

Central Plan Scheme for Classical Tamil

Second National Consultative Meeting

(January 10 & 11, 2006)

held at National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research, Taramani, Chennai

MINUTES

1. The Second Consultative Meeting under the Central Plan Scheme for Classical Tamil was held on 10 & 11 January 2006 at the National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research, Taramani, Chennai under the chairmanship of Prof. V. C. Kulandaiswamy, the Chairman of Tamil Language Promotion Board.

2. The agenda for the meeting was as given below:

A. MAJOR PROJECTS

1. Critical Editions of Ancient Tamil Works
2. Translation of Ancient Tamil Works into other Indian languages
3. Corpus development for Ancient Tamil Works
4. On-line Teaching of Classical Tamil
5. Visual Episodes on Ancient Tamil Grammar, Literature, epigraphy, Architecture, Arts, Science and Technology, and Dravidian languages
6. Digital Library for Studies on Ancient Tamil
7. Tamil Grammar from ancient to modern period on Historical Principles
8. India as a Linguistic Area (comparative study between Tamil and other Dravidian Languages, and between Dravidian and other families)
9. Tamil Dialect Survey
10. Antiquity of Tamil – An Interdisciplinary Research

NB: 1. Project Advisory Committees will be constituted for each project

2. Suggestions are welcome from the Experts

B. SHORT TERM PROJECTS (TO BE IDENTIFIED)

Academic and financial assistance will be provided to reputed scholars engaged in Short Term Projects in the designated areas.

C. PROGRAMMES

1. Meetings of the Board and of different committees
2. Conferences and Seminars (national and international)
 - a. The contribution of Tamil to Indian literary heritage
 - b. The contribution of Tamil to Indian philosophic heritage
 - c. Bhakti movement in Tamil Nadu and its impact on the rest of the country
 - d. Indian civilization and culture as the confluence of Sanskrit and Tamil traditions
3. Orientation/ Refresher courses (areas to be decided)

D. PUBLICATION

E. WEBSITE (www.ciil-classicaltamil.org)

3. The Meeting was attended by the following scholars:

1. Prof. S. Agesthiyalingom
2. Prof. Pon. Kothandaraman
3. Thiru. I. Mahadevan, IAS
4. Dr. R. Krishnamurthy
5. Prof. Avvai Natarajan
6. Prof. K. P. Aravanan
7. Prof. E. Sundaramoorthy
8. Prof. Tamizhannal
9. Prof. A. A. Manavalan
10. Prof. S.V. Shanmugam

11. Prof. S.N. Kandaswamy
12. Prof. Y. Subbarayalu
13. Prof. P. Marudanayagam
14. Prof. T. N. Ramachandran
15. Thiru. Natana Kasinathan
16. Prof. K. Balasubramanian
17. Prof. A. Damotharan
18. Prof. V. Sankaranarayanan
19. Prof. P. R. Subramaniam
20. Prof. V. Jayadevan
21. Prof. K. Rajan
22. Prof. G. Sreenivasa Varma

Of the 26 invitees, Prof. V. I. Subramoniam did not respond to our invitation. Prof. K. Chellappan and Prof. A. Dakshinamurthy with prior intimation did not attend the meeting due to unavoidable circumstances.

4. The meeting began at 10.30 a.m. as scheduled under the chairmanship of Prof. V.C. Kulandaisamy Prof. K. Ramasamy, Convenor welcomed the august gathering and presented in brief the details of the scheme. The participants introduced themselves. The Chairman in his address, gave a historical account of the scheme.

5. At the outset, the Chairman elicited from the experts their opinion on the Tamil equivalent of the English term Classical Language and of the two equivalents in use Cemmozhi and Cevvial mozhi, the latter was preferred by many. It was decided that hereafter the term Cevvial would be used as the technical equivalent for Classical.

6. All the items given in the Agenda were discussed in detail in their order and there was a consensus among all the participants in carrying out all of them.

7. The salient points of the discussion on different items of the Agenda are as follows:

(a) The critical edition of ancient Tamil works will include 41 works, namely, Tolappiyam(1), Patinen Mel Kanakku (18 upper classics) Patinen Kizhk Kanakku (18 lower classics), Silappadharam(1), Manimekalai(1), Muttollayiram (1) and Iraiyanar

Kalaviyal(1). The work will be executed in two parts. The first part will comprise the definitive text with transliteration (involving hyphenization) and footnotes for important words. The second part will include a lucid and comprehensible modern commentary. The chronological ordering of the 41 works is essential. The different editions published earlier will be made use of. The critical edition brought out under the present scheme should be accurate and error free.

(b) With regard to the translation of the above works in different languages it was felt by everyone that a survey of the translations already done should be undertaken as a first step towards this endeavour. The translation should be published along with the original text in Tamil script and Roman transliteration. The cultural terms should be transliterated with a footnote. Each volume of translation should include an elaborate introduction to the particular literary work. When translation is done into other Indian languages, it should be based on the original Tamil text and not on any English translation. As far as possible, the translator should be one to whom the target is the mother tongue. The translations done earlier may be critically examined and then adopted.

(c) The digitization of ancient Tamil works has been already attempted by scholars like Prof. Malton (Germany) and Institutions like Tamil Virtual University. They need to be examined before we start this work. The corpus may include at the first instance all the 41 ancient Tamil works. The text should be hyphenated for sandhi and word boundary. Both the Tamil script and transliteration should be used. The digitization work should be followed by grammatical tagging and evolving tools such as concordance. This work may be entrusted to an organization under the supervision of a Project Advisory Committee.

(d) The online teaching of Classical Tamil should include at least 50 lessons encompassing areas such as grammar, literature, epigraphy, arts, architecture, philosophy etc., Lessons in ancient Tamil literature should be given a good coverage. They should be prepared keeping in view the non-Tamil speakers in India and abroad and should be bilingual. This work may be linked with the online teaching programme already launched by the Tamil Virtual University.

(e) Under the visual documentation project, besides what has been already planned the inscriptions, coins, pot chips, drawings and sculpture which are in the process of decay may be documented and preserved on priority.

(f) The digital library should be developed into a National Library for Ancient Tamil Studies. The work already done in this regard by the Tamil Virtual University should be linked with the work proposed to be done. The books and materials related to Ancient Tamil Studies have to be collected from different libraries and institutions within the country and abroad. All Ph.D. theses relevant to the field should be brought out in the CD form.

(g) A Grammar of Tamil on Historical Principles should include a comparative account of different grammatical categories of ancient, medieval and modern Tamil. This should

be on par with the historical grammar written by Otto Jespersen for English. A book on the history of Tamil language should also be planned.

(h) A comparative study of Tamil and different languages as well as of Dravidian and other families may be undertaken in line with the most authenticated works done earlier. This research should be done in a systematic manner with objectivity in such a way that the findings are accepted by the scholarly world. The comparative study should involve grammatical, literary and folklore traditions.

(i) The regional, social and occupational dialects of Tamil should be studied through proper survey methods and a dialect dictionary should be brought out. The earlier work done in this regard needs to be consolidated. The novels and short stories with regional and social orientations may be consulted for this purpose. The dialect studies already done have to be consolidated. The dialect survey may be executed through different universities in Tamil Nadu.

(j) The antiquity of Tamil has to be approached through literary, epigraphic and numismatic evidences. Besides the different kinds of evidences available within Tamil Nadu, much attention needs to be paid to the evidences available in other states and countries. The support from the authorities of the museums of India may be sought in order to carry out this project successfully. Appropriate studies on the Harappa - Mohanjedaro civilization have to be initiated. Necessary steps may be taken to conduct research in foreign countries. Studies relating to cultural anthropology should also be undertaken.

8. National and International Conferences may be organised at the capital cities of different states in the nation on topics related to the contributions of Tamil to Indian literary and philosophical traditions. Refresher courses or orientation programmes may be organised on topics related to the reading and understanding of Sangam Literature.

9. The Centre of Excellence may publish (print and electronic versions) rare manuscripts and books. Reprinting of important works published more than 50 years ago may also be undertaken. A Research Journal or an Occasional Paper Series on the Antiquity of Tamil may be brought out. The publications of the Centre should show utmost concern for credibility and acceptance.

10. All the activities of the Scheme for Classical Tamil should be put on the website and constantly updated.

11. The meeting ended with a Vote of thanks proposed by both Prof. V.C. Kulandaiswamy and Prof. K. Ramasamy.

(K. RAMASAMY)

Head, Scheme for Classical Tamil