

Genesis And Growth Of Tamil Movements

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Abstract

The genesis of Tamil movement had started from the medieval period and spread up its trend to different dimensions. Many great scholars emerged and revamped the literature which eventually led to the sovereignty of Tamil language. Sangam age is considered by the Tamil people as the golden era of Tamil language. The period between the 11th and the 13th centuries, during which the Chola power was at its peak, there were relatively few foreign incursions and the life for the Tamil people was one of peace and prosperity. Modern linguistic scholarship places the poems between the 3rd century BC and the 2nd century AD. Arumuga Navalar was the pioneer to do this task and later, C.W. Damotharan Pillai (1832-1901), U.V.Swaminatha Aiyar (1855-1942) and others had followed in his footsteps.

European scholars too accredited that the South Indian family of languages kindled the feelings of Tamil literates, which led the Tamils to reconstruct Tamil antiquity and their past glory in their language and literature. The first theory outlined by Caldwell that Tamil culture had a separate and independent existence before the coming of Brahmins into South India, was widely interpreted more enthusiastically in the light of the rediscovered ancient Tamil literature. The first Madras Dravidian Association meeting was arranged in Madras in 1916. The most important achievement of the Madras Dravidian Association was the establishment of a hostel in Madras city for non-Brahmin students in 1916. Pon. Pandidurai Devar (1867-1911), the Zamindar of Palavanatham had founded Madurai Tamil Sangam in 1901. Following the Madurai Tamil Sangam, a few more organizations were founded subsequently which stood for the propagation and importance of the Tamil language. With the growth of Tamil language, more and more scholars emerged who wanted to elevate the position of Tamil in a high watermark.

Key words : Tamil movement - medieval period - peace and prosperity - Arumuga Navalar – C.W. Damotharan Pillai - U.V.Swaminatha Aiyar - European scholars - Robert Caldwell - G.U. Pope Madras Dravidian Association - Pon. Pandidurai Devar - Madurai Tamil Sangam

Introduction:

The genesis of Tamil movement had started from the medieval period and spread up its trend to different dimensions. The second part of 19th century witnessed remarkable changes in the history of Tamil literature in terms of growth in education and evolution in printing and press. The growth of Tamil literature was a nonstop process and its growth was recognized into significant growth from one stage to another. Though efforts were made by a

few scholars to adorn its beauty and purity, it was only a timely effort and did not bring any sort of lasting remedy. Therefore, the necessity for the manifestation of various scholars was much necessitated for the great mission. Many great scholars emerged and revamped the literature which eventually led to the sovereignty of Tamil language. European Tamil scholars too accredited that the South Indian family of languages kindled the feelings of Tamil literates, which led the Tamils to reconstruct Tamil antiquity and their past glory in their language and literature.

Growth of Tamil Language

Sangam age is considered by the Tamil people as the golden era of Tamil language. This was the period when the Tamil country was ruled by the three 'crowned kings' the Cheras, Pandyas and the Cholas. Tamil legends hold that these were composed in three successive poetic assemblies that were held in ancient times on a now vanished continent far to the south of India. A significant amount of literature could have preceded *Tolkappiyam* as grammar books are usually written after the existence of literature over long periods. The medieval period was the period of the Imperial Cholas when the entire south India was under a single administration. The period between the 11th and the 13th centuries, during which the Chola power was at its peak, there were relatively few foreign incursions and the life for the Tamil people was one of peace and prosperity. Modern linguistic scholarship places the poems between the 3rd century BC and the 2nd century AD. The land was at peace with no major external threats. Asoka's conquests did not impact on the Tamil land and the people were able to indulge in literary pursuits. The poets had a much more casual relationship with their rulers than can be imagined in later times. They could chide them when they are perceived to wander from the straight and narrow. A revival of Tamil literature took place from the late 19th century when works of religious and philosophical nature were written in a style that made it easier for the common people to enjoy. The modern Tamil literary

movement started with Subramania Bharathi, the multifaceted Indian Nationalist poet and author, and was quickly followed up by many who began to utilize the power of literature in influencing the masses. However, Arumuga Navalar was the pioneer to do this task and later, C.W. Damotharan Pillai (1832-1901), U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar (1855-1942) and others had followed in his footsteps.

Arumuga Navalar (1822-1876)

Arumuga Navalar was born at Jaffna in Ceylon in 1822. When he was a youth, Christian missionaries published Tamil version of The Bible and preached Christianity among the Tamils. As an indirect method to challenge such works the Hindus wrote prose and preached *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha*. Arumuga Navalar had strong faith in Saivism. He started printing press and published Tamil classics – the Tirukkural and *Tirukkovai* in 1860 and 1861 respectively. Again he published works on Saivism and Tamil Grammar in the Question Answer format. In general his works were very simple and lucid in style. Hence he was honoured as the ‘Father of Tamil Prose’ and was adorned with the *Navalar* title from Thiruvaduthurai mutt. His tireless service to Tamil impressed C.W. Damotharan Pillai and U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar.

C.W. Damotharan Pillai (1832 – 1901)

C.W. Damotharan Pillai was born in 1832 in a hamlet near Jaffna. He began his life as a school teacher and later concentrated on published Tamil works. In 1853 he had published a minor ethical work, *Neethineri Vilakkam* with notes in 1853. Later he got B.A. Degree from the Madras University in 1858. After graduation he qualified himself as a lawyer in 1871 and entered the Judiciary of the princely State of Pudukottai. Damotharan Pillai followed the footsteps of Arumuga Navalar. First of all he had concentrated upon grammatical works only.

He had collected a number of palm-leaf manuscript copies about *Tolkappiyam* and versions of its commentaries. He studied books related to it in a most critical manner and analysed systematically and later published it. His other work, *Chollatikaram* bears the commentaries of *Cenavaraiyar* and *Naccinarkkiniyar* and was published in 1868. His other works *Porulatikaram* and *Eluttatikaram* were published in 1885. Besides these, he had published *Viracoliyam*, written by Puttamittiran in 1881 and *Iraiyana Akapporul* in 1883 and *Ilakkana Vilakkam* written by Vaittiyana Tesikar in 1899. Beyond this, in 1887 he had published a book called *Kalittogai*, one of the Eight Anthologies assigned to the post-Sangam period (250 – 600 A.D.).¹² Again, he brought in print the *Culamani* in 1889.

Robert Caldwell (1816-1891)

Robert Caldwell was born in Ireland and joined as a member in London Missionary Society in 1834. Later, he studied religion in Glaxo University. Afterwards, he got a chance to come to India to preach Christianity. In 1838 Robert Caldwell reached Madras and met Doru, an English man and learnt Tamil from him. Later he had decided to observe peoples' culture and their social life and for a better understanding of their language, he travelled by walk from Madras to Tirunelveli. Besides preaching Christianity, he studied Tamil in an orderly manner and published works called History of Tirunelveli and Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South India Family of Languages. In his second work he implied Tamil as the most highly cultivated *abintra* of all Dravidian idioms and dispensed with Sanskrit. According to him Tamil not only stood alone; but had flourished without others' aid. Again if one eliminates the Sanskrit derivatives from Tamil language, they furnish the simple life of the Tamils. Moreover, in the primitive Tamil mind, its manners and religion and ancient vocabularies of the language were unique without much mixture of Sanskrit.

G.U. Pope (1820-1908)

G.U. Pope was born in 1820 in England and had his education at Hoxten College. As a member of western mission, he came to Madras and was appointed as a missionary preacher at Tirunelveli in 1839. From that time onwards, he began to study Tamil language from Ramanuja Kavirayar. Subsequently he engaged himself in the teaching profession at Ooty and then in Bangalore. Later in 1882, he returned to England, where he worked as a lecturer in Tamil and Telugu in the Oxford University. While working in the Oxford University, he had published the English translation of *Tirukural* (1886), *Nalatiyar* (1893) and *Thiruvagasam* (1900). Again he had published a work on *Elementary Tamil Grammar* in three volumes which was admired by Thiru V. Kalyanasundaranar. According to Pope, Saivism was the old pre-historic religion of South India and prevailed from pre-Aryan times. He required the Tamils to look back with pride to their ancient religion and the philosophy propounded by their ancestors.

U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar (1855 – 1942)

U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar was born in 1855 at Uttamanathapuram, a village near Kumbakonam in Tanjore district. He studied Tamil grammar and Tamil literature from his guru Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai of the Tiruvaduthurai mutt during 1871-1876. As a result of it he was appointed Tamil pandit in 1880 in the Government College at Kumbakonam. The writing of U.V.Swamynatha Aiyar had a wider appeal among the Tamil scholars and the general public. During his tenure he found that the various Tamil works belonging to the Sangam Age were known only by name and through quotations in commentaries and other such treatises; but could not expose to the common man its uniqueness of good grammar and literature. During his service he himself engaged in collecting palm-leaf manuscripts. As a teacher in the College, he rendered yeomen service to Tamil Literature. Again the Sangam literature was not taught in student oriented method though it dealt with social, political and

economic life of the ancient Tamils. It was not taught in a glamorous way to enable the modern people to enjoy the subject matter. Hence he wanted to change the method of learning Sangam literature, so as to make it easily understandable with the subject matter. With this in mind he met Salem Ramaswami Mudaliyar, a scholar in Tamil literature. He undertook a series of tours and travels in saving important works from imminent destruction. He explained the glory of Sangam Tamil literary work *Chivakachinthamani*. He believed that there would have crores of Tamil works in scattered form.

As a result of it he had brought out the first printed editions of eight major works *Chivakachinthamani* in 1887, *Pattuppaattu* in 1889, *Silappatikaaram* in 1892, *Puranaanuru* in 1894, *Purapporulvenpamalai* in 1895, *Manimekalai* in 1898, *Ainkurunuru* in 1903 and *Pattirrupattu* in 1904. In his writings, he took much care to incorporate the biographical introduction, glossary, index and many other relevant details for the sake of the readers. His publications of classical works provided a revelation of the splendour of their heritage to the scholars who began to devote their attention towards Dravidian civilization. The first theory outlined by Caldwell that Tamil culture had a separate and independent existence before the coming of Brahmins into South India, was widely interpreted more enthusiastically in the light of the rediscovered ancient Tamil literature. It led the Tamil scholars - P. Sundaram Pillai (1855 – 1897), J.M. Nallaswami Pillai (1864 – 1920) and other Tamil scholars who attempted to show that the Dravidian religious system was distinctive. They were boldness that it was superior to the teachings of the Vedas and was propounding the *Saiva Siddhanta* philosophy. The renaissance of *Saiva Siddhanta* philosophy started with the founding of associations in different parts of Tamilnadu. As early as in 1883 a *Saiva Siddhanta Sabha* was founded at Tuticorin for the revival and propagation of Saivism. Under the auspices of the Sabha a Tamil Veda Recitation School was started in 1903. Apart from the language prominence of Dravidians, the Tamils wanted to establish their racial superiority also in the

Tamil society by pointing out the Brahmanical hegemony. Accordingly the Tamil scholars found that the Aryans had established over Tamil society on the basis of caste by birth and declared that they were superior in terms of getting gifts of land and tax free land from the Tamil rulers. By enjoying all these, they led a joyful life. During the British period, their predominant position in society leaned towards Western education and ultimately they occupied almost all Indian high positions. In view of these the educated Dravidians or non-Brahmins by the beginning of the 20th century questioned their inferior position assigned by the Aryans. Hence the educated Dravidians, being large land owners and merchant classes clamoured for political power and governmental influence in terms of their wealth and status in society. As a result of these, the Tamil researchers and its' lovers decided to eliminate the dominant position of Sanskrit in the Tamil language and to propagate their antiquity. For this they organized the Fourth Tamil Sangam, Pure Tamil Movement, Tamil Protection Conferences and other methods on the one hand and made an attempt to form social organization for early political dominance.

Madras Dravidian Association

The Madras Dravidian Association held regular meetings and provided an opportunity for the members to meet and discuss their problems. Literary meetings were also arranged under its auspices and achieved much for the non-Brahmins. The most important achievement of the Madras Dravidian Association was the establishment of a hostel in Madras city for non-Brahmin students in 1916. Till then the non-Brahmin students who came for higher education from various places of the Presidency had confronted with difficulty in getting hostel or any accommodation in the Madras city because of caste barriers. From now, their problems were over and the hostel was called as Dravidian Home. It's service was tremendous in enlightening non-Brahmin population towards literacy. In due course of time, the Madras Dravidian Association became a popular organization among the non-Brahmins.

As a result of it, from 1915 onwards their literacy rate showed much progress and they got the capacity to compete with the Brahmins which attracted the attention of P. Thiyagaraya Chetti (1852- 1925) and Dr. T.M. Nair (1868-1919). By that time, the British Government accepted the policy of representative self-government to introduce after the end of First World War in 1919. Opposing this move Mrs. Annie Besant began the Home Rule Movement in 1915 which was supported by Aryans as it advocated the religion and culture of India.

The non-Brahmins opposed it vehemently as it had supported the Congress Party, dominated by the Brahmins much against the aspiration and feeling of non-Brahmins. As a result of this, the awakened non-Brahmins showed their protest and for encouraging this movement they strongly supported the Dravidian Association. The first Madras Dravidian Association meeting was arranged in Madras in 1916. In the meeting it was decided to start the South Indian People's Association primarily for conducting daily newspapers to guide and to define and publicized the views of the non- Brahmins on public questions. As a result of it the English daily Justice appeared on 26th February 1917 and *Diravitan*, a Tamil daily was started in July 1917. Following this development, the South Indian People's Association issued a non-Brahmin manifesto in December 1916 to define the attitude of the non-Brahmin communities in the Madras Presidency. The manifesto evaluated the conditions and ideology for the progress of the non-Brahmins in the very future. The manifesto stated that the British Indian Government should implement the reforms so as to enable every class and caste to get representation according to its population. Again it stated that the non-Brahmins would organize associations thereby to educate themselves. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India announced reform scheme in London on 20th August 1917. It was the signal for the starting of intense political activity among the non-Brahmins.

Madurai Tamil Sangam, 1901

Pon. Pandidurai Devar (1867-1911), the Zamindar of Palavanatham had founded Madurai Tamil Sangam in 1901. There were many historic background for its formation. Pandidurai Devar learnt Tamil literature and grammar from Sadava Dhanam Muthusamy Iyengar and Madurai Ramaswami Pillai alias GnanaSambandappillai³¹ during his early days. By developing a taste upon Tamil literature, he had extended financial assistance to U.V.Swaminatha Aiyar for publishing *Purapporul Venbamalai* and *Manimekalai*. By that time, the protagonists of Pure Tamil Movement had requested Pandidurai Devar to arrange for Tamil lectures for the promotion of Tamil language in Madras. By that time he had made a sudden visit to Madurai. When the Tamil scholars came to know of his visit, they wanted to arrange for a meeting under his presidentship.

In the meeting, the chief guest required two books namely, *Thirukural* and *Kambaramayanam* for his reference. When he heard that these two sacred books were not available, the president of the meeting felt much over the non-availability of these books at this Tamil based Madurai. Again, he was shocked over the non-availability of valuable Tamil books - *Tirukural* and *Kambaramayanam* with the scholars for their reference and personal use. It had made the chief guest for the arrangement of these books for their ready reference. After the meeting he felt about the lack of awareness on the progress of Tamil language and literature on the people of Madurai. This event had eventually led him for the Pure Tamil Movement to establish Tamil Sangam at Madurai. With this end in view, he had convened the lovers of Tamil language at Setupathi High School, Madurai on 24th May 1901 and officially Madurai Tamil Sangam was established on 14th September 1901. As a result of the hectic work of the Madurai Tamil Sangam a good number of Tamil works were published subsequently. Among them, a few were, Kadirvel Pillai's Tamil Dictionary and Singaravelu's *Abidhana Sinthaamani*. Apart from this it had commissioned a monthly called

Sentamil in 1903. In its first issue it was stated that the aim and purpose of the Sangam was to establish the greatness of Tamil language to the world. As a result of its contributions, the Madurai Tamil Sangam was regarded as the Fourth Tamil Sangam.

Sivagnana Yogi's Thiravidar Kazhagam

Following the Madurai Tamil Sangam, a few more organizations were founded subsequently which stood for the propagation and importance of the Tamil language. *Thiravidar Kalagam*, a significant organization was founded by Sivagnana Yogi of Virudhunagar on 19th November 1908. It functioned under the presidentship of Sirkali K. Chidambara Mudaliyar with over fifty nine members to its credit. Among them Sirkali K. Chidambara Mudaliar, Rao Bahadur Thiyagaraja Chettiar, V.P. Subramania Mudaliar, Arasan Sanmuganar, M.C. Poornalingam Pillai, Swami Vedasalam, M. Kathiresa Chettiar and Somasundara Bharathi were eminent personalities. The main object of this organization was to make known the Dravidian antiquity, its position and the importance of Tamil language to others. This organization had used only the pure Tamil words like *perum karuthu* (majority) *nikalthu kuttam* (managing committee) *niraiven* (quorum) *antarikkai* (annual report) *kazhaka kavalar* (patron of the Association), etc. It also expressed the view that the territory between Pahruli river and the Himalayas were the land owned by Tamils called *Tiruvisdam* until the Aryans came and settled there. Tamil was spoken as mother language of the people.

Pure Tamil Movement

During the medieval period the rulers of Tamilnadu had patronized the Sanskrit language and made it the language of the court as well as inscriptions. Therefore, Tamil scholars had no other options, but to study Sanskrit language. Again, as the Jains created a prose type of language form in Tamil literature and made Sanskrit and Tamil inter-mixed, at the rate of fifty-fifty which was called as *Manippravalam*. Later it created an erroneous

impression that the Tamil language was derived from Sanskrit and most of the Tamil scholars too were influenced by this view. The combined authors Subramaniya Dikshikar and Swaminatha Desikar of *Ilakkana Kothurai* had questioned the purity of Tamil language of having only five pure letters viz., *ra* (w), *na* (d), *zha* (h), *e* (v), *ghana* (") and ridiculed the surviving Tamil as a language. However, the western scholars recognized the independent growth of the Tamil language by all means.

As a result of the criticism leveled against the Tamil language, the Tamil scholars took it as a challenge to purify the Tamil language from its grass root level and began to erect it on its own footing. With this end in view they decided to purify their language and resorted to eliminate all the Sanskrit words from the Tamil literature. The Pure Tamil Movement attempted to maintain and purify the chastity of Tamil and encouraged to speak only in virgin Tamil. As a follow up action, Surya Narayana Sastri (1870-1903), a Tamil Professor of the Madras Christian College, Madras, changed his name into 'Paritimar Kalaignar', in the pure Tamil version. Apart from this, Subramaniya Siva (1884-1925), a freedom fighter and the editor of *Gnana Banu* had announced a competition in his magazine in the issue of July 1915, offering rupees five to anyone who "write an article about either history of Thiruvalluva Nayanar or significance of Tamil language for about eight pages in pure Tamil". The Tamil scholars continued their mission of purifying the Tamil language. They aimed to popularize the antiquity of Tamil language to one and all in the society. Again they tried to purify the Tamil language by way of removing the impurities that it had mixed with Sanskrit words. In order to prove the availability of words in Tamil language, a Tamil Lexicon was prepared. The idea of publishing a Tamil lexicon was first mooted in 1905 by G.U. Pope, who was working as a Lecturer in Tamil at the University of Oxford. He wrote a letter to Sir Frederick Nicholson, an honorary fellow of the University of Madras and a retired official of the I.C.S. saying that he had accumulated enough material for an exhaustive lexicon of the Tamil

language and expressed his desire to publish an entirely new dictionary. By that time, the Government of Madras was not ready to provide him financial assistance for his proposed lexicon project. However, it had kindled the feelings of Tamil lovers. As a result of it without the governmental aid and assistance, out of language fervour, P. Ramanathan, a Tamil lover and devotee published the first volume named A Twentieth Century Tamil Dictionary. Subsequently the Madurai Tamil Sangam had published a Tamil Dictionary written by C.W. Kathiravel Pillai.

Conclusion:

The growth of Tamil language was steady and the scholars clamored for Tamil University and Tamil language as the medium of instruction at the school and college levels. The Tamil language attained more and more purity and growth with the contribution of European scholars as Robert Caldwell, G.U. Pope and Indian scholars as Damothara Pillai, U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar and others. With the growth of Tamil language, more and more scholars emerged who wanted to elevate the position of Tamil in a high watermark. As a result of it, the Government of Madras Presidency came forward to minimize the importance of Sanskrit. By that time they had confronted with a lot of hurdles which had triggered their mind and soul greatly to get a proper place for Tamils. For that they had dedicated their precious time and energy for the attainment of their goal by attributing their efforts to the Tamils which ultimately resulted in new Tamil identity.

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