

THE TAMIL PURIST MOVEMENT: *A Re-evaluation.**

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THE place and role of Tamil language in the modern politics and social conflicts of South India (and one may add Sri Lanka) have been abundantly described in a number of monographs during the last two decades.¹ Besides the specific studies on South India, certain general works dealing with the Indian sub-continent as a whole or other regions of India in particular, have made passing references and observations that have helped focus attention on the subject.² One aspect of the language movement in Tamil that has not received the scrutiny it deserves is the *tanittamil*, 'pure-Tamil' movement, which in many ways highlights the more virulent features of Tamil revivalism. Although the 'pure-Tamil' movement will, inevitably be discussed in its socio-political context, the present paper intends to approach the subject from the vantage point of a writer's experience; more specifically the implications of the movement to creative literature and its ramifications will be analyzed to evaluate its importance. For while a certain amount of sociological data for the emergence of the purist movement has been examined by writers on the subject,³ the literary sources bearing on it have hitherto been largely neglected. Furthermore a study of instances of language prescription which is the main characteristic of the movement can be revealing for both the linguist and cultural historian.

The intellectual background to Tamil Nationalism has already been dealt with in recent studies to make any elaboration on it unnecessary here. Suffice it to say that certain statements by European missionary scholars like Percival, Winslow, Caldwell, Pope and others^{3a} kindled a sense of pride among Tamils about their heritage. The writings of these early Indologists contributed in no small measure to the discovery and interpretation of their past by Tamil scholars and writers. The enthusiasm and thrill with which

* This was originally presented to the South Asia Colloquium of the Pacific Northwest (SACPAN) at the University of Washington, Seattle on 10 March 1978.

the European savants presented the salient features of Tamil language, literature, antiquities and religion also instilled in these Tamil scholars a notion of uniqueness about their past glory that set them apart from other races and peoples of India, especially the Brahmin community, (broadly identified as Aryans) who were portrayed as traditionally hostile to Tamil and constantly conspiring to elevate Sanskrit at the expense of Tamil, through a process of 'Aryanization' or 'Sanskritization'.⁴ Rev. Robert Caldwell (1814—1891) was probably the first to adumbrate the idea.

It was supposed by the Sanskrit Pandits (by whom everything with which they were acquainted was referred to a Brahmanical origin), and too hastily taken for granted by the earlier European scholars, that the Dravidian languages, though differing in many particulars from the North Indian idioms, were equally with them derived from the Sanskrit...This representation...and the supposition of the derivation of the Dravidian languages from Sanskrit, though entertained in the past generation, is now known to be entirely destitute of foundation...The Orientalists referred to were also unaware that true Dravidian words, which form the great majority of the words in the southern vocabularies, are placed by native grammarians in a different class from the...derivatives from Sanskrit and honoured with the epithets 'national words' and 'pure words'...Tamil however the most highly cultivated *ab intra* of all Dravidian idioms can dispense with its Sanskrit altogether, if need be, and not only stand alone but flourish without its aid, and by dispensing with it rises to a purer and more refined style...So completely has this jealousy of Sanskrit pervaded the minds of the educated classes amongst the Tamilians, that a Tamil poetical composition is regarded as in accordance with good taste and worthy of being called classical, not in proportion to the amount of Sanskrit it contains, as would be the case in some other dialects, but in proportion to its freedom from Sanskrit...Even in prose compositions on religious subjects in which a larger amount of Sanskrit is employed than in any other department of literature, the proportion of Sanskrit which has found its way into Tamil is not greater than the amount of Latin contained in corresponding compositions in English.. Through the predominant influence of the religion of the Brahmins the majority of the words expressive of religious ideas in actual use in modern Tamil are of Sanskrit origin and though there are equivalent Dravidian words which are equally appropriate, and in some instances more so, such words have gradually become obsolete, and are now confined to the poetical dialect... In Tamil,... few Brahmins have written anything worthy of preservation. The language has been cultivated and developed with immense zeal and success by native Tamilians and the highest rank in Tamil literature which has been reached by a Brahman is that of a commentator. The commentary of Parimelaraḡar on the *Kural* of Tiruvalluvar...is the most classical production written in Tamil by a Brahman,⁵

These remarks made by Caldwell in his lengthy introduction, under the sub-heading 'The Dravidian Languages independent of Sanskrit' have had such an abiding influence over subsequent generations of Tamil scholars that they merit closer scrutiny. Phrases such as "pure words", "religion of the Brahmans", "native Tamilians" and "freedom from Sanskrit", etc., set in motion a train of ideas and movements whose repercussions and consequences went beyond the field of philology. Many socio-political and cultural movements among the Tamils during the last hundred years have without doubt been influenced in one way or another by statements of Caldwell: the non-Brahmin movement, the self-respect movement, pure-Tamil movement, the quest for the ancient Tamil religion, the Tamil (iṭai) music movement, the anti-Hindi agitation and the movement for an independent Tamil state, not to speak of the general revivalist movement of Tamil literature and culture, owe, in different ways and degrees, something to Caldwell's zealous writings.

Be that as it may, it was P. Sundaram Pillai (1855—1897) who introduced some of these ideas into Tamil literature.⁶ In his dramatic poem *Manonmaniyaṃ* (1891) Sundaram Pillai made an innovation in the matter of the invocatory verse. Till then it was customary for authors to invoke a deity or deities at the beginning of a work. Sundaram Pillai wrote a "Prayer to Goddess Tamil" as the invocatory verse.⁷ Composed in the kali meter which lends itself for singing,⁸ the verse has since remained a model in Tamil literature.⁹ In 49 of the 57 lines of the verse Sundaram Pillai paid homage to Goddess Tamil in a diction that was charged with emotion and ecstasy. Its impeccable literary quality is indisputable. But what concerns us here is its content. Sundaram Pillai made the following assertions. (a) Deccan is a distinctive division of the country (India), (b) Dravidam is pre-eminent among its constituents, (c) Tamil has universal recognition and fame, (d) Tamil is like the eternal God, (e) Tamil is the 'parent' of all the Dravidian languages, (f) Unlike Sanskrit (which became extinct) Tamil is a living tongue (ever young). In making these statements the author compares works in both Sanskrit and Tamil and asserts that Tamil works are superior in their imagination, morality, piety and social justice. For instance he says that those who know the *Kural* well will never accept the laws of *Manu* which discriminates between different castes and prescribes differing moral codes and justice. Likewise he says that those who are captivated by the enthralling *Tiruvāsaḡam* will not waste their time in chanting the *Vedas*.

Sundaram Pillai was one of the pioneers in the study of the history of Tamil literature and there is no doubt that some of his contributions are noteworthy.¹⁰ He was also active in other fields like religious studies in 1880's propounding the theory that the early religion of the Tamils were based on the *Agamas* which were later corrupted by the Brahmans who tried to reconcile the *Vedas* and *Agamas*. In this he was ably supported by J. M. Nallaswami Pillai (1864 — 1920) who started a monthly called

Siddhanta Deepika or Light of Truth in 1897 which served for many years as the rallying forum for non-Brahmin Saiva protagonists. However Nalla-swami Pillai was not anti-Sanskrit like Vedachalam.¹¹

It is true that Sundaram Pillai was also drawing on certain Tamil literary sources which were jealous of Sanskrit and had portrayed Tamil as equal or superior to it. In fact, it is evident from the *Bhakti* poems of the Pallava period (circa 7 c. A. D.) that Tamil was beginning to be cherished as a sacred language and hence equal to Sanskrit.¹² But it is in the works of the late medieval authors like Kumarakuruparar, Sivapragasa Swami, Paranjoti Munivar, Karunaipragasar and the author of *Tamil Vidu Toothu* and others that we hear strident voices contemptuous of Sanskrit and placing Tamil on a divine pedestal.¹³ And yet these voices were limited in their range of 'knowledge'. Sundaram Pillai imbibed the arguments of Caldwell and converted them into bases of a new religious creed. Furthermore Sundaram Pillai's predecessors had no 'scientific' authority to back up their statements. They were also not hostile to Brahmins as such. But Sundaram Pillai was apparently drawing on the philological discoveries (of Caldwell and others) and giving his statements the stamp of history, sociology, anthropology and philology.¹⁴ Naturally his pronouncements acquired enduring prestige.

Another contemporary of Sundaram Pillai needs to be mentioned here. V. G. Suryanarayana Sastri (1870—1903) who was a graduate of the Madras University and Professor and head of the Department of Tamil at Madras Christian College had changed his name into Paritimalkaignanar (Pariti - Surya, mal = Narayana, Kaignanar = Sastri) a pure-Tamil form of his original Sanskrit name.¹⁵ Sastri too was influenced by the writings of Caldwell and wrote a book on Tamil language. He also wrote poetry, plays and novels. He adopted a classical style in his writings which made them somewhat difficult and heavy. However he was sensitive to new ideas and trends and was enthusiastic of innovations.¹⁶ He was for sometime the joint editor of *Nanapotini*, a periodical published since 1897 in Madras by M. S. Purnalingam Pillai (1866—1947). In fact Sastri began serializing his novel *Mathivanan*—which he titled in English, 'A classical Tamil story'—from the first issue of the magazine.

It is significant that the founder of the pure-Tamil movement had close ties with Sundaram Pillai and Suryanarayana Sastri both of whom laid the foundations for the movement. S. Vedachalam Pillai (1897—1950) who changed his name into Maraimalai Adikal, after he started the pure-Tamil movement, was a Vellala from Nagapatam in Tanjore district. At the age of nineteen (1895) Vedachalam went to Trivandrum along with his Tamil mentor Narayanasamy Pillai to meet Sundaram Pillai who had also studied under the same teacher. It would appear that Vedachalam had made a good impression on the Professor who gave him a testimonial recommending him for a post in colleges.¹⁷ Vedachalam returned to

Trivandrum the next year and spent about three months working as a tutor and delivering lectures on religion. During this period he came into contact with Nallaswami Pillai who was then a District Magistrate in Chittoor and very much in need of help to edit his Tamil version of *Siddhanta Deepika*. Vedachalam worked in the journal for some time before joining the staff in Madras Christian College. As has been remarked earlier, Suryanarayana Sastri was the head of Tamil Dept., there and Vedachalam worked as a Tamil Pandit in the College from 1898—1911. Sastri died prematurely in 1903 (within two years of the demise of C. W. Tamotharam Pillai¹⁸ whose tutelage was valuable and fruitful for his academic career) but Vedachalam must have had close connections with him for at least five years.

Thus we see that before launching the pure-Tamil movement, Vedachalam had a preparatory period during which he had the benefit of learning, and discussing matters with active and eminent personalities like Sundaram Pillai, Nallaswami Pillai and Suryanarayana Sastri who were propagating the "ideas concerning the antiquity and cultural self-sufficiency of the Dravidians". It is probable that there were also other influences that shaped Vedachalam's ideas.¹⁹

The genesis of the pure-Tamil movement has been described, albeit dramatically, by the biographers of Vedachalam.²⁰ It is said that while discussing the poetry of Saint Ramalingar (1823—1874) with his daughter Neelayathaci, Vedachalam opined that in a particular line the pure-Tamil word *yakkai* (body) would have been more apt and aesthetically more satisfying than the word *tekam* which was of Sanskrit origin.²¹ At the end of the discussion they decided to use thenceforth pure-Tamil words in their speeches and writings. In accordance with that decision both father and daughter changed their names to Maraimalai Adikal and Neelambikai respectively. Likewise his journal *Nanacakaram* was renamed *Arivakkadal* and his Institution, *Samarasa Sanmarga Sangam* was redesignated *Potunilaik Kalakam*. These developments, of course, took place over a period of time. However, historically speaking, we may consider 1916 as the year in which Vedachalam launched the movement. (It is indeed interesting to speculate on its timing when we recall the fact that the Justice Party—officially called at the beginning the South Indian Liberal Federation—(SILF) came into being that year.²² The organization announced its birth with the publication of "The Non-Brahmin Manifesto" and proclaimed its aim to promote and protect the political interests of non-Brahmin caste Hindus. If not anything else, Vedachalam would appear to have chosen the perfect moment to "eliminate" Sanskrit - a language identified with Brahmins - from the Tamil scene.) In other words, as much as the SILF strove to "free" South Indian socio-political life from Brahmin domination, Vedachalam too wanted to "free" Tamil language and literature (and religion) from Sanskritic influences. Both movements were mutually

-complementary. Furthermore it may be pointed out that in spite of his professed abandonment of "non spiritual public activities" and retreat to his "Ashram" in Pallavaram in 1911, he did participate actively in both the anti-Hindi agitations of 1937 and 1948 - addressing public meetings and publishing pamphlets.²³

We may now delineate Vedachalam's concept of pure-Tamil. Being one of his main preoccupations he has written about it at different places in his works. In brief, he argues that language is the basis of civilizations and hence its preservation and vitality is essential for a race like the Tamils; at all times it is the elite who have the capacity to direct the development of a language; the Tamil alphabets are sufficient and adequate to express all the necessary sounds and hence no reform is required; alien words will corrupt both the language and its speakers. But let his words speak for themselves :

That the Tamils were highly civilized in the past is not only deducible from their ancient literature but is demonstrated also by the researches of Oriental Scholars. Dr. Caldwell writes : "The primitive Dravidians do not appear to have been by any means a barbarous and degraded people. Whatever may have been the condition of the forest tribes, it cannot be doubted that the Dravidians properly so called, had acquired at least the elements of civilization prior to the arrival amongst them of the Brahmans"...In any case Dravidian civilization was predominant in India before the coming of the Aryans. ...The Dravidians were probably in a much more advanced stage of civilization...

Now, it is time we try to get at an idea of the factors that have contributed to the building up of such a Civilization...It is the peculiar good fortune of the Tamils that those halcyon days produced among them thinkers and writers of the right type, differing in this respect from their brethren of such contemporary Western civilized nations as the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Chaldean, the Aryan, etc. It is because of this vital difference that the Tamil Civilization endures against odds while others remain merely as archaeological curiosities. The language used by the Tamils continues alive and grows while the rest are all respectable dead languages...It is to impress this fact on our mind that the late lamented Professor Sundaram Pillai sang : "Oh ! Tamil ! If the whole world had been yours before the birth of the Aryan tongue which contains the four Vedas, is it too much to say that ye are the first-born and eternal speech ?" To those who deeply consider all these facts it must be obvious that this enduring characteristic of the Tamil civilization is not a little attributable to its birth from the loins of ancient Tamil poets and scholars who bravely, wisely and unflinchingly held up the standard of Tamil culture. Writers of over 1800 years ago were careful to practice the art of writing in pure, well-chosen, simple and virile Tamil words. They would not weaken

its strength and get themselves demoralized by indiscriminately admitting into its fold any extraneous word. A language loses its vitality if it is needlessly and thoughtlessly corrupted. So also a class of people becomes disintegrated and weak by harmful admixture. The great and deserving merit of the Tamilians is that, for more than fifty centuries, they have used their language with so great care and vigilance and kept it so pure and undefiled, without disintegrating it by reckless mixture with Sanskrit words, that we who are their descendants are enabled to speak now almost the same language they spoke then and derive the same enjoyment they had of their productions as if they had been the productions of our own age. For such legacies, is it possible for any of us to make an adequate return in an appropriate manner?''

These statements and claims need no explication. The author's indebtedness to Caldwell and Sundaram Pillai is obvious. But what is most striking is his notion of the role of thinkers and poets in the growth of the language. While his idea of the past is certainly romantic his prescription for the preservation and development of the language is elitist and betrays utter voluntarism. In it lies the strength and weakness of the movement he initiated.

Because of the fervour with which he presented his case and the prevailing socio-cultural milieu, Vedachalam's call had considerable attraction. Although the number of people with total commitment to the cause was always small, it had initially at least, a certain amount of vogue that was out of proportion to its actual strength. Given the fact that Vedachalam travelled around in South India and Sri Lanka to deliver lectures he established contacts and changing names became fashionable among certain Tamil scholars, especially those who had some grounding in traditional literary scholarship. One of his early followers was Uruthirakodeeswarar who also lived in Sri Lanka for a few years. Another follower was S. Balasundaram who changed his name to Ilavalakanar²⁵ and wrote a number of books on Sangam literature. Some aspects of the linguistic implications of the Tamil purist movement have been treated by Dr. E. Annamalai in a recent paper.²⁶ As has been mentioned earlier the literary background will be considered here in greater detail.

Puristic movements in languages are not new and nor are they entirely a modern phenomena. However it may be correct to say that such movements have a tendency to be present in-situations where national sentiments are awakened or strong.²⁷ The essence of purism has been aptly summarised by Wexler.

People have also frequently shown an inclination to direct the development of their language by proposing that certain existing linguistic elements be either dropped or retained while still other elements be introduced into their language. These activities of labeling and regulating linguistic elements are invariably characterized by recourse to some

previously defined preferential norms, usually consciously formulated by the native speakers themselves. The terms "purism" and "puristic trends" are widely used to designate instances of language evaluation and regulation where speakers are generally opposed to elements in their language.¹⁸

The Tamil purist movement had, as the object of elimination foreign elements like Sanskrit (and English) words that had and were finding their way into Tamil.¹⁹ These were to be replaced by native elements. (In practice the attack on English was less vehement and often purely symbolic. For as we shall see, Vedachalam himself wrote frequently in English and as time went on, particularly after the anti-Hindu agitations argued for the retention of English as the main language. In a peculiarly patronizing tone he once wrote "therefore, the safe, precious and inspiring examples, to be followed for building up a solid and substantial future are available only to the English and the Tamils").²⁰

Viewed historically, one might *a priori* concede that there was a felt need for crying halt to the indiscriminate and sometimes wanton use of Sanskrit words in Tamil. As part of the commentatorial literature, a style of prose evolved in Tamil using not only a very high percentage of Sanskrit loan words, but also unadapting them to Tamil phonemic system and translocating a great number of structural features of Sanskrit into Tamil. Furthermore a poet like Tayumanavar (circa 1706—1744 A. D.) could write whole lines comprising Sanskrit words. This mixture of Sanskrit and Tamil was called *manipravala*, like a necklace of gems and corals. The Vaishnava philosophical writings excelled in this type of prose.²¹ With the given lead in educational and social standing the Brahmins were prone to adopt this type of style. But it must be pointed out that in the 18th and 19th Centuries the non-Brahmin caste Hindus too wrote, if not in *manipravala*, certainly in a highly Sanskritized idiom. With the increase in the reading public and popular education there was a necessity to rectify this absurdity. Furthermore, *Virasoliyam* the grammatical treatise (circa 12 C. A. D.) had legitimized the *manipravala* style and subsequently a few commentators to the *Tolkappiyam* and the 17th Century grammarian Swaminatha Desigar asserted that Sanskrit grammatical rules applied to Tamil as well. These trends naturally provoked reactions²² among Tamil Scholars and Vedachalam was, in a way giving form and shape to such sentiments. But the manner of his reaction was extreme and as will be shown below, in the end, self defeating. As long as the pure-Tamil movement overlapped with the general revivalist trend it evoked general support. But the main thrust of the linguistic (and cultural) fervor was for the development of Tamil into new branches of knowledge and experience which basically required a sense of freedom and variety. But Vedachalam's concept of pure-Tamil was in effect a return to the glorious past—the time of the Canror, the Sangam poets²³—whose poetic language was supposed to be free from Sanskrit admixture. In choosing or

opting for the old Tamil, doubtless archaic and unintelligible to large numbers of people in modern times, Vedachalam was trying to swim against the current. There were two issues involved and he mixed the two together.

It is well known that traditional diglossia has existed in Tamil in the form of *Centamil*, classical language, and *Koduntamil*, vulgar language and these two "have long-established, functionally separate roots in the same society."³⁴ Besides the above classification which was fundamental, the grammarians also spoke of *valakku*, spoken, colloquial (style) and *ceyyul*, literary, poetic (style). Until the first quarter of this century, the spoken language was rarely committed to writing. (Western missionary scholars like Beschi,³⁵ Caldwell and Pope³⁶ were quick to perceive the diglossia situation and came to terms with it.)

Partly as a result of the impact of English and also due to the changes in the Tamil society, the main effort in modern Tamil has been towards the creation of an effective, simple and standard language. This drive manifested itself first in prose and subsequently in poetry. The achievement of a person like Arumuka Navalar (1822—1876) is precisely this. Although he never used colloquialisms, "he wrote simple elegant but grammatically correct prose". That is why he is considered "the father of modern literary prose".^{36a} Navalar who had a hand in the translation of the Bible, benefited from his education in a Methodist missionary school in Jaffna and made many innovations in writing. Later in his polemical writings against the Christians and Hindus he adopted a rhetoric that almost approached the speech rhythm of his times. He was also the first to introduce public speaking in Tamil.³⁷ Navalar of course, used Sanskrit loan words in Tamil but adapted them to Tamil phonemic system. Similarly Subramania Bharathi (1882—1921) the father of modern Tamil poetry was committed to writing in an idiom that could be readily understood by the average person. The very success of Bharathi and his place in modern Tamil literature is mainly due to his use of simple - popular language. Thus we see that, both in prose and poetry, the mainstream was towards 'modernization' and 'simplification' of the literary language.^{37a} The task was not easy and the process is still on. Naturally, there was and is some opposition to this process of using an increasing amount of popular language. The question of a standard Tamil is still not settled. But Vedachalam's attempt to preserve not only the classical Tamil but also make it free of Sanskrit was doubly retrogressive. It was an impossible task. But he persisted. Besides writing 'theoretical' essays on the subject of purism, language preservation and planning, Vedachalam endeavored to preach by his own practice too. By 1916 he had already published nearly a dozen books which had Sanskrit words in them. It is probably true that even before 1916 he used Sanskrit words sparingly.³⁸ But he now set out to revise his works and began to expunge the Sanskrit words interspersed in them. As is to be expected he was also interested in dictionary writing

and coining of terminology. Sociolinguists characterize such activity as part of the process of modernization of a language. Ferguson's observation is apt.

The efforts of language planners generally focus on the production of glossaries and dictionaries of new technical terms and on disputes about the proper form of new words, when the critical questions seems to be that of assuring the consistent use of such forms by the appropriate sectors of the population.³⁹

The purists in Tamil first took up positions in this matter (under the leadership of Vedachalam) during the 1930s when the need for text books and other reading material in Tamil led to some organized efforts. The Madras Presidency Tamil Association (with government patronage and support) constituted a Committee for Scientific and Technical terminology in 1934. It published initially a volume of ten thousand technical terms in Tamil pertaining to nine branches of study.⁴⁰ C. Rajagopalachari as Chief Minister of Madras was keenly interested in the project. (He was confident that science could be taught in Tamil but given his family and social background was not a purist)^{40a}

During the time when the glossary was being prepared "disputes about the proper form of new words" erupted. With the view to obtain a consensus and greater participation of interested persons the Committee conducted a number of seminars and conferences,^{40b} which also provided the forum for conflicting viewpoints. Basically there emerged (as is often the case till today) three points of view: (1) the 'cosmopolitan', (2) the 'Sanskritic' and (3) the 'puristic'. (In each school of thought there were extremists as well as moderates.)⁴¹ Broadly speaking the English-educated liberals, especially those seriously concerned with the development of the science comprised the core of the cosmopolitans. They argued the case for the adoption of foreign (English) words into Tamil for efficacy, economy and expediency. They were aware of the need for intertranslatability.⁴² The 'Sanskritic' school was predominantly championed by 'nationalists' and 'integrationists' who felt that Sanskrit was the fountain of technical vocabulary for the whole of India and citing the analogy of Latin and Greek forming the base for technical terms in European languages' pleaded for leaning on Sanskrit. This school probably had many Brahmins supporting it.

The 'puristic' school marshalled all the evidence in support of the purity and self-sufficiency of Tamil and argued that the inherent nature of Tamil language (words being formed from roots) would facilitate the coining of precise and pleasing terms. Vedachalam's opinion may be seen in one of his book of essays.

Tamil is an independent language with a rich store of words capable of expressing in a skillful hand all kinds of thoughts that appear in the different branches of learning.⁴³

The purists were also opposed to the use of *Grantha* alphabet in Tamil, especially in technical terms. Vedachalam's daughter Neelambikai was active during this period and with the help and under the guidance of her father, published two Dictionaries of Sanskrit loan words in Tamil and their equivalent pure Tamil words.⁴⁴ She also wrote a monograph on the development of Tamil language. Judging from the various glossaries in Tamil dealing with Science, law, administration, commerce, etc., that have been published since then, both in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka, it would appear that the puristic school has had definite impact.⁴⁵ But more often than not the terms in the glossaries have never gained currency in usage. A leader published in the *Madras Mail* (May 28, 1927) seems to have registered the point.

Fortunately such purists do not control the growth of a language. That is the work of the common people. The purists may frown at slang, they may grumble that the language is being debased by slipshod and lazy talkers and writers; but fifty percent of what they condemn eventually finds its way into the language, to be defended by a later generation of purists as violently as the earlier fought for its exclusion. Language cannot be successfully cribbed cabined and confined.⁴⁶

As mentioned earlier, the influence of Vedachalam and his followers on those engaged in the preparation of glossaries and dictionaries has been significant. But two important forms of discourse in the process of modernization are the news and feature stories of the press and radio.⁴⁷

It is in this important aspect that the purists were always pushed to a defensive position if not utter helplessness. The real problem insofar as Tamil was concerned was the existence of traditional diglossia and the urgency for a 'standard' language adequate for communication in the context of modern life. In that sense Vedachalam's grand crusade was really charging at the windmills; the actual battle was elsewhere. Nor was Vedachalam's campaign of any immediate importance or advantage for the ruling elite, who were quite happy with the English educational heritage.

Although Vedachalam made periodic sallies into the soci-political arena, he was never in the front line. Nor were his periodicals reaching the common man at any time. His journal had a circulation of less than 300 copies. As a result it was personalities like T. V. Kaliyanasundaranar (1885—1953) scholar, publicist, politician and pioneer trade unionist or C. Rajagopalachari (1878—1972) statesman, scholar and writer or Kalki (R. Krishnamurti 1899—1954) social worker, writer, organizer and journalist, or C. N. Annadurai (1909—1968) politician, dramatist, orator, or P. Jeevanandam, agitator, trade unionist, publicist, who were decisive in shaping the form of the modern prose. The politicians, popularizers and propagandists used the language as a medium of communication. The newspapers in particular helped evolve a standard Tamil that was always

close to the idiom of the people. And because Vedachalam and his disciples were restricted by their concept of classical and pure-Tamil they were never in the picture.

It is interesting to note that the novel too has played its role albeit obliquely in deflating the altruistic claims of the purists. Among the unforgettable characters created by Rajam Iyer (1872—1898) is the erudite but naive and impractical Tamil pandit Adusapatti Ammaiyappa Pillai, who has since remained the prototype of a pedantic Tamil teacher speaking in obsolete language. His flawless but fossilized and funny utterances are in sharp contrast to the lively and vibrant conversations of the other characters. Subsequent novelists, playwrights, cartoonists and film makers have often utilized such characters for evoking laughter.⁴⁸

But the real weakness of the purist movement showed up in its inability to generate any form of literary creativity. For, starting with the religious revivalism it was more in literature that the Tamil Renaissance found its maximum outlet and noteworthy accomplishments. The novel in particular, has been in vogue since 1876 and except for a handful of novels written now and then in pure-Tamil all of them show a wide variety of linguistic patterns. Virtually all the dialectal forms have found their way into the novel. From Rajam Iyer who wrote "the first real novel in the language"⁴⁹ to Rajam Krishnan the contemporary novelist who handles socio-political themes realistically, the novelists have touched upon all dimensions of the life of the people both in its private and public aspects. The history of modern Tamil prose is largely the history of the novel.⁵⁰ Some of the finest prose-writers like Rajam Iyer, Madhavaiya (1872—1925), Bharathi, Kalki, R. Shanmugasundaram, T. Janakiraman, T. M. C. Ragu-nathan, G. Alagiriswamy (1923—1970), D. Jeyakanthan, S. Ponnuthurai, K. Daniel and L. S. Ramamirtham are also remarkable novelists. Many of them were also journalists.

Now, Vedachalam himself published two novels, *Kumutavalli* (1911) and *Kokilampal Kaditankal* (1921) in pure-Tamil. Both were adaptations from English works of fiction which are considered mediocre: the former, *Kumutavalli*, was a tamilized work of a story by G. W. M. Reynolds (1809—1873). Vedachalam remarked in his lengthy English preface that the original was a celebrated work and he was rendering it into Tamil as an exemplary creation. (This of course reflects on his literary taste and judgement.)⁵¹ But more than literary or aesthetic considerations he was once again using the novel as a pretext for his puristic crusade.

Although the Tamil language is pliant and rich in vocabulary capable of conveying the finest shades of meanings, yet in all the Tamil novels published in a decade or two the diction is rendered very unwholesome by the introduction of unassimilated foreign words from Sanskrit and other languages and by the unhappy combination of words and phrases.⁵²

Except for the fact that *Kumutavalli* was prescribed as a text for examinations held by the Universities of London, Madras, Annamalai and Sri Lanka at different times, it was never considered a serious work of fiction by the Tamil readers. Apart from its rigid, archaic, monotonous and grave style, the content of the novel too was remote and unfamiliar—the story taking place in an imaginary Tamilnad of the 6th or 7th Century A. D. “In his enthusiasm to maintain purity Atikal even resorted to the use of certain archaic forms of literary expression”⁵³ which found its peak in a work like this. Suryanarayana Sastri too wrote his *Mathivanan* in a language which “exhibits all the worst features of linguistic purism and the artificial introduction of stilted phrases”.⁵⁴ His disciple and biographer N. Balarama Iyer (1875–1943) too wrote the novel *Leelal* (1897) in a similar style. These writers were probably motivated by the desire to see their works prescribed as literary texts for examinations.⁵⁵ But such attempts ceased with the works of Vedachalam. The readers of the fiction from 1920s had access to a variety of novels that were being written in easy and elegant style and hence had no patience for a language that was frequently unrecognizable to them. Thus ended the abortive attempt of the purists to enter the world of creative writing. It is true that a few poets like Bharathidasan (K. Subburathnam 1891—1964) and his followers—Suratha, Mudiyaasan and Vaanidasan were exponents of pure-Tamil poetry. Bharathidasan was a disciple of Subramania Bharathi, but later embraced the self-respect and pure-Tamil movements. Due to his allegiance to the DMK doctrines he became popular among non-Brahmin readers and was the unofficial “Poet-laureate” of the DMK. He was called *paaventar*, king of poets. However he never adopted archaisms and was also flexible and relatively simple in his style. But perhaps, because of his obsession with purism, anti Hindi and anti Brahminism and other issues, his poetry suffered. Says Zvelebil: “Bharathidasan—only a few years after his death—sounds slogan-like, proclamative, flat and full of hollow rhetoric.”⁵⁶ This sums up the attempts of the purists to use their language as literary medium.

The most powerful and productive literary group that sprang in 1930s was called after the short-lived but scintillating journal *Manikkodi*. It was started by two veteran journalists K. Srinivasan and T. S. Sakkalingam, with Va. Raa. (V. Ramaswami Iyengar 1889—1951) as the editor. Va. Raa. who was an admirer of Subramania Bharathi and wrote the first biography of him, made the journal the forum and center for literary experimentations. He was one of those rare personalities who could inspire promising writers without patronizing them or inhibiting their ideas. Although the journal was inspired by patriotic and Gandhian ideals it soon emerged as a quality magazine devoted to serious literature and criticism. In the previous decades V. V. S. Aiyar (1881—1925) had been the leading figures in literary activity.⁵⁷ He was the first to write original short stories in Tamil (1910) and also introduced modern literary criticism and comparative studies. The writers who gathered around *Manikkodi* had not

studied Tamil as a discipline. They came to Tamil writing having studied Sanskrit, English, Philosophy, Economics, Medicine, etc. They were influenced by British, American and European literature between the two world wars, and of course by the achievement of Bengali writers. To some of them, literature was a vocation. Putumaipittan, (S. Virudachalam (1906—1948) the greatest short story writer in Tamil, was one of the members of this group. He was (in spite of his pseudonym which meant "he who is mad after novelty"), well grounded in traditional Tamil literature, which naturally gave him an edge over his fellow writers. As Zvelebil observes, some of his stories may be favourably "compared with highly developed story-writing of world literature".⁸⁸ But one person does not make a movement. Besides Putumaipittan, K. P. Rajagopalan (1902—1944), N. Pitchamurti (1900—1976), B. S. Ramaiah, C. S. Chellappah, P. K. Sundararajan, Mauni, L. S. Ramamirtham and others wrote short stories, poems, new-verse, criticism, polemics and political commentaries. Most of these writers were romantics, whose individualism, aesthetic commitment and creative zeal called for felicitous, sensitive and unrestricted language and style. To them pure-Tamil was intellectually and emotionally abhorrent. The sheer power of their works and the others who followed them, established the *marumalarchi natai*—the style of renaissance - as the principal medium of literature and communication.⁸⁹

These writers were not content with creative work alone. Bharathi and V. V. S. Aiyar had written occasional essays on the nature of literature. But these writers, concerned as they were, primarily with contemporary literature and its problems, went into the question of the appropriate prose for different genres of literature and wrote penetrating articles on the subject. Va. Raa. was of the conviction that "one should write as one speaks".⁹⁰ But others like Putumaipittan, C. S. Chellappah,⁹¹ K. N. Subramanyan, N. Pitchamurti and Ilangaiyarkon were more subtle. Their articles were analytical and persuasive. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, the illustrious editor of the Tamil Lexicon and one of the outstanding textual critics and literary historians took a sober view of the problem and wrote in favour of simple and effective prose.⁹² Himself a scholar with scientific objectivity and scrupulous exactitude, his support gave some moral strength to the creative writers, who were standing up to the ferocious onslaught of the purists (and traditional Tamil scholars). But the *Manikkodi* writers got backing from one unexpected quarter though. T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar (1882—1954) popularly called *Rasikamani* — 'connoisseur par excellence' was a gentleman of means and leisure who spent his time in the enjoyment of poetry, especially in the company of selected friends. A sort of an anti-intellectual with an impressionistic approach and endowed with graceful eloquence, he was an institution by himself lending his support to cultural movements. Being a gifted conversationalist, he was of the opinion that "you should write as you would speak". He never hesitated to use Sanskrit loan words if he felt it was appropriate although he was capable of coining words for new concepts.⁹³ Chidambaranatha Mudaliar

was an intimate friend of C. Rajagopalachari and Kalki and wrote regularly to the weekly, *Kalki*. Primarily concerned with cultural values, he resented the regimentation and pedantry of the purist school.

Yet another factor too worked against purism from about the 1950s. Both in South India and Sri Lanka, post-Independence problems created the conditions for a band of writers who came from traditionally oppressed sections of Tamil society, i. e. the lower castes. Many of them were attracted by Marxism and communist organizations which provided them with a world view and also the confidence to struggle against exploitation and articulate their thoughts and feelings freely. As might be expected, their level of literary education was somewhat low. But they ushered in new experiences and visions into fiction, poetry and drama using hitherto unheard of dialects, idioms and expressions.⁶⁵ They were indifferent to "correct" Tamil itself as taught by school teachers; pure Tamil was of no concern to them: they in fact openly despised it and ridiculed its proponents. To them linguistic restrictions or restraints were akin to social and political oppression and all such barriers had to be broken down. Harrison's general observation in a slightly different context seems applicable here.

Where language differences tend to coincide with class distinctions, language conflict is apt to coincide accordingly with the lines of social conflict, greatly increasing it. And if the language of the lower classes is spoken by them at a time when they increase in numbers, or when they gain a bigger share in political and economic power in the society, then the language quarrels will be part of a general process of their elevation in the society and of their gradual bid for increasing social power.⁶⁶

Viewed in sociological terms, the exclusiveness of the pure-Tamil movement, its alienation from the literary mainstream and the social pressures from below sealed its fate. "By the Thirties, pedantic, scholarly writing was practically dead, and the purist trend was sterile."⁶⁷

This inescapable weakening of the purist dogma was bound to reflect on the movement itself. Nambi Arooran has analysed the percentage of Sanskrit words in Vedachalam's works at different times.⁶⁸

Year	General theme	Literary theme	Religious theme	Averages
1902	21%	7%	22%	16%
1911	28%	10%	16%	15%
1921	9%	3%	8%	7%
1931	6%	5%	5%	5%
1941	10%	9%	9%	9%

Explaining the increased percentage of Sanskrit words in Vedachalam's latter works, Nambi Arooran conjectures that his failing health and old

age vitiated the vigorous pursuance of his ideal. But it would be more logical to surmise that Vedachalam had reached the limits of pure-Tamil writing and the inevitable relaxation and compromise were taking place. Such a line of argument is strengthened by the fact that while dealing with non-literary themes he had perforce to use more Sanskrit words. The table indicates that the percentage of Sanskrit was highest in works pertaining to general themes. This fact is crucial. The whole point of developing a language for modern needs calls for quick and easy communication in a medium that would cause the least delay and confusion. Vedachalam himself must have recognized this problem as is shown by the fact that at times "he found it necessary to limit his pure-Tamil style while communicating with his readers". In other words he had to make concessions to his readers. But by and large, he stuck to his position, arguing that the readers of his work should make an effort "to catch up his high and pure style which was the only way to increase one's vocabulary" and knowledge of the language. It is interesting to note that Dr. Raghuvira one of the most prominent and enthusiastic proponents of pure Hindi movement once retorted to Nehru, (who had complained that though a Hindi speaker himself, he found it difficult to understand documents in pure Hindi), that "the attitude of the educated Hindi speakers to the new style should be that of a learner, a receiver".⁸⁷

As has been indicated earlier, the purist movement lost momentum in the late Thirties and early Forties. Some causes have been pointed out; a rounded statement may be attempted now. Wexler adduces four major reasons for the ultimate discrepancy between prescription and performance in language purism.⁸⁸ (1) Regulators are frequently not consistent in implementing their principles. (2) Regulators may frequently disagree with one another, and a single trend may include supporters who differ in their interpretations. (3) Prescriptive norms may change through time with the result that new recommendations can both supersede and coexist with earlier recommendations. (4) The public fails to heed prescriptive pronouncements.

These four factors have, in varying degrees, been operating in the Tamil purist movement too. For instance, while the extremists would have no Sanskrit words at all, the moderates were prepared to accommodate them provided they are changed to suit Tamil orthography and pronunciation. We have also pointed out the inconsistencies in Vedachalam's practice⁸⁹ and the compromises he had to make.

I must conclude now with a few remarks on the socio-political aspects of the purist movement. It was pointed out at the beginning of this paper that the launching of the purist movement coincided with the formation of the SILF (Justice Party). Notwithstanding the differences between politics and culture in the tempo of their development, one is able to see certain broad

parallels in the rise and fall of the Justice Party and the pure-Tamil movement. Both were started by non-Brahmin upper caste personalities drawing support from educated, wealthy and pro-British personages. They were never really popular movements; under their broad slogan of Dravidian nationalism and its ostensible unity were hidden several conflicts, contradictions and confusion. At times they even seem to have functioned with a certain amount of cynicism and double standards. In the Thirties, the Justice Party ran out of fuel being superseded by the Self-Respect movement, which in turn gave way to the more militant DK and DMK. Likewise the pure-Tamil movement merged with the anti-Hindi movement in the Thirties and was later absorbed into the ideology of the DMK. In Sri Lanka it became part of Tamil cultural nationalism. Wasbrook's observation on the Justice Party is illuminating:

The South was supposed to be the scene of a great Brahman / Non-Brahman drama but, between the early 1920s and 1957, this was taking place off-stage. The Non-Brahman Justice Party in office had dismantled its ideology and had shown itself very willing to support any Brahman who would support it. By 1930 it was seriously considering offering membership to Brahmans. The British, who had played a large part in engineering caste animosity, had lost interest in the controversy.⁷⁰

Although caste, religion and language served at a particular juncture to mobilize loyalties and furnish a sense of identification they are not the real bases for politics and power. For nationalism along with modernization is simultaneously the cause and effect of old communities dying and new communities being born. In this process loyalties and priorities are frequently fluctuate and change. Class interests overtake caste interests though sometimes both can coexist and overlap. Language bonds are not free from political manipulation.⁷¹

The middle class which spearheaded the literary renaissance did not wish to be contained within puristic boundaries. The claims and boasts of the purists doubtless gave a sense of pride and self satisfaction to some sections of the middle class. But such claims were not to be taken seriously for actual practice. For the middle class, while paying lip service to pure-Tamil, and such other cultural symbolisms were set on a cosmopolitan course. Life and literature, precept and practice were neatly separated. Language was also a handy weapon. So when the Anti-Hindi agitation flared up, pure-Tamil enthusiasts like Eelathu Civanantha Atikal and others began to campaign for it. The pure-Tamil movement became a past relic, a hobby horse of the monolingual Tamil teachers in South India and Sri Lanka, who refer to it while bemoaning their plight. The middle class itself prefers to be its own watchdog rather than allow the purists to dictate its correct expression. In Tamilnadu under the guise of fighting against

Hindi, English continues to dominate the administration, courts and education. "By putting forward English as the only weapon with which the Hindi offensive can be met, the most conservative and powerful sections in our country cleverly hide the fact that their real object is a refusal to let Tamil grow and a determination to keep English in the place which Tamil, and not Hindi should occupy."⁷²

It is an irony of history to note that Vedachalam, who probably spoke and wrote more about the development of Tamil and its potentialities, should have eventually argued for the retention of English as the common language of India.⁷³ Using all his skills he made a case for preferring English. With that the pure-Tamil movement not only lost its momentum but also its very *raison d'être*.

The writers and communicators of the new generation, have categorically rejected the restraints of purism. Yet we must concede a formative importance to the prose of Vedachalam which, taken in conjunction with that of some of those whom he influenced was to modify today's language.

NOTES

1. Hardgrave, Robert L. Jr. *The Dravidian Movement*, Bombay : 1965; Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*. Berkeley and Los Angeles : 1969; Barnett, Marguerite Ross, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, Princeton, N. J. : 1976; Bhaskaran. R. *Sociology of Politics*, Bombay : 1967; Suntharalingam, R. *Politics and National Awakening in South India 1852—1891*, Tucson, Arizona : 1974; Thambiah, S. J., "The Politics of Language in India and Ceylon" *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. I. Part 3. Cambridge : July 1967. pp. 215—240. Schiffman, Harold, "Language, Linguistics and Politics in Tamilnad" *DRAVLINGPEX*, Vol. 5, No. 2 November 1972.
2. Das Gupta, Jyotirindra, *Language Conflict and National Development*, Berkeley and Los Angeles : 1970; Prakash, Karat *Language and Nationality Politics in India* Madras : 1973; Brass, Paul R. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge : 1974; Wriggins, Howards, *Ceylon : Dilemmas of a New Nation*, Princeton, N. J.:1960.
3. Nambi Arooran, K. *The Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905—1944, with special reference to the Works of Maraimalai Atikal*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, (University of London, 1976). Also, Irschick, *Ibid.*, pp. 275—310.
- 3a. For a sample of these, see Rajarigam, D. *The History of Tamil Christian Literature*, Bangalore : 1958. pp. 8—11. It is of interest to note that the writings of two other Christian Missionary scholars

in the present century influenced the "Dravidian nationalist" historians and linguists: Father Henry Heras (1888—1955) whose work on the Indus scripts favoring a Dravidian origin for them boosted the 'morale' of many an anti-Aryan scholar. Father S. Gnanaprasada of Jaffna, Sri Lanka (1875—1947) wrote, among other things, *Comparative Etymological Dictionary of Tamil* (incomplete) which argued that Tamil was the basic language. Father Gnanaprasada who knew more than twenty languages was an indefatigable worker and was honored in Germany with an issue of a stamp. His ideas have influenced later Tamil writers like K. Appadurai, Devaneyan Ilakkuvanar and M. Kanapathi Pillai.

4. Unfortunately Tamil literary history and scholarship provide ample examples of such attitude. A modern scholar like K. A. Nilakanthasastri (1892—1976) whose researches on many aspects of South Indian culture earned him the well deserved esteem of scholars all over the world, had a predilection for extolling Sanskrit as the mainspring of Tamil literature and philosophy. Cf. *History of South India*, Oxford: 1958. P. 330. Also *Dravidian Literature* Madras 1949. W. Krishnaswamy Iyer, a Judge of the Madras High Court once remarked that, "Sanskrit is the parent of all Indian literatures including Tamil; for much that is claimed in Tamil literature is indebted to conceptions which are entirely to be found in the field of Sanskrit literature" *Madras Mail* 6, May, 1910 quoted by Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 341. At the other end of the spectrum one sees modern Tamil enthusiasts with scholarly pretensions like G. Devaneyan, K. Appadurai Pillai, S. Ilakkuvanar and others asserting that Tamil was the first language in the world. Such emotionally charged statements and positions "can sometimes be quite comical and fallacious in content" for these men "are very often not professional linguists and, as propagandizers of a particular position, frequently act on emotion rather than on objective examination of facts" *Vide*, Wexler, Paul N., *Purism and Language* Bloomington, Indiana: 1974. p. 7. Although the author deals primarily with modern Ukrainian and Belorussian Nationalism his comparative data is instructive; for a critique of Brahminism see Nair, B. N. *The Dynamic Brahmin*, Bombay: 1959.

5. *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*. 2nd edition. revised. London: 1875 pp. 45—51.

On the question of the British Government's role or connivance in creating ethnic, caste and racial appeals, see, for instance David Washbrook: ".....the evidence of the Census and of the writings of missionaries and early anthropologists provides some foundation for a generalization on 'the official mind'. The features of caste most commonly emphasized in European literature of the

- time was the permanency of ritual position and the subjection of lower to higher castes—features which were derived to a considerable extent from the Hindu scriptures and from the vocabulary of local status confrontation”. D. Washbrook, “The Development of Caste Organization in South India 1880—1925 in *South India* by Baker and Washbrook, 1975, pp. 180—181,
6. For biographical details, see *Professor P. Sundaram Pillai Commemoration Volume* (ed.) Pillay, K. K. Madras : 1957; Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. *Tamil cudar manikal* 3rd ed. Madras : 1959.
 7. For a detailed study of Tamil invocatory poems, see Kailasapathy, K. *Adiyum Mudiyum*, Madras : 1970. pp. 64—119.
 8. It may be recalled that during the DMK rule, the Tamilnadu government had declared this poem as “national” anthem. Even before that it was sung before commencing Tamil literary meetings.
 9. Says Xavier S. Thani Nayagam : “The burden of these lines has been a recurrent theme during the last sixty years and has not been superseded even now as the main undertone of patriotic Tamil writing”. “Regional Nationalism in Twentieth Century Tamil Literature”, *Tamil Culture*, Vol. X No. 1. 1963. p. 3.; More than thirty five poets have written similar poems on Tamil since Sundaram pillai. For a representative collection of these poems see T. Swaminatha Velautham Pillai, (ed.) 2nd edition, *Moliyarasi*, Madras: 1971.
 10. *Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature*, Madras: 1895.
 11. Balasubramaniam, K. M. *The Life of J. M. Nallaswami Pillai*, Annamalainagar : 1965. pp. 61—63. Nallaswami Pillai was closely associated with the founding of the Saiva Siddhanta Samajam in 1905 and was for many years its senior adviser and organizer. After a few years of association, Vedachalam kept away from the activities of the Samajam. It is likely that in Vedachalam’s view Nallaswami Pillai was too moderate.
 12. Kailasapathy, K. *Pandai Tamilar Valvum Valipatum*, Madras : 1966 pp. 120—126. Vanamamalai, N. *Tamilar Varalarum Panpatum*. Madras : 1966 pp. 42—62.
 13. *Adiyum Mudiyum*, p. 108.
 14. It is an indication of the English-educated, middle class oriented nature of the revivalist movement that Caldwell’s seminal work—*Comparative Grammar*—remained untranslated into Tamil till 1959. And yet it was the most invoked work in language polemics in Tamil during the last few decades. Isolated passages from his works were often cited as quotations—often out of their contexts—by Tamil scholars to buttress the arguments about the antiquity, purity,

- independence and self-sufficiency of their language vis-a-vis Sanskrit and Hindi. For the translation of Caldwell's work see *Tiravida molikalil Oppilakkanam* translated by K. Govindan and T. Singaravelu, Madras : 1959; the continued use of English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges was also a reason for the delay in the translation. For a balanced view on these matters written in Tamil vide Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. *Tiravida molikalil Araychi*, Madras: 1956. It is only recently with the development of Linguistics as a discipline in Universities in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka that Caldwell has been objectively evaluated.
15. *Suryanarayana Sastri Centenary Volume* (ed.) N. Subramaniyan, Madras: 1970. See Kailasapathy, K. "Paritimalkataignanar—māramatipitu" in the volume.
 16. Sastri tried to introduce the English sonnet in Tamil by publishing *Tanipācural tokai* Madras : 1901. G. U. Pope translated some of them into English and wrote an Introduction too. Sastri also wrote a treatise on Dramaturgy called *Natakaviyal Madras* : 1901.
 17. It is interesting to note that a few years later Vedachalam gave an almost identical testimonial to T. V. Kaliyanasundaranar who was applying for a teaching post at Wesley College, Madras. Vide, *Valkkai kurippukal* 2nd ed Madras : 1969. p. 164.
 18. C. W. Tamotaram Pillai (1832—1901) from Jaffna, Sri Lanka was, in many ways, one of the most remarkable scholars of the last century. He was the first graduate of the Madras University, passing the B. A. degree examination in 1858. He later qualified and practised law and retired as a High Court Judge in 1890. A Key figure in Tamil Renaissance, he critically edited and published several literary and grammatical classics. An outstanding intellectual, he was instrumental in creating a love for Tamil among the educated people of his days. "Without doubt he was the one who was first engaged in the rediscovery of the earliest classical literature... Perseverance and modesty were the two most characteristic features of this man, whose greatness and merits have never been acknowledged" Zvelebil, Kamil, *The Smile of Murugan*, Leiden : 1973 p. 269; Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. *Tamil Cutar Manikal*; also see Kailasapathy, K. Foreword to V. Muttucumaraswamy's *C. W. Tamotaram pillai* Jaffna : 1971. Tamotaram Pillai was very fond of Sastri (having been one of his examiners), and constantly encouraged him in his pursuits. At the death of Pillai, Sastri wrote a moving elegy : see his *Tamil Pulavar Carithiram* 6 edn. Madras : 1968, pp. 92—96.
 19. Vedachalam's view on Saiva Siddhanta was largely shaped by his mentor and model Somasundara Nayagar (1846—1901) who treated him as his son. At Nayagar's death Vedachalam wrote a long elegy.

- It was later published, *Comacuntara Kanciyakkam*, 3rd ed. Madras : 1941. Another person who probably influenced Vedachalam was Gnaniyar Atikal (1873—1942) who was the Head of the Tirukkovalur *Math*. He was an enlightened person who did much for the revival of Tamil and Saivism. He was associated with the founding of the Saiva Siddhanta Samajam and it was largely due to his suggestion that Pandi Thurai Thevar, Zamindar of Palavanantham founded the Madurai Tamil Sangam in 1901. See Sundaram, V. *Tavattiru Gnaniyar Atikal*, Madras : 1972. pp. 36—43. Vedachalam must have also imbibed his missionary zeal from his Christian teachers at the Wesleyan Mission High School.
20. Pulavar Aracu, *Maraimalaiyatikal* Madras : 1951; M. Tirunavukkaracu, *Marai Maraimalaiyatikal Varalaru*, Madras : 1959. The latter author is one of the sons of Vedachalam. For interesting and revealing reminiscences of the man, see T. V. Kaliyanasundaranar, *Ibid.*, pp. 163—169; also Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, pp. 309—328. But a critical biography and study of Vedachalam is yet to be published. That it is a desideratum need not be emphasized.
 21. For the poem and its English translation see Balakrishnan, A. *English Readings of Thiru Arutpa*, Madras : 1966. pp. 22—23. Vedachalam was influenced by Saint Ramalingar's life and works from which he derived his idea of a religious order.
 22. Irschick, *Ibid.*, pp. 47—48.
 23. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 354. and the details cited in footnotes. Perhaps Vedachalam's most important pamphlet was *Inti potu moliya?* (Is Hindi a common language?) serialized in his journal in 1937 and later printed and distributed freely by his disciple from Sri Lanka. *Ilttuc Civananta Atikal*.
 24. *Ancient and Modern Tamil Poets*, Pallavaram, Madras : 1939. pp. 12—15. The concluding lines of the passage quoted here, reminds one of a similar sentiment expressed by Sundaram Pillai in his preface to *Manonmaniyam*. Vedachalam probably followed Sundaram Pillai in writing prefaces in English to his Tamil books.
 25. Changing of Sanskritic names to "pure" Tamil ones is perhaps one of the most tangible results of Vedachalam's movement. In Sri Lanka too a number of Tamil poets and scholars assumed new and pure-Tamil names. e. g. Balasubramanian became Ilamurukanar. Of the others, S. Iraca Aiyandar, Venthanar and Alagasundara Tesikar (1873—1941) may be mentioned. At one stage it became a fad. In subsequent years, such symbolic actions became part of the Tamil nationalist politics in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka. In some cases changing names was also an escape from caste positions, enabling those with new names a greater amount of social mobility

- within the political group. Those who did not formally change their names took on pure-Tamil pen names. On changes in names and designations in Tamil, cf. Franklin C. Southworth "Linguistic Masks for Power: Some Relationships between semantic and social change" *Anthropological Linguistics*, Vol. 16. No. 5. Bloomington: May 1974. pp. 177-191.
26. "Movement for Linguistic Purism," seminar paper Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, India: Jan. 1977 (mimeographed).
27. Although language conflict and planning is a major problem in developing countries especially where multilingual situations prevail, purism is also present in developed countries like France and Germany. By and large, East European countries appear to have experienced these problems for many years. It is interesting to note that in Sinhala too there is a purist movement initiated by Munidasa Cumaratunga (1887-1944) in the Thirties of this century. He was a scholar in grammar. His movement was called the *Hela* or *Elu* movement fighting against Sanskritization. It is said that Sinhala poetry has always preserved *Elu* and that it is one of its peculiarities. Cumaratunga was a lecturer in Sinhala in Teacher Training Colleges and those who came under his influences carried his messages all over the country. At times the movement betrayed caste loyalties too. Munidasa Cumaratunga was also a writer of some distinction. In recent years the *elu* movement appears to be sagging. On purism in Sinhalese see Sugathapala de Silva, M. W. "Effects of Purism on the Evolution of the written language: case history of the situation in Sinhalese" *Linguistics*, Vol. 36. p. 5-17. Hague: November 1967; Sugathapala De Silva, M. W. "Some Linguistics, Peculiarities of Sinhalese Poetry" *Linguistics* 60, pp. 5-26, August 1970. Also, Gair, James W., "Sinhalese Diglossia" *Anthropological Linguistics* Vol. 10, no. 1, Bloomington: Jan. 1968 pp. 1-15.
28. Wexler, *Ibid.*, p. 1.
29. Some perceptive Tamil scholars (e. g. the late Prof. K. Kanapathi Pillai 1903-1968 of the University of Sri Lanka) who were not too concerned with the 'politics' of purism felt that more than foreign vocabulary, foreign syntactic patterns are influencing and imperceptibly changing the essential characteristic of Tamil language. Kanapathi Pillai was a traditional scholar and a trained linguist. For instance, ever since the translation of the Bible into Tamil, English syntactic and phraseological influences have come into the language. Concerned, as he was, with the intrusion of overtly recognizable 'nonnative' elements, Vedachalam does not seem to have discussed this aspect of the problem. (It is also likely that his particular penchant for English might have stood in the way of

such an inquiry.) Systematic studies of English syntactic overlay in Tamil formal prose will be immensely rewarding. For parallel data on this problem, see Wexler, *Ibid.*, p. 5—6 *passim*.

30. *Ancient and Modern Tamil Poets*, p. 3
31. Meenakshisundaram, T. P. *A History of Tamil Literature*, Annamalai-nagar : 1965. pp. 173—74.
32. For discussion of this situation see *Adiyum Mudiyum*, pp. 102—110.
33. Kailasapathy, K. *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, Oxford ; 1968. pp. 229—230.
34. Cf. Fishman, Joshua A. in *Language Problems of Developing Nations* New York : 1968. p. 45.
35. It is generally accepted that Constantius Beschi (1680—1746) was the first European to note the presence of diglossia in Tamil. He wrote *A Grammar of the Common Dialect of Tamil* called *koduntamil* Tanjore Saraswathi Mahal series : 1971.
36. G. U. Pope (1820—1907) has endeared himself by his exuberant love for Tamil language and literature and his many translations of Tamil works into English. As Irschick rightly remarks, Pope contributed much “to the elevation of Tamil studies and Tamil religion as legitimate subjects of study for Oriental scholars” *Ibid.*, p. 279. He published many of his translations in *Siddhanta Deepika* and was a source of encouragement to Nallaswami Pillai. Pope had wide contacts with Tamil scholars in India and Sri Lanka. Also see Balasubramaniam, K. M. *Ibid.*, *passim* on Pope. Vedachalam has made an observation on Pope’s translation of *Tiruvachagam* : “How strange and uncouth, and even how grotesque in certain places does the literal English translation of the Tiruvachakam the great sacred lyric in Tamil, look, even when it is done by so eminent an English and Tamil scholar as Dr. G. U. Pope.” *Ancient & Modern Tamil Poets* p. vii.
- 36a. Meenakshisundaram, T. P. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
37. Sivapadasundaram, S. *Arumukha Navalar*, Jaffna : 1950. p. 9. In recent years there has been an upsurge in the study of Sri Lankan Tamil heritage and as might be expected Navalar has attracted considerable attention. See, Thananjayarajasingham S. *Navalar panikal*, Peradeniya : 1969; Somakanthan, N. “From the role of a religious reformer to a national hero” (in Tamil) *Tamil Sahitya Festival Souvenir* Colombo : 1972; In 1968 on the occasion of the second International Conference—Seminar of Tamil studies held in Madras, the Tamilnadu government honored great Tamil personages by erecting statues for them. The Tamils in Sri Lanka felt hurt and let down that Navalar was overlooked. Reacting to this alleged blatant indiscretion, an idea to erect a statue for him in Sri Lanka

at his birthplace gathered momentum. A Navalar *Sabha* came into being (or was revived) and in 1969 a statue was duly installed in Nallur. It was also planned to establish a library there. The occasion assumed a "national" character. A commemoration Volume was published containing articles in Tamil and English. See K. Kailasapathy "Tradition and Modernity in Navalar" (Tamil) in the volume. Two years later in October 1971 the Government issued a stamp in honour of the National Hero. This episode shows the existence of (minor?) contradictions between South Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil 'national' sentiments. It is a constant irritant to Sri Lankan Tamil enthusiasts that Navalar who had done yeoman services to the revival of Tamil and Saivism should be forgotten by the Tamils in India where Navalar spent a good many years teaching, lecturing and printing books. In another sense Navalar has become, in a different context, part of contemporary Tamil Cultural Nationalism in Sri Lanka. A number of books have been written on him recently. *Vide* Kanapathi Pillai, S. *Navalar*, Jaffna : 1968.

- 37a. It is only in recent years that socio-linguists have begun to investigate the problem of social change and linguistic patterns. For an early essay on this important topic see Ramanujan, A. K., "Language and Social Change : The Tamil Example" *Transition in South Asia—Problems of Modernization* ed. Robert I. Crane, Duke University: 1972. pp. 61—84.
38. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, pp. 343—344.
39. Ferguson, Charles A. in *Language Problems of Developing Nations*, p. 33
40. Ratnam, K. P. "Kalaic Collakkam", *Proceedings of the II International Conference Seminar of Tamil, III* Madras 1968. pp. 222—236.
- 40a. In fact Rajaji wrote a few articles on elementary chemistry in Tamil. His intention was to demonstrate that scientific subjects could be dealt with in Tamil. These articles were later published, *Thinnai racayanam*, Madras : 1946. In his Foreword to the book he made the following observation : "No one can create barriers for the development of Tamil; it is wrong to do so. But I do not wish to quarrel over the matter. Authors should be free to choose their mode and style. The best will survive." As is well known, Rajaji was a prolific writer in Tamil and among his valuable contributions are translations from Socrates and the *Meditations* of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Rajaji's prose is simple, conversational and homely but incisive and to the point. For Rajaji's views, *The Art of Translation—A Symposium*, New Delhi : 1962.
- 40b. One such conference was held in 1936 at Pachayappa's college, Madras. Swami Vipulananda (1892—1947) from Sri Lanka presided

over the conference and ably guided the proceedings. The Swami, previously called S. Mylvaganam, was a science graduate of the London University and a pandit of the Madurai Tamil Sangam—the first to qualify at the Academy from Sri Lanka. He was the first Professor of Tamil at Annamalai and Ceylon Universities. As a Swami of the Ramakrishna Mission he was universal in his outlook and knew Sanskrit (and a few other languages) very well. However he leaned towards pure-Tamil unobtrusively. He took part in the coining of terminology and made significant contributions. See for instance his long essay “Vignana Deepam” (The light of science) where he uses numerous terms he had coined. Unlike some of the aggressive artless purists, Vipulananda had a poet’s sense of feeling for euphonic words and a scientist’s concern for precision and brevity. He was also a gifted translator from English to Tamil. He did sections of Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Browning and others into Tamil which are of a very high order. Vipulananda’s students later became officials in the Government Language planning agencies in Sri Lanka and adopted their teacher’s preference for pure-Tamil but without his broad vision and subtlety. Vedachalam visited Sri Lanka three times—in 1914, 1917 and 1921—and during his sojourns Mylvaganam had met him. It is likely that his interest in pure-Tamil was kindled by these meetings.

41. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 339 and the references given therein.
42. Cf. Ferguson, *Ibid.*, p. 28
43. *Cintanaik katturaikal* 2nd ed. Madras : 1925. p. 23
44. *Vatacol Tamil Akaravaricai*, Madras: 1937; *Vatacol Tamil akaravaricai Curukkam* Madras : 1938.
45. Insofar as the preparation of glossaries for technical terms in the various branches of academic and administrative establishments are concerned, the Tamils in Sri Lanka have done more and better work. Because the medium of instruction in most of the educational institutions is in national languages, the compilation of dictionaries glossaries and translation of basic text books and other reading material was a dire necessity. This urgency was never felt in Tamilnadu where by and large, education still continues to be in English. At the same time most of the work done by private persons and Government Agencies unmistakably show the firm hand of purists at work. The literary (not creative) elite who were bureaucratically chosen to man these posts had, as a result of their preoccupation with such matters over a period of time, preconceived notions about their tasks and apparent expertise. Once given responsibilities they set about to create a vocabulary and a prose style that was consistent with the genius of Tamil language.

- Beginning with Dr. V. Ponniah who was a sort of a polymath, a number of people connected with 'official languages' work—K. P. Ratnam, A. W. Mylvaganam, E. Rathinam, M. Kanapathi Pillai—were of the puristic school. It is only in very recent years, especially after bitter experiences and telling feedback and protests, a gradual relaxation of "fundamental principles" is becoming evident. See Ratnam, K. P., *Ibid.*, p. 227. For interesting—almost identical—parallels in the Hindi scene, Das Gupta, Jyotirindra, *Ibid.*, pp. 177—180.
46. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 341
 47. Ferguson, *Ibid.*, p. 32; also Fishman, Joshua A. "*Language Modernization and planning in comparison with other types of national modernization and planning.*" *Language in Society* Vol. 2. No. 1. April 1973. pp. 25—26.
 48. Usually the forced alliterations, pompous phrases, shallow witticisms, silly blunders, pure-Tamil patterns and recurrent hyperboles of these pandits cause the laughter. The present writer himself has played the role of such a character in a play by Ilangaiyarkon (C. Sivagnanasundaram 1915—1961) an outstanding short story writer and a talented playwright.
 49. Zvelebil, *Ibid.*, p. 281
 50. For an elaboration of this idea, see Kailasapathy, K. *Tamil Naval Ilakkiyam*, Madras: 2nd ed. 1977. Chapter 2
 51. *Ibid.*, Chapter 4
 52. *Kumutavalli Nakanattaraci*, Pallavaram, Madras: 1911. English preface, p. ii
 53. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 346
 54. Cf. Harrison, Selig S. *The Most Dangerous Decades*, Columbia University: 1957. p. 19
 55. Sundararajan, P. G. & Sivapathasundaram, S. *Tamil Naval*, Madras: 1977. pp. 69—72
 56. *Smile of Murugan*, p. 285. Zvelebil seems to have had a different opinion of the poet a few years ago. Vide, *Introducing Tamil Literature*, Madras: 1968. p. 23, wherein he says, "Bharathidasan was one of the greatest—or perhaps the greatest—modern Tamil poets after Bharathi."
 57. Aiyar went to England to study law but became involved in radical patriotic activities and escaped to Pondicherry which was then a haven for Indian patriots. He was a confidant of V. D. Savarkar, a friend of Aurobindo, and a dear companion of Subramania

Bharathi. His essay "Poetry" (1918) was the precursor to later critical works, that flourished in the late Twenties and Thirties. In politics, Aiyar was a militant Hindu.

58. *Smile of Murugan*, p. 292
- 58a. Something should be said about a few other journals. After *Manikkodi* ceased publication, a number of little magazines, each in its own way tried to continue the literary endeavour of *Manikkodi*: *Kalamohini*, *Chandrodayam*, *Suravali*, *Teni* and *Kirama oolijan* in Tamilnadu and *Eelakesari*, *Bharathi* and *Marumalarci* in Sri Lanka served as avenues for the ever increasing literary output. All of them were short lived. However, one magazine established itself successfully and is still in business: *Kalaimagal* was started in 1932 by R. S. Narayanaswami Iyer who ran the Madras Law Journal Press and from the beginning it established respectability and reliability. It no doubt had a strong Brahmin bias and thrived on caste loyalty. But it also catered for the new literary consciousness. In its early years scholars and cultural personalities like K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, T. A. Gopinatha Rao, U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, R. Raghava Iyengar, S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, P. N. Appuswami, P. Sri Acharya, T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, Swami Vipulananda and others wrote in it. It also carried translations of Bengali, Hindi and Marathi fiction. But gradually its character changed. After the end of *Manikkodi*, a number of writers had their short stories published in *Kalaimagal*. It was never really inclined towards experimentations and on the whole is conservative. But it played its role in the consolidation of modern creative literature.
59. See his powerful essay "Etu Tamil?" (which is Tamil?) in *Inra'ya Tamil Ilakkiyam*, Madras: 1965. pp. 172—182.
60. *Tamilil Ilakkiya Vimarcanam*, Madras: 1974. He is the 'historian' of the movement, nostalgically hanging on to the past.
61. Vaiyapuri Pillai (1891—1956) had an abiding interest in creative literature and occasionally dabbled in it. He has to his credit a few poems in translation, a couple of short stories and a novel *Raji*. His essays dealing with modern Tamil literature are collected in *Tamilin marumalarci*, Madras: 1947. He was a good friend of the poet-scholar, Desigavinayagam Pillai (1876—1954) and wrote a few appreciative essays about his works which are collected in *Kavimani Desigavinayagam Pillai*, Nagarkoil: 1967. He worked closely with K. A. Nilakanta Sastri.
62. For representative collections of his literary and cultural essays see *Itaya Oli*, Madras: 1958 and *Arputa rasam*, Madras: 1964. He is said to have coined the word *panpatu* as an equivalent for the English term culture. It has virtually supplanted the earlier

- word *kalacaram*. For a brief critical evaluation of T. K. C. as was known, see K. Kailasapathy, *Ilakkiyamum Tiranaivum* 2nd edn. Madras : 1976. pp. 43—48. 121—123 *passim*,
63. I have discussed this point in a historical perspective in "Tamil Studies in Sri Lanka" *Newsletter of the SIS*, Vol. 10, No. November 1977. Also in a seminar paper for the International Writing Program, the University of Iowa, October 1977, "Tradition and Change—A glimpse of Modern Tamil Literature."
64. *The Most Dangerous Decades*, p. 12. In Sri Lanka the late Fifties and early Sixties saw a sharp struggle between the 'progressive' writers and the Tamil literary establishment over the use of dialectalism and neologisms. Some purist members of the establishment had called the language used by certain writers, *ilicinar valakkam* 'the usage of vulgar (low caste) people.' The matter had socio-political undertones. For a quick glimpse of contemporary Tamil writing in Sri Lanka see Kailasapathy, K. *Tamil Naval Ilakkiyam* Chapter 6; Sivathamby, K. *Tamilil Cirukataiyin torramum Valarcivum*, Madras : 1967. pp. 143—152; Sivakumaran, K. S. *Tamil Writing in Sri Lanka*, Colombo : 1974; And Sundararajan & Sivapathasundaram, *Ibid.*, pp. 261—272.
65. *Smile of Murugan*, p. 287.
66. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 346.
67. Das Gupta *Ibid.* p. 184.
68. Wexler, *Ibid.*, p. 13.
69. Some contradictions in the personal life of Vedachalam have always troubled his friends and admirers. In contrast to his insistence on Tamils using their language in all walks of life, he maintained his diaries in English. Tirunavukkarasu, *Maraimalaiyatikal Varalar*, p. 153. Likewise he also corresponded with many in English. T. V. Kaliyanasundaranar refers to such matters in his autobiography *Valkkaik Kurippukal*, p. 168.
70. Baker, C. J. and Washbrook, D. A, *South India*, Bombay: 1975. p. 16
71. Cf. Harrison, Selig S. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
72. Kumaramangalam, Mohan S. *India's Language Crisis*, Madras: 1965 p. 71.
73. Besides Vedachalam, a person like S. Somasundara Bharathi (1879—1959) a lawyer who turned to Tamil studies (like many others of that era—S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, K. N. Sivaraja Pillai, K. Subramani Pillai) flourished in the self respect atmosphere. He even occupied the chair of Tamil at Annamalai University. A fanatic purist he later campaigned against the imposition of Hindi by

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eventually argued for the retention of English. Likewise M. S. Purnalingam Pillai (1866—1947) who was a colleague of Suryanarayana Sastri at Madras Christian College and wrote *Tamil Literature*, (1929) the first history of Tamil literature, favored the use of English. In contrast T. V. Kaliyanasundaranar consistently pleaded for the use of Tamil in education and administration.

74.

A feature that became noticeable during the last fifteen years or so is the lavish use of English—words, phrases and sometimes whole sentences—in prose and poetry by some Tamil writers. They either use English alphabets or transliterate the words. This is most prominent in what is called the avant-gardist writings that are published in little magazines. This trend started with the “New Poets” who emerged around 1958—59 and spread to fiction writers too. Among the novelists Indira Parthasarathy, Jeyakanthan, N. Parthasarathy, Sujatha, Ambai and a few others are noted for this. C. S. Chellappah, V. Swaminathan, K. N. Subramaniam and N. Jegannathan intersperse English in their critical essays. Some of these writers have created characters that are bilingual and at times conversing in English. Naturally the readers’ knowledge of that language is taken for granted. This phenomenon is not seen in the writings of the earlier generations (1930s and 1940s) who too in their days claimed to be “experimental” writers. I do not mean the use of technical words but simple sentences like “Don’t be silly”. Indra Parthasarathy’s play *Malai*, ‘Rain’ is virtually in both Tamil and English. Some observers have attributed this excessive use of English to alienation of the writers, a reaction to linguistic prescription, a growing sense of ‘internationalism’ in literature and a process of intellectualization of Tamil literature. It is also true that such writers are mostly from cities. On some aspects of the “New Poetry” see *Smile of Murugan* pp. 313—335. As to the problem of alienation of the writers and the impact of modernization vide, *Tamil Naval Ilakkiyam*, pp. 135—156. Also Shanmugam Pillai, M. “Code Switching in a Tamil Novel” in *Structural Approaches to South India*, ed. Harry M. Buck & Glenn E. Yocum, Pennsylvania: 1974 pp. 81—95 wherein he analyzes the phenomenon of code-switching found in a novel by Jeyakanthan. Shanmugam Pillai thinks that because the novelist writes about middle-class people and some of the subjects dealt with in the novel are taboo, English helps to keep the distance and facilitates discussion. On the question of using regional dialects in fiction, Shanmugam Pillai, M. “Merger of literary and colloquial Tamil” *Anthropological Linguistics*, Bloomington: April 1965. The lavish use of English seems to be a feature in contemporary Hindi Literature too, especially in poetry. This became marked at the end of 1950s. I am indebted to Dr. Karine Schomer (Berkeley) for this information.