

1.0 Introduction

A brief history of Linguistic heritage of Sri Lanka Tamil is presented in this paper.

1.1 General

Tamil Language belongs to the Dravidian family of languages and is mainly spoken in the Tamil Nadu in South India. In India, it is one of the fourteen national languages. Besides India, It is spoken in several other countries such as Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonasia, East and South Africa, Fiji, Mauritius, and Malagasy Republic too where Tamils have settled down for a long time. It is the only spoken language in India, which has two thousand years of literary history. Kamil zvelabil, a distinguished Dravidologist says "It is perhaps not an exaggeration when we say that Tamil as a 'world Language' is being spoken by about 40,000,000 people". In India, Tamil has long literary tradition.

1.2 Tamil Language in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, Sinhala, Tamil and English are the major languages. Of these, Sinhala is the language of the majority, Tamil the language of the largest minority, while English is the language used by the English educated among all Communities in Sri Lanka, in addition to its being the mother tongue of the Burger community.

The Tamil speaking population in Sri Lanka consists of the Sri Lanka moors, and the Indian moors. They thus constitute more than a quarter of the total population of the Republic of Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lanka Tamils though found all over the island in scattered settlements, predominate in the Northern and Eastern Provinces that have been considered their traditional homelands from oldentimes. There is also a bulk of the Tamil population in the greater Colombo areas. Jaffna, Vavuniya and mannar are the major towns in the Northern province and Batticaloa and Trincomalle in the Eastern Province. The Indian Tamils are mostly employed in the plantations in and around the hilly districts in the central part of the island. On the social scale, it is possible to speak of Sri Lankans' Tamil dialect (Non-Muslim), Sri Lanka muslim dialect, and Indian Tamil dialect in Sri Lanka. There are Indian muslims in Sri Lanka whose differs from the Srilanka Muslim Tamil. It is interesting to note that in Sri Lanka there are no caste dialects with marked differences like the caste dialects in India such as the Brahmin dialect and Non-Brahmin dialect.

The muslims from the second minority in Sri Lanka. One third of the total muslim population is in the Northern and Eastern provinces and they are mostly monolinguals speaking Tamil only. The rest of the muslims are found scattered in the other seven provinces where they are mostly bilinguals

speaking Tamil and Sinhala. English educated muslims in the island are not many.

1.3 Heritage of Tamil Language

The antiquity of Tamil in Sri Lanka dates back to the early centuries of the Christian era. Natesan, a historian, while writing on the Tamils in Srilanka in a volume on the "History of Ceylon" said that the Tamil language has had a long history in ceylon and that during the reign of a famous Tamil king by the name Ellala. Tamil Language was well established both in spoken and written forms. In course of time Tamil Language in Sri Lanka both spoken as well as written had developed certain special features that marked Sri Lanka Tamil as very different from all other varieties used in other countries. These features can be summerized under two categories (a) retention of archaic features of the Language that were lost in the course of its history in other countries, and (b) development of certain features independent of the developments in other varieties of the Language else where.

As already pointed out Sri Lanka Tamil differs from Indian Tamil in many respects. Indian Tamils in India when they listen to Sri Lankan Tamil speakers they wonder whether it is Malayalam or some other Language. A scholar from India named Akilan in his foreward to the novel *niiNDapayaNam* 'Long Journey' written by Sri Lankan Tamil author Ganeshalingam has said that "We who read the novel in Tamil Nadu cannot read it faster and finish reading it". In his foreword he emphasised the

individuality and the peculiarity of the Sri Lanka Tamil language.

1.3.1 Impact of Tamil on other Languages

Historically speaking, Sri Lanka Tamil had been in contact with a few languages. Of these Portugese, Dutch and English should be mentioned herein.

The Portuguese impact of the Tamil language began with the 16th century. Their rule was followed by the Dutch for another one hundred and thirty five years. The rule of the Portuguese and the Dutch brought about close linguistic contacts between Tamil and the Portuguese and the Dutch. This contact resulted Portuguese words in borrowings in Sri Lankan Tamil like Katirai 'Chair', Karattai 'Cart', Kucini 'Kitchen', Cappaattu 'Shoe', Tuvaai 'Towel', and Dutch words like taacci 'Pan', Laacci 'Drawyer', Boonci 'Beans', Pakkuus 'Box' are being commonly used in Sri Lankan Tamil.

A part from the Portuguese and the Dutch languages Sri Lanka Tamil has also borrowed some words like sampal 'food item', rampulTaan, mangustaan 'fruits from Malay' language. All these are examples of peculiar borrowings from alien languages in Sri Lanka Tamil.

The impact of English on Sri Lanka Tamil is very different from the impact on all other varieties of Tamil. British ruled India and Sri Lanka for a long period but the results of linguistic contacts between Tamil and English in India and Sri Lanka need a comparative study in detail.

The manner in which Indian Tamil integrated the borrowings from English

differs from that of Sri Lanka Tamil. For Example the counterparts of borrowings in Indian Tamil for words like kaapi 'coffee', laari 'lorry', saar 'master' in Sri Lanka Tamil are koopi, lori, and seer. In Sri Lanka English words have been borrowed and used mostly according to the native sound pattern in the spoken variety.

1.3.2 Impact of Tamil on Sinhala

Tamils and Sinhalese are the two major Socio Linguistic groups in the Sri Lanka Society. They are two different ethnic groups belonging to two different language families. In spite of several diversities between Tamils and Sinhalese there have been some kind of Social interaction in the course of their co-existence for several centuries. They have some mutual influence both socially and linguistically. There are several customs, manners, beliefs and linguistic pattered share by these groups of people.

Sri Lanka Tamil has been in close contact with Sinhala language unlike the Indian Tamil. Tamil has had more influence on Sinhala. On the other hand, Sinhala language did not influence Tamil language. But a few Sinhala borrowings can be seen in Sri Lanka Tamil. Examples are poya, vesak, posan, mahapola, perahara, kaju. Tamil as spoken by the mulims living in Sinhalese areas has more borrowings from Sinhala vocabulary.

According to the researches, Tamil language enjoyed prestige in Sri Lanka in ancient time and it had influenced the Sinhala language and literature. The Tamil grammar 'viiracooliyam' had

influenced the Sinhala grammatical work 'sidat sangaraava' which is considered standard work on Sinhalese grammar even today. The Sinhalese scholars have accepted this fact. The Sinhalese poets of the 15th and 16th centuries included Tamil along with sanskrit and pali, as the most important literary languages of the day. According to them those who were not acquainted with these three languages were ignorant. The great number of Tamil borrowings into Sinhalese is due to the Tamil linguistic heritage in Sri Lanka.

1.3.2.1 Selected examples of Tamil loan words in Sinhalese are as follows:

	Tamil	Sinhala
umbrella	KuTai	KuDee
flag	KoTi	KoTi
mirror	KaNNaai	KannaDi
cradle	toTTil	toTTillú
quarter	Kaal	Kalak
box	PeTTi	PeTTi
brain	muuLai	molee
food item	Coṭi	hodi
	puTTu	piTTu
corriander	Kottamalli	Kotamalli
vegetablebed	paatti	paati
itch	Cori	hori
dew	pani	pini
a weight	paTi	paDi
a measure	ceer	ceeruvak
to throw	viicu	viicukúrunúva
to push	taLLu	tallukúrunúva
to use	paaviccū	paaviccukúrunúva
to help	uṭavu	utavkúrunúva

There are marked similarities between Tamil and Sinhalese. Several types of simple sentences are translatable word to word from one language to another.

Tamil :naan kooYilukku pooka veeNum

Sinhala :mamú KoqvilúTú Yannú oonú
'I want to go to the temple'

Tamil :e)kaLukku oNTum veeNTaam
apitú mokut eppa

Sinhala : 'we don't want any thing'

Tamil :niiyum naanum pooka veeNum

Sinhala :oyay mamay yannú oonú
'you and I have to go'

Tamil :enakku neeram illai

Sinhala :matú velaavak nææ
'I have no time'

There is similarity in reciting Tamil and Sinhalese letters; the letter a is aanaa in Tamil and ayanna in Sinhalese, i is iinaa in Tamil and iyannaa in Sinhalese.

1.4 Conclusion

From time immemorial, Tamil has created a strong heritage which enabled it to continue as a living language. Tamil has been growing vigorously and keeping pace with modern demands for its use in various domains. Though Tamil is one of the oldest languages, it was never destroyed like the Babilonian language or the Egyptian language. Tamil has many creativeness. Unlike Latin or Sanskrit which is confined only to the temples and aves, Tamil is not frozen. Tamil flourishes not only among scholars and researchers but also in the midsts of Layman. Today Tamil is seen as a dynamic language, ever growing, and also as a historical language. Tamil language has a long traditional history.

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