

# Amuthu Pulavar Memorial Lecture

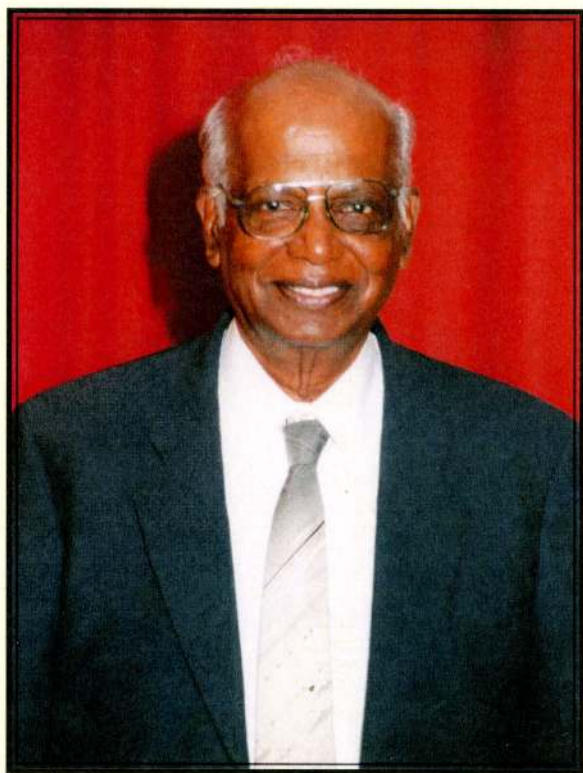
## *Poetics, Aesthetics and Contemporary Tamil Poetry*

by

***Professor Dr. Chelva Kanaganayakam***  
*Professor, Department of English,  
Director, Centre for South Asian Studies,  
University of Toronto, Canada*

**Greenford Town Hall**  
Greenford  
United Kingdom  
February 27, 2011





**Chevalier Dr. S. Adaikalamuthu, PhD (HC, University of Jaffna)**  
*Retired Principal, St. Henry's RCT Boys' School, Ilavalai, Sri Lanka*

**Born:**  
**September 14, 1918**

**Eternal Rest :**  
**February 23, 2010**



# Poetics, Aesthetics, and Contemporary Tamil Poetry

## Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you all for being here. It is a great privilege to be present on the occasion of Dr. Adaikkalamuthu's first death anniversary and to give the inaugural Pulavar Amuthu Memorial Lecture. I am grateful to Prof. Chandrakanthan and his family for inviting me and for all their hospitality. This is also a very gratifying moment for me because apart from the fact that Prof. Chandrakanthan and I have been colleagues and friends for a long time, Dr. Adaikkalamuthu, or Pulavar Amuthu as he was popularly known, was an eminent literary figure. He was both a remarkable poet and a perceptive literary critic. Although my association with him has been intermittent over a period of forty years or so, his connection with my father was deeper and more profound. For a period of time he was also a student of my father at the University of Peradeniya. In one of his books, he writes about this connection and his conversations with my father. In some ways, it is this essay about his relations with my father that prompted me to frame the topic of my own talk today. In this essay, Pulavar Amuthu recalls how he and my father were engaged in a spirited discussion about what constitutes good poetry, and how one distinguishes good poems from mediocre ones.

There are many ways in which one might wish to pursue this topic. One possible approach might be to look closely at Dr. Adaikkalamuthu's own poetry, collected in an anthology, and also the poems included in the first volume of his collected works. His poetry (and for that matter his prose) needs a great deal of careful analysis. His long critical study of Gnapragasa Swamigal and his epic poem on Mother Teresa are major achievements that need to be studied, analyzed, and celebrated. He was in many ways a traditional poet in that metre and rhyme were central to his idea of poetry. He belonged to a particular tradition of scholarship that stressed the need for careful, painstaking and meticulous study of Tamil language and literature. We need to remember that he wrote this kind of poetry at a time when free verse was dominating the literary scene and the capacity to write traditional genres such as the epic was becoming increasingly rare. But he was also a modern poet in that he wrote about contemporary topics in addition to his more traditional ones. In reading his poetry I was constantly faced with the question he himself appears to have been aware of several decades ago: how does one talk about poetics and aesthetics in poetry?

Before going into this question in some detail, let me speak briefly about why this is an important question, particularly for us who are Sri Lankans by birth and British or Canadian or Australian by adoption. Why is poetry so central to our identity, and to our sense of who we are? Although we do not often recognize it, it is often difficult for us to tell the story of our life in ways that others would comprehend. Poetry has been for us, always, an important aspect of our social and cul-

tural life. What we know about our past, we know through poetry. In more recent times, literature in general, and poetry in particular, has been of considerable significance in shaping our understanding of our lives. If we are to comprehend the events that happened over the last thirty years or so, we often turn to poetry. The hopes, aspirations, and struggles of a people are often enshrined in that poetry.

For a moment I would like to turn to an essay titled "Farewell" written by Pularvar Amudhu. It is a deeply moving essay about departure, about sorrow and the agony of what it means to leave one's native soil. In the midst of all that sorrow, one thing becomes clear: his commitment to literature and poetry. More specifically, he refers to his love for traditional poetry. He feels that it is his solemn duty to preserve the tradition of poetry. These are not two separate identities. Literature and identity, being a Tamil and being a poet are intimately connected in his life and in his sensibility. In the tradition of Tirumular, he too feels the need to be of service to Tamil. In keeping with his interest in literature and his commitment to a particular form of poetic expression, I would like to offer some thoughts on poetics, aesthetics, and poetry in Tamil.

## Lecture

The last three decades have been, for Tamil poetry in Sri Lanka, a period of immense growth. From the time that the well known anthology Pathinoru Ealathu Kavignarkal was published in 1984, and Maranathul Valvom in the following year, the burgeoning of poetry has been quite striking. The range and depth of this poetry is rarely matched in twentieth century poetry in Tamil. In retrospect, however, although we have a good sense of the conditions that enabled the composition of poetry, the various ways in which it was transmitted, and the socio-political context that served as a catalyst for the rise of this genre, we do not have a strong theoretical framework for discussing this body of literature. Admittedly, there have been individual essays about one or more poets, and some attempt to see this corpus in holistic terms, but we lack a body of sustained literary criticism that locates this work within or against a long tradition of writing. Sri Lankan poetry operates within a relatively small circle, and there are some social impediments to serious critical activity. Nonetheless, one cannot help lamenting the fact that we have no solid basis for understanding or evaluating this literature. Consequently we are often perplexed when we are called upon to make distinctions among poets and among poems, or even speculate about (to borrow a phrase from T.S. Eliot) the use of poetry and the use of criticism. It may well be that our lines of inquiry are flawed, given the context in which these poems appeared and the purpose they often served, but even so, there is a need to theorize and make sense of both the unity and heterogeneity that we see during this phase.

This absence of critical activity was not always the case. In the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, under the influence of various Western schools of criticism, there was at least a partial attempt to think about and make strong assertions about the form and function of poetry. Critics such as Kailasapathy and poet/critics such as Nuhman strongly favored a Marxist approach to literary criticism. There were poets who preferred a distinctly modernist form of writing while others opted for a more hybrid poetry that employed traditional metrical forms while dealing with contemporary themes. There were those who stuck resolutely to traditional forms of writing, in both content and form. In a very general sense this dichotomy (or multiplicity) came to be identified as "progressive" and "traditional" writing. In relation to poets themselves, there was a binary between those known as kavignar and those identified as pulavar. The relation between kavignar and pulavar is, in contemporary usage, sometimes an arbitrary one, that has no bearing on how these terms originated or evolved. Pulavar in general terms refers to one who has gathered a certain kind of formal knowledge about poetry, and is in some ways steeped in tradition. As the etymology suggests, pulavar is one who knows the poetic terrain, the lay of the land as it were. Kavignar is more recognizably modernist in both form and content. A false dichotomy is thus set up in which one of them is traditional in that he or she uses traditional metrical forms and deals with archaic subject matter and the other is modern in that he or she uses free verse and deals with contemporary issues. The divide, which is ostensibly about form,

then becomes one of content or theme. The pulavan writes about the past and the kavignan writes about the present. Within this binary, there is still no easy way of determining the aesthetic value of one or the other. In actual terms, the distinctions were much more difficult to uphold, since a number of the major poets of the 50s and 60s, including Mahakavi and Murugaiyan, appeared to straddle both worlds. But the problem of aesthetic value still remained.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was, at the University of Peradeniya, for example, an attempt to read ancient literature along very different lines. The idea of practical criticism became an aspect of Tamil studies, inspired largely by New Criticism, and by those who pioneered that movement, including I. A. Richards, Bradley, and William Empson. Two of Chelvanayakam's essays, *Kaanutran Vali* and *Purananutrill oru Paatu* strike us as examples of the approach that was being put forward at this time. Using the 7th poem of the *Purananuru* as an example, Chelvanayakam's essay brings up certain important points in that not only is the diction of Sangam poetry alien to us to some extent, the norms and conventions of social life may be equally alien to us. Certain virtues and acts of courage may be more important in a culture that sustained itself very differently from ours. Chelvanayakam's essay raises a further question that with Sangam poetry the commentaries have been misleading. His way of countering that is to suggest that we look at poetry in relation to the social norms of that culture. Ultimately, the essay tries to interrogate the idea of criticism that we often take for granted.

The question, that I would like to pose in relation to Tamil poetry, both modern and ancient, is whether we have created for ourselves a clearly defined sense of aesthetics or poetics. I do not refer to aesthetics in the sense that philosophers do, but rather as a term that points to forms of evaluation and assessment. The issue, then, is whether it is possible to claim a tradition of literary criticism for Tamil and how we should map this terrain. I think the issue goes beyond asking whether some school of criticism, be it feminism or Marxism or psychoanalysis could be applied profitably to certain periods of literature. The practice of criticism needs to be established within a theoretical frame that includes social context, readership, circulation, the conditions of composition etc. Whether one approach is better than the other is probably less important than recognizing the history of literature and literary criticism in Tamil needs to be examined on its own terms. There is, I think, a need to identify the concerns that make literary criticism a difficult pursuit in Tamil literary studies.

By way of comparison, I often tend to think of the tradition of English poetry, particularly in the last six centuries, from about the time of Chaucer to the present. The comparison has obvious limitations, largely because the terms of production and circulation, not to mention socio-political context, are very different. That said, together with the poetry that was written during this time, we have, from, say Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie* to T.S. Eliot's *The Use of Poetry* or I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism*, a long tradition of reflecting on poetry, its value, its need, its



practitioners, and so forth. We think of Dryden, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Arnold, and a host of others who have in one form or shape felt the need to reflect on their own work and on poetry in general. In the process, they have often stated or implied distinctions among poets and among individual works.

Admittedly, this did not happen in Tamil literary history in quite the same way. I think it might also be a mistake to use Western methods or models to look at Tamil literary history and criticism in a somewhat simplistic manner. Apart from the fact that we have a very long literary history to contend with, many of the problems with literary historiography are peculiar to Tamil. In our desire to construct a clear linear trajectory, we have sometimes skirted many potholes and in the process not established a precise connection between literary history and literary criticism.

In recent years a sustained attempt has been made by Sivathamby to discuss, in his monograph titled *Thamlin Kavithaiyiyal*, the notion of poetics in Tamil. Clearly a significant intervention in the history of Tamil poetics, the book attempts to map the changes in poetic form in relation to the various texts, particularly the *Tolkappiam*, *Viracoliyam*, *Thandialankaram* and *Nannool*, and explore the changing perceptions of how poetry gets constituted at different times. The book offers a cogent argument about the symbiotic relation between poetic formulations in grammatical texts and the changes in form during the centuries of literary history. Along the way, he raises a number of questions about literary historiography and points to problems that one should be aware of in the current periodisation and taxonomy. If one were to expand the frame of the premise of the book, then the question, for the present essay, would be: what is the discursive framework within which poetry functions efficiently or poorly? For instance, once we have identified that during a particular period a metrical form and a stanzaic pattern becomes normative, then do we need a discursive framework within which that poetry succeeds or fails in achieving a particular objective. While it is important to be able to say that in the Pallava Period *viruttham* began to gradually replace *venpaa* and that the *pathikam* becomes a versatile mode, how does one actually theorize about the changes within a larger social and political change? In the absence of that we are left with explication rather than literary criticism.

The problem, then, can also be formulated in the following manner. Our notion of literary criticism is dominated by the *Tolkappiam*. Its enduring influence is attested by the various commentaries that were written during later centuries and the canonical status it enjoys even in the present day. While there is no denying the magisterial scope of the *Tolkappiam*, we do not have any clear sense of the corpus upon which the taxonomy advanced by this text is based. We cannot say with any certainty that the Sangam texts were compiled at the time that the *Tolkappiam* was composed, assuming that we have a single date and author for this text. It is quite conceivable that this text had both oral literature and a very different body of poetry in mind. The Sangam texts were collected within the broad framework of *Ettuthokai* and *Pattupattu* for certain reasons, despite the obvious heterogeneity

in the classification. We have used the Tolkappiam as a grid to understand Sangam literature. Apart from the fact that Porulathikaram does not tell us everything we need to know about Sangam literature, its objective is to offer a grammar of poetic composition than a set of critical tools. As Sivathamby has suggested, the Tolkappiam offers an important but outsider's perspective rather than the exposition of an insider speaking to insiders.

In short, if we were to take Sangam literature as a case in point, we have a very problematic situation. We have a body of texts that do not always preserve internal consistency and appear to have been anthologized with a preconceived model in mind. We have some sense of who compiled and for whom, but we do not know what set of guidelines dictated the process of compilation. We have a text on poetics that helps us understand this poetry although we cannot say with any certainty that this work was an attempt to elucidate this body of Sangam literature. To further complicate matters, we do not know the extent to which Sangam literature is concerned with or reflects the conditions of the age. I am not arguing for a realist model that says that there must be direct correlation between a body of literature and the conditions that produced it. But with Sangam literature we have a unique situation in that much of the knowledge that we have about the period is cobbled together on the information we find in the poetry. A rigorous attempt was made by Kailasapathy in his notable work *Tamil Heroic Poetry* in which he contends that Sangam literature needs to be seen as heroic poetry in the same way that we have a Western tradition of literature that goes back to Greek times with its origins in oral literature. George Hart later questioned the premises of that argument by stating that what we have in Sangam poetry is a fully formed, very conventionalized form of poetry, without a clear sense of oral or ballad like origins. Sangam poetry may have been sung, but they don't strike as oral poetry. These three aspects, namely, the inconsistencies in a body of collected poetry, a text on poetics whose genealogy is unknown, and an age about which the evidence is scanty, raise the question of how we are to formulate a theory and methodology for literary criticism.

The problem, then, reformulates itself in different ways in other periods. During the Pallava Period, for example, we have a much clearer sense of social and cultural context. The political and economic changes of the time have been researched and documented in a much more systematic manner. And the poetry appears to be more consistent and homogeneous. We have a sense of individual poets composing a large corpus of poetry. However, we still have a very rudimentary sense of the relation between the poetry, which is largely religious, and the major social and economic transformations of the era. The notion that this was the great period of bhakti literature is almost a tautology. Here we also have a further problem that is evident in the fact that Saiva bhakti literature has very little by way of commentary. Since much of this poetry was ostensibly inspired by divine intervention it becomes much more difficult to impose a critical paradigm on this poetry. This trend has continued over a long period of time with literature, sometimes even secular literature, being associated with temples and therefore being considered

sacrosanct. Literary criticism is in many ways a secular activity, and that does not always sit well with a tradition of religious literature.

In the 20th century, the situation changed considerably. We see, for instance, a poet such as Subramanya Bharati speaking about his own poetry with a measure of self-relevivity. His desire to write using a particular kind of diction, and his decision to tap into oral forms of poetic utterance have a remarkable resemblance to the pronouncements of Wordsworth who, in his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, speaks of the "language of man." In more recent times, we have seen a proliferation of different forms of poetry and different schools of criticism. Many of these have been inspired by American and European critical practices. While there is much to be said for these influences that energize and shape literary criticism in Tamil, but there is still much to be done in order to construct a practice of literary criticism that anchors itself in Tamil literary history.

The task is hardly a simple one, and it has a great deal to do with one's own subjective stance about the function of poetry. Even a cursory look at the history of literary criticism from, say, Philip Sidney to Northrop Frye would indicate that there is hardly any consensus about the use or function of poetry. While it is often tempting to make exaggerated claims for the role of poetry, I tend to agree with Eliot who is suspicious of "criticism which seems to demand of poetry, not that it shall be well written, but that it shall be 'representative of its age'" (*The Use of Poetry*, 25). The opposite of this is not the ivory towerism of art for art's sake. Often a false dichotomy is set up in which the poet is a radical activist or a conservative traditionalist. Again to quote Eliot: "The poetry of revolt and the poetry of retreat are not of the same kind" (26).

Let me conclude on a more optimistic note. Ramanujan ends his book titled *Interior Landscapes* with the observation that literary history in Tamil has no equal to the poetry produced in the Sangam Period. Says Ramanujan: "These poems are not just the earliest evidence of the Tamil genius. The Tamils, in all their 2,000 years of literary effort, wrote nothing better" (115). When Ramanujan makes the assertion that there is nothing richer than what was written by the Sangam poets, what exactly is implied in the statement? Whether he is accurate or not in his appraisal is less important than the question of how one might substantiate such an assertion with a methodology that is acceptable. George Hart, in his book *The Poems of Ancient Tamil* draws attention to the practice of suggestion or allusion which, he says, comes naturally to Tamil poetry. Both in this book and the introduction to *Poets of the Tamil Anthologies*, he demonstrates this notion through a reading of specific poems. His interpretation of Kuruntokai 25 (p.9) is particularly insightful in its reading of the landscape, nature and human relations. Hart quite rightly points out that these nuances are not easily available to those who do not know the poetry or the culture in some detail. The process of focusing on certain poems and not others is a major step in constructing a method for literary criticism.

It is possible to extend this argument further. We all have our favorite poems. Poets too have their favorite poems, and they make their preferences known by drawing intertextual references to them. When the poet Vilvaratnam writes a contemporary poem that draws on a famous Sangam poem by Kapilar, there is more than a doffing of the cap to tradition. There is an acknowledgment that the Sangam poem appeals to us in certain ways, and that drawing on the experience of a poet who wrote two thousand years ago is central to shaping a contemporary poem. Some of the bhakti poems that were composed fourteen centuries ago are still a part of our repertoire of favorite poems. That is not because they are religious poems but because they have said something that cannot be expressed in any other way. On the other hand, there are poems in the Sangam corpus that strike us as repetitive, straightforward or fairly conventional. We see in bhakti a number of poems that are predictable in the images they draw from and in the sentiments they express. Some of the finest poems seem to coexist with mediocre ones. For various reasons, we have difficulties in looking at the past or the past through a critical practice goes beyond reverence, subjectivity or imitation.

Poetry is ultimately about language, and about the poet's capacity to push the limits of language until a new insight is imparted to the reader. Poetry in Tamil has never existed outside social concerns, but it would be false to assume that its purpose was to reflect social realities. In a slightly different context Robert Stecker makes the point that "a novel, whose fictional characters inhabit nineteenth-century Russia, presents a conception of nineteenth-century Russia" (97). More specifically about poetry, Eliot says that "the poetry of a people takes its life from the people's speech and in turn gives life to it" (15). And that is where a host of problems begin to surface for literary history in Tamil. How much do we know and how much do we not? And how do we establish a relation between the two? Towards the end of Seyyuliyal, the Tolkappiam has this wonderful couplet:

செய்யுள் மொழியால் சீபுரணந்துயாப்பின்  
அவ்வகை தானே அழகெனப்படுமே

(1492)

We know a great deal about what goes into the making of good poetry. But in order to recognize good poetry we need செய்யுள் மொழி which is essentially constructed language that draws from everyday language but reconstructs it to reveal a moment of illumination. It is at that moment (to modify Tolkappiar's assertion) that azhaku becomes transformed into vanappu. We have a long tradition of azhakiyal, but we need to cultivate the idea of vanappiyal.

# Pulavar Amuthu – An Academic and Social Biography

By

Mr. Rasa Swampillai & Mr. Ivan Pedropillai

## 1. A Man of many Achievements and Accomplishments

The Late Vidwan Savarimuthu Adaikalamuthu was Principal and Headmaster, Tamil scholar, writer, journalist, author, exponent of Tamil culture and arts, trade unionist, educationist, poet, orator, and a tireless church and community worker.

Mr Adaikalamuthu was born on 15 September 1918 and grew up in St Xavier's parish, Delft, Jaffna diocese, Sri Lanka. He qualified as a teacher in 1938 at Colombogam Teachers' Training College, Jaffna, a prominent Catholic institution. He received his Diploma in Tamil Studies at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka in 1960.

As a prominent and prolific writer he has published regularly in regional weeklies - *Catholic Guardian*, *Eelanadu*, and other national dailies like *Thinakaran* and *Virakesari*.

For a long period from 1950-1975 he served as Special correspondent of *Thinakaran* and *Virakesari* especially

He was also the Editor of Colombogam Teachers' Training College Centenary Souvenir and was the Editor of University of Peradeniya publication, *Ilankathir*. In addition to this he edited some issues *Ilanjar Pothiny*, a students' magazine.

He authored many books some of which have been re-printed thrice. His books are highly acclaimed for literary merit. He also wrote on Church history and devotion, and other titles as *Maathaa Anjali* (1940), *Nenche Ninai Biography of Swami Gnanapragasar* (1975), *Karkkum Kaikal: Biography of Dr. Emil Innasithamby*, (1978), *Biography of Fr Pierre Noailles Bienvenue* (1980), *Poems by Amuthu* (1991), *Mother Theresa and Her Works* (1997), *Lyrics to our Lady of Madhu* (1998), and *History of St Anne's Church, Ilavalai* (2001).

Proceeds from many of these publications had been donated to the benefit of Charitable and community organisations.

## 2. Family Background

There were well-known teachers and scholars in Mr Adaikalamuthu's family circle. He grew up in a setting of erudition and scholarship with a strong tradition of resolute Catholic faith and Tamil culture. His late elder brother Mr Sinnappu Nayagam was a well known educationist

and Principal. His late sister Gnanapoo and late brother in law S. Ramanathan were both eminent Community Leaders, teachers and Principals of the major High School in Delft. His youngest brother, the late Alexis Sebaratnam was Chief Auditor in Sri Lanka's Telecommunications Department and was an ardent Tamil Scholar and Community Leader. Two of his paternal and maternal uncles, the late Kavimani K. T. Gnanapragasam and the late Mr Benedict were also prominent Head Masters, Poets and erudite Tamil scholars.

### 3. Interests and Record of Achievements

Mr Adaikalamuthu was always devoted to the study and teaching of Tamil language and literature; a historian of the Tamil Catholic Church and a lay Catholic leader who served the Tamil Church and the Tamil community with exceptional distinction. . As his influence developed, his friendly disposition, intellectual prowess, administrative skills, and relentless determination in championing the causes he undertook were recognised and admired by colleagues and superiors alike. His guidance and assistance was sought by many, and responsibility was cast on him by Church and secular authorities regularly. This trend continues even now in his retirement, albeit at a reduced pace.

He held many positions in the Community of teachers as Elected Joint Secretary, and later Vice President of Northern Sri Lanka Teachers' Association. He was Elected President of Catholic Teachers Association and was Appointed Secretary of Jaffna Diocese Literature Committee. Served as President of Ilavalai Parochial Church Council for many years and as Vice President of Jaffna Diocesan Council for over a long period.

Besides these he also served on several ad hoc committees of the diocese of Jaffna and of the Government education department, Jaffna.

When he migrated to live in the United Kingdom, he served as a Member of the Council of Tamil Catholic Chaplaincy of London. A Much respected scholar and prominent personality in the Tamil literary scene in London and in Europe. At the invitation of the Chief Priests of the many Hindu Temples he has given series of lectures on Tamil literature and Tamil Devotional Writings at the London Murugan temple and other Saiva-Hindu temples in Europe. On many occasions he was honoured by these Temples with number of honorary titles and laurels.

#### 4. Marriage and a Catholic family life

Mr Adaikalamuthu married Theresamma Swampillai, a Teacher, and daughter of Mr and Mrs Chelliah Swampillai, a prominent Catholic family in Ilavalai. Mr Chelliah and his brothers were benevolent supporters of the Church, and philanthropists. The Adaikalamuthus have ten children and celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1994 in London where they now lived from August 1985 till their death in 2003 (RIP- Mrs. Theresa Adaikalamuthu) and 2010; most of their children live in England and some in Canada.

Many of their children are prominent in their respective academic and professional fields, and they all have their parents' noble trait of service to the Church and to the Tamil community. Mrs Adaikalamuthu's family was among the benefactors of St Henry's College, Ilavalai, and the parish church of St Anne in Ilavalai. Outstanding among these benefactions is the magnificent three hundred-foot high Bell Tower in stone and concrete, topped with dome and steeples, complete with set of bells, all donated to the parish church in the early part of the last century by the paternal uncle of Mrs Theresamma Adaikalamuthu, named Senathirajah, father of the late Teacher Mr. Mary Joseph. Other uncles Seemanpillai, Senthuri Soosaipillai and Nicholapillai were also prominent leaders in Ilavalai and they contributed a great deal to the development of performing arts and nattu koothu.

#### 5. Leadership Style

Amuthu Master is a very talented communicator both in terms of his writings and his speeches. His amiable nature and power of persuasion could win over even the most stubborn of hearts. This has always been his strength. His interactions in academic, managerial, and administrative activities at various times with people of great eminence and ability have left an endearing mark on him. But to Amuthu Master these were all opportunities to be of service to the Church and to the Tamil community.

Collaborative research with academicians like the late eminent scholar, Rev Fr S Gnanapragasar and late Emeritus Professor and Vice Chancellor Prof S Vithiananthan

Work as Jaffna Catholic teachers' representative with successive General Managers of Catholic Schools and in later years with Divisional Directors of Education.

Regular interactions as leader of parish and diocesan councils with senior clergy and Bishops. Rt Rev Dr Deogupillai, Emeritus Bishop of Jaffna, summed up Amuthu Master's leadership style and qualities admirably in his goodwill message by recalling Mr Amuthu's

unflinching dedication to the Church and to Society, on the occasion of conferment of the title of Muppany Venthan by the Tamil Catholic Chaplaincy London in 1998.

## 6. Standing in the Community

His peers, as well as Church and community leaders have always held Mr Adaikalamuthu in high esteem from the earliest days of his teaching career. The effectiveness of his leadership flows from the trust, respect and affection of everyone with whom he has been associated. In recent years, his place in the community has been recognised by honours and awards that have been bestowed on him by the following distinguished individuals and organisations:

Gnanapragasar Tamil Manram, Jaffna, Sri Lanka

Karanthai Tamil Sangam, Tamil Nadu, India

Tamil Catholic Chaplaincy Germany

London Tamil Arangam

St Henry's College, Ilavalai, Sri Lanka

Tamil Catholic Chaplaincy London

## 7. Education:

Tamil Language Teachers' Training Certificate/ Diploma Certificate (1938); Vidwan and Diploma in Tamil awarded by University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, 1959.

### Para-Academic Titles Conferred:

**"Sollin Selvan"** Conferred by the Most Revd. Dr. B.

Deogupillai, Bishop of Jaffna on the day of the launching of the book *Nenche Nineai – A Biography of Nallur Swami Gnanapragasar* (1975) In Jaffna

**"Pulavar Mani"** Professor Dr. S.J. Emmanuel, University of Munster, Germany 1988 on the launch of his book on Mother Teresa of Calcutta, conferred in London, UK.

**"Tamil Kankai"**, Tamil Literary Society of London and London University Tamil Students' Union, United Kingdom (1998) In London, UK

**Muppany Venthan** Conferred by the Priests and Bishops of the Tamil Catholic Chaplaincy London in 1998. (U.K)

**"Mathura Kavi"** The Principal Staff and Students' of St. Henry's College Ilavalai and Holy Family Convent Mahavidyalaya, Ilavalai in consultation with the Department of Tamil, University of Peradeniya and Department of Tamil University of Jaffna, jointly conferred by Right Reverend Dr S Jebanesan, Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India, and Professor P Balasundarampillai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jaffna – at Ilavalai Holy Family Convent School, March 2002.



**“Kala Pooshana Award ”** Ministry of Cultural Affairs,  
Government of Sri Lanka, (2005)

## 8. Educator and Academic

Teacher

Qualified as a Teacher at the age of nineteen.

Served in the Jaffna district during the entire teaching career.

Taught Senior Secondary Students at leading Colleges.

Supervised and Corrected G.C.E. O/L and A/L examination scripts.

Taught and held Administrative Positions at the Following Colleges:

St. Henry's College, Ilavalai

St. Charles Boys' School , Jaffna

St. Anthony's College, Kayts

St. Joseph's College, Mathagal,

Principal and Head-Master, St. Henry's R.C. Boys' Secondary School, Ilavalai

Adapted eminently to many policy changes in education during his career.

Prominent Principal/ Headmaster and educationist and Administrator.

Editor of "Iilankathir" University of Ceylon, Tamil Annual 1959

Helped in the Revision of Primary and Secondary School Curriculum in 1962-65, 1971-75, Ministry of Education, Colombo.

Contributed prose and poetry to Tamil Language Text Books for Grade 5, 6, 7 and 8 (JSC) (*Navamani Vasagam*) Published by the Catholic Press, Jaffna 1962 (Reprinted 1964, 1966)

Held the Office of Vice-President and Joint Secretary for North Ceylon Tamil Teachers' Association (several times between 1960-1975) Lecturer and Tutor for the Pandithar Diploma Course Programme organized and conducted by North Ceylon Teachers' Association at Pandatherruppu Girls School (1962- 1969)

## 9. Other Awards and Honours Received:

**Papal Knighthood of the Order of St Gregory the Great -**

November 2002 conferred by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II for services to education, scholarship, services to the Church and to the Tamil community.

Publicly honoured by the Right Reverend Bishop Howard George Tripp, Archdiocese of Southwark, London, at Wandsworth Town Hall, for services to Tamil Catholic Chaplaincy in London, and to the community - 1998.

He has been recognised by honours and awards that have been bestowed by distinguished organisations – among them, Gnanapragasar Tamil Manram, Jaffna, Karanthai Tamil Sangam, Tamil Nadu, London Tamil Arangam, and Tamil Catholic Chaplaincy, Germany, Tamil Writer's Association, Paris, France.

His Essays and Articles on “Christian Tamil Scholars” have been recommended as “Required Text” for the B.A. degree in Tamil Language at Manonmaniam Suntharanar Tamil University, Tanjore, South India (1999-2005)

Some of his articles and essays on Sri Lankan Tamil Scholars as Fr. Thani nayagam and Swami Ganapragasar were edited and published by Dr. S. Sivalingarajah, department of Tamil, University of Jaffna, under the title *Tamil Iyal Katturaikal*

At the request of Professor Shanmugadas and Dr. Sivalingarajah and the Department of Christian Civilization of the University of Jaffna, he guided and mentored Research Dissertations on Christian Tamil Literatures for the Honours students of the same Department between 1981- 1986

A student wrote a B.A. Honours Dissertation in 1995 on his contribution to Tamil Literature in General and Christian Tamil Literatures in particular in the Department of Christian Civilization under the Direction of Professor A.J.V. Chandrakanthan who was then Head of the Department of Christian and Islamic Studies at the University of Jafna.

#### **10. From the Citation for the Chevalier Award by H.H. Pope John Paul II:**

In recognition of:

##### **a) Outstanding Services to the Field of Education and Knowledge.**

Teaching career spanning over 40 years in Jaffna district. And for having used leadership role in Teachers' Unions to promote common standards and targets in Catholic schools, and later in Government Schools.

And for having actively promoted continuing professional development for Trained Teachers; and encouraged his younger colleagues to follow his example by undertaking University based courses, research and collaborative work. Outstanding Research Publications cited and recommended by University scholars As texts and source for further research.

Directed and Guided Research and Dissertations of University students in Jaffna and London. Gave talks and lectures on Tamil Language and Literature to University Students and General Public at Universities and Academic Institutions in Jaffna, London, Paris, Frankfurt, Montreal, Toronto, Sydney and Singapore.

**b) Accomplishments in scholarship, writing and poetry (PUBLICATIONS) Published several works in Tamil from 1940 to 2002. Works of particular literary merit among these are:**

1. *Nenche Ninai – A Biography of Nalliar Swami Gnanapragasar*, Catholic Press, Jaffna, 1975, 240 pages
2. *A Man Who passed this Way (In Tamil Ivalichentra Inniya Manithan)*, A Biography of Fr Pierre Noailles, Catholic Press Jaffna, 1978, 140 pages
3. *Amuthuin Kavithaikal – Poems by Amuthu*, Assisi Press, Nagercoil, South India, 1991. Revised and Reprinted by Manimeklaia Pirasuram 2002
4. *Kakaum kanarungal (Hands that Heal) A Medical Biography of the Innasithamy Traditional Native Medical Practice of Nine Generations*, Thambi Publishers, Sillalai, 1980, Reprinted 1987 and 1992. 206 pages with illustrations
5. *Anpin Kankai Annai Theresa – A Biography of Mother Theresa and her Work*, Tamilaarangam, London, –1997. Reprinted in Sri Lanka in 1999 and 2005
6. *Madu Maathaa Kaviyam – Lyrics to Our Lady of Madhu, Madhu Church, Mannar* 2001.
7. *Ilaivalai Punitha Annamamal Aalaya varalaaru (A History of St. Anne’s Church Ilaivalai*, Selvam Publishers, London, 2004
8. Published over three hundred articles and essays in Monthlies, Annuals, Celebration Souvenirs of Scholars and other volumes to mark special occasions, Leading Tamil dailies, Weeklies and academic journals.

**c) Community service**

Used every opportunity to familiarize and explain epic works of Tamil literature to ordinary folk. Used his mastery of Tamil literature to further interfaith dialogue. Counsellor and confidant to the Chaplains

and the Tamil Catholic Chaplaincy London.

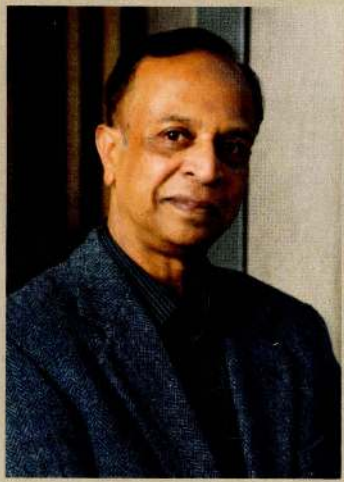
Encouraged and motivated individuals and organisations in setting up Tamil schools and other centres for promoting Tamil culture and arts in London and in Europe.

Active in Tamil learned societies and organisations for the arts in Jaffna and in Europe.

Unflinching dedication to the Church and to Society during his entire life.

Gave a series of lectures on Tamil literature and Saiva Tamil Devotional Writings at the London Murugan Temple and other Saiva-Hindu temples in Europe.





## Chelva Kanaganayakam

Professor, Department of English, Director, Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Toronto.

### Publications:

*Counterrealism and Indo-Anglian Fiction*. (2002), *Dark Antonyms and Paradise: The Poetry of Rienzi Crusz* (1997), *Configurations of Exile: South Asian Writers and Their World* (1995), *Structures of Negation: The Writings of Zulfikar Ghose* (1993). Edited books: *Wilting Laughter: Three Tamil Poets*. (2009), *Arbiters of a National Imaginary: Essays on Sri Lanka*. (2008), *Moveable Margins: The Shifting Spaces of Canadian Literature* (2005), *Lutesong and Lament: Tamil Writing from Sri Lanka* (2001). *Insurgent Rain: Selected Poetry of Rienzi Crusz* (1997).