

Preface

The Study of Linguistics and Comparative Philology on modern lines in South India is about hundred years old. Bishop Robert Caldwell laid the foundation of linguistic study in Dravidian languages by publishing his epoch-making work "The Comparative Grammar of Dravidian languages" in 1856 from London. The Madras University encouraged the study of linguistics and philology by instituting research departments and awarding Degrees, graduate and post-graduate, in the study of the same.

In 1946, I submitted a thesis (to the Madras University) for the M. O. L. Degree, the subject being "Origin and Growth of Tamil language" and was awarded the Degree.

Having it as basis, I published two books, "The Making of Tamil Grammar" and "Brief Study of Tamil Words", wherein the Growth of Grammatical theories and the evolution of semantic changes in Tamil were

discussed and analysed respectively. While preparing my thesis I went through Prof Vendryes' work 'Language' and being captivated by it I made up my mind to write a book about Tamil Language on the model of it. But after publishing the two books above mentioned it seemed that most of the portions about Tamil Language were covered in them. Yet the names *Semanteme* and *Morpheme*, being unknown to the students of Tamil language, attracted and induced me to have them as the topic of my further research. As far as I know there is no work which deals with them. Even western philologists cared them little.

The treatment of semantemes and morphemes is concerned with outward forms of the words. On the theories of Prof Vendryes I have pursued my study of Tamil language in this branch for the past some years. Now I am having the opportunity of teaching Prof Vendryes' book 'Language' to the M. A. (Tamil) class. So it has been possible for me to complete the work and publish the same.

I have utilised the work of Vendryes thoroughly; not only as model but also for the sustenance of my book. For the study of Tamil language, I based myself mostly upon the work of Tholkappiyar for the old Tamil period (up to second century A. D.); and that of Pavananthi for the middle Tamil period (up to fifteenth century A. D.) and upon the spoken dialect and some other books of nineteenth and twentieth centuries for the modern period. The work of Dr. Caldwell is quoted and some of his theories are criticised. The works which helped me directly or indirectly in preparing this thesis are given in the bibliography. I am greatly indebted to them all.

In assigning the chronology of Tamil Grammarians the scholars widely differ. On linguistic grounds I have assigned the age of Tholkappiyar to the seventh century B. C. and that of Pavananthi to the ninth century A. D. or to the age prior to the age of Yapparunkalam and Nambi Ahapporul.

Prof Sathiavageeswarier M. A., popularly known as Shakespeare of South Travancore, in spite of his old age and ailment has kindly gone through this thesis in manuscript and made valuable suggestions. His foreword is adorning this book depicting his erudite scholarship and critical acumen. I have great pleasure in thanking him for his labour of love.

I dedicate this book to Dr. (Sir) A. Ramasamy Mudaliyar, Vice-chancellor of the University of Kerala as a humble token in recognition of his great service to the Tamil language and culture in particular and to the humanities in general.

To print research work of this kind in English interspersed with phonetic symbols and foot-notes is not easy in Nagercoil. The authorities of the Assisi Press devoted great care under the guidance of Rev. Fr. B. J. R. Alexander, Ph. L., S. T. L., to the format of this book in an attractive manner. My thanks are due to them and to all who helped me in bringing out this book.


