As per my advice this newly created department took upon itself as its first and foremost duty to do everything for attaining classical status for Tamil. It formed a committee under the Chairmanship of Thiru Tamizhkkudimagan consisting of the former Vice-chancellor of Anna University, Thiru V.C. Kulandaisami, the Vice-chancellor of Madras University, Dr Ponnusami, the former Vice-chancellors of Tamil University Dr S. Agasthalingam, Dr Avvai Natarajan, Dr C. Balasubramaniam, the former Vice-chancellor of Bharathidasan University Dr S. Muthukumaran, the Director of the Institute of Asian Studies, Dr G. Samuel, Thiru Manavai Mustafa and the Secretary for Tamil Development and Culture. A circular drafted by Dr John Samuel was examined, suitable modifications were suggested, and it was decided to send this appeal to the Central Government, besides getting the recommendations of the syndicates of the Universities in Tamilnadu.

Since this document contains all reasons for the strong claim for classical status to Tamil, and since this was the first official attempt made by the DMK Government, I felt it is necessary to render its Tamil translation for the benefit of Tamil lovers, and my kith and kin of the party. I shall present its salient features in Tamil in my next letter.

With love,

Mu. Ka.



4

The Oldest Living Language of the Prehistoric Past

28/12/2009



My dear blood - brother ,

When I took over the Chief Ministership of Tamil Nadu for the fourth time, it was decided to present a petition to the central government on behalf of the Kazhagam administration. I submit below a notification drafted by the Director of the Institute of Asian Studies, Dr John Samuel, accepted by such scholars as Dr S. Agesthialingom, Dr. V.C. Kulandaisami, Thiru Manavai Mustafa, Dr Avvai Natarajan, Dr Porko and others:

Tamil Language in the Indian Context

Tamil has a very unique place among the classical languages of the world. It has a history of more than two thousand years of consummate literary expression, and is the sole preserver of the Dravidian heritage of old literature, a massive corpus of poetry written in this language being traced to pre-Christian era. It has had a continuing, vibrantly alive existence, growth and development through centuries down to the present, witnessing diversity and ramifications through space and time. It has tributaries of languages growing from, meeting and mingling all along its course by virtue of its seminal position as a major language of the Dravidian family of languages. Also, it had been flowing parallel to the streams of Northern tongues, chiefly Sanskrit, right from the pre-Christian days of Indian cultural evolution, maintaining healthy affinities with those tongues, and yet preserving its uniqueness and identity as the expressive medium of a cultural community.

Again, Tamil, as also the other Dravidian languages, is seen by Caldwell to display deep-rooted analogies with features of Indo-European languages Celtic, Germanic, Latin, Greek as well as Eastern languages like Iranian. Thomas Burrow lists the affinities between Dravidian and Finnish, while G. S. Balint refers to the resemblances of the former with the Hungarian; and H.B. Hubber and Susumo Ohno speak of certain areas of correspondences between Tamil-Korean and Tamil-Japanese respectively. Tamil language is spoken by more than 60 million people in South India in the state of Tamil Nadu, in large parts of Sri Lanka, and in Tamil overseas communities in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, the islands of Mauritius, Trinidad and Fiji. In Sri Lanka and Singapore it has the status of an official language. It is significant to mention here that Tamil and Sanskrit have been the subjects of research at the international level by many academicians and research centres all over the world.

Tamil has a rich legacy of literary, grammatical, art and cultural traditions which date back to many centuries before the Christian era. Proto-Tamils or Proto-Dravidians could perhaps trace their proto-history back to third millennium BC when the three ancient civilizations of the world flourished in Egypt, Sumer and Indus valley as contemporary civilizations in close contact with one another. At the same time, after an unbroken literary records lasting for more than 2000 years, Tamil is perhaps the sole survivor amongst the spoken languages of the world today. As a maritime people, Tamils have been carriers of their culture and civilization to distant parts of the world and traces of Tamil culture are found not only in Burma, Ceylon and South East Asia and Far East but also in Africa, Europe and the Americas.

Tamil is the foremost representative of the Dravidian family of languages which are more than twenty-five in number scattered all over and having links with various language families of the world.

When the lexical items of all the Dravidian languages are reconstructed to their proto-form, they come identical or closer to their equivalents in ancient Tamil literature. This clearly shows that the ancient Tamil can adequately represent all Dravidian languages and in this respect it resembles Sanskrit which is a perfect representative of the Indo-Aryan languages.

Attempts in standardising Tamil language and the theories that underlie the literary compositions of Tamil started more than two thousand years back in *Tolkappiyam* for poetical conventions, distribution of phonemes, linguistic usages and for the Tamilization of borrowed words or elements. The standardised conventions and usages belong to the category of classical Tamil known by the phrase 'centamil' (the refined Tamil) which is akin to the word or name Sanskrit which means refined medium. This clearly shows that the native scholars over 2000 years back evolved a clear conception about what we mean by the term classical today and they made all efforts to develop their mother tongue as a classical language. According to Guilbert Slater, Tamil language attained this status before it developed its contact with the Greeks. According to Winslow, this standard Tamil is more refined than Greek, more elegant than Latin and more powerful than English and German. To the French Indologist, Pierre Meilel, the poems of the classical Tamil challenge comparison to the finer lyrics of the Greek language and they deserve to be placed among the best literary creations of the world.

Delayed Start and Discoveries

Among the two major cultures of India, represented linguistically by the two classical languages, Sanskrit and Tamil, the Indo-Aryan Sanskrit has been exhaustively studied during the past two centuries because of the keen interest evinced by philologists and Indologists both of West and the East. Owing to this continuous academic pursuit, Sanskrit has been recognised in course of time as

one of the classical languages of the world along with Greek and Latin. But, the part played by the other classical language Tamil and the culture of the Tamils in the development and interaction of the great culture of India, has not been made a subject of serious studies on scientific lines. Consequently, international scholarship has not taken adequate interest initially in that sector of Tamilology.

Tamil studies or Dravidian studies were neglected by foreign scholars due to two reasons as pointed out by the eminent French Indologist Prof Filliozat. Although the earlier European Missionaries started their works of proselytism in the Tamil speaking part of this country and did good amount of pioneering studies in Tamil by way of compiling dictionaries and preparing grammatical works, their activities were centred around Calcutta by the eighteenth century and they had generally little scope for close cultural or academic interaction with the South. Secondly, some of the early Indologists failed to realise the contribution of Tamil to the evolution of the composite culture of India.

Even in the earlier stages Walter Elliot, Ellis, Gover, Winslow, Caldwell, Pope and Vinson voiced their complaints in their day concerning the neglect of Dravidian culture in general and Tamil culture in particular. G. U. Pope wrote in 1810 about the British neglect of Tamil literature thus: "Although the very ancient copious and refined Tamil language is inferior to none, it is regarded by most people as the vernacular of a people living somewhere in a remote district of Great Britain's imperial possessions. Neither does our Indian government nor do our universities fully recognise the value of Tamil literature and so those who spend their lives in the study of the great South Indian classics must resemble man seeking pearls under water."

But the above situation changed gradually since the end of the last century and a number of circumstances, national and international have contributed to an awareness of the importance of Tamil studies

in Indological studies and in South Asian as well as South East Asian studies. Both as a geographically widespread Indian language, and as the language of groups of ethnic and sociological interest, Tamil came to be studied in the USA and Tamil language found a place in the teaching programmes especially of the Universities of Pennsylvania, Chicago and Kansas state, and in the rotating summer school. The development of the South Asian Programmes in universities assumed new proportions and co-ordinated the research of several scholars in different branches of Tamilology by the incorporation of the American Institute of Indian Studies. This Institute has supported financially a number of scholars including R.E. Frykeneg, Burton Stein and Eugene F. Irschick to work on various aspects of Tamilology.

In addition to Oxford, Cambridge, Leyden and Uppasala, the Sudasien Institute in Heidelberg has a multidisciplinary programme which includes various aspects of Tamil Studies and the teaching of Tamil at different levels. The University of Bonn and the University of Stockholm also introduced Tamil. The works of the Leningrad and Moscow scholars, together with the pupils of Dr Arno Lehman made the Eastern Europe conspicuous among areas which contribute to Tamil Studies. Other countries like Australia, Canada, South America, Israel, Italy, Japan and the Philippines also developed active interest in Tamilology. The creation of the department of Indian Studies at the University of Malaya with its South Asian orientation, its emphasis on Tamil Studies and its schedule of publications is a turning point in the history of Tamil Studies.

The International scholarship as well as the leading Indologists of our country realised the indispensability of Tamil Studies for a complete and integral understanding of Indian culture as a whole. The scholars unanimously expressed the view that mere study of Sanskrit alone is not enough for a complete grasp of the composite culture of India in its full perspective and that any study on Indian

culture will be complete only if it takes into account the rich cultural heritage represented by Tamil which is the chief among the Dravidian languages. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, the well-known authority on Indian linguistics once remarked thus: 'In the present day texture of Indian culture and religion, the warp appears to be Dravidian and the weft Aryan.' He has clearly accentuated the view that the contribution of Dravidian to the composite culture is not less than 50%.

During the past five decades or more and since the discovery of Indus Valley Civilization followed by the excavations of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, the considerable and significant contribution which the Tamils or Dravidian speaking peoples have made to the totality of the Indian culture is gradually better understood. Prof R.D. Banerji, who discovered the Mohenjo-Daro site wrote, "it has been established that a wonderful Pre-Aryan civilization existed in the Indus Valley many centuries before the period of the Aryan intrusions...who were apparently the Dravidians or Proto-Dravidians later represented by the various communities in South India speaking dialects of the Dravidian languages."

It is proved beyond doubt that the Tamils have developed very effective system of grammar for their language over 2000 years back which is in no way inferior to any other classical languages of the world. Tamil language has retained its uniqueness and identity; it has borrowed some Sanskrit words but all of them have been nativised or Tamilised. It has also applied larger number of lexical items to North Indian languages and they have been listed by T. Burrow under the caption Dravidian borrowings in Sanskrit. The highly schematical phonemic system of Tamil is a strong indication that the early Tamil grammarians had a clear grasp of the principles which now form the basis of modern linguistics. Daniel Jones in his book the Phoneme wrote: "Tamil is a language which illustrates particularly well the grouping secular quite distinctive sound into

single phoneme." C.R. Sankaran, a Sanskrit scholar himself, after studying the chapter on phonology in the two millennium old Tamil grammar *Tolkappiyam* wrote, "such an emphasis on the pattern inherent in the sounds of the language of study, and the attempt to establish, on the basis of their occurrence and distribution, the types of sounds which must have been significant in distinguishing the meaning of words is not met with, even in the *Astadyayi* of Panini." This can be mentioned as the very significant contribution of the ancient Tamil grammatical tradition to linguistics.

Tamil as a Classical Language

Tamil studies have gained momentum throughout the world in the past few decades and Tamil is recognised as one of the classical languages of the world by the leading international scholars, who have contributed a great deal for the promotion of academic research on various aspects of Indian culture. While speaking about the rich corpus of Sangam classics which flourished in Tamil Nadu 2000 years back, Kamil Zvelebil says, "those 26,350 lines of poetry promote Tamil to the rank of one of the great classical languages of the world, though the world at large only just about begins to realise it." According to him, it is only the Tamil culture that has produced—uniquely so in India—an independent, indigenous literary theory of a very high standard, including metrics and prosody, poetics and rhetoric. Although these works flourished simultaneously with the rich Sanskrit classics they are unique in their way unaffected by the influence of Sanskrit. In the words of A.K. Ramanujan (in *Language and Modernization*, 31), "In most Indian languages, the technical gobbledegook is Sanskrit; in Tamil, the gobbledegook is ultra Tamil." The *Oxford Companion to English Language* (1992) accepts the antiquity of Tamil and it describes Tamil as a "Dravidian language comparable to Sanskrit in its antiquity and textual traditions" (1021).

Tamil literature is the only Indian literature which is both classical and modern; while it shares antiquity with many of the early Sanskrit works and is as classical, in the best sense of the word, it continues to be vigorously living modern writings of our days. In the words of A.K. Ramanujan (*The Interior Landscape*), "Tamil, one of the two classical languages of India, is the only language of contemporary India which recognizably continues with a classical past." Dr Kamil Zvelebil gives three reasons for the classical nature of the early Tamil poems popularly known as Sangam literature. "First of all, the so-called Sangam poetry is regarded by the Tamils themselves, by the professional historiographers and critics, as well as by intellectual readers, as classical in the same sense in which we regard some parts of our national literatures as classical. Second, it has been, a finite, 'frozen' corpus, a body of texts which had not been expanded since it ceased to be part of the classical heritage as it were. Third, it is the expression of a linguistic, prosodic and stylistic perfection; it is a finished, consummate and inimitable literary expression of an entire culture, and of the best in that culture; in this sense, it is truly a classical product, a classical literature (*The Smile of Murugan*, 50).

Tamil has had a perennial existence, growth and development, from an antique past to centuries down to the present, meeting and mingling all along its course by virtue of its unique place as a major tongue of the Dravidian family of languages. Again, Tamil, as also the other Dravidian languages, display deep-seated analogies with features of Indo-European languages as well as Eastern languages. It is the most prominent language in the Dravidian family of languages which consist of more than 25 languages, a few of them like Brahui and Malto spoken in Baluchistan and other North Indian regions too. It fits into all the definitions given to a great classical heritage by its antiquity, well formulated theory of poetical composition, its objectivity, harmony and its adherence to clearly codified rules of verbal art. It is the representative of a great culture, a great linguistic

tradition, the roots of which can be traced to almost all the classical language of the world. It has produced wonderful works of valour, eroticism and noble ethics; great masterpieces and wonderful corpus of compositions which are based on general human nature and which speak about humanity in general transcending geographical, regional and religious barriers. It has a wonderful corpus of devotional poetry which has left indelible impact on almost all the regional languages of the country.

Recognition to Early Tamil as a Classical Language

In spite of all its global recognition and merits, its antiquity and greatness, it is still considered in its native country as a regional language and it is grouped under the MIL (Modern Indian Languages). No Indian language except Sanskrit is as antique as Tamil. But, it is still given the status of a modern Indian language by the government of India. The constitution of India makes it a fundamental duty of every Indian citizen "to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture." While the contribution of Tamil to Indian culture is so enormous and immense, it failed to get the recognition it deserves. In the Dakar University in Senegal, Tamil, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit are taught as classical languages in the Department of classical languages. But, in our Universities, Tamil was excluded in this list for a long time and the other languages namely Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit are accepted as classical languages. One hundred years back, a great savant of Tamil namely V.G. Suryanarayana Sastriar made a clarion call to recognise Tamil as a classical language. This call echoed and re-echoed in the hearts of many sons of this soil at that time. Now, this genuine claim gained a good momentum not only among the Tamils but all lovers of this great culture of our nation and the lovers of this culture spread all over the world.

Each linguistic community possessing a rich legacy of literary heritage earmarks a particular period in their social and literary

milieu as classical age. According to some scholars the period covering 500 BC and 323 BC is the classical age of Greece. The period from 500 BC and AD 1110 is considered as the classical age in Sanskrit.

As far as Tamil is concerned, the period from Sangam age to 6th century AD can be termed as classical age since this age witnessed unique literary and linguistic achievements. These contributions are the typical representatives of the Dravidian heritage which forms an integral part of the composite cultural heritage of India. It is clearly stated by most of the leading scholars of Indology that any study on the cultural heritage of India will be incomplete if it fails to take into account the rich cultural achievements of the Dravidians. International scholarship has now accepted Tamil as one of the classical languages of the world. The Universities of Tamil Nadu have now come forward to declare old Tamil as a classical language along with Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. As mentioned earlier, the Dakar University of Sengal has already included Tamil in their list of classical languages. In the list of classical languages, the Government of India has included Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. It is only appropriate that the Government of India includes old Tamil (upto 6th century AD) in the list of classical languages along with Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian and give due importance for the promotion of studies on this ancient language and culture in a wider national and international perspective.

This letter, pleading for the declaration of Tamil as a classical language on the basis of convincing historical and other evidences, was sent by the DMK Government to the Department of Education of the Central Government which was forwarded to the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore for careful scrutiny and comments..

With love

Mu. Ka.



5

California Professor's Considered Viewpoint

29/12/2009



My dear blood - brother ,

The request that Tamil should be declared a classical language, sent to the central government by the Tamil Nadu government, was duly forwarded by them to the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. The Institute, after examining in detail all aspects of the letter, recommended strongly that since Tamil possesses all qualities of a classical tongue, the Centre should announce that Tamil is a classical language. In the meantime, Anna University, under the auspices of the Tamil Mandram Bharathi Endowment scheme held a seminar on 'Tamil in the Scientific Age' on 6, 7 August, 1988. Many Vice-Chancellors, University Professors of Tamil, officers of the department of Tamil development, correspondents of newspapers and Tamil scholars participated in the seminar. The Srilankan minister Thiru Amirthalinga presided over the seminar, the former State and Central minister Thiru C. Subramaniam gave the inaugural address and the Vice-Chancellor of Anna University, and Dr V.C. Kulandaisami presented the recommendatins and resolutions. Thavathiru Kundrakudi Adigalar delivered the valedictory address. The first session of the seminar was devoted to the topic, 'Tamil as a Classical Language.' Dr V.C. Kulandaisami moved a resolution that Tamil which has been accepted as a classical language by the world at large should be officially announced and declared as a classical language like Sanskrit which enjoys this status.

Meanwhile Manonmaniam Sundaranar University wrote to the Centre on 30/5/1996 that since Tamil has a hoary tradition of two

thousand years, it should be included in the list of classical languages and that sufficient funds must be allotted for its development and growth. Thanjavur Tamil University sent a unanimous resolution to the Centre that ancient Tamil language, so rich in literature and so perfect in grammar should be declared a primary classical language. When Dr Porko was the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras, with the concurrence of the Syndicate, a resolution was passed that from the academic year 2001–2002, Chemmozhi Tamil should be put into effect. Since Tamil is an ancient language with a hoary tradition and rich in literature and since it had served as the source of inspiration for creative works in other languages, it should be accorded classical status and liberal funds should be allocated for its future growth by the Central Government. A similar resolution was passed by Bharathidasan University on 20/8/1996. Such resolutions were passed and forwarded by all universities in Tamil Nadu to the State and Central Governments.

On 23/8/1996, at the meeting of the legislative assembly, the Hon'ble minister Thamizhkkudimagan announced by way of answering the query of the member Dr E.S. Ramachandran that the Chief Minister had written to the Prime Minister that in all Indian universities, Tamil should be accorded the same status as has been done in the case of Sanskrit, and Arabic. On 21/8/1996, as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, I wrote to the then Prime Minister Deve Gowda that despite possessing rare attributes, Tamil has not been accepted as a classical language in India. Without any further delay the Ministry of Human Resources Development and the University Grants Commission should sanction liberal grants for the development of Tamil, besides granting it the status of a classical language. Prime Minister Deve Gowda sent a letter of acknowledgement on 29/8/1996. Referring to my previous letters to former Prime Ministers Thiru Deve Gowda, Thiru I.K. Gujral and the ministers of Human Resource Development, I wrote on 24/10/1998 a letter to the

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpai stating that I would like to bring to his notice the demands of all Tamils living throughout the world that like Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, classical status should be granted to Tamil also. I also sent the pronouncement of learned scholars entitled "Tamil as an Independent classical Language," along with the resolutions passed by the various universities in Tamil Nadu. Reminders were sent time and again.

In the capital city, Delhi Tamil Sangam, and other organizations convened a conference on 29,30 April 2000 in which a claim was put forward for making Tamil an official language and raising its status as a primary classical language. Many educationists, political leaders and Tamil scholars participated in the conference ably conducted by Salini Ilanthirayan, the Chairperson of the Classical Tamil Implementation Committee. On behalf of Tamil Nadu, Dr Thiru Thamizhkkudimagan, Minister for Tamil Development and Culture was sent as its representative. I sent my message for the successful conduct of the conference. I referred to the valiant efforts taken by my government right from the days of Anna for making Tamil an official language at the centre. Appeals were constantly sent to the central government. I commended the conveners of the conference extending my whole-hearted support and expressing my goodwill. The untimely death of Salini Ilanthirayan who gave her heart and soul for the success of the conference in April 2000 gave me untold grief. As a mark of respect for her memory, the conference was held in her honour, after laying the body to rest.

In accordance with the request made by Professor E. Maraimlai, in April 2000, Professor Dr George L. Hart published an article pointing out the valid reasons for naming Tamil a classical language. In the history of classical Tamil, this publication which attracted the attention of the scholars the world over is a principal and significant chapter. George L. Hart has been a professor of Tamil in the University of Berkeley in the U.S. He graduated in Sanskrit from

Harvard. He taught Sanskrit at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, U.S. He had formal education in Tamil and Sanskrit. He learnt Greek and Latin and is well-versed in the literature of the two languages. He has a sound knowledge of European languages and is quite well-equipped in comparative study of literature. As a linguist he is fluent in Russian, German and French. He has read Malayalam and Tamil literatures in their original and the literatures of other languages in translation. He has read widely the works of Mahadevi Varma, Tulsidas and Kabirdas.

For the benefit of my Kazhagam brethren and others, I am furnishing below the Tamil version of some excerpts from Professor Hart's learned article and his grounds for calling Tamil a classical language. That he is attending our conference at Coimbatore is worthy of mention now.

Let me state unequivocally that, by any criteria one may choose, Tamil is one of the great classical literatures and traditions of the world. The reasons for this are many; let me consider them one by one.

First, Tamil is of considerable antiquity. It predates the literatures of other modern languages by more than a thousand years. Its oldest work, the Tolkappiyam, contains parts that, judging from the earliest Tamil inscriptions, date back to about 200 BCE. The greatest works of ancient Tamil, the Sangam anthologies and the Pattuppattu, date to the first two centuries of the current era. They are the first great secular body of poetry written in India, predating Kalidasa's works by two hundred years.

Second, Tamil constitutes the only literary tradition indigenous to India that is not derived from Sanskrit. Indeed, its literature arose before the influence of Sanskrit in the South became strong and so is qualitatively different from anything we have in Sanskrit or other Indian languages. It has its own poetic theory, its own grammatical tradition, its own esthetics, and, above all, a large body of literature

that is quite unique. It shows a sort of Indian sensibility that is quite different from anything in Sanskrit or other Indian languages, and it contains its own extremely rich and vast intellectual tradition.

Third, the quality of classical Tamil literature is such that it is fit to stand beside the great literatures of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Chinese, Persian and Arabic. The subtlety and profundity of its works, their varied scope (Tamil is the only premodern Indian literature to treat the subaltern extensively), and their universality qualify Tamil to stand as one of the great classical traditions and literatures of the world. Everyone knows the Tirukkural, one of the world's greatest works on ethics; but this is merely one of a myriad of major and extremely varied works that comprise the Tamil classical tradition. There is not a facet of human existence that is not explored and illuminated by this great literature.

Finally, Tamil is one of the primary independent sources of modern Indian culture and tradition. I have written extensively on the influence of a Southern tradition on the Sanskrit poetic tradition. But equally important, the great sacred works of Tamil Hinduism, beginning with the Sangam Anthologies, have undergirded the development of modern Hinduism. Their ideas were taken into the Bhagvata Purana and other texts (in Telugu and Kannada as well as Sanskrit), whence they spread all over India. Tamil has its own works that are considered to be as sacred as the Vedas and that are recited alongside Vedic mantras in the great Vaisnava temples of South India (such as Tirupati). And just as Sanskrit is the source of modern Indo-Aryan languages, classical Tamil is the source language of modern Tamil and Malayam. As Sanskrit is the most conservative and least changed of the Indo-Aryan languages, Tamil is the most conservative of Dravidian languages, the touchstone that linguists must consult to understand the nature and development of Dravidian.

To qualify as a classical tradition, a language must fit several criteria: it should be ancient, it should be an independent tradition that arose mostly on its own not as an offshoot of another tradition, and it must have a large and extremely rich body of ancient literature. Unlike the other modern languages of India, Tamil meets each of these requirements. It is extremely old (as old as Latin and older than Arabic); it arose as an entirely independent tradition, with almost no influence from Sanskrit and other languages; and its ancient literature is indescribably vast and rich.

It seems strange to me that I should have to write an essay such as this claiming that Tamil is a classical literature—it is akin to claiming that India is a great country or Hinduism is one of the world's great religions. The status of Tamil as one of the great classical languages of the world is something that is patently obvious to anyone who knows the subject. To deny that Tamil is a classical language is to deny a vital and central part of the greatness and richness of Indian culture.

The ideas in this pronouncement of Professor George L. Hart had a great impact on the minds of the educationists in India and inspired the Tamil lovers and enthusiasts.

With love,

Mu. Ka.



6

Continuous Efforts for Prominence for Classical Tamil

30/12/2009



My dear blood - brother ,

On behalf of the DMK Government, letters were regularly written reminding the Central Government of announcing Tamil as a classical language. On 13/6/2000 a reminder was sent and again on 18/12/2000, as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, I wrote a letter to Prime Minister Vajpai reminding him of my earlier requests that Tamil, a language so rich in literature and culture should be declared a classical language. This claim had been kept in abeyance for quite a long time. The just and honest demand of the state government should be immediately met and orders should be passed.

The DMK felt that it was extremely necessary to take political and legal steps, apart from working at the government level. Echoing this sentiment, we placed our demand that all regional languages should be made official failing which Tamil, one of the family of Dravidian languages rich and hoary in its literary wealth, should be admitted to the official status. In the election manifesto of 2001, the party announced its electoral promise for getting Tamil the classical status. Without stopping there, it started making efforts for the fulfillment of the promise.

On May 4 and 5, 2002, Tamil Sangam, Chennai and Bangalore Tamil Sangam jointly sponsored a conference under the three-fold theme, Tamil as an official language, Tamil as a classical language and Tirukkural as national literature. A unanimous resolution was

passed to the effect that despite repeated pleas for several years, the Central Government had been delaying taking any positive step. It is a matter of deep concern that the genuine feelings of the Tamils had not been comprehended, much less valued. The demand was once again reiterated. On 13 April, 2003, under the auspices of the Tamil Language Akademy, the tenth conference of the national languages was held. In it I was awarded the "Ilakkiyak Kadal Virudu" Accepting it, I made the following observations which, my dear brother, deserve your attention.

Those who spoke before me have said that Tamil should be made a classical language. It is already in existence as a classical language. There can be no two opinions on this matter. All that we ask is that it should be called a classical language. This is the demand that we place before the Centre. Scholars have listed eleven essential traits for any classical tongue and Tamil is the only language in the world that fulfils all these criteria.

The total number of languages in the world is 600. Of these, the languages which possess literature and are grammatically defined are 60. Those which have a history of more than 2000 years are 6 in number. These are Tamil, Chinese, Sanskrit, Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. Of these, Latin and Greek are practically dead languages. But Israel seems to have successfully infused new blood into Hebrew. Greek seems to have a new lease of life after Greece attained independence. Sanskrit was never a language for communication. Only its written form is in use. But beyond doubt Sanskrit is one of the oldest languages in India. My Kuraloviyam, written in Tamil, has now been translated into Sanskrit and released. Chinese is a pictorial language, having ideograms as its characters. But Tamil is the only language capable of conveying nuances of thought and ideas with precision and depth. I am not saying this. Professor Emeneau, considered as the father of linguistics, holds the same view about

Tamil. To understand European life and culture through language, we need the help of Latin, Hebrew and Greek; similarly to understand the culture of the Indian subcontinent, we need the help of Sanskrit and Tamil. These two are the mother of all other Indian languages. Pandit Nehru in his *Glimpses of World History*, has accepted that the civilization that prevailed in Harappa and Mohenjadaro was Dravidian. The language of that ancient civilization was Tamil. We claim classical status for that very language. What are the advantages we derive if Tamil is accepted as a classical language? Here is my answer to those who raise this question:

If the central government announces that Tamil is a classical language, the University Grants Commission will accept it. Then, Tamil will begin to function as an independent department in all Indian universities. Advanced research in Tamil language, Tamil art and literature will be conducted with greater zeal. Tamil will gain acceptance in all the universities of the world as an independent language and not as one of the several oriental languages. Like the Sanskrit year, for celebrating which the Centre grants rupees fifteen crore, there will be a Tamil year which can also be celebrated. There will be opportunities for creating encyclopedias with details on Tamil art and culture. Tamil-English dictionaries can be brought out with the aid from the Centre. There can also be other plans for the development of Scientific Tamil. Tamil works will get translated not only in other Indian languages but also in foreign tongues such as English and French. During the regime of the DMK, we took all-out efforts for attaining our goal of getting classical standing for Tamil. Right from the year 1918, we have been trying hard to get the

centre accept our resolution and I ask the government to put into practice the proposals of the resolution of this conference.

This speech of mine created a stir in the hearts of Tamil lovers. English newspapers gave a detailed report and it attracted the attention of the central government.

At the conference sponsored jointly by the Tiruvananthapuram Sangam and Chennai Tamil Sangam at the office of Tiruvananthapuram Tamil Sangam, the following resolution was passed: Among the languages of the world, the oldest five are Tamil, Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and Chinese. Though Greek, Latin and Sanskrit are no longer current in communication and usage, they are granted classical status. But the Central Government refuses such a status to Tamil, the mother of other languages, and the one that is alive and rich in literature.

Reiterating our claim, a resolution was passed again by Karanthai Tamil Sangam, owing to the lead taken by its secretary Thiru S. Ramanathan that Tamil should be announced as a classical language. About 5000 Tamil lovers, scholars and teachers and students of Karanthai Tamil sangam took out a procession making this demand. On 18/8/2003, Chennai Tamil Sangam, Delhi Tamil Sangam and other Tamil organizations went on a hunger strike opposite the parliament house. On behalf the DMK, members of the parliament and central ministers and quite a few others took part in the fast. The group included T.R. Balu, A. Raja, A.K.S. Vijayan, A.T.K. Jayaseelan, T. Venugopal, S. Agniraj, Adisankar, A. Krishnasami, V. Vettrichelvan, Prof Sankaralingam, S. Viduthalaivirumbi, and R. Shanmugasundaram. Thiru Kumari Anandan, the leader of the disciplinary committee of Tamil Nadu Congress Party and Gandhi Literary Association made a press note on 12/8/2003 that "the demand for making Tamil the medium of instruction and sanctioning classical status to it has been a long standing one. Our

literary association celebrated the centenaries of Bharathi and Bharathidasan for 52 weeks each. I proudly take part in the hunger strike on behalf of my association." Likewise, the leader of the MGR party and my good friend, R.M. Veerappan said in his message that more than 90 years ago, Tamil scholars had insisted that Tamil should be made a classical language. Notwithstanding party affiliations, many Tamil men of letters have been emphasizing this prime demand. MGR party will happily take part in the agitation to be held at Delhi.

A few days later, after the hunger strike, a petition was presented on 19/8/2003 to Prime Minister Vajpai and the President Abdul Kalam. Perunkavikko V.M. Sethuraman, Secretary of Chennai Tamil Sangam T. Sundararajan, poet Arivudainambi, Prof Aru Alagappan, Dr T.K.S. Kannan, Secretary of Bangalore Tamil Sangam Subramanian, and the Secretary of Delhi Tamil Sangam Mukundan stressed the demand for granting classical status to Tamil, a precious language so rich and fertile in its literature. It was pointed out that since Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic have been accepted as classical languages by the Central Government, this hundred-year old demand should be taken into consideration. Prime Minister Vajpai replied that the demand was already in consideration. Regarding this, Thiru K. Veeramani, the President of Dravida Kazhagam issued a challenging public statement on 2/9/2003. "The entire community of Tamil scholars, political leaders and responsible citizens in various social set ups, members of parliament have in one voice, without any dissent, made a plea to the National Democratic Front Government led by Prime Minister Vajpai that Tamil should be made a classical language. This demand, like a stone thrown into the well, remains unmet. Meanwhile an unofficial report appears in the newspapers that the Minister for Human Resources made enquiries with the officials in his ministry. They seem to have replied that only those languages which are dead and no longer in use and currency can be

declared classical. Though Tamil is rich in all ways, it cannot be declared a classical language since it is very much alive and in wide use and currency. Can there be anything more absurd than such a statement? All Tamils in India and around the world at large should take it as a denial of our legitimate right."

The BJP which had a lion's share in the National Democratic Alliance and leaders like Murali Manohar Joshi had entertained deep hatred for Dravidian languages. This is evident in their oppositional and inimical attitude to the just demands made for Tamil, resulting in prolonged delay and postponement in taking any positive decision. That our history has taken note of this fact cannot be denied.

With love,

Mu. Ka.



7

Not a Letter, but an Imperishable Copperplate

31/12/2009



My dear blood - brother,

There are historical evidences to prove that the DMK, whether in power or in opposition, has always been raising its voice asserting its principles. Its prime goal was that Tamil should be declared a classical language. To achieve this goal, it left no stone unturned whether in power or in opposition. As the leader of the DMK, I wrote a letter to Prime Minister Vajpai on 22/4/2003, in which I said:

It is my heartfelt plea that Tamil should be made a classical language. I have been insisting this claim for several years and I should like to bring it to your notice once again. So far there has been no conclusive proof as to when Tamil language came into existence. Some scholars are of the view that Tamil had its origin even earlier than prehistoric days. I have been emphasizing, time and again, that a language known for its antiquity and renown should be recognized as a classical tongue. I have made several requests to the centre and I fervently hope that the NDA Government, under your leadership will fulfill my desire.

The Conference of Villupuram District DMK held on 20 and 21 September 2003 was an inspiring and fruitful one. It created in the minds of the public that the Central Government had not shown any interest in meeting our long felt desire and claim regarding the

classical status to Tamil though this demand was raised many times in the Lok Sabha. A resolution was passed to this effect. As a follow-up of this resolution, symposia were organized in 15 district headquarters under the aegis of the literary front of the DMK. Dr M.P. Manivendan and other office bearers led these symposia. Meetings were held all over the state raising several pending issues such as status for classical Tamil, Sethu project, Cauvery problem, POTA, ESMA, TESMA, etc. Accentuating these issues, DMK protested and picketed Central Government offices on 1/11/2003. Under the auspices of the Karanthai Tamil Sangam, a meeting of Tamil savants was held on 10/1/2004. It was decided to obtain one crore signatures from the general public calling attention of the centre to the long-standing demand. On Monday 12/1/2004, this campaign began with the first signature by the Chairman of Thanjai Municipal Council, Thiru Sultan and the signatures were obtained in a record time owing to the strenuous efforts of the lovers of Tamil.

In the manifesto of the parliament election held in 2004, DMK explained for the first time the reasons for the demand for classical status to Tamil. For getting separate departments for Tamil in all Indian and foreign universities, for conducting advanced research with financial assistance by the Centre, Tamil should be declared a primary classical language since it possessed all requirements for such an honour. Parliament elections were held. United National Alliance ably led by Thirumathi Sonia Gandhi, a selfless leader, swept the polls and the government was formed with Dr Manmohan Singh as its Prime Minister. DMK and other parties were part of the alliance. As a result of our repeated appeals to Thirumathi Sonia Gandhi, after the government was formed, in the national common minimum programme, it was publicly announced that Tamil would be declared a classical language. The world realized that in the history of the struggle for classical Tamil, an important landmark had arrived. When the President of the Indian Republic,

Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam announced in the combined meeting of the members of the parliament that Tamil would be declared a classical language, the joy of the Tamil lovers and scholars all over the world knew no bounds.

A special conference of DMK was convened at Salem on 21 and 22 August, 2002. The following resolution, moved by Prof M.P. Balasubramaniam and seconded by Thiru S. Amudhan was unanimously tabled:

For more than a century, many Tamil scholars had shown with illustrations and evidences that Tamil deserved classical status. Kalaignar, when he was the Chief Minister, had repeatedly reiterated the demand to Prime Minister Vajpayee through letters and in person. The election manifesto for parliament elections included this claim. As a result of all these attempts, the United Democratic Alliance had finally made its proclamation in favour of the demand. Without much further delay the centre should pass orders declaring Tamil a classical language.

The United Democratic Alliance Government, ably guided by Thirumthi Sonia Gandhi and led by Dr Manmohan Singh, made an official announcement declaring Tamil a classical language on 12/10/2004. As you know me well, my dear brother, you would have realized how much joy I felt and how elated I was when the announcement came out. I felt the same delight and bliss as I experienced whenever Thanthai Periyar lauded my work patting me on my back and Arignar Anna embraced me with deep affection. The expression of my intense joy and satisfaction were the speeches I made on 10/10/2004 at the conference of the Tamil Akademi at Chennai and at the jointly hosted conference at Madurai by Madurai Tamil Sangam and 30 other sangams commending my efforts. Since

they are quite relevant to the serialized essays I have written, I quote excerpts from my speeches.

We have all gathered together to celebrate the announcement that Tamil has been declared a classical language. I cannot accept that this function is got up to congratulate me. The great scholar in Dravidian comparative grammar, Dr Caldwell, and following him the first person to raise his voice for the declaration of Tamil as a classical tongue, Suryanarayana Sastry aka Parithimarkalaignar, and later hundreds and thousands of Tamil scholars and Tamils sangams have struggled hard for attaining our goal. I think that you have ordered me as the right person to deliver all our thanks to them who richly deserve all our gratitude. I am just an instrument. The people of Tamil Nadu have used this instrument. Tamil poets and scholars are still using this instrument. A chisel is used to carve a statue, but the chisel does not carve it by itself. It is the sculptor who does the work. I am just a chisel, there have been innumerable sculptors. I bow my head in obeisance before all such sculptors with a profound sense of gratitude.

If you think still further, every language can grow only with the support and assistance of the government. If you con the pages of history, you will realize that the power of the government and the aid of those who run it are essential for the growth of any language. Such a government came to be formed in India under the guidance of Thirumathi Sonia Gandhi and the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. I am duty bound to express my thanks to them on behalf of this conference.

Some 80 years ago, in a small hamlet Thirukkuvalai in Thanjavur district, I was born as the son of Muthuvelar and Anjugam ammal. I am now the recipient of the greetings and blessings of all of you. I dedicate them to my humble parents who gave birth to me, to Thanthai Periyar who raised and nurtured me, to Perarignar Anna who guided me, and finally to all those who have been working with me in this glorious enterprise. In the previous era, it was necessary to pass resolutions and fight hard for getting classical status to Tamil. About a lakh of friends and well-wishers of this organization had to court imprisonment. Not a word by way of response was forthcoming from the previous regime. But this government, the one that is ruling India now, understood our feelings, and officially made an announcement through the President of the Indian Republic, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. It has now been ratified by the ministry and has gained official status.

This is not the result of a single individual's effort or labour. The trust that the voters in Tamil Nadu have reposed in us has not been in vain. The love and care that we have bestowed on Tamil has not been in vain. It is not for me to take any credit for protecting it from going waste. All the credit should go to the voters of Tamil Nadu who, under my leadership, successfully chose 40 members of parliament as their representative. All credit belongs to them; we owe all our gratitude and thanks to them. They deserve this grand function.

Then, on 5/3/2006, at the DMK conference held in Trichy when I spoke in the presence of Thirumthi Sonia Gandhi, all my feelings gushed out like water from the Kurralam falls. To share those joyous

moments with you, I quote below some parts of my speech.

Suryanarayana Sastry, alias Parithimarkalagnar was the first Tamil scholar to claim classical status for Tamil more than 150 years ago. It flowered into a big movement and just when it was getting ripe for fruition, there were genuine doubts whether it would fall into neglect and decay. At this juncture, the present government told us not to entertain any more fear about the claim. It announced classical status for Tamil and Thirumathi Sonia Gandhi wrote the following letter to me dated November 8, 2005.

Dear Thiru Karunanidhiji:

I have received your letter of 28 October. I am glad that all the formalities for declaring Tamil as a classical language have now been completed. This is an achievement for the constituents of the UPA government, but particular credit goes to you and your party.

With Regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sonia Gandhi

I would like to tell you, "You have written to say that my party and I have been primarily responsible for this. This is not just a letter. Hundreds of years later, when my great-granchildren read this, they should realize that this is the invaluable monument that had been protected by their great-grandfather. In my younger days, I began my political career, raising the slogan,

'Long live Tamil,' holding aloft the flag bearing the insignia of the tiger, the bow and the fish. The same political career continues even today. If there is a history behind this movement for classical Tamil, the letter that you have written to me is worthy of being inscribed in letters of gold, studded with diamonds and hung in my burial chamber. The letter is a token of remembrance for my entire life and I do most heartily extend my thanks and greetings to you. Every word of my thanksgiving speech will keep reverberating in my heart till I live and in my graveyard after I die."

The voice raised by Tamil scholars, first echoing as a movement, then getting transformed into the voice of the Tamil country, became a political struggle, championed and espoused by the government, and finally at the right moment it became a reality when the competent authorities made the declaration that Tamil is a classical language. Today Mother Tamil, seated on a gold chariot, is being taken in a global procession. A hundred-year old dream of the Tamils has come true. The first part of the history of Classical Tamil has come to a glorious end. A great deal of service for the cause of Classical Tamil awaits us. Let us prepare ourselves and get ready for the task before us!

Long Live Classical Tamil!

Long Live Tamils!

Let the renowned Tamil Country attain bountiful Growth!

With Love,

Mu. Ka.

