

# **Central Plan Scheme for Classical Tamil**

## **Tamil Language Promotion Board - First Meeting**

**(December 10, 2005)**

1. The first meeting of the Tamil Language Promotion Board under the Central Plan Scheme for Classical Tamil was held on 10-12-2005 at the Central Leather Research Institute, Adyar, Chennai under the Chairmanship of Prof.V.C.Kulandaisamy, the Chairman of the Board.

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

### **A. Major Projects**

1. Critical Editions of Ancient Tamil Works
2. Translation of Ancient Tamil Works into other Indian Languages
3. Corpus development for Ancient Tamil Works
4. On-line Teaching of Classical Tamil
5. Visual Episodes on Ancient Tamil Grammar, Literature, epigraphy, Architecture, Arts, Science and Technology, and Dravidian languages
6. Digital Library for studies on Ancient Tamil
7. Tamil Grammar from ancient to modern period on historical principles
8. India as a Linguistic Area (comparative perspectives of Tamil and other Dravidian languages as well as of Dravidian and other families)

### **NB:**

**1. Expert committees may be constituted for the preparation of reports for implementation of the above mentioned projects.**

**2. More suggestions are welcome from the members.**

### **B. Short Term Projects (to be identified)**

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

### **C. Programmes**

1. Meetings of the Board and of different committees
2. Conference (national and international)
3. Seminars (themes to be identified)
4. Orientation / Refresher courses (areas to be decided)

#### **D. Publication**

#### **E. Website ([www.ciil-classicaltamil.org](http://www.ciil-classicaltamil.org))**

3. The meeting was attended by the following members:

#### **Nominated Members**

- i. Dr. M. Nannan
- ii. Dr. Silamboli Chellappan
- iii. Kavikko Abdul Rahman
- iv. Dr. Manavai Mustafa
- v. Dr. Avvai Natarajan
- vi. Professor Solomon Pappiah
- vii. Kavignar Nirmala Suresh
- viii. Kavignar Erode Thambizhanban
- ix. Dr. Perungkavikko V.M. Sethuraman
- x. Professor M.P. Balasubramaniam

#### **Ex-Officio Members**

- i. Mrs. Bela Banerjee

Joint Secretary (L)

Ministry of Human Resources Development, Govt. of India , New Delhi

- ii. Mr. S. Mohan

Deputy Secretary (L), Ministry of Human Resources Development

Govt. of India, New Delhi

- iii. Professor Udaya Narayana Singh

Member Secretary, Director, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore

iv. Professor K. Ramasamy

Deputy Director, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore

The following Ex-officio members could not attend the meeting:

- i. Financial Advisor, MHRD, Govt. of India
- ii. Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India
- iii. Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi
- iv. Director, National Book Trust, New Delhi

4. The meeting began at 11 a.m. under the Chairmanship of Prof. V.C. Kulandaiswamy. Mrs. Bela Banerjee, Joint Secretary (L), MHRD welcomed the gathering. The members introduced themselves.

5. Professor Udaya Narayana Singh, Director, CIIL, in his presentation, outlined the details of the scheme in the light of the participation of the Institute in the project from the conception. The salient points of his address are as follows:

- a. Tamil occupies an important position in the history of Indian Cultural Traditions.
- b. over the millennia, Sanskrit and Tamil together have contributed much to the making of Indian cultural heritage.
- c. The Central Government created a special category called 'Classical Language' and declared Tamil as one on September 17, 2004.
- d. In order to implement the decision, SFC meeting was held at the MHRD and the SFC minutes were approved on 14th July 2005.
- e. CIIL, an apex Institution under Languages Division, MHRD, already committed to the development of Tamil, was entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the scheme.
- f. The broad divisions of the scheme are as follows:
  - Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil
  - Tamil Language Development Board
  - Fellowships
  - Awards
- g. CIIL, shall be responsible for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the scheme.

h. The Centre of Excellence would promote quality research and academic activities on different aspects of Classical Tamil.

i. The following will be the major areas of operation of the Centre of Excellence:

- Critical editions of ancient Tamil works
- Translation of ancient Tamil works into other languages
- Research into poetic theory, grammatical tradition, and aesthetics as well as knowledge bases
- Preparation of teaching and documentation material in print, film and electronic media
- Studying India as a linguistic area

6. The Chairman in his introductory remarks expressed his sincere appreciation of the services rendered by Mrs. Bela Banerjee, Professor Udaya Narayana Singh, Mr. S. Mohan and other officials in the Ministry. The following are some of his significant observations:

a. The official announcement by the Government of India recognizing the Classical Status of Tamil and Sanskrit is a historic event.

b. It is a fact that Sanskrit and Tamil constitute the pillars of the civilizations and culture of the country.

c. It is Sangam Literature in the main that has given Tamil the classical status.

d. Though the contribution of Tamil to Indian culture and civilization has been widely accepted by the scholars, unfortunately, it is not reflected in ancient Indian history texts.

e. The recognition of Tamil as a Classical Language is a national recognition of the contribution of Tamil to Indian cultural heritage.

f. The foremost of the activities that we have to promote must help create a national awareness of the contribution of Tamil to the cultural glory of the country and this awareness will be in the national interest.

g. Looking at the task before us from this angle, we have to be somewhat ambitious and think big as far as our programmes are concerned.

h. The activities of the four units of the Scheme need to be harmonised and coordinated.

i. The Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil has the characteristics of an institution and its composition, powers, functions and procedure for

recruitment of staff must all be specified – it needs expertise, adequate manpower and nodal centres with necessary infrastructure like computers and a well – stacked library.

j. The Board as per the Government Order is advisory in nature; but the term Board in the world of management implies certain administrative and financial powers and functions and therefore it is expected by the scholars that this body will play an effective role in the promotion of all activities associated with Classical Tamil and promotion of Tamil language as such. We will do as much as we can, even as an advisory body.

7. Following the above remarks of the Chairman, each of the ten members put forth his or her suggestions with regard to the implementation of the Scheme.

7.1. A survey of the work already done, institutions engaged in research on Classical Tamil and of individual / experts and materials available need to be undertaken so that we could proceed further from the present status.

7.2. The result of the survey as well as plans / programmes as decided may be made available on the Classical Tamil Website.

7.3. Support may be extended to those universities which will establish departments of Tamil or chairs in Classical Tamil.

7.4. Support may be extended to Voluntary organisations, Non-governmental Organisations, Institutions and Tamil Sangams which will work for the promoting the cause of Classical Tamil.

7.5. A fresh look into the origin and development of Tamil from a comparative and historical perspective may be undertaken and a part of that, relationship between Brahmi script, its Variants and Tamil writing system be explored.

7.6. Lexicographical work on Dravidian – Japanese and Dravidian – African language connections may be undertaken seriously.

7.7. A National Resource Library in Classical Tamil (both print and digital) may be set up to facilitate research.

7.8. Updating of existing encyclopaedias and preparation of new ones may be taken up in all earnestness.

7.9. A description of classical language tradition in India may be made available in Tamil and the publication of a hand book of Classical Tamil / Tamil cultural heritage may be undertaken.

7.10. An electronic dictionary of Classical Tamil needs to be created.

7.11. Database of translation / linguistic and literary studies should be made available.

7.12. Appropriate scientific and linguistic research on the change and development of Tamil should be undertaken.

7.13. An authoritative dictionary of Tamil is to be compiled.

7.14. Norms for Transliteration in Tamil from English have to be standardised.

7.15. A history of science may be written in Tamil and the genre of scientific fiction in Tamil may be further developed.

7.16. Norms for guidance may be formulated for the creation of technical terms in Tamil.

7.17. A major project on the preparation of technical glossaries in Tamil may be taken up.

7.18. Tamil Language Promotion Board may not only be an advisory body but should also direct the implementation of research projects.

7.19. A Centre / Branch of Centre of Excellence may be set up at Chennai.

7.20. The Centre of Excellence – with a vision document / aims and objectives / staff strength etc., and its relationship with the Board may be decided upon.

7.21. Translation on a large scale (50 to 60 volumes) of International and National level works with well researched instructions should be undertaken.

7.22. Research should be initiated on the contribution of Tamil to Indian literary, cultural and philosophical (especially Bhakti movement) heritage.

7.23. Necessary steps should be taken to promote Tamil teaching and research abroad.

8. After the presentations by the members of the Board, Mrs. Bela Banerjee made the following remarks:

8.1. All the suggestions given by the Chairman and Members of the Board will be duly examined for implementation by the Ministry.

8.2. We have to prioritize the works to be done and take up the important projects first.

8.3. Tamil Language Promotion Board is at present only an Advisory Body and the suggestion that the Board may be assigned additional powers has to be examined by the authorities in the Ministry.

8.4. Assistance to institutions abroad falls within the purview of the External Affairs Ministry.

9. Dr. Udaya Narayana Singh in his final address summarised the suggestions given by the members.

10. The Tamil translation of the word Board will be Vaariyam and hereafter only this term will be used.

10.1. As per the Government communication, the function of the Board is to advise the MHRD and even as an Advisory Body, it must be out effort to achieve as much as possible.

10.2. The major projects given in the Action Plan with some additions have been covered by the Members also in one form or other and therefore action may be initiated immediately through appropriate expert committees. In my opinion, the most important aspect to be borne in mind in the context of recognition by the Government of India of Tamil and Sanskrit as Classical Languages is to focus attention on establishing the fact that Tamil is an equal partner in the cultural, philosophic and spiritual heritage of this county. All other efforts must contribute in one way or the other to this objective.

10.3. As for recommendations about support for institutions and projects, CIIL may consider if and when viable proposals are received.

10.4. Under the programmes, conferences and seminars must be organised at both National and International levels and the themes broadly cover the following subjects:  
i. The contribution of Tamil to Indian literary heritage  
ii. The contribution of Tamil to Indian philosophic heritage  
iii. Bhakti Movements in Tamilnadu and its impact on the respect of the country  
iv. Indian civilization and culture as the confluence of Sanskrit and Tamil traditions

10.5. The Expert Committee constituted by the Government of India to implement the provision in the CMP for recognizing the Classical Status of Tamil in its meeting held at Sahitya Akademi in September 2004 has recommended that Chairs for Classical Tamil be established by the University Grants Commission in some of the Universities in India and in the Central Universities to start with.

10.6. The MHRD may write to the University Grants Commission to take steps to establish a Department of Tamil in each of the Central Universities in India.

11. The meeting ended with a Vote of thanks proposed by Prof. K. Ramasamy, Convenor of the meeting.