42ND ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTS
(Continued from August 2014 issue)

Academic Events

Many informative and educative sessions were held on 20.6.2014 at different venues in the Bhasha Bhavan of the Dravidian University. Three parallel sessions were conducted continuously from 10 to 11.30 a.m., 11.45 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2 to 3.30 p.m. at Shri Gidugu Ramamurti Hall, Prof. K. Nagamma Reddy Hall, Prof. Bh. Krishnamurti Hall and Prof. G.J. Somayaji Hall. The scholars were enthusiastically waiting to imbibe the wealth of knowledge disseminated about different topics related to language and linguistics. The session which focused on clinical linguistics was chaired by Prof. R. Lalitha Raja. The paper titled Relationship between Procedural Memory and Grammatical Morphology of Children with Autism was presented by Dayana Devassy. Children with Autism have less language competence when compared to other younger typically developing children. She distinguished procedural and declarative memory and stated that these children rely more on declarative memory than procedural memory. Many studies reveal that any kind of disorder in procedural memory causes impairment in acquiring morphology which results in their inability to create words with affixes on the basis of grammatical rules. It is found that language training focusing on specific grammatical rules would be an effective strategy for developing the language skills. In the paper Linguistic Remedies for Aphasia, Kavitha Navakulam dealt with the difficulty of people with Aphasia who are unable to communicate verbally or using written media. Their normal life is totally affected due to the lack of communicative competence. Recovery from Aphasia is possible by both medication and speech therapy. However, complete recovery is a challenge in many cases and intervention of a speech therapist is very much needed to recover their language abilities. Several questions were there regarding the early detection and implementation of linguistic remedies for enhancing their language skills.

The session on Dialectology held at Prof. K. Nagamma Reddy Hall was chaired by Prof. G.K. Panikkar. In the paper Ethnicity of Paniyas, Dr. Rosemary highlighted the ethnic consciousness shared by the members of Paniyas, the largest tribal group in Kerala. The ethnicity is reflected through their culture, household implements, accommodation, clothing, customs, rites and rituals. The second paper titled A Brief Study on the Religious and Ritual Aspects of Cholanaickan Tribes was presented by Hridya V.R. and Aparna Sreevalsan. The study was based on the religious aspects of Cholanaickans found in Nilambur Valley. They have their own dialect to speak among themselves and use Malayalam to speak to others. Their dialect contains words from Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam languages. Parveen G., in the paper A Study of Lexical
Variations in Telangana Telugu, spoke of the dialectal variations in Telugu in the Telangana region. Linguistically and culturally, it is entirely different from the dialects spoken in the other regions of Andhra Pradesh. Prof. G.K. Panikkar congratulated the paper-presenters and concluded the session by pointing out the characteristics of Paniyas and Cholanaickans.

The special session on Bengali and Dravidian at Prof. Bh. Krishnamurti Hall was chaired by Prof. K.S. Mustafa. Prof. P. Visalakshy in the paper The Influence of Sanskrit on Bengali Grammars portrayed the salient features of some popular Sanskrit grammatical texts like Kātantra, Mughdhabodha, Saṃkṣiptasāra, Rasavatī, Vyakarana-kauumudī and Kātantrachandahprakriyā. There were Bengali writers who belong to the Vaidya community and were ardent followers of grammarians like Kavirāja and Kulacandra Śripati. The Bangla grammarians who wrote grammar for their mother tongue were mostly Sanskrit teachers and hence it is natural to have the influence of Sanskrit on their texts. Dr. Naduvattom Gopalakrishnan’s paper A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary and Malayalam focused on the first dictionary which covered almost all languages under the Dravidian family. He maintained that many words in DED are not found in Rāmacaritam and they are wrongly interpreted and placed in the DED. Gundert has extensively made use of Rāmacaritam for the collection of ancient words which exhibit the earliest phase of Malayalam language. Several examples were cited to show that some factual errors crept into the DED mainly in the entries made from Rāmacaritam. He concluded with the remark that a comparative study of the DED (1984) with the indexes of Rāmacaritam, Kṛṣṇagātha and Manipravāla will be helpful to locate the missing Malayalam lexical items in the DED. Dr. Abdul Samed in the paper Issues and Strategies in Translating Poetry - Bengali to Malayalam spoke of the theories of translation and various issues in translating poetry from Bengali to Malayalam. He illustrated these by translating a poem from Tagore’s Gītānjali to Malayalam. He followed Catford’s linguistic theory of translation and made use of simple and easily intelligible words which convey the message of the source language. He underscored the fact that the main issue in translating poetry is the difficulty in finding the equivalence of culture-based words in the target language. He also pointed out that proverbs, ornamental words (rhetoric), slangs are difficult to be translated to the target language. The paper titled Geminates and Gemination in Bangla and Tamil: A Comparative Study was presented by Hafiz Ansary. He explored the process of gemination with special reference to Bangla and Tamil and described with examples the patterning and distribution of geminate and non-geminate phonemes in Bangla and Tamil. Ahana Sarkar in the paper Pidginization and Creolization in Dravidian and Bengali Dance Practices: A Comparative Analysis dealt with various dance practices in Bengali and Dravidian. She had taken examples from both classical and non-classical dance forms. Her study was based on the concept of viewing dance as a form of cultural hybridization and as a means for communicating ideas. The chairman complimented the paper-presenters and concluded the session with his remarks on the features of Bengali and Dravidian.

The session on Language Teaching Methods held at Prof. G.J. Somayaji Seminar Hall was chaired by Prof. Panchanan Mohanty. Anitha Sankar examined the impact of religion on language competence of the students at the tertiary level in Kerala. Based on the data collected from college students, she came to the conclusion that religion plays a prominent role in developing language competence and opined that in communicative competence in English, Christians are better than Hindus and Muslims. It may be due to the influence of Christian Missionaries and the religious education provided by the church. The topic was highly controversial and a host of issues relating to religion and language competence were discussed. The paper titled The Quasi-native, Quasi-foreign Status of the Nasta’liq Script: Some Pedagogical Implications was presented by Tariq Khan. Prof. Raichoor, Prof. Panchanan Mohanty and Dr. Shanavas participated in the discussion on the problems of script, sound selection and identification of syllables.

[To be continued]

Y. Viswanatha Naidu & K.N. Geethakumari
STUDIES ON SANGAM LITERATURE  
(Continued from August 2014 issue)

Other Contributions

In the Universities of Madras, Annamalai, Madurai-Kamaraj, London, Edinburgh and some in the United States, studies for securing research degrees have contributed new theories and information on Saṅgam works. Of them, Nature in Ancient Literature of M. Varadarajan, Nature in Saṅgam Poetry by Fr. Xavier Thaninayagam, Concept of Love in Saṅgam Literature by V.Sp. Manickam, S. Chidambaram Pillai’s study on Parattamai (prostitution) during the Saṅgam Age, C. Balasubramaniam’s Position of Women during the Saṅgam Age, etc. are worth mentioning. J. Mar of the London University, U.K., R.E. Asher of the Edinburgh University, U.K. and George Heart III of the United States are some of the foreign scholars of repute who have made valuable contributions on the study of Saṅgam works.

Sri Lankan scholars like Kailasapathy, Sivathampi and others relied on the Marxian theory to interpret the Saṅgam works. This is the common approach of most of the Sri Lankan scholars. There are also other methods to study the Saṅgam works based on anthropological theories and they have been demonstrated by S. Singaravelu of Malaysia in his History of the Tamils - Classical Period, in which he is trying to establish that the principles of totem and moiety existing among the tribes did exist among the people of the Saṅgam period. Besides, K.K. Pillai’s Social History of the Tamils and collections of articles, though are of the textbook pattern, really possess meaningful contributions.

Recent Activities

With the declaration of Classical status to Tamil and the establishment of the Centre for Classical Tamil Studies, universities, voluntary research organizations and a few colleges utilized the grants provided by the Centre for conducting seminars and symposiums on the classical status of Tamil. Most of the seminars concentrated on studies on Saṅgam works. Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai (one), Dravidian University, Kuppam (two), International Centre for Tamil Culture, Madurai (two: one at Kodaikkanal and the other at Kuttalam), International School of Dravidian Linguistics (one), Scott Christian College, Nagercoil (one). Aṟiṇṭṭar Āṟṇā College, Āṟalvāṁolo (one) have conducted seminars and the present author participated and presented papers. Some of them are published and others may be published in due course. The World Classical-Tamil Conference held at Coimbatore from 23rd to 27th June 2010 had sessions in which studies on Saṅgam classics and its impact on Tamil culture were presented and discussed.

Conclusion

There is ample scope for the continuance of further studies on Saṅgam literature. In this context, let us consider what are the areas that may be studied in the future.

V.I. Subramoniam, in his introduction to the Dravidian Encyclopedia, indicated that the Backward Class, Scheduled Castes and Tribes are the real custodians who protect the Dravidian culture. So a comprehensive study on those individual groups of people should be done in order to understand the ancient culture depicted in literary works.

A comprehensive subject index of the eight anthologies and ten idylls must be done on the pattern of the word index prepared for them in the Department of Tamil, University of Kerala. Though the Tamil University, Thanjavur has brought out a few series, they are incomplete.

Many a study on the position of women during the Saṅgam period has been done. A few of them speak about the equality of women during the Saṅgam society. But a few verses in the Saṅgam poetry portray the pathetic condition of some groups of women. In this connection, it may be mentioned that a thorough study of the social position of women and that of the Parattaiyar may throw fresh light on the social position of the Tamil women of the Saṅgam Age.

Select Bibliography


M.E. Manickavasagom

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(August 2014)

1. Dr. Gail Coelho
   Associate Professor
   G6, Teachers Transit Hostel
   Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi - 110 009

2. Dr. S. Ganesh Baskaran
   Department of Linguistics
   Assam University, Silchar, Assam

3. Ms. Irfana M.
   Junior Research Fellow
   Department of Speech Language Sciences
   All India Institute of Speech & Hearing
   Mysore - 6, Karnataka

4. Dr. T.N. Satheesan
   Professor of Malayalam
   MIG 26, 'Pranavam', Pushpanjali Colony
   Ramghat Road, Aligarh - 202 001, Uttar Pradesh

5. Dr. N. Sreedevi
   Department of Speech Language Sciences
   All India Institute of Speech & Hearing
   Mysore - 6, Karnataka

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   [To be continued]

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