

# UNIVERSITY OF JAFFNA



Lady Lilavathi Ramanathan

MEMORIAL LECTURE

THE SANSKRIT TRADITION  
OF THE SRI LANKAN TAMILS  
- A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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*K. Swaminathan*



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## INTRODUCTION

Lady Lilavathi Ramanathan Memorial Lecture is an annual event which usually takes place early in the week following the General Convocation. This memorial lecture is held under an endowment instituted by Saiva Mangaiyar Sabai - Association of Hindu Women founded by Sir Ponnampalam Ramanathan in 1924. The objective of the Endowment is to propagate ideas related to profound study and illuminative understanding of Hindu Religion, Saiva Philosophy and Dravidian Arts.

The lecture this year is on **The Sanskrit Tradition of The Sri Lankan Tamils - A Historical Perspective** and is delivered by Professor V. Sivasamy, Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit. It is my fervent hope that the subject chosen for the lecture will fulfill the aspirations of the great Lady in whose memory it is being delivered.

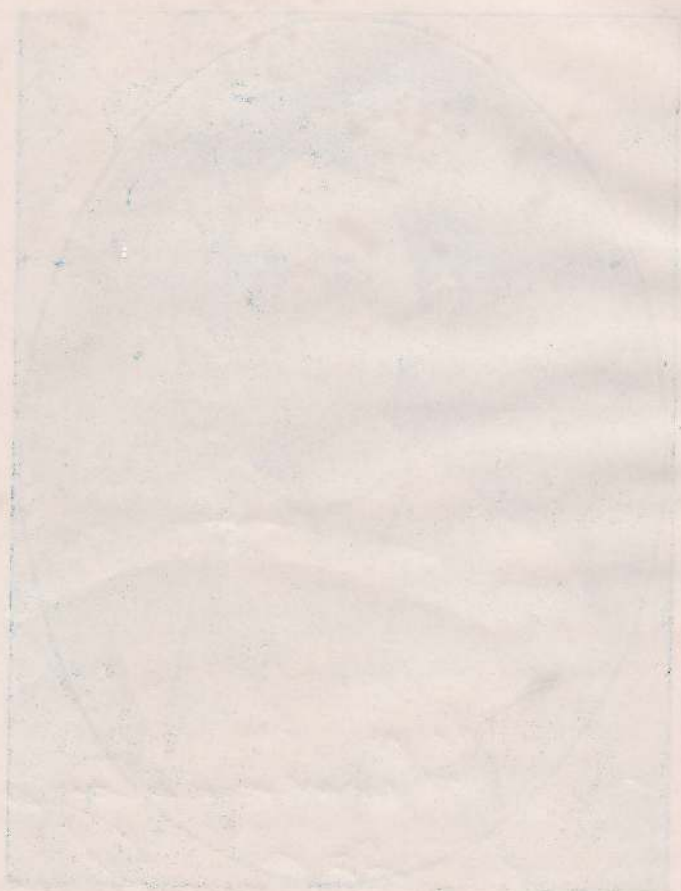
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**Ladies and Gentleman.**

I feel greatly privileged and honoured to be invited by the University of Jaffna, to deliver this important Memorial Lecture of Lady Lilavathi Ramanathan this year (1992) on the second day after the Convocation.

I am very thankful to the Convocation Committee headed by the Dean Faculty of Arts Prof. P. Balasundarampillai, for giving me this opportunity to deliver this lecture & encouraging me. Besides the library of the University, I am also thankful to Prof. V. Arumugam, Mrs. M. Thiruccitrampalam, Dr. S. Krishnaraja, Mr. S. Krisnananda Sarma and especially Mr. B. Ganesalingam for helping me with some rare material not easily available for the subject of this address.

Before, I go on with the subject, I feel that it is my duty to say a few words about the great Lady Lilavathi Ramanathan. She had been the ideal wife of Sir P. Ramanathan in the latter part of his life. Ever since she was attracted by the charismatic personality of this great Sri Lankan Tamil, first as disciple, then as secretary and finally as Sahadharma-carini (wife as co-partner in all his activities) rivalling the ideal wives as depicted in the Hindu Epics, Puranas and Kavyas, she played an important part in his life. In her preface to her English version of the Ramayana she has aptly summarized her view of her husband thus: "He has been my great Friend, my Beloved Teacher, my Everlasting Light of Grace and Truth which no words can ever describe". Such was her great admiration for him.

She is comparable in some ways to the great Irish lady Dr. Annie Besant who worked selflessly for the upliftment of the Indian society about the same time. Lady Ramanathan continued to follow the ideals of her husband and served his community till

her death in 1952, more than two decades even after the death of her husband in 1930. She remained a Jaffna Tamil Hindu Lady to the last and served this land and its people and didn't go back to her homeland. Thus, she has naturally won the hearts of the people who remember her today with gratitude.

The subject of my address today 'The Sanskrit Tradition of the Sri Lankan Tamils - A Historical Perspective' is one of the subjects dear to the Ramanathans and therefore it befits the occasion.

## **The Sanskrit Tradition of the Sri Lankan Tamils A Historical Perspective**

Sanskrit has played an important role in the evolution and development of the cultural and religious heritage of the Sri Lankans the Tamils and the Sinhalese as in the sub-continent of India. In this connection, I feel, it is very relevant to quote Svami Vipulananda the first Professor of Tamil in India and Sri Lanka and a 'samarasajnani' whose birth centenary is being celebrated this year. He has said 'The people of this country (Sri Lanka) should willingly study the ancient classical languages Pali and Sanskrit. Just as the students of the Western countries study Latin, Greek and other classical languages so that their education would be complete, the students of this country deserve to study Pali and Sanskrit. The foundation of the Sri Lankan civilization has been built on the basis of Tamil and Sinhalese languages whose grammar and literature are enriched by Sanskrit' <sup>1</sup>. One may agree or disagree with this view. Here the Svamiji has emphasized the study of Pali and Sanskrit for the Sinhalese and Sanskrit for the Tamils so that they will have a better understanding of their own culture and have a common cultural language too, in Sanskrit.

In today's address, I propose to give a bird's eye view of the contributions of the Sri Lankan Tamils to Sanskrit studies. These will include not only those of the Sri Lankan Tamils here and abroad but those from India especially Tamil Nadu



who had come and served here and returned home or became Sri Lankans. The study will generally cover up to the sixties of this century, as there has been a sharp decline in the study of this language afterwards.

## Study of Classical Languages

Before dealing with the subject, I wish to state certain aspects of the study of classical language like Sanskrit about which there are some misconceptions too. One is with regard to 'the study of the past and the so called 'dead' languages, particularly those of the Orient should have no place in the scheme of things; that only livelier subjects like law, medicine, economics and statistics and various sciences are the only forms of knowledge worth acquiring, for they could readily be turned to practical account of life'<sup>2</sup>. With regard to this view, it is relevant to quote a leading Sri Lankan Sanskrit scholar who has said that, 'the contention that the ancient languages and literatures have no meaning for us rests on a fallacy born of a too revolutionary view of human progress. If civilization is what it is today, it is largely, if not solely, due to what it was yesterday and the day before. Every step in human progress has been made possible only on account of social tradition handed down by past generations, and this tradition, of which language is perhaps the most important element, lives even today in each of us'<sup>3</sup>. Then, he proceeds to emphasize his point of view by quoting from a leading anthropologist Golden Weiser who says 'the culture that exists at any given time and place has come from the past. It is the result of accumulation of things, attitudes, ideas, knowledge, error, prejudice .... From this angle, the major role of language is that of a culture carrier ---Next of the prolonged infancy of man, the culture bearing function of language is the most important fact in the making of humanity'<sup>4</sup>. 'The past is never dead, in the sense of being annihilated, it continues to live in its products. There is a true sense in which Sanskrit like classical Latin and Greek and other tongues no longer spoken by whole communities never died. They were in course of time transformed by process of linguistic change and the modern dialects derived from them are living continuation of those dead languages. In the same sense Latin is considered to survive in its derivative languages and dialects such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, so Sanskrit can be said to live today in its derivatives



such as Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Sinhalese and a host of other dialects. In a different way, it may be held that Sanskrit also survives in the Brahmin schools of Vedic learning in the various institutions of Pandits and Sastries such as the Navadvipa school of logicians in Bengal, and also in the technical subjects and professions like medicine and music just as Latin has been declared to survive in the Catholic Church and in the various church libraries and schools. Apart from these purely linguistic considerations, the civilization of which Sanskrit has been the main vehicle permeates the life of nearly everyone in a large part of Asia today, including the Sinhalese and Tamils of Ceylon'<sup>5</sup>.

As stated earlier, though it is considered a 'dead' language by some scholars, 'there are potent signs of life in the Sanskrit language. There are numerous families in India whose mother tongue is Sanskrit. Sastrarthas are frequently held in Sanskrit among pandits. Literary discussions, dialogue, recitation contests, staging of Sanskrit plays old and modern and such like literary activities in Sanskrit are occasionally held throughout the length and breadth of India. More than twelve magazines are published in Sanskrit from various parts of India'<sup>6</sup>. News is broadcast daily in Sanskrit as in other Indian languages, over the All India Radio. Therefore, one may agree with the view of the French Savant Louis Renou and V. Raghavan a famous Indian Sanskrit scholar that 'Sanskrit is not a dead language'<sup>7</sup>. The latter scholar has tried to prove this in two fairly well documented articles.<sup>8</sup> According to him 'one sees Sanskrit alive in the full sense of the term as the vehicle of expression for contemporary life and thought'<sup>9</sup>. As the devabhasa-the sacred language of Hinduism, it is still freely used in the temples and rituals of the Hindus, as any other living language. Further, what M. I. Finley has said about the Greco-Roman civilization is relevant to Sanskrit also. That is, 'If the past-any past whether Greco-Roman or 19th century is to enlighten and remain relevant to the present, it requires active interpretation and reinterpretation, informed, critical and flexible. That (and only that) is what experts are for'.<sup>10</sup> Historically speaking, not only the Hindus but the Mahayana school of Buddhists too considered Sanskrit as their sacred language. But in course of time, the Theravada Buddhists and the Jains too gave importance to the study of this language.

## Antiquity and Richness of Sanskrit

Sanskrit belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and has a rich and varied literature harking back to more than 4000 years. This literature covers both religious and secular, though the religious literature is often given greater weightage. Almost every aspect of human activities-social, economic, cultural, religious and even scientific are well represented in this literature. Various schools and strands of thought contributed by seers, thinkers, theologians, scientists professing different religions during the various periods of history are included in this literature which is encyclopaedic in character. Briefly speaking, every branch of knowledge has found expression in this language. It has three phases of literary activity namely, the Vedic, the Epic and the Classical.

It is highly enriched with a refined literature "remarkable for its variety and richness of forms" and comparable to any literature, ancient or modern. One may cite as examples, the lyrical hymns of the Rgveda, the philosophical literature of the Upanisads, the poetry of Vyasa, Valmiki, Asvaghosa, Bharavi, Magha, Kumaradasa, Amaru, Jayadeva and the dramas of Bhasa, Sudraka, Harsa, Bhavabhuti and above all the poetry and dramas of Kalidasa. As remarked by A. B. Keith "Classical Sanskrit literature is entitled to rank among the great literatures of the world"<sup>11</sup>. Its scientifically based grammar as devised by the great genius Panini is highly commended even by modern linguists.

Long before the Christian era, Sanskrit became not only the Devabhasa-the sacred language of Hinduism but more significantly the language of higher learning, religious and secular. As a result, it became the common language-the lingua franca-of specially the elite of India and any every other branch of human knowledge came to be written in this language by scholars from various parts of India whatever their mother tongue was. Consequent to this development, one may notice the prevalence of two languages in the various parts of India, one the regional language representing the ethos of the particular region, and the other the common language-Sanskrit, generally representing the ethos of the entire sub-continent from the Himalayas in the North to the Cape Comorin in the South. With the spread of the Indian culture whether Hindu or Buddhist



to Sri Lanka and countries of South East Asia and Central Asia, Sanskrit too found an important place in the culture of these countries. Thus, it became a common cultural language of a considerable part of Asia. In some respects, the position of Sanskrit is comparable to that of English nowadays in South Asia.

It is also worth noting the view of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister and architect of modern India, about Sanskrit. He said "If I was asked what is the greatest treasure that India possesses and what is her finest heritage, I would answer unhesitatingly, it is the Sanskrit language and literature and all that it contains. This is a magnificent inheritance and so long as this endures and influences our people, so long the basic genius of India continue"<sup>12</sup>. He also said in another context "Sanskrit language is amazingly rich, efflorescent, full of luxuriant growth of all kinds, and yet precise and strictly keeping with the framework of grammar which Panini laid down 2600 years ago; it spread out, added to its richness, became fuller and more ornate but always stuck to the original"<sup>13</sup>.

With the expansion of European trade and colonial activities in the East, the Europeans-the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and especially the British came to know about the importance of Sanskrit. In this respect, the epoch-making presidential address of Sir William Jones at the meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 is a memorable one. In the course of his address, he said "The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure: more perfect than the Greek, more copious than Latin and more exquisitely refined than either yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident....."<sup>14</sup>. This led to the growing interest in Sanskrit among European scholars especially the Germans. "It was the starting point from which developed the study of comparative philology of Indo-European languages and eventually the whole science of modern linguistics"<sup>15</sup>. Following this, many universities in Europe and America created separate departments of Sanskrit. By the way, in recent times, the Madras Hindu published an article entitled "Sanskrit around the world". In this article, the writer highlighting the growing global interest in Sanskrit laments the neglect of Sanskrit study in India<sup>16</sup>.

William Jones also translated into English some Sanskrit works including the Sakuntala the famous play of Kalidasa. Sakuntala was later rendered into German, French, Danish and Italian. Goethe, the famous German poet, was highly impressed by this play and paid a magnificent tribute to Sakuntala as "Wouldst thou young years blossoms and the fruits of its decline, and all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed, couldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole name combine? I name thee, O Sakuntala and all at once is said" 17. He has thus "summed up his criticism of Sakuntala in a single quatrain; he has not taken the poem to pieces. The quatrain seems to be a small thing like the wick of a candle, but it lights up the whole drama in an instant and reveals its inner nature". In Goethe's words "Sakuntala blends together the young years blossoms and the fruits of its maturity; it combines heaven and earth in one" 18. In his magnificent play Faust, Goethe has thus expressed his appreciation of Sakuntala. The idea of giving a prologue to his Faust is said to have been inspired by Kalidasa's prologue which was in accordance with the usual tradition of Sanskrit drama 19.

The interest shown by scholars in this language, whether Indian or foreign, now centres more on the thoughts-religious or secular contained in this language. Hence, one notices that the study of the language is now more geared to the understanding, elucidation and interpretation of the religious and secular ideas-political, social, economic, religious, philosophical and cultural as expressed in this language. This trend is generally observed in several universities where Sanskrit studies are being fostered. But at the same time, it does not mean that the aspects of language and literature are completely neglected.

### **Sanskrit and Tamil**

The relations between Sanskrit and Tamil hark back atleast to the earliest corpus of Tamil literature-the Sangam Classics which bear ample testimony to this fact. One may cite some examples here to illustrate this.

In the second poem of Purananuru, the poet Muranciyyur Mutinakanar praises and blesses his patron, the Cera king Utiyanceral



that "even if milk becomes sour, day becomes night, the righteous path as set forth in the four Vedas go astray (these are impossibilities), he will live long with his loyal ministers". In the same poem, the poet refers to the deer sleeping freely in the light of the three sacred fires and ends that the king may live long without troubles like the Himalayas with the golden peaks and the Podiyil mountain.

In another poem (15) of the same work, the poet Nettimaiyar praises eloquently the achievements of his patron the Pandya king Palyagasalai Mutukutum; Peruvaluti. In the course of this eulogy, he poses the question, which number is greater? The number of enemies who were defeated (by him) and therefore they felt disgraced or the number of his sacrificial pavilions with the yupas (pillars), where sacrifices were performed as set forth in the four Vedas and many offerings were placed in the sacrificial fires which blazed forth. One of the titles of the king, namely, "Palyagasalai" shows that he has performed several sacrifices.

This relationship between Tamil and Sanskrit became more and more intimate in the subsequent post-Sangam periods of the Pallava-Pandya, the Cola and the Vijayanagara ascendancy. Generally, there have been no inhibitions with regard to the study of Sanskrit in Tamil Nadu until recent times. The study of Sanskrit was not only fostered by the adherents of Hinduism but Buddhism and Jainism too in course of time. Tamil and Sanskrit were fostered and patronized by the Tamil kings-Tamil as the language of the region and Sanskrit as the common cultural language. They were generally given equal recognition in the royal courts. With the emergence of the Bhakti movement in Tamil Nadu in the sixth century A. D., both these languages were said to be the creations and embodiment of lord Siva 20. Thus they were considered divine; the mutual relations of these languages had an impact on each other. In this respect, a knowledge of Sanskrit was deemed necessary for a better understanding and interpretation of certain aspects of Tamil language and literature. This was also considered relevant to the study of medicine, fine arts, Hinduism and its schools of philosophy, especially the Saiva Siddhanta that flourished in Tamil Nadu.



Another important fact to be borne in mind is that Sanskrit though generally associated with the brahmins, has never been exclusively their forte. scholars from other social groups and strata have contributed now and then to the development of this language especially after it became the common cultural language of Bharatavarsha.

It is also important to note that the influence of Sanskrit on Tamil or other Dravidian Languages was not one-sided. The Dravidian languages too have made an impact on Sanskrit. T. Burrow has clearly pointed out the influence of Dravidian languages on Sanskrit from the time of the earliest Sanskrit literary work-Rgveda in which he has noted a few Dravidian loan words 21. According to this scholar equally proficient in Indo-Aryan & Dravidian languages, the cerebral letters already found in the Rgveda are of Dravidian origin 22. He has listed a few words of Dravidian origin in Sanskrit in his work THE SANSKRIT LANGUAGE. The list includes, aguru (akil), ankola (arincil), arka (erukku), alasa (alasu), ulukha (ulakkai), katu (katu), kathina (katti), kaka (kakkai), kancika/kanjika (kanci), kanana (ka) kuta (kutam), kunda (kuntu), kuvalaya (kuvalai), khala (kalam), candana (cantu) tamarasa (tamarai), danda (tantu), nir (nira), palli (palli), bala (val, valam), mala (malai), mina (min), muraja (murasu), and valli (valli) 23. This trend of borrowing words from one language to another continued.

Sanskrit words continued to be used in the written as well as, colloquial Tamil. The number increased in course of time and the Tamil grammarians devised two ways by which Sanskrit loan words could be used in Tamil One is by TATSAMA (equal to that) method. Here the words which have the same sounds in both languages are used as they are without any changes. One may cite as examples; kara-karam, Vinayaka-Vinayaka and karana-karanam. The other is the TABBHAVA (produced or born from that) Here, the Sanskrit words which have some letters or all the letters not found in Tamil are adapted to suit the Tamil idiom. One may cite as examples; siras-sirasu, karya-kariyam and sugandha-cukanta.

In the medieval period, both Tamil and Sanskrit words were used more or less in equal numbers in some works and this style of writing was called MANIPPIRAVALAM.

In colloquial Tamil too, Sanskrit words continue to be used freely. In this respect, the people of Tamil Nadu use more Sanskrit words than those of Sri Lanka whose speech as well as writing are usually noted for the use of pure Tamil words.

## Sanskrit and Sri Lanka

Sanskrit constituted a common base for the culture of the Sinhalese and Tamils of Sri Lanka from very early times. It has been fostered by both the communities and has its impact on their languages and cultural traditions. The early Brahmi inscriptions of Sri Lanka dating from the third century B.C. refer to brahmins and Hindu culture. Sanskrit was fostered by the Sinhalese kings from the days of the Anuradhapura period. The important role of Sanskrit in the language and culture of the Sinhalese has formed the subject of a doctoral thesis of Pandit Deihigaspe Pannasara Thera submitted to the university of Ceylon. This excellent work has been published in 1958 and is readily available for the readers. 24

But so far, there has not been any systematic study of the contributions of the Sri Lankan Tamils to Sanskrit studies and this has prompted the writer to give atleast a general survey of the subject in a modest way and kindle the interest of those who may be interested in this study.

## Sanskrit and Sri Lankan Tamils

As in Tamil Nadu, Sanskrit would have been fostered by the Sri Lankan Tamils from early times. The Bhakti movement in Tamil Nadu gave a great fillip to the study of Sanskrit and its religious and philosophical literature. The sacred hymns of the Saiva and Vaisnava Saints greatly reflect this tendency. In the sacred hymns of the Saiva Saint Tirugnanasampantar and Sutarar about God Siva enshrined in the ancient Siva temples at Tirukonesvaram (Trincomalee) and Tirukketisvaram (Mannar), there are references to the Vedas and some other aspects of the sacred lore found in Sanskrit. Archaeological remains of the late Anuradhapura Period testify to the existence of Siva temples at Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka. Similar temples would have been built in other parts of Sri Lanka like the



Nakulesvaram at Kirimalai too. In these centres of Siva worship, Sanskrit would have been fostered especially by the priests.

The Conquest and consolidation of the Cola power in Sri Lanka in the late 10th and 11th centuries (A. D. 993-1070), would have given greater impetus to Sanskrit studies too, as in Tamil Nadu Cola inscriptions in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka refer to the royal patronage of Sanskrit learning including Vedic and philosophical studies. Many temples of Siva and a few of Visnu were built in the various parts of Sri Lanka especially at Polonnaruwa-the capital city. The ancient Siva temples of Tirukonesvaram and Tirukketisvaram were probably enlarged and rebuilt during this period. Atleast one temple had been built in the Jaffna Peninsula as testified to by the Cola inscription discovered in the Jaffna Fort and another in the Poanakari area at Mannitalai as evidenced by the remains of a Cola temple discovered recently.<sup>25</sup>

Two of the earliest extant Sanskrit inscriptions of Sri Lanka are the KUCCAVELI INSCRIPTION and the TRIYAY ROOK INSCRIPTION<sup>26</sup>. Both date from about the seventh century A.D. and their script closely resembles the grantha script as found in the contemporary Pallava inscriptions. Both are in verse and of Mahayana persuasion. They might have been inscribed at the instance of Tamil Buddhists.

The SLAB INSCRIPTION OF THE VELAIKKARAS (Tamil mercenaries) at Polonnaruwa, though written in Tamil has an introductory Sanskrit verse. Though, this is assigned to the period of Vijayabahu I (1038-1114 A.D), some scholars assign it to the period between 1137-1153 A.D.<sup>27</sup>

The extant portion of the NAYINATIVU TAMIL INSCRIPTION generally assigned to the time of Parakramabahu I ends with a Sanskrit eulogy on the king<sup>28</sup>. Unfortunately, the rest of the inscription is not available.

With the rise and expansion of the second Pandya Empire, followed by the emergence of a Tamil Kingdom in Northern Sri Lanka with its capital at Nallur by about A. D. 1250, a new era dawned in the history of Sanskrit studies among the Sri Lankan Tamils. The areas where two of the ancient Sivasthalas-the Tirukonesvaram and Tirukketisvaram are located, also formed part of this kingdom.

Besides others, some brahmins and scholars too would have come from Tamil Nadu and settled here and enjoyed royal patronage as known from literary and oral traditions. They were followed by others in course of time. The new rulers were called Aryacakravartis (as they hailed from an ancestor of that name) and they came from Sevvizukkainadu in the Southern part of Tamil Nadu. The first ruler had been a general of the Pandyas and later he became independent and founded the kingdom now commonly called the Jaffna Kingdom.

From early times, Sinhalese kings of the Anuradhapura period, patronized Sinhalese, Pali (the sacred language of Theravada Buddhism) and Sanskrit. Later, Tamil too was patronized as in the medieval period. Similarly, the Tamil rulers of Jaffna patronized Tamil and Sanskrit. As already pointed out this trend of patronizing the regional and the common language, prevailed in Tamil Nadu and other parts of India for several centuries.

A Sanskrit inscription of one of the Tamil kings of Jaffna has been discovered at Padaviya. It dates from about the thirteenth century A.D. It refers to "Setukula" which is usually associated with kings of Jaffna.<sup>29</sup> The Tamil rulers themselves were generally proficient in both languages (Tamil and Sanskrit) and some of them knew even Persian as evidenced by the Travel accounts of Ibn Batuta from Morocco, who visited Sri Lanka in A.D. 1344, met the contemporary ruler, conversed with him and enjoyed his hospitality.<sup>30</sup> Sanskrit was fostered by the brahmins and non-brahmins in Jaffna. The number of brahmins was smaller here compared to that in Tamil Nadu.

In Jaffna there have been no sharp clashes or enmity between brahmins and non-brahmins, as in Tamil Nadu of later times. Among the poets from the royal family, one may refer to Arasakesari who rendered the Raghuvamsha of Kalidasa into a Tamil Mahakavya. Besides secular literature in Tamil and Sanskrit, Vedas and Saivagamas, as well as Siddha-Ayurveda medicine, astrology, astronomy and fine arts were fostered in this kingdom. A knowledge of Sanskrit was considered necessary for a better understanding of many of these subjects.

As in Tamil Nadu in Sri Lanka too, the study of Sanskrit has been closely or rather inextricably linked with Tamil, Saivism



and Saivasiddhanta and other fields of knowledge like architecture, sculpture, painting, music and dance, drama, Siddha-Ayurveda medicine and astrology. All these have been associated with this religion and philosophy. The intimate connection between Sanskrit, Tamil, Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta is generally evident from the extant works which will be classified and pointed out later. In the past, a good scholar in Tamil generally had a good knowledge of Sanskrit, Saivism, and Saiva Siddhanta. The study of Sanskrit has generally been confined to literature, language, indigenous medicine (Siddha-Ayurveda), astronomy, astrology, Saivism, Saiva-Siddhanta, Vedanta, logic and fine arts.

The Tamil works written during the period of the Jaffna kingdom like the Kailayamalai Yalppana Vaipavamalai and the Taksina Kailasa Puranam refer to the Vedas, the Agamas, the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Puranas and other allied works. In this respect, the evidence from the Kailayamalai regarding the coronation of the king and especially the grand consecration ceremony of the Kailasanatha (Siva) temple at Nillur is very significant.

The portuguese sources too refer to the Sanskrit scholars in Jaffna at that time. Paulo Da Trindade, a Portuguese missionary of the seventeenth century refers to experts in "guirandao" by which he has meant Sanskrit works written in the grantha script <sup>31</sup>. He also refers to books brought here from Tamil Nadu <sup>32</sup>. During early times Sanskrit was studied in the grantha script in Tamil Nadu and Northern Sri Lanka. The use of the devanagari came into vogue very late in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. The formation of the grantha script as different from the devanagari script of the North for writing Sanskrit shows the genius of the Sanskritists of Tamil Nadu who perhaps wanted to preserve their identity.

Svami Gnanaprakasara lived at Thiruneelveli in Jaffna during the beginning of the Portuguese rule (early 17th C.). According to local traditions, he is said to have left the shores of Jaffna to Tamil Nadu, as he didn't want to associate himself with the slaughter of cows for the Portuguese. Perhaps, like the Pilgrim Fathers of England, he didn't want to do anything that would disturb his religious susceptibilities under compulsion and therefore left the homeland and went to another land where he could practise his faith freely. In Tamil Nadu, he acquired further knowledge



of Tamil, Sanskrit and Saivasiddhanta, and distinguished himself as a great Saivasiddhanta scholar and researcher, and wrote a number of books in Sanskrit and one in Tamil, a commentary on an important Saiva Siddhanta text-Sivagnana Siddiyar. It is to be noted that Srila Sri Arumuka Navalar, the leader of the Hindu Renaissance in Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century, hailed from a family closely related to Svami Gnanaprakasas whom he emulated in some respects.

According to some traditions preserved among the Hindu almanac makers, Sri Candrasekara Sastrikal was the royal astrologer to the first of the Aryacakravartis. His son Ramalinga Munivar is credited with the formulation of the first almanac in Tamil here. He translated the Sanskrit Baladipika (an astrological work) into Tamil. One of his descendents, Sri Visvanatha Sastrikal was honoured with the title the "royal astrologer" by the king George IV. These brahmin scholars came from Tiruvanaikka and settled at Araly 33. They seem to have been followed by other scholars both brahmins and non-brahmins who settled in the various parts of kingdom. Vaidyanatha Thambiran of Alaveddy, who was a contemporary of Svami Gnanaprakasas was proficient in Tamil and Sanskrit. He lived and worked in India also. He is said to have translated some Sanskrit works into Tamil like the Vyaghrapada Puranam.

From about the late 18th century to the middle of this century, one may note a galaxy of Tamil and Sanskrit scholars of Jaffna contributing their share to Sanskrit studies. Some of them had their higher education in Tamil Nadu also. A few of them had come from Tamil Nadu. Many of them made their mark in Tamil Nadu. A recognition of their learning and scholarship in Tamil Nadu was considered a great achievement. It will not be possible to list the names of all the scholars and their contributions in this paper.

Therefore the important contributions of these scholars to Sanskrit and the fields of study for which a knowledge of Sanskrit has been considered necessary are classified and dealt with as follows:

- (i) Sanskrit Literary Works
- (ii) Tamil Translation and Adaptations of Sanskrit Literary Works

- (iii) Grammar and Lexicography
- (iv) Elementary Sanskrit Readers
- (v) Logic
- (vi) Hinduism
- (vii) Fine Arts
- (viii) Astrology and Astronomy
- (ix) Siddha - Ayurveda Medicine

### (i) Sanskrit Literary Works

Though Sanskrit has been fostered well among the Sri Lankan Tamils, creative works of great literary merit do not seem to have been written here. One of the reasons for the paucity of creative works might be that the creative period of Sanskrit literature had generally come to an end in India by about the twelfth century A.D., although there had been occasional streaks of creativity in subsequent times. Therefore, it was quite natural that there was hardly any creative work written in the Jaffna kingdom which flourished later. By way of comparison with the Sinhalese, one may cite the examples of a Mahakavya-the Janakiharana of Kumaradasa and a few minor kavyas written under the aegis of the Sinhalese kings before the 13th century.

Though there is hardly any evidence for the composition of creative works in Sanskrit in Jaffna, some works entirely of religious nature, have been composed. Among these, the Daksina Kailasa Mahatmyam which is said to be a part of Skanda Purana, is noteworthy. It is of great importance for the history of Hinduism in Sri Lanka. It enumerates the various sacred places as found all over Sri Lanka with Daksina Kailasa (Southern Kailasa-Tirukonesvaram) as the centre. This word (Daksina Kailasa) might denote even the whole of Sri Lanka. The list includes not only several sacred places of Siva but also a few of Visnu and other Gods. Curiously enough, the famous temple of Muruka at Nallur and that of Visnu at Dondra are not included. It contains some excellent stotras on the God Siva enshrined in the places like Tirukonesvaram, Tirukketisvaram, Sattanathar temple at Nallur and the Varivananathar at Chavakachcheri. It glorifies these ksetras and says that because of these, this island (Sri Lanka) is superior to any other land in this world. Thus, it inculcates not only religious



fervour but patriotism as well. It is written in the usual puranic style and is comparable to the Sthalapuranas written in India during the ancient and medieval times. It has 22 chapters and 1859 verses of which only 1809 are available. It might have been written during the period of the Jaffna kingdom. It has been edited and published with Tamil translation by Pandit S. Nagalingam 34.

Among other compositions in Sanskrit, various stotras written on Gods and Goddesses enshrined in the sacred places in Sri Lanka may be noted. Of these, the SIVATANDAVA STOTRA ascribed to the king Ravana of Lanka may be mentioned at first. The verses of these stotras are not only noted for the piety but for its poetry too. By reading or listening to these stotras, one may be reminded of the vigorous tandava form of the dance of Siva. The sounds of the verses themselves echo His performance of the art. Along with these, one may consider Gona Girisastaka (available in Tamil script) composed by P. Thiagaraja Kurukkal on Siva enshrined at Tirukonesvaram. It reflects the poetic style of the previous work.

Of other stotras, one may refer to Vativambika Pancaratnam composed by Prof K. Kaliasanatha Kurukkal on the Goddess Vativambika enshrined at Munnesvaram. It reminds us of the excellent Pancaratna stotras of Adi Sankara. It reveals the author's intense devotion to the great Goddess, his poetic talents and mastery of the language.

K. Sitarama Sastri's KETISA SUPRABHATAM which extols the God Siva enshrined at Tirukketisvaram strikes a different note. This includes a Suprabhatam (II), Pratipatti (II), Mangalam and Manasika Ksetratnam. It reveals the author's intense devotion to Siva and his poetic talents. Bhagavatisvara Sastrikal, a former Sivacarya of the Vaittisvaran temple in Jaffna has composed VAIDYANATHASTAKAM. VAIDYESAKARAVALAMBANASTUTI and NATARAJABHUJANGA STOTRAM on the God Siva enshrined at Vannarpannai, Jaffna and ASTAKSARAGRATHITA ANANTA PADMANABHAKARAVALAMBITA STUTI on God Visnu. Similar stotras have been composed on some other temples also.

## (ii) Tamil Translations and Adaptations of Sanskrit Literary Works

There are a few adaptations and translations of some Sanskrit literary works of merit in Tamil. Though, these are adaptations, some of these are acclaimed, as good as, original works in Tamil.

The epics-the Mahabharata and the Ramayana had been popular in Sri Lanka from very early times among the Sinhalese and the Tamils. In this respect, the Ramayana has greater influence than the other. The Janakiharana had been written in the 6th or 7th century A.D., but Tamil adaptations or summary of this great epic came fairly late. In this respect, the Raghuvamsa of Arasakesari-a Tamil adaptation of Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa (which was based on the Ramayana) is a work of literary merit, though written in a style intelligible only to scholars with a sound knowledge of Tamil grammar and lexicography. The author has introduced some new elements in the form and content of the work. Vidvan Ganesa Iyar has pointed out some literary merits of the work in his edition of some parts of this Mahakavya. Prof. A. Velupillai also has referred to some of its literary aspects 35. The Tamil literary works written in the contemporary Tamil Nadu also are generally found in a style not easily intelligible to the average reader. Therefore, the royal poet appears to have followed the literary trend that was in vogue there.

Ramodantam which summarizes the story of the Ramayana has been translated into Tamil by A. Kumarasvami Pulavar of great erudition. Among his other Tamil works based on the Ramayana, RAGHUVAMSA KARUPPORUL and RAGHUVAMSACARITAMIRTAM are worthy of mention. RAGHUVAMSA CURUKKAM (summary of the deeds of the scions of the Raghu dynasty) was written by V. Kanapathipillai of Puloli who had been a lecturer in Sanskrit and Tamil at the Maharaja's College in Trivandrum. He is said to have made a direct Tamil translation of the Raghuvamsa of Kalidasa which has not been published so far. His sister Parvati Amma was a good scholar in Sanskrit who could repeat and explain portions of the Ramayana of Valmiki from memory. T. Kanagasundarampillai from Trincomalee was a good scholar in Tamil and Sanskrit. He had translated a portion of Kiskinda Kanda and Sundarakanda of Valmiki's Ramayana into Tamil.



The Ramayana has been greatly appreciated and adored by Sir P. Ramanathan and his beloved wife Lilavathi who wrote the story of Rama briefly in English and published it with notes written by her husband. In the preface of her Ramayana story, she had said the following "He (Ramanathan) also intended to write at length about the poet Valmiki and the identity of what is now called Ceylon with Sri Lanka" 36. This work bears testimony to her great admiration for Hindu culture. The stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata written in Tamil for school children are not taken into account in this survey.

The Tamil translations of the works of Kalidasa other than Raghuvamsa may now be mentioned. Reference has already been made to Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa in an earlier paragraph. The Meghaduta has two translations. Of these, one is by Kumarasvami Pulavar. It is named MEGHADUTA KARIKAI. It is in elegant verse. A recent researcher on this poet, has highly commended its high quality of poetry rivalling similar duta kavyas in Tamil 37. The other translation is that of S. Natarajan who has translated several Sanskrit works into Tamil. This translation is also in verse and it has been commended by Tamil scholars. T. Sadasiva Iyar, a great Sanskrit scholar, has translated the Ritusamhara into Tamil. This is also in elegant verse and is as good as the original. Of the dramas of Kalidasa, Abhijnanasakuntalam has naturally drawn the attention of several scholars. Of these, S. Natesan's (Sri P. Ramanathan's son-in-law) SAKUNTALAI VENPA is of high literary quality. It is a Tamil translation in the venba metre and it was formally released before a highly educated audience at the Annamalai University. It was presided over by the then Vice-Chancellor of the Annamalai University Sir C.P. Ramasvami Iyar who described this work "as combining some of the best aspects of Tamil poetry with the sonorous and suggestiveness of Sanskrit poetry". Another translation is that of S. Natarajan. A summary of this drama has been published in Jaffna some time back especially for school children. Recently, S.T. Sambanthan published another adaptation of this work named SAKUNTALAI KAVIYAM. Besides these, there are two unpublished manuscripts of the Tamil translation of Kumara Sambhava. One is by Pandit S. Subramaniam and the other is by Pandit S. Thiyarajapillai.



Didactic fables in Sanskrit too have drawn the attention of local scholars. Of these, the Tamil translation of HITOPADESA by Naganatha Panditar, a leading scholar, in Sanskrit and Tamil who knew English and Sinhalese also, may be mentioned. This has been later published by his pupil Kumarasvami Pulavar. It is in chaste Tamil prose. The same scholar has translated the Canakya Satakam into Tamil as CANAKYANATI VENPA. Erambaiyar is said to have translated the Nitisastra into Tamil.

Of the Tamil renderings of other Sanskrit works, one may refer to Tamil prose summaries of SISUPALA VADHA and KIRATARJUNIYA which are two of the Mahakavyas in Sanskrit. The former has been translated by A. Kumarasvamy Pulavar and the latter by V. Kanapathipillai who has some more Tamil translations of Sanskrit works to his credit. These include VILHANIYAM and VATAPURESAR CARITAI (the life history of the Saint Manikkavasakar as found in the Halasya Mahatmyam. These translations also indicate that the originals were studied in literary circles.

S. Natarajan has also translated Mrccakatikam of Sudraka into Tamil as POMMAI VANTI. K. Kanapathipillai a former Professor of Tamil has translated Ratnavali of Sri Harsa as MANIKKAMALAI.

Sanskrit stotras have drawn the attention of devotees. As a result, there are several Tamil translations of these stotras. Among the Tamil renderings of Sanskrit stotras, the Davi Manasapuja of Adi Sankara translated by T. Sadasiva Iyar, a great scholar in Sanskrit and Tamil, as DEVI MANASA PUSAI ANTATI is noteworthy. Two Tamil translations of SUBRAHMANYA BHUJANGA STOTRA of Adi Sankara have appeared, One is by V. K. Atmanatha Sarma and the other by K. Rajendra Kurukkal. P. Thiyagaraja Kurukkal has published Tamil translations of Adi Sankara's GANESA PANCARATNAM and GANESASTAKAM. Ganesa Pancaratnam is translated by M. Paramasami Kurukkal also. Sivappirakasa Panditar is said to have translated SIVANANDA LAHARI of Adi Sankara into Tamil. Pandit S. Subramaniam also has translated into Tamil the above work, besides the SAUNDARYA LAHARI of the same author.

### (iii) Grammar and Lexicography

Arumuka Navalar is said to have planned writing a Sanskrit dictionary and a book on Sanskrit grammar. Perhaps he worked on them. Unfortunately, he passed away before completing these and one does not know as to what happened to his manuscripts. Navalar's contemporary and a close associate, Nirveli Sankara Panditar, wrote a book on Sanskrit grammar SATTASANGRAHAM (A concise grammar of Sanskrit in two parts which were condensed into one later). He also published a book on the roots of verbs in Sanskrit and named it as DHATU MALAI. Naganatha Panditar, Sankara Panditar, N. Kumarasvami Pillai, Muthukkumarasvami Kurukkal and a few others were highly proficient in grammar. Some works on Sanskrit grammar are available in old manuscripts also.

### (iv) Elementary Sanskrit Readers

Several elementary readers have been published, generally in the grantha script, in Jaffna. Of these, one may refer to the FIRST PRIMER and SECOND SANSKRIT Reader written by Sankara Panditar and published by the Sothida Prakasa Press at Kokuvil. They have gone for several editions. The BALAPATHA or First Book in Sanskrit written by S. Subramaniya Sastrikal also has been popular. It has several editions. V. Kanapathipillai is said to have published a SAMSKRTA PRATHAMA VACAKA PUSTAKAM. Nyaya Siromani Subramaniya Sastri has published a Balapatha called NAVANITA MANANA MANJARI. T. K. Sitarama Sastri recently published a primer called SAMSKRTA SIKSA PRATHAMA SOPANAM. Prof K. Kailasanatha Kurukkal has two such books, namely, the LAGHUBODHAM FIRST AND SECOND BOOKS. Unlike the previous ones, the readers of the last two authors are in the devanagari script. The number of readers that have been published here shows that the language has fairly popular.

### (v) Logic

Tarkasastra or logic also has been given an important place in the study of different schools of philosophy like the Saiva Siddhanta and the Vedanta, and in the study of grammar and literature. Thirugnanasampatha Pillai, a student of Arumuka Navalar, had been proficient in these and was called "tarkakutara talutari"



He translated TARKAMRTA into Tamil. SIVANANTHAIYAR also excelled in logic and translated the commentaries on TARKASANGRAHA, namely, the NYAYABODHINI, PADAKRTYAM ANNAMBATTIYA and its commentary, NILAKANTHIYAM into Tamil. Logic seems to have assumed greater importance, perhaps due to debates, controversies and counter debates between the followers of Saivism and other systems of philosophy like the Vedanta on the one hand and the Christians on the other. As a result, a number of polemical works were written in Tamil during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries.

#### (vi) Hinduism

As stated earlier, Sanskrit is very closely linked with Hinduism and it has been the principal vehicle of Hinduism for thousands of years. Of the various schools of Hinduism, Saivism has been the faith of most Sri Lankan Tamils. As a sacred language, this has been continuously used from early times in the religion and philosophy of the people. Naturally several works of various types on various aspects of Saivism have been written here from time to time.

The works on saiva Siddhanta philosophy may be referred to first. This school of philosophy evolved in Tamil Nadu during the Pallava and Cola periods though its origins may be traced back to an earlier period. The basic texts of this philosophy are in Tamil as well as in Sanskrit, as represented by the Tirumantiram and the Meykanta Sastras and the Vedas and the Agamas and allied works respectively. The most important work of this school of philosophy is the SIVAGNANABODHAM consisting of 12 sutras written by Meykanta Tevar in Tamil. He lived in the 13th century A.D. His pupil Arulnanti Sivacarya has further elaborated this work in his Sivagnanasiddhiyar. He was followed by Umapatisivacarya who elaborated this further and gave greater dimensions to this system of philosophy. Later, Sivagnanasvamikal and other scholars have given their interpretations of this school.

At the same time one has to consider the Sanskrit sources of this school too. The Vedas and the Agamas constitute the main sources in this respect. Of these, the Vedas are considered as the "general" and the Agamas as the "special" basis of this system.



The Agmas have four padas namely the carya, kriya, yoga and gnana representing the four paths leading to the liberation of souls from bondage. The gnanapada is called Agamanta constituting the path of knowledge and here it refers to Saivasiddhanta. Just as the Vedas have the Upanisads as Vedanta, the Agamas have the gnanapada as Agamanta at the end.

There is no unanimity of opinion regarding the originality of the Tamil SIVAGNANABODHAM among scholars and researchers on Saivasi dhanta. One school of opinion holds that it is an original work; the other considers it to be a Tamil version of the twelve sutras as found in the 66th chapter-Papavimocana patala of the RAURAVA AGAMA. It is also claimed that no one has seen this particular portion of this Agama. But quite a number of scholars have accepted the Sanskrit original and interpreted the text accordingly. One may refer to Sivagrayogi (16th C.) who has written a very elaborate and exhaustive commentary on the Sanskrit sutras of Sivagnanabodham-called SIVAGRABHASYAM which might have prompted Sivagnanasvamikal to write his Magnum opus-the TIRAVIDA MAPATIYAM, an exhaustive Tamil commentary on the Tamil SIVAGNANABODHAM. He too has accepted the Sanskrit origin of SIVAGNANABODHAM. Svami Gnanaparakasar, Arumuka Navalar, Sankara Panditar, Sentinatha Iyar, Ampalavana Navalar and some other scholars of Jaffna have held the same view. It is interesting to note that Sivaprakasa Panditar, the worthy son of Sankara Panditar, has translated into Tamil that portion of the Sivagrabhasya dealing with the first Sutra and this has been published in Madras by Svaminatha Panditar, another Saiva scholar from Jaffna.

Sadasivacarya from South India has written a small commentary on the Sanskrit Sivagnanabodham. It is interesting to note that recently Jayendra Soni a South African Scholar has published his Ph.D. thesis entitled PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN SAIVA SIDDHANTA (1989) mainly based on the SIVAGRABHASYAM. This research was carried out under the supervision of Prof. K. Sivaraman of the Mac Master university, Canada. The Sanskrit sources of Saivasiddhanta have been highlighted in another doctoral thesis entitled SAIVASIDDHANTA THEOLOGY by Rohan Dunwila, a Sinhala scholar who is working in one of the American universities.



As already mentioned many Saiva scholars of Jaffna upheld the Sanskrit origin of SIVAGNABODHAM as is evidenced from such works as SIVAGNABODHAVRITTI (Sanskrit commentary on this text), the Tamil translation of the same by Sankara Panditar and the SIVAGNANABODHAVASANALANKARADIPA of Kasi Vasi Sentinatha Iyar. The last work includes the Sanskrit text, the Tamil translation, Meykanta Tevar's Tamil Sutras, and explanations of all these with reference to the Agamas and other allied texts. The view of these scholars assume importance again in the light of recent researches mentioned above. Further, there have been arguments and counter arguments regarding the Vedagamic basis of Sivasiddhanta. S. Kumarasvami Kurukkal wrote his VEDAGAMANIRUPANAM in order to establish the Vedagamic basis of Saivasiddhanta and refute the arguments of others.

Like the Vedas, the Agamas also were studied and preserved among the Sri Lankan Tamils especially in Jaffna, atleast from the days of the kingdom of Jaffna. References to these texts in some Sri Lankan Tamil texts have already been mentioned.

The works written on Saiva Siddhanta, whether they are based on Meykanta Sastras or Agamas and allied texts, or both, have been generally either interpretations in Tamil or expositions of the originals or their essence in Tamil and rarely they were in Sanskrit. In this respect, the contributions of Sri Lankan scholars are recognized as remarkable by scholars in South India. N. Murugesu Mudaliyar has said thus in an article published in the Journal SAIVASIDDHANTA, "The contribution of Sri Lanka to Saiva Siddhanta thought from the earliest times to the present day is inestimable" 39.

Arumuka Navalar and S. Sivapathasundaram have tried to interpret and expound the essence of Saiva Siddhanta in Tamil as found in the Tamil and Sanskrit sources especially the Agamas. As Sanskrit was not the language of the common people, they had to do this for the benefit of the people, as against the activities of the other schools of Hindu thought and the Christians. But on the other hand, Svami Gnanaprakasara, Sankara Panditar, Ambalayana Navalar and a few others do not seem to have been content with this. They too went to the relevant Sanskrit and Tamil sources, studied them thoroughly, edited some important original texts and wrote Sanskrit or Tamil commentaries emphasizing their points of view.



Svami Gnanaprakasara is a polymath; he is credited with the authorship of PAUSKARAGAMAVRITTI (a commentary on the Pauskara Agama), SIVAGNANABODHAVRITTI (already referred to), SIDDHANTA SIKHAMANI, PRAMANADIPIKA, SIVAYOGACARAM, SIVAYOGARATNAM, AJNANAVIVECANAM AND SIVAGAMADIMANMIYASANGARAH. All these are in Sanskrit. He has also written a Tamil commentary on the SIVAGNANA SIDDHIYAR. His critics often criticized him as a "Sivasama Vadin (that is, one who argues that the soul is equal to God in the state of mukti (Salvation))". According to Sivagnanasvamikal and others this is not a correct view of Saiva Siddhanta which emphasizes Sudhadvaita. But Sivananthaiyar from Jaffna has countered this argument in his Tamil translation of a Sanskrit work on logic. Recently, M. Arunasalam has refuted the view of Sivagnanasvamikal and said that there is no evidence to substantiate this view 40. The writer of this address also agrees with him.

Sankara Panditar was perhaps the greatest of the Sanskrit scholars among the Sri Lankan Tamils of the 19th century. He was equally well-versed and proficient in Tamil too. He was a prolific writer in Sanskrit and Tamil. He was a very close associate of Arumuka Navalar. He was also a great polemical writer like Navalar who tried to counter the missionary activities of the Christians. What Navalar tried to do for Saivism in Tamil, Sankara Panditar did in Sanskrit, besides Tamil. He critically edited some important Saivagamas like the MRGENDRA VRITTI, PAUSKARA GNANAPADA, SIVAGNANABODHA VRITTI of Gnanaprakasara and DEVIKALOTTARA VRITTI. He could speak very fluently in Sanskrit and he proved his mettle when an opportunity was afforded. Once, at a great assembly held at the Pacciaiyappa's College in Madras where leading Sanskrit scholars, including those from Cidambaran (Holy of Holies of the Saivites), were present, the principal of the College requested Sankara Panditar, on the request of some scholars in the audience, to give a lecture on PATIVISESANIRUPANAM (proof for the special attributes of pati-Siva) in Sanskrit 41. He willingly accepted the request and spoke for nearly three hours and the audience was astounded at the command of his language and thorough knowledge of the subject which they perhaps did not expect from a Sri Lankan. The day after the lecture, Sri Vaidyanatha Sastrikal, a prominent scholar, met him personally and commended his speech and requested him to repeat the lecture slowly and Sankara Panditar obliged 42. Among his achievements, one may refer to his high command of the Sanskrit language by which he proved that Sanskrit cannot



be considered a dead language. By editing some important Agamas he has helped other scholars to follow him. He has also proved beyond doubt that Sanskrit belongs to scholars and is not exclusively the language of the brahmins. This fact is often forgotten by scholars themselves.

Kasivasi Senthinatha Iyar had lived at Kasi (Benaras) for some time and studied religion and philosophy. He was a loyal student and henchman of Arumuka Navalar and had high regards for his ideals. He was another prolific writer on Saivism and Saivasiddhanta. He was the principal of the school founded by Arumuka Navalar at Vannarpannai in Jaffna. He had tried to establish that Saivism is the essence of Vedas. This is crystal clear from his books such as TEVARAM VEDA SARAM and SAIVA VEDANTAM. His Tamil translation of the Brahmasutras with its commentary of Nilakantha who has interpreted this Vedanta text from the stand point of the Saivasiddhanta, is also one of his notable achievements. His Tamil translation of the text with the bhasyam called NILAKANTHABHASYAM is now available to scholars and others who may not understand the original.

Ambalavana Navalar was another Saiva scholar from Jaffna. He was not a disciple of Arumuka Navalar but he had very high regards for Arumuka Navalar. Like other three scholars mentioned earlier, Ambalavana Navalar was highly proficient in Tamil and Sanskrit. He edited and published PAUSKARA AGAMA with the exhaustive commentary of Umapati Sivacarya and has given an exhaustive introduction in Tamil. His venture reveals his high degree of scholarship in Tamil, Sanskrit and Saiva Siddhanta. AGHORA SIVACARYAS PADDHATI (with the explanation of Nirmala Mani) was another text edited and published by him. He wrote a few other books. He was an eloquent speaker too. T. Kailasapillai was another scholar in Sanskrit, Tamil and Saivasiddhanta. Besides other works, Kailasapillai edited and published some Agamas like the DEVIKALOTTARA and some of the works of Svami Gnanaprakasara. S. Kumarasvami Kurukkal also has edited some Agamas, and works on Saiva Siddhanta. He has also published Sankara Panditar's Tamil translation of PRASADASATSLOKI with notes. Sabapathi Navalar, Nataraja Iyar, S. Sivapathasundaram, Sabaratna Mudaliyar, S. Ponniah, T. Kailasapathi and a few others have shown interest in Saiva Siddhanta with reference to Tamil as well as Sanskrit sources.

At the same time several other works on Saivasiddhanta based on Tamil and Sanskrit sources or on Tamil sources only continued to appear and thus, a good number of works have been written in Tamil and English. S. Sivapathasundaram's SAIVA SCHOOL OF HINDUISM and S. Ponniah's SAIVA SIDDHANTA THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE may be cited as examples of works in English.

Sanskrit works on temple and other rituals as found in the Agamas, Paddhatis etc. are compiled and preserved in the priestly families. They are usually hand-written on palmyrah leaves and later in exercise books. Some of them have been published here also. S. Kumarasvami Kurukkal from Accuveli has compiled and published some works on the rituals pertaining to the consecration of Siva temples in two parts as SIVAGAMASEKHARAM. He has been a doyan of Sivacaryas and author of several publications on the Hindu rituals. K. Kailasanatha Kurukkal is another great authority on Hindu rituals. His Tamil work on the temple rituals, SAIVATTIRUKKOYIR KIRIYAI NERI indicates his high scholarship in the religious lore. He worked on "SAIVISM AS DEPICTED IN THE EPICS AND PURANAS ----" for his doctorate at the University of Poona decades ago.

There are some other compilations for the rituals. I. Kailasanatha Kurukkal's AGAMAMRTAVARSINI is an important work. Manuals on pujas based on Sanskrit originals are available in Tamil also. N. Kathiraverpillai's SUBRAMANIYA PARAKKIRAMAM shows his deep knowledge of the Kaumara cult as found in Tamil and Sanskrit sources.

Compilations of Purva and Aparakriyas also have been published here. One may cite as for example, the APASTAMBAPURVAPRAYOGAM in four Parts (one is not sure as to whether all parts are published) by Sambasiva Sivacarya and the SAIVA SRADDHAVIDHI by S. Kumara svami Kurukkal. Nirveli Sankara Panditar and his Son Sivaprakasa Panditar have translated into Tamil some works on aparakriyas.

Various namavalis (garlands of names on the deities) -the astotara (108) and SAHASRANAMAVALIS (1000) on Ganapati, Subrahmanya, Siva, Parvati and other Gods, Goddesses and on some aints too have been published in the grantha script also. One may



for example refer to LALITSAHASRANAMAVALI published in Tamil and grantha scripts with Tamil translation by K.V. Atmanatha Sarma. B. Pancadsara Kurukkal has compiled and published FIFTY THREE ASTOTTARA SATANAMAVALIS that begin with the God Vinayaka and end with Candesvara.

The Bhagavadgita and the Upanisads too have been studied and given importance in Jaffna. There are some translations of Bhagavadgita of which the translations of Sir P. Ramanathan Svami Vipulananda, Pulavarmani Periyathambypillai, Naganatha Panditar, M. Gnanaprakasam and Karunalaya Pandiyanar may be mentioned. Ramanathan's translation has been acclaimed as an excellent work by an Indian scholar, Mahamahopadhyaya Sarvesvara Sastri. Svami Vipulananda has translated only certain portions of Bhagavadgita and Upanisads. As a member of the Ramakrishna Mission, he has shown greater interest in the Vedanta Philosophy. Karunalaya Pandiyanar also has translated some of the Upanisads most of which are unpublished. Visvanathan (under the pen name science graduate) has written an English translation and a commentary on Svetasvataraopanisad. Some of his other works like ELEMENTS OF SAIVASIDDHANTA, SOME NOTES ON THE BHAGAVADGITA, VADANTAMOOLASARAM reveal his deep knowledge of not only the Saiva literature but Sanskrit works especially the Vedas, Upanisads and Bhagavadgita.

Besides these, the Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga and Mimamsa schools of philosophy were also studied in relation to Saivasiddhanta. There had been debates between the followers of Saivasiddhanta and Vedanta in South India. The Sri Lankan scholars like N. Kathiravetpillai excelled in such debates and he was conferred the title "Mayavada tumsa kolari" by a group of scholars in Madras, with the blessings of Kasivasi Senthinatha Iyar. Naganatha Panditar is said to have translated Manavadharma Sastra into Tamil. He also translated some Upanisads like the Chandogya and the Sankhya text and taught them to his students.

#### (vii) Fine Arts

A considerable number of works on architecture, sculpture, painting, music and dance also have been written in Sanskrit in India. The basic technical terms used in these fine arts are generally in Sanskrit. As a result, a knowledge of Sanskrit is considered necessary

for a better understanding and elucidation of these arts. The local silpis use MAYAMATA, KASYAPA and a few other texts some of which have Tamil translations too. Some portions of Saiva Agamas deal with the Temple Arts.

Svami Vipulananda had studied some Sanskrit sources of Indian music like the SANGITARATNAKARA, SANGITAPARIJATA, SANGITAMAKARAKANDA and the CATURDANDIPRAKASIKA of Venkatamakhi. The study of these also helped him to research further on Indian music culminating in his YALNUL. He had also translated into Tamil the DASARUPA of Dhananjaya, an important work on Indian dramaturgy that has been useful to actors and dancers. This translation and the original are included in his MATANKACULAMANI.

A.K. Coomarasvami has shown greater interest in all forms of art. His publications of the manuscript of ABHINAYADARPANAM of Nandikesvara with an English translation has created interest in the classical dance forms of India, in the East as well as the West. Its impact on the renaissance of Indian dances especially Bharata Natyam is noteworthy.

The spread of Carnatic music and Bharata Natyam to Sri Lanka also has given some importance to the study of Sanskrit in Sri Lanka. The reason is that a number of musical and dance compositions as well as important works on the theory of these arts and the basic technical terms are all in Sanskrit.

### (viii) Astrology and Astronomy

One of the subjects that attracted the attention of the Tamils and Sinhalese is astrology. The earliest extant work in Tamil on astrology written in Sri Lanka is the SARASOTTMALAI of Posarasa Panditar. He wrote this under the patronage of Parakramabahu IV who ruled in the 14th century from his capital at Dambadeniya. He has made use of the original Sanskrit works on the subject. Generally, the Sinhalese and the Tamils have adapted or translated the original Sanskrit works in their Sinhala or Tamil writings on astrology.



SARASOTI MALAI was followed by another work SEKARASASEKARA MALAI. It was written under the patronage of the Tamil king of Jaffna-Sekarasasekaran. Like the earlier work, this is also an adaptation of Sanskrit original works. Yet another work written during this period of Tamil kings was the SANTANADIPIKAI that has been already referred to earlier. Narayana Jyotisa Panditar wrote the astrological work VIDANAMALAI another adaptation from Sanskrit. It was later edited by V. Sabapathy Iyar.

Astrology cannot be properly studied and interpreted without some knowledge of astronomy which was also probably studied here.

## Hindu Almanacs

From early times Hindus used almanacs (Pancankas) in their daily life. As mentioned earlier, Ramalinga Munivar is credited with writing the first almanac in the Jaffna kingdom. There are two schools of Hindu almanac in Sri Lanka, namely, the "Vakya" school and 'Ganita' school. Ramalinga Munivar represents the first school which relies on the experience, observances and aptavakyas of the former sages and scholars, besides astronomy. The latter school relies more on astronomy and allied sciences. Both are recognized among the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Both schools continue to give importance to Sanskrit original works and their Tamil translations and adaptations. Some Sanskrit verses are cited in their almanacs. Both schools have their own printing press and publish astrological works and others including Sanskrit primers, stotras, namavalis etc.

## (ix) Siddha - Ayurveda Medicine

In the history of medical science in South Asia, the Ayurveda, though originated in the North of India is common to the entire South Asian region including Sri Lanka. The Siddha mainly represents the medical science that developed in South India especially in Tamil Nadu but in course of time, it is highly influenced by the Ayurveda as evidenced by the extant texts in Tamil. Therefore, the term Siddha - Ayurveda is used here.

The rulers of the Jaffna kingdom paid very great attention to this form of medical science. This has led to the composition of several medical texts of which the SEKARASASEKARAM and especially the PARARASASEKARAM deserve special mention: . Both are named after the kings of Jaffna who patronized this form of medical science.

Both works refer to authorities on Ayurveda but PARARASASEKARAM in particular, has expressed in its invocatory verse its indebtedness to Vakata (as it is called) of the famous Tanvantri written in Sanskrit. The contents of both works also reveal the authors' knowledge of Ayurveda. By way of comparison, one can refer to the system of Ayurveda as practised among the Sinhalese. One of the kings of Jaffna is said to have sent his personal physician for treating his Sinhalese counterpart who was suffering from a very bad disease.

As in astrology, originals and translations of Sanskrit works on medicine too continue to be in use here to date. The basic terminology used in this science like the words, Cikitsa, Vata Pitta, Slesma etc. also show the influence of Sanskrit in this field.

## **Institutions and Societies Fostering Sanskrit Studies**

As stated earlier, Sanskrit has been studied in the guru-kula system from very early times. A good account of Sanskrit education as prevailing under this system, especially for the Hindu priests, is given by S. Vijayendra Sarma 43. He has touched on the contributions of some institutions too. Therefore, it needs no repetition herein.

Among the important schools under this system, the KAVIYA PATHASALAI established by T. Kailasapillai at the Navalur school in Vannarpannai, the PRACINA PATHASALAI founded by T. Sadasiva Iyar at Chunnakam, the SIVANANDA GURUKULAM established by the All Ceylon Hindu Congress at Tirukketisvaram and the GANAPATISVARA GURUKULAM set up by K. Subramaniya Sastri may be mentioned. The principal aim of the last two have been the training of the young brahmin priests. The first two held classes for the oriental titles PRAVEŚA PANDITHAR, BALAPANDITAR and PANDITAR in Tamil and Sanskrit awarded by the ARYA - TIRAVITA BHASA VIRUTTICCANKAM (an association for the promotion of studies in ARYA (Sanskrit) and TIRAVITA (Tamil)



Languages. This association was formed in 1921 by some leading Tamil and Sanskrit scholars of the time like T. Kailasapillai, Svami Vipulananda, T. Sadasiya Iyar, Kumarasvami Pulavar and others. As a result, there were opportunities for young students to become pandits proficient in Tamil and Sanskrit. The syllabus was such that those who aspired for the title-Pandit in Tamil had to study Sanskrit and a few others who opted for Sanskrit had to study Tamil. This type of learning two languages was in keeping with the tradition that prevailed here for centuries. As a result, many living in various parts of North and East of Sri Lanka became Pandits (scholars in Tamil and Sanskrit) and the association could be proud of this. Some of them sat for the Pandit examination of the Tamil Sangam at Madurai in India and passed that too and thus had two titles. The number of Tamil pandits had been so great in Jaffna that the editor of a leading Tamil weekly Kalki in Madras, Krishnamoorthi who had been to Jaffna several times seems to have remarked "anywhere one goes in Jaffna, every other person whom he meets will be a Tamil Pandit". This is not an exaggeration but speaks highly of the Tamil scholarship in Jaffna. Incidentally, if one examines this statement closely, he will not fail to realize that the same Pandit was generally a scholar in Sanskrit too. Further, the word pandit denoted a scholar in Sanskrit.

Some leading schools in Jaffna had provision for teaching Sanskrit. Among them the two schools founded by Sir P. Ramanathan. The Ramanathan College and Paramesvara College and other schools like Jaffna College, Jaffna Hindu College, Jaffna Hindu Ladies College, Vembadi Girls High School, Jaffna Central College, Manipay Ladies College, Vadamaratchchi Hindu Girls' College and Valvettiturai Cidambara Vidyalaya may be mentioned. Many of these schools had good Sanskrit teachers from India like M.D. Balasubrahmanyam at Jaffna College, Rama Iyar and Sundara Iyyangar at Ramanathan College, Sitaramasastrikal at Paramesvara College, Ramasami Iyar at Central College and S. Krishan at Cidambara Vidyalaya. Besides, there were local teachers like R. Balasubramaniyam at Jaffna College and S. Kandiah at Manipay Ladies College. Balasundara Kurukkal was a good scholar and teacher of Sanskrit.



Jaffna College and Paramesvara College provided classes for the external degree examinations of the University of London. At that time students opting for a degree in Arts should have offered a classical language like Sanskrit, Pali, Latin, etc, at the Matriculation/ G. C.E. (A/L) examination. The Tamil students who aspired for the arts degree mostly opted to offer Sanskrit as it was the classical language closer to their religion and culture and for which teachers were available locally. As a result, a good number of students attended these two institutions. Besides, there were individual tuition centres too. The number of students offering Sanskrit among Tamils increased suddenly in the University of Ceylon in the sixties of this century. But soon there was a general decline: The Sri Lankan government's decision to stop the London examinations, lack of job opportunities and change in the educational policy, were the reasons for it. No Tamil student offering Sanskrit entered the University during some years in the seventies, though the situation slightly improved in the late eighties.

The Batticotta Seminary (1823-1855- the higher educational institution that flourished at Vaddukkoddai before Jaffna College was founded) had in its scheme of education provision for Sanskrit. But it couldn't get teachers at first. Later some brahmin scholars joined the Seminary to impart Sanskrit education. Some of the eminent Tamil and Sanskrit scholars of the 19th century studied there. One may refer to C.W. Thamotharampillai and Naganatha Panditar here. Paramesvara College was more fortunate to have good Sanskrit teachers and they were able to stage plays like Kalidasa's Abhijñanasakuntalam.

In this survey, one has to refer to the services of the Jaffna Sanskrit ASSOCIATION also. It functioned very effectively in the fifties with S: Natesan as president and M. D. Balasubrahmanyam as the secretary. W. P. Ananda Guruge (who was then working in Jaffna as a Civil servant) helped the association in a significant way. It was for the first time that Sanskrit teachers and others interested in Sanskrit learning in Jaffna got together to work for the promotion of Sanskrit studies in the early fifties. The association had a conference at Paramesvara College where the then professor of Sanskrit at the University of Ceylon, Dr. O. H. de A: Wijesekara delivered two lectures. The association published a souvenir also 44. Unfortunately,



the association ceased to function later. M.D. Balasubramanyam, a lecturer in Sanskrit at Jaffna College and a great Sanskrit educationist, formed "the Oriental Study Group" at the Undergraduate Department, Jaffna College for promoting interest in Sanskrit studies, especially among the undergraduates preparing for the external degrees of the University of London. Some of the leading Sanskrit scholars of Jaffna have studied at this institution.

Attempts were made in Jaffna to establish Vedagamic schools now and then during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Arumuka Navalar made an attempt to establish one such school in Jaffna and another at Cidambaram. Similar efforts were made by the Saiva leaders later. V. Pasupatipillai Vitaniyar founded a Vadagamapathasalai at Pungudutivu for training young brahmins as Priests especially in the islands, adjoining the Peninsula. He succeeded in getting the services of K. Narayana Sastri from India, as a teacher. This school functioned for about a decade in the forties and fifties and later ceased to exist. The same educationist tried to establish another Vedagama Pathasalai at the Jaffna town but could not succeed as his plans were thwarted by some others at the last moment.

Sanskrit was provided as a subject at the University College in Colombo and later at the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya since its inception in 1942. Mr. S. Kandiah a former librarian of the University of Ceylon and K. Kinapathippillai a professor of Tamil distinguished themselves as brilliant students of Sanskrit at the University College. Of the Tamil undergraduates who studied Sanskrit in the forties and early fifties, Prof. K. Kailasanatha Kurukkal, Mrs. B. Thanabalasingam, R. Balasubramaniam, Prof. A. Sathasivam, S. Murugaveri, S. Mahesan, Mrs. M. Arulchelvam and a few others may be mentioned. Some of them have done their postgraduate degrees in Sri Lanka and abroad.

It is important to note that the department of Sanskrit was one of the five departments established in the Faculty of Humanities, when the Jaffna campus of the University of Sri Lanka was inaugurated on the 6th October 1974 fulfilling the cherished aspirations of the Tamil educationists especially Sir P. Ramanathan. It is to be noted that the first Ph.D degree conferred by this University has been on the Saivagamas and Silpasastras 45

This address will be incomplete without making some references to the facilities available for the printing of Sanskrit works in the grantha and devanagari scripts (lipis). In Jaffna one may note more than half a dozen printing presses namely, the Kalanithi Yantirasalai Point Pedro, Vidyanupalana Yantirasalai Jaffna, Vinayakasundaravilasa Yantrasalai Vathiri, Valvai Paratiyal Mudraksara Salai, Sothida Pirakasa Yantrasalai Kokuvil, Madduvil Tirukkanita Yantrasalai, Sarada Accakam Jaffna and Asirvatham Accakam, Jaffna. Of these, all except the last one, had facilities for printing in the grantha script. The last one had devanagari script, but not now.

Of other Hindu institutions and religious movements that promoted Sanskrit studies among Sri Lankan Tamils in one way or other, one may refer to the Rama Krishna Mission, the Hare Krishna Movement (only in Colombo), the Divine Life Society, the Satya Sai Bhava Samities and the Vedanta Madam at Kandarmadam in Jaffna deserve mention.

### Impact on Society

Though, the number of students and others studying Sanskrit has gone down in recent years, Sanskrit consciousness is alive in the life and culture of the people. Even a cursory glance at the changes taking place in the Sri Lankan Tamil Society, say during the past few years, will not fail to notice this aspect. The process of "Sanskritization" as noted by the famous sociologist M.N Srinivas in India, is evident here also. It is not so elaborated here. But one may very briefly refer to two aspects of this process here. One is with reference to names of children and the other regarding the growing interest for temple worship based on Agamas and "bhajanais". These will be clear, if one merely compares the lists of names of people and the temples that are being mentioned in the Hindu almanacs now with those given fifty years ago.

The stories and ideals of the Epics and Puranas continue to be cherished by almost all sections of the Hindu population. In this respect, the Skanda Purana, Ramayana and Mahabharata may be mentioned in particular. It is true that these have come down to the masses through Tamil versions of these works orally



or in written forms. It is not surprising to find people flocking to speeches, debates etc. on themes based on these works. Little does he or she realize that the sources of these are in Sanskrit. In this context, it is worth quoting the view of M.I. Finley with regard to the role of Latin and Greek in Western culture: He says "It is also a fact of history that the language and literature of the Greeks and Romans are woven into the web of our own language and literature of our cultural traditions and even to a great extent than is perhaps usually appreciated of our religious thinking. Tradition is inescapable, much as we sometimes like to pretend otherwise; that is inherent in the nature of man. It is the mark of civilized man that he seeks to understand his traditions and criticize them, not to swallow them whole" 46. This may be generally relevant to the position of Sanskrit in Sri Lankan Tamil culture, if one were to substitute Sanskrit for the language and literature of the Greeks and Romans.

## Conclusion

This address may be concluded with the opinion of some eminent Sri Lankan Tamils regarding the importance and relevance of Sanskrit studies to their culture. The view of Arumuka Navalar may be cited first. He said "Both these languages (Tamil and Sanskrit) have originated from lord Siva: they are enriched by the works composed by the great men who were blessed by His grace. Therefore, both are equal" 47. Thus, he repeated the traditional views of the Saivites. Panditamaui S. Kanapathypillai a great Saiva scholar in the Navalar tradition has said "Sanskrit and Tamil are father and mother: father and mother are (like) the God" Sir P. Ramanathan's views are better expressed in a brochure entitled "THE AIM OF THE STUDENTS AT PARAMESHVARA COLLEGE" He pronounced: "Parameshvara College was founded to bring inexpensively within the reach of Tamil boys the blessings of a sound education, which combines the best of British learning with the wisdom of the sages of India and the classics of its literature in Tamil and Sanskrit, in order that every boy, who is bad, may have a chance of becoming good; who is impelled by mischief and passion, may control them and be helpful in good works". 48. Finally, the views of Svami Vipulananda expressed in the twenties regarding the importance of establishing a University in Jaffna and its would be ideals are worth quoting as they are relevant even now. He said "Scholarship in Tamil, Sanskrit and Western arts should spread in Jaffna. Our intelligent children should shine forth as philosophers, scientists, Sanskrit scholars, and Tamil scholars..... World famous works should be written in Jaffna which has a great tradition of learning harking back to very early times" 49

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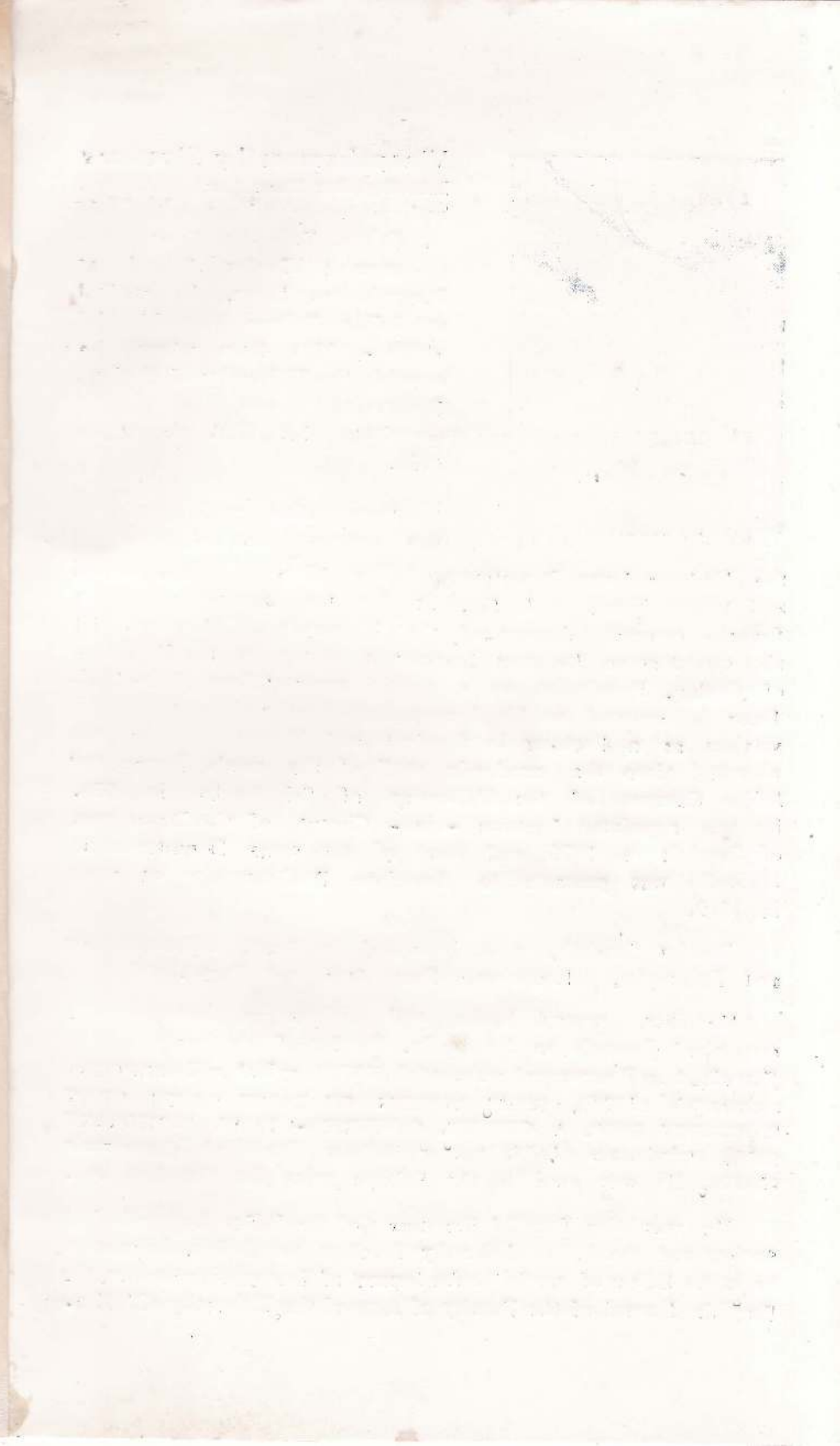
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