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Dravidian Languages and Culture Section

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By

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DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURE

Brother Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to the Executive Committee of the All-India Oriental Conference for the honour they have done me by inviting me to be President of this Section this year. This Chair has been adorned in the past by veteran scholars and recognised linguists such as Rao Saheb S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, Sri K. Ramakrishnayya and Dr. P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri. This Section was to have been presided over this year by the late Dr. C. A. Menon, who was the Head of the Department of Malayalam, University of Madras. He was elected President of this Section in October 1951, but the cruel hand of Death snatched him away in April 1952. Dr. Menon was a scholar in Malayalam and a persuasive exponent of Kerala culture relating particularly to its aesthetic aspects of Dance, Drama and Folk-lore. Please do not deem me conventional when I say that I am conscious of my limitations and feel not a little embarrassed to preside over this Section. My claims to this place are very few. I have however accepted the invitation as a gesture of encouragement on the part of the Executive Committee of the Conference to one who is just one of your closest followers. A student of South Indian History and Culture in general but not of the linguistics of the South Indian languages I venture to hope that I may be able to place before this Section not the particular view of the linguistic specialist but a consensus of all views, and with your kind co-operation I hope the proceedings of this Section will be fruitful and stimulating. As you know this is the youngest of the thirteen usual Sections of this Conference, but not the least important. It was only in 1946 that this Section was created and it has had so far four sessions. It reflects the growing appreciation of the place of the Dravidian languages in our country as also of the contribution which Dravidian culture has made to the evolution of Indian culture. It is an evidence of the increasing recognition of the work done by scholars in this field of research and an encouragement to them to do more.

The name of this Section is significant and suggestive. It is rather unfortunate that there should now be a lot of unnecessary controversy over the connotation of the term 'Dravidian'. At the present day, speaking generally, the word denotes a particular group of languages, the people speaking them and their distinct

culture. In the early stages of the history of our country there were many migrations of various cultural and linguistic groups into it; and in spite of much fusion among them in the course of ages, the group that occupied South India and is known as the Dravidian group has been able to maintain its individuality largely on account of the comparative isolation of the region.

We shall consider here the origin and antiquity of Dravidian languages and culture. The origin of the Dravidians is by no means an easy question. Years ago, it was assumed by historians, archaeologists and anthropologists that long before the Aryan migration into India large parts of the country in the north as also in the south were occupied by the Dravidian speaking peoples, and that they were pushed southwards by the Aryan immigrants with the result that by the dawn of historical times the Dravidians came to be confined to the southern part of the peninsula. Plausible though it might appear, this view does not take into account the fact that in the large belt of the country covering Central India there still live many primitive peoples who may be distinguished from the peoples of both North India and South India from the point of view of their race and in some cases from the point of view of their language also. It must also be noted that if the Dravidians had been occupying the whole of North India at any time, we may expect to have a larger volume of evidence of this than just the language of the Brahuis still spoken in some parts of Baluchistan. When we come to know anything definite about the Dravidians they appear to have been largely confined to South India, and our knowledge of their material culture is mainly derived from archaeological evidence.

Though South India is one of the richest regions of the world for its heritage of prehistoric cultures, our knowledge of them is still very meagre. In recent years prehistory, particularly of South India is receiving some attention at the hands of the Archaeological Survey of India; and to us interested in the problem of the Dravidians it is of great value. "Historical conjecture both inside and outside India has for many years dwelt on the possible significance of the Dravidians of the South in the development of Asiatic Civilizations, of supposed links between them and the Sumerians, with the Brahui of Baluchistan as an isolated memorial of former movement, one way or the other, between South India and Western Asia. To Archaeologists the detailed resemblance of some of the megalithic monuments of South India with

others of Western Asia, North Africa and Europe has long been an alluring and baffling problem—alluring as presenting a possible link in the early development of human thought and expression extending half-way round the world, baffling because we still know less about these monuments in India than in any other country”.

Some excavations made in South India throw light on this question. The excavations conducted by Alexander Rea at Adichchallur in the Tirunelveli district exposed a number of urns containing iron implements and weapons, funerary vessels, bronze lids crowned with animal representations, ornaments of gold, bronze as also human bones indicating fractional burials. Probably associated with it was the megalithic culture, evidence of the existence of which has been obtained in abundance in different parts of South India. W. H. Tucker found at Sulur in the Coimbatore district a number of megalithic cists which have yielded among others funerary objects, bones, a coin of the Eran type assignable to the third century B.C. and a silver coin of Augustus. Some other places also have yielded similar articles.

The Brahmagiri excavations reveal the existence at the place of three strata of culture starting from neolithic times. The first was the stone axe culture which was followed by a new culture which was characterised mainly by the use of iron, a distinctive wheel turned black and red pottery and above all by megalithic tombs containing stone cists with “portholes”. The excavations conducted by Dr. Subba Rao in the Bellary District also show that a megalithic iron-using culture prevailed in that area superseding the neolithic culture. Such megalithic sites have now been counted in large numbers all over South India.

There have been found some megalithic remains in parts of North-East India also. But there are striking differences between the South Indian megalithic culture and the North-East Indian. While the megalithic culture of North-East India belonged to the neolithic age that of South India belonged to the iron age. Again from the point of view of the structure there is resemblance between the South Indian and the Mediterranean megalithic cultures in their architectural features and “portholes” while there is no such similarity between the South Indian and the North-East Indian megalithic cultures.

Ethnologically who were these people who professed this culture? Two possible answers may be given to this question. Either

they were the descendents of the people of an earlier primitive culture or they were altogether a new people who came to South India and whose culture superseded the earlier one. The former possibility has to surmount the difficulty of connecting the earlier neolithic culture with the megalithic culture which has many new traits. Certainly the megalithic people could not have come from Northern India for the use of iron was known in South India earlier than it was known in Northern India where the use of bronze and copper appears to have preceded that of iron. There is a great structural similarity "seemingly amounting to kinship" between these South Indian megaliths and the megaliths in the countries in the area bordering upon the Mediterranean and the Atlantic in the Caucasus, Iran and others. Is it not possible to connect the megalithic people of South India with those of the Mediterranean area and to show that the latter could have migrated to South India through Makran, Baluchistan and Sind and by sea? An answer to these questions depends on further exploration and research in the intermediary region. Here it is well to remember that the evidences supplied by archaeology and anthropology are more valuable than those supplied by literature.

But when could the Dravidians have settled down in South India? The megalithic finds in South India are generally assigned to the period from the seventh to the third century B.C. In this connection the views of Gordon are worth consideration. He thinks that there is no material evidence for the introduction of iron before the beginning of the first millenium B.C. and from an examination of certain types of iron articles in use by the early peoples of South India he is inclined to assign the period 700 B.C. to 400 B.C. as the probable period of the migration of the iron-using people to South India. If this is accepted then it is not very difficult to connect the authors of this culture chronologically with the people of the Mediterranean area where the megalithic culture is on valid grounds assigned to the period 2500 to 1500 B.C. It is likely however that the migration of the people with this iron culture could have taken place a few centuries earlier, say about the end of the second millenium.

A significant point of coincidence must be noted here. A language which probably did not have its roots in the country also emerges just in this period, and it is tempting enough to take the people who spoke the language as a new people and associate them with the speakers of the Dravidian language. In fact we may

very well ask with Furer Haimendorf, "If the megalithic builders did not speak Dravidian what language could they have spoken"?

Some faint idea about the language that these people spoke and the script they used may be formed with the help of some stray pieces of archaeological evidence obtained in South India. In the far South of the Tamil area some forty to fifty Brahmi inscriptions have been brought to light and assigned to the third and second centuries B.C. on palaeographical grounds. Opinion has varied among scholars as to the language of these inscriptions. While scholars like H. Krishna Sastri and K. V. Subrahmanya Iyer have assumed that there are some Tamil words occurring in them and that therefore they contain a jumble of prakrit and Tamil forms, Dr. Narayana Rao says that the records appear to be prakritic for "there is no warrant for assigning such an early date as the third century B.C. for any Tamil inscriptions". He says: "the most peculiar feature of the epigraphs under discussion is that they contain a form of prakrit described by the prakrit grammarians as Paisāci. The Aśokan edicts found at Shabazgarhi and Mansera are considered to register a form of Prakrit which reveals a resemblance to Dravidic forms which Sir George A. Grierson has popularised as representing the old Paisāci dialects, but the present epigraphs are strikingly and more directly representative of the form of Paisāci known to Indian grammarians. The Pandya country according to these grammarians is a tract where the prevailing language was Paisāci. These inscriptions conform to this statement in a remarkable manner". Light on this question comes from an unexpected quarter, the Arikamedu excavations, the special importance of which in South Indian archaeology can hardly be exaggerated. The excavations (1945) have yielded among others eighteen pot sherds, all bearing *graffiti*. It is said that except two among them, all others are capable of reconstruction in Tamil and are among the earliest known examples of the language, and akin to the short inscriptions in Brahmi mentioned above. The character of the inscriptions is capable of being compared also to the Māmandūr inscription (3rd century B.C.), the Bhaṭṭiprōlu Brāhmi inscriptions thought to be assignable by Bühler "to the time immediately after Aśoka (i.e. 200 B.C.)" and the Hathibada and Ghosundi inscriptions assigned to the beginning of the first century B.C. though there are some slight differences with regard to the formation of some letters in them. The Arikamedu inscribed pot sherds belonged to the first century A.D. as borne out by the association of the site with dated antiquities though the script on

the *graffiti* from the place may appear to belong to a slightly earlier period. Thus there does not seem to have been much development in the South Indian script between the third century B.C. and the first century A.D. The reason for this is not hard to find. Bühler has shown that the Dravidi script must have separated from the main stock of Brāhmi much earlier than the time of Aśoka, and that was undoubtedly the reason why so many archaic forms are noticed in the few inscriptions so far known in the Dravidi script. As Dr. N. P. Chakravarti says "the development of forms after separation could not be so fast in Dravidi as in the regular Brāhmi which continued to be used throughout the whole of India. If we bear this point in mind it would not be unreasonable to assume that though the script of Arikamedu *graffiti* appears to be similar to the script of Brāhmi inscriptions of the first and second centuries B.C., it actually should be relegated to a later period. If this assumption is correct then the so-called discrepancy between the palaeographic and archaeological evidence would seem to disappear".

Thus during the three or four centuries before the commencement of the Christian era the Tamil script as also the Tamil language were in the process of formation. The circumstances under which and the purpose for which those Brāhmi inscriptions were written in caverns in out of the way places in the Pāṇḍyan country as also their general content so far as it has been made out show that there were powerful influences in South India exercised by the Sanskrit and Prākṛt languages and the Jaina and Buddhist religions of North India. While on this subject a word may be said about the script of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. So far attempts have been made by scholars like Marshall, Mackay, Piccoli, Gadd, Sidney, Smith, Langden, Hunter, Pran Nath, B. M. Barua and Hrozny the last of whom is well-known for his deciphering the Hittite Cuneiform tablets of Boghazkoi. Rev. Fr. Heras reads old Tamil straightaway in the inscriptions and connects the Indus valley people with the Tamils. At best the views expressed by these scholars are no more than plausible suggestions the validity of which cannot be tested unless any future exploration in the area brings to light a bi-lingual inscription which may give us the clue to the Indus valley script.

"Dravidian languages" is a convenient term to denote the compact group of the cultivated languages of South India, Tamil and Telugu on the east of the Peninsula and Kannada, Tulu and

Malayalam on the west though there are a few isolated branches of this group such as the Gondi and Kolami in the Madhya Pradesh, Kui and Kurukh in Orissa and Bihar, Malto in parts of Bihar and Bengal and Brahui in Baluchistan. Latest figures show that Tamil is spoken by about twenty-two millions of people in South India and Ceylon, Telugu by nearly thirty millions, Kannada by eleven millions and Malayalam by some ten millions. Tamil (Drāviḍa in Sanskrit) is admittedly the most ancient and leading language the antiquity of which may be traced back to at least the early centuries of the Christian era. Though some legends mention the existence of three literary academies (Śaṅgams) which lasted altogether for 9900 years, and counted as their members 8598 poets among whom were some divinities, monarchs and sages, the Brahmi inscriptions referred to above give us the earliest limit beyond which it is not possible for us to trace back the early history of Tamil. Since literature can grow only with the practice of the art of writing and the alphabet in South India was just in the process of formation in the third century B.C. it should be fantastic to assign very high antiquity to the Tamil literature. However the so-called third Śaṅgam (early centuries of the Christian era) may be taken to be a historical one during the period of the existence of which a large volume of extant literature running to about 30,000 lines was produced. It is generally believed that Telugu literature as such begins with Nannaya's Telugu *Bhārata* written under the patronage of the Eastern Chālukya king Rājarāja Narendra (1019-1061). But the Telugu language has an anterior history though its character is not definitely known. The Telugu language of the early centuries of the Christian era had closer affinities with the two other Dravidian languages of South India, Tamil and Kannada as is borne out by the early inscriptions of the Andhra country. The *Janāśrayachandas* a Sanskrit work on Prosody, apparently by the Vishṇukunḍin king Mādhavarman II (A.D. 580-620), contains some metres which are not known to Sanskrit but are peculiar to Telugu. The inscriptions of the Telugu Chōḍas and Eastern Chālukyas contain Telugu prose and verse. Though Pampa is considered the greatest of the early Kannada poets the Kannada language may be traced to much older times and said to have some close resemblance to Tamil with regard to its sound and form and by about the 5th century A.D. it was developing into a separate language with a fair admixture of Sanskrit. Malayalam is admittedly the youngest of the South Indian languages, and the *Unnunili-sandesam* that is modelled on Kalidasa's *Meghasandēśa* is the earliest known literary work in the

language and is assignable to the fourteenth century. It is believed that the language grew from the local dialect of Tamil known as *Koḍumtamil*. More than any other South Indian language it owes much to Sanskrit. Its ancient alphabet also underwent the necessary changes for conveying the Sanskrit sounds effectively.

All these languages have had each a continuous and varied history and were enriched from time to time by their contact first with Sanskrit and later with other languages. The Tamil language calls for certain observations in this connection. Even so early as the commencement of the Christian era, the *Śaṅgam* works reveal the influence of Sanskrit on them which shows that the Dravidians and the *Āryans* had come into cultural contact long before that period. In subsequent periods words from other languages such as Pāli, Persian, Portuguese and Hindustani came to be mixed up with the Tamil vocabulary. There is now a movement for purging the Tamil language of the foreign words particularly Sanskrit. This purist movement is about a century old. Winslow wrote long ago in his preface to "A Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary of High and Low" as follows: "Within certain range of thought, omitting terms of art, science, religion in a great measure and certain abstract forms, we may write in pure Tamil as in English we may in pure Saxon. In fact the nearer we approach the *Shen Tamil* the less we need Sanskrit". Dr. Caldwell also thought that "the Tamil, the most cultivated, *ab intra* of all Dravidian idioms, can dispense with Sanskrit altogether, if need be, and not only stand alone but flourish without its aid", and the late M. S. Purnalingam Pillai also felt likewise. The movement has gained considerable strength in recent times thanks particularly to the lead given to it by the great scholar and savant the late lamented Maraimalai Adigal who was an original thinker and a prolific writer. It is just worthwhile to consider the pros and cons of this purist movement in Tamil or any language as a matter of that. Every living language is a growing language. It is natural and inevitable that it should absorb and assimilate words which are foreign to it. In such a process the words may change with regard to their form as also with regard to their meaning. The Tamil language has been enriched considerably by its association with Sanskrit and its borrowing words from it, and gained much adaptability and flexibility. In fact the great progress, which Tamil as well as other Dravidian languages, have been able to make in journalism and popular drama is largely due to this capacity for assimilation. It is really unthinkable how Tamil as any other

South Indian language for that matter can give up the use of Sanskrit words or forms which have mixed with them and influenced them for centuries. There is no real ground for the protagonists of the purist movement to fear the mixture of the Sanskrit language with Tamil; in fact besides becoming poorer by pursuing such a policy the language may not be able to grow to meet modern requirements. There cannot be any justification for a feeling of suspicion and rivalry between the local languages and Sanskrit. There is no particularly Sanskrit speaking population as distinct from the speakers of the local languages. There is need, increasing need for the continued and more intimate friendliness between Sanskrit and the local languages "both for retaining an inheritance and for progress".

There are a few outstanding matters relating to the Dravidian languages which I wish to mention here. It is a matter of common knowledge among us that though there are many works in the South Indian languages dealing with various subjects, most of them are not available to us since they have not been printed and published; and even among the published ones not all of them have been properly edited with critical introductions, notes etc. This is particularly so in Tamil though we are indebted to scholars like Tandavaraya Mudaliyar, Arumuga Navalar, Rao Bahadur Damodaram Pillai, and last but not least the late MM. Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer who have brought out very valuable and critical editions of the *Tolkāppiyam*, the Śāṅgam classics and a number of other works. The place of such brilliant individual scholars appears to have been taken of late by institutions like the Śaivasiddhānta Kaḷagam and the Ādhīnams. To one of the latter we owe a deep debt of gratitude for the Variorum Edition of the *Tirukkural* which it has brought out recently. There are many manuscripts lying idle if not uncared for in many of the oriental manuscripts libraries in South India. It is a promising start that some of the manuscripts in the different South Indian languages in the Oriental Mss. Library, Madras, the Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Library, the Government Oriental Libraries of Mysore and Trivandrum are being published according to plan. The importance and urgency of the publication of at least the more important ones among them with the help of competent scholars within a reasonable length of time can hardly be exaggerated; for if any kind of research in the languages is to be made the necessary raw material must be made available to scholars. The work is urgent for otherwise the manuscripts are likely to perish in spite of the best care taken of them.

Another important and equally very urgent work that has to be done is an authoritative and exhaustive history of the Dravidian literatures. Probably in this line of work Tamil appears to lag far behind when compared with Kannaḍa, Telugu and Malayalam. The three volumes of the *Karṇāṭaka Kavicharite* by the late R. Narasimhachar dealing with the history of the Karṇāṭaka literature, the three volumes of the *Lives of the Telugu Poets* by Veerasalingam Pantulu dealing with the history of Telugu literature and the history of the Malayalam literature by Ulloor Parameswara Ayyar and Narayana Panikkar are reliable accounts of the history of the three literatures. It is unfortunate that there is no such account of the history of Tamil literature so far. The few that are available are K. S. Srinivāsa Pillai's *Tamil Varalāru* in Tamil, M. S. Purnalingam Pillai's and K. Subrahmanya Pillai's *History of Tamil Literature* and M. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Tamil Studies* and a few others like R. Raghava Ayyangar's *Tamil Varalāru*, Somasundara Desikar's *Sixteenth and Seventeenth century Tamil Poets* and P. N. Appuswami's and Desikar's *Century of Tamil Progress* deal only with particular periods. We wish we could have a comprehensive history of Tamil literature ere long. In such an account the historical and comparative method must be followed, emphasis being laid on the evolutionary character of the literature. Time was when a work was studied from the point of its various characteristics such as grammar, rhetoric etc. It is good in its own way. But it is certainly better to study a work in relation to the life and times of the poet and to its place in the whole range of that literature, for that will certainly enable us to understand and appreciate better the merits and beauties of the work besides the genius of its author himself. It is only such a study that can indicate the gradual evolution and historical development of the various forms of literary creation in the land as reflecting the various phases of the life and thought of the people.

The work is not however so easy as it may seem. Much material would have to be collected and spade work done at the beginning. It would be of immense help if we have a complete bibliography of all works, published and unpublished arranged according to the different subjects. It must be topical and alphabetical and must serve as a work of ready reference for any scholar interested in Dravidian studies. "The Year's Work in English Studies" edited for the English Association by F. S. Boas and "Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature" edited

for the Modern Humanities Research Association by Angus Macdonald may serve as useful models. Besides, the thousands of inscriptions that have been laboriously collected in South India by the Epigraphical Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India and have a bearing on the Dravidian literatures have to be pressed into the maximum service.

Not only that. It is necessary that a scholar in a language must have a fair idea about the literatures of the other sister languages. The advantages of equipping oneself by gaining sufficient knowledge of them can hardly be denied. Is it too much to have translations of the important works which would be useful for scholars in all the Dravidian languages? Likewise it would be really helpful if one is able to study the works in other Indian languages on the subject in which he is engaged. That will not only widen one's vision and broaden his outlook but also remove much of his prejudice and misunderstanding.

There are other aspects of our linguistic studies which require our immediate attention; and they relate to research in the languages. First of all I think we require a complete survey of our languages, a linguistic survey. The work done in this field, planned and carried out by Sir George Grierson and published in "The Linguistic Survey of India" though of inestimable value is more in the nature of a pioneering piece of work and admits of further elaboration. It does not require much straining of our imagination to realise the importance of planning a dialect survey for the Dravidian languages including the minor ones. It is for the Governments of the different States in South India including the new Andhra State to consider the urgency and importance of the work and lend their active support to it.

Lexicography is a Science by itself. Its aim is to trace every word etymologically to its ultimate origin and follow its subsequent history both in its form as also in its meaning. The four fold parts of a Dictionary are (a) words (b) meaning (c) illustrations and (d) derivation. Murray's Oxford English Dictionary which satisfies all the necessary characteristics of a Lexicon is the best of its kind and must serve as a model for the preparation of a Lexicon. Lexicons are neither new nor novel to us. In Tamil we have the *Divākaram* of Śēndan and the *Pingalam* and in Kannada the *Vastukōśa* of Nagavarma II. The Tamil Lexicon which has been prepared by a band of scholars between 1913 and 1936 and published by the University of Madras has superseded those of Rotter (1832)

and Winslow (1862). Though it is the best among the works of the kind in the Dravidian languages one may feel that it does not satisfy all the requirements of a Lexicographical work. Further many of the obsolete and current terms used in Tamil epigraphy deserve to find a place in the volumes. A concise Lexicon incorporating fresh words and serving as a Supplement is a hard felt and urgent need. We are happy the University of Madras is making arrangements for the publication of such a volume at an early date. In lexicography some work has been done in Telugu and Kannada. Kittel's Kannada Dictionary and Brown's Telugu Dictionary besides the *Sūryarāyanighantu* in the latter language deserve particular mention. It gives us great pleasure to learn that the Mysore Government and the Travancore University will bring out respectively a Kannada and a Malayalam Lexicon. In this connection it will not be out of place to refer to the great need for a dictionary of scientific and technical terms. There is much apparent public support for the establishment of a uniform vocabulary for the whole of our country common to our languages. This is a question to which students of Dravidian languages and culture must address themselves earnestly and without prejudice or prepossession. A truly scientific approach to the character of our languages aided by a trained historical imagination can help to prevent this vital question being decided only by political or other equally irrelevant considerations. How far each of our languages requires and can admit and assimilate words and phrases from other languages can be determined with precision and certainty only when we succeed in creating a large band of linguists.

Another branch, undoubtedly a very important and perhaps the most difficult aspect of Dravidian linguistic studies, relates to Dravidian philology and etymology. It is a well-known fact that Indo-European Comparative Grammar follows a method in reconstructing the most essential phonological features of early Indo-European and that "even as mere formulae these reconstructions are of the highest systematic value which have contributed to the development of Indo-European Comparative Grammar into an exact science". In similar work in the Dravidian languages we owe a deep debt of gratitude to the way shown to us by Western scholars in them such as Bishop Caldwell, Dr. Gundert, Brown and Kittel whether we are able to bring ourselves to agree with their views or not. Dr. Caldwell who is recognised as the father of Dravidian philology thought that the Dravidian group of languages was affiliated to the Turanian and occasionally Semetic

Pré-Aryan languages which later gave rise to such languages as Turki, Finnish, Laplandish and other allied ones. Though the view found acceptance then, scholars are not prepared to endorse it now. Some are inclined to identify it with the Munda family, the Tibeto-Burman languages and the dialects spoken by the aborigines of the Australian continent. But as has been pointed out by Dr. Sten Konow we must consider the Dravidian family as an isolated group of languages with many characteristic features of its own. Though other scholars like F. O. Schrader E. Lewy and Hevesy have put forth different views on the subject, Dr. Sten Konow's views still hold the field. Etymological studies in the Dravidian languages and particularly studies regarding the relation between the Dravidian and the Indo-Aryan or Sanskrit languages have attracted a number of scholars. The subject has received some attention at the hands of Indian scholars in recent years. Among them mention may be made of R. Swaminatha Ayyar, V. G. Suryanarayana Sastri, Dr. P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri, R. P. Setu Pillai, Dr. C. R. Sankaran and M. Varadarajan in Tamil, L. V. Ramaswami Iyer and Dr. K. Godavarma Raja in Malayalam, Dr. C. Narayana Rao and Vidwan T. Somayajulu in Telugu and Dr. R. Narasimhachar, Govindaswami Rao and Dr. A. N. Narasimhayya in Kannada. But studies in this field are really very difficult and the unbridled imagination of some scholars have made them attempt fantastic derivations of words in one language from those in another. A fruitful line of work here is an examination of the relationship between the different Dravidian languages from the philological point of view; and for that a comprehensive vocabulary in those languages is an urgent need. Some years ago Mr. K. Ramakrishnayya collected a number of cognates for such a study. More work on the same lines is being done by the Departments of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam in the University of Madras and we hope that when such a comparative vocabulary of Dravidian languages is published, it will be of help in tracing general phonetic laws governing the evolution of the cognate and taking up an exhaustive study of comparative philology in the Dravidian languages.

I have dealt so far with problems relating to the Dravidian languages. Before I conclude I should like to make a few remarks on the importance and need for a study of "Dravidian Culture". I admit it is not easy to define the term 'Dravidian Culture'. With the advancing civilization of a country and the ethnic admixture of its people the race sociology and psychology of the primitive peoples are rapidly annihilated; and their beliefs, practices and

institutions lose all their reality and become relics and survivals of an ancient culture. That has been the remarkable feature of the culture and civilization of many races in India as of any other country and the Dravidians were no exception. Indian culture which may also be called Hindu culture is a synthesis of various streams of cultures, the most important of them being the Indo-Aryan or the Vedic and the pre-Aryan cultures. The most predominant pre-Aryan culture may be called the Dravidian culture; and it has been emphasised many a time by scholars that due regard should be paid to this element in the early history of India. A distinguished Indian scholar, Prof. Sundaram Pillai even went to the extent of saying at the commencement of the present century "the scientific historian of India ought to begin his study with the basin of the Krishna, of the Kaveri and of the Vaigai rather than with the Gangetic plain, as has been now long, too long, the fashion". Though there is much force behind the urge made by that scholar, there are difficulties in undertaking such a work for as he himself recognises "even here the process of aryanisation had gone indeed too far to leave it easy for the historian to distinguish the native warp from the foreign woof. But if there is anywhere any chance of such successful disentanglement it is in the south; and the farther south we go the larger does the chance grow". Really the admixture and fusion of the two cultures had taken place to such a great extent even by the period of the commencement of historical times in South India that it is next to impossible to form any reliable idea of the Dravidian culture before it became fused with the Indo-Aryan culture. So "the scientific student will receive with caution the pictures often painted of the glories of Dravidian civilization because he can never forget that early Tamil literature on which such pictures are based reflect conditions that prevailed long after the aryanisation of the whole of India". Still in spite of the vagueness and difficulty of treating the subject it may be tentatively taken that the features of Indian culture and thought which cannot be traced back to the Vedas as direct and natural developments from Vedic texts were non-Aryan and Dravidian in their widest sense. But in historical times South India has been able to retain its individuality with regard to its culture and civilization and contribute considerably to the growth of Indian thought and culture. Hence its interest and importance.

The contributions of the Dravidians seem to have been more in the sphere of religious thought, institutions and practices rather than in the sphere of material culture. In the earlier stages the

Vedic religion was primarily a fire cult and one of ritualism characterised by the performance of homas and yajnas generally by individuals and occasionally by the kings for the good of the public. In course of time, these practices gave way to new forms of religious practices like the worship of God in temples. The growing popularity of the worship of the Divine through some form consecrated in a temple was probably one of the noblest of the gifts of the Dravidians to Hinduism. With this great change must have taken place another, namely, change in the nature and habitat of some of the Aryan gods. In the Vedic age for instance Rudra, the fierce red god of destruction had the burning ghat, hills, forests and out of the way places for his habitat. Among the Dravidians and the Kols the phallic emblem or the Linga represented the conceptions of energy and destruction. In due course it was probably as a result of the commingling of the Vedic and the Dravidian cultures that the conception of Śiva or Sadāśiva associated with mildness and gentleness was probably evolved. Not only that. With the growth of the idea of the personification of the gods, animals, birds, reptiles and others became associated with them as their vehicles, ornaments etc. In the early Vedic period preference is given to male Gods in worship and in fact we do not get reference to Goddesses at all except to Aditi, the mother of the Gods and a few others. But various Goddesses come into prominence as consorts of the male Gods or in their individual capacity probably as a result of the influence of the cult of the Mother-Goddess perhaps more generally prevalent among the Dravidians. She is considered as but one aspect of the Supreme Godhead giving rise to the evolution of the Ardhanārīśvara (Śiva-Śakti) cult.

With the evolution of Hinduism and the growing importance of temples, rituals and worship a new class of literature grew in the country. They are the Āgamas. The Āgamas or Tantras are mainly works that deal with the worship of Gods like Śiva, Viṣṇu and Śakti. Though the earliest Āgama texts may not be older than the sixth century A.D. when the Āgamas were popular in the Tamil country the doctrines themselves may be assigned to still earlier times. In the construction of temples, consecration of images and the organisation of worship in them the extant Āgamas are the main source of authority.

With the personification of God and the organisation and systematisation of temple worship South India saw the growth of a vigorous theistic devotional movement of the emotional type along

the twin streams of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism blended with philosophical speculations of the Nāyanārs and the Ālvars and influenced by the schools of philosophy associated with the names of Kumābila, Śankara, Rāmānuja and Madhwa. Though the bhakti movement or the Bhāgavata cult might perhaps be said to have originated in North India in very early times it was certainly elaborated fully in South India from where it flowed back in fresh streams to North India. In this connection it is of interest to note that the *Bhāgavata-Māhātmya* contains a parable which says that Bhakti which is described as a woman was born in the Dṛaviḍa country, attained her womanhood in the Karnataka and Maharashtra and reached Brindāvan with great misery through Guzarat along with her two sons *Jñānā* (Knowledge) and *Vairāgya* (Renunciation) and that the sons died there. The literary outpourings of the Nāyanārs and the Ālvars resulted in the collection of a large volume of religious literature. A very important contribution of the Tamils to religion was the Śaiva Siddhānta which literally means "the settled conclusion on final position of Śaivism". The main sources of Śaivism are considered to be twenty-eight *Śivāgamas* of which the *Kāmikā* is the most important. There is no ground to think that Āgamas represent an attitude of antipathy to the authority of the Vedas as may be seen from the words of Saint Tirumūlar, author of the *Tirumandiram* wherein he says "The Āgama, as much as the Veda is truly the work of God; the one (Veda) is general and the other (Āgama) special; though some consider these words of the Lord, the two antas, to be different, for the great no difference exists". The Vira-Śaiva or Lingāyat cult founded by Basava in the Karnāṭaka country and the Ārādhyā sect founded by Mallikārjuna Paṇḍitārādhyā in the Andhra country served to resist the spread of aggressive Islam in South India. Jainism has had a continuous though chequered history in South India from very early times and has made tremendous contributions not only to vernacular literature but also to art, sculpture and painting. The history of Jainism in the South is a subject of absorbing interest and deserves careful and systematic study. It is a matter for satisfaction that the subject is now receiving the attention it deserves.

South India is a land of temples which served as the mileu round which centred much of the religious, social and cultural life of the people, besides contributing much to the growth of the allied arts of architecture, sculpture and painting. A study of each one of the major temples and temple cities of South India

may not only help the study of local history but also a systematic survey of architecture, sculpture and painting in the area.

The history of Greater India in relation to South India constitutes a very important and brilliant chapter in the history of our country. Starting with peaceful commercial intercourse with the countries of the Far East South India was able to establish her cultural imperialism over them. Such cultural influences appear to have reached Malaya, Sumatra, Java, Bali, Cambodia and Siam mainly through maritime routes starting from Poloura near Ganjam and Kāvēripattinam in the Tanjore district. South India's intimate contact with the Far East is borne out by the existence there of inscriptions in the Pallava grantha script besides numerous monuments which have close resemblance to those of South India. A general study of the history of South East Asia shows how scripts, faiths, beliefs, arts, customs and manners were transported there from South India. Dutch and French Archaeologists have placed us under a deep debt of gratitude to them by their archaeological work in the Far East during the last half a century and more and by placing before us a large volume of material throwing valuable light on the achievements of South India in that region. The subject requires further concentrated attention at our hands.

Friends, one word more and I shall have finished. In recent years we see a good lot of enthusiasm evinced for the development of the languages and the spread of knowledge through them. We see it in a large measure so far as the Dravidian languages are concerned in the awarding of prizes for good books published, the holding of linguistic festivals, the preparation of the two Encyclopaedias, in Tamil and Telugu, etc. These are no doubt proofs of a consciousness of the need to explore ways and means for the study and exposition of Dravidian culture, and they are all good so far as they go. But the magnitude of the problem and its importance are such that a comprehensive and organised scheme has to be worked out to realise the object. If the suggestions I have ventured to outline above for working on the Dravidian languages and culture are acceptable, I feel that the plan to achieve the end should be similar to the schemes for promoting Indological studies in India that are now actively being thought of. I am thinking if it would not be possible within some time, for the Oriental Research Institute in the University of Madras to grow into a large School of Dravidian Studies with the help of the States in South India and the

Central Government and contribute a substantial share to Indological studies. The work is of course stupendous, the problems that have to be tackled are many and require a large band of enthusiastic scholars in the different South Indian languages who would take to linguistic studies and research as a life work and mission. We must work for a cause with singleness of purpose and in a spirit of co-operation. If we are able to work up to this ideal, that "would be the greatest service that we can render to Dravidian literatures, Culture and our country.



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