



CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES

53rd Foundation Day Lecture Series

Lecture 22

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Indian Grammatical Tradition: A Comparative Study of Nāṭya Shāstra and Tolkāppiyam



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L. Ramamoorthy is Formerly Reader cum Research Officer in the Central Institute of Indian Languages. He headed various schemes like Linguistic Data Consortium for Indian Languages (LDC-IL), Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL), Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Languages and also was Principal, Southern Regional Language Centre. Before joining CIIL, he worked as Director, Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Pondicherry. He was the Editor-in-chief of the PILC journal of Dravidic Studies. His research interests include Corpus Linguistics, Grammatical Traditions, Sociolinguistics and Language Documentation. He has published 7 books on various topics like Language Modernisation, Language Loyalty, Linguistic Purism, Tamil Literary Criticism. He is currently Visiting Professor at Tamil university, Thanjavur.

In the education system of ancient India, the study of grammar occupied a very important place as it formed part of Vedangas. Those who specialised in grammar were considered to be of highest order among scholars. The contributions of Pāṇini and Tolkāppiyar are testimony to this. Tolkāppiyam and Aṣṭādhyāyī are the earliest grammars available in Indian languages. Though Tamil and Sanskrit belong to two different language families, the approach to grammar is similar in several aspects as is clearly evident in Nāṭya Shāstra and Tolkāppiyam. The Nāṭya Shāstra is an ancient Indian treatise on performing arts, encompassing theatre, dance and music. It delineates a detailed theory of drama comparable to the Poetics of Aristotle. Tolkāppiyam, the earliest extent grammar of Tamil, also describes a detailed account of poetry. This talk highlights the common aspects of drama and poetry as depicted in these texts. The dramatic elements incorporated in the grammar of poetry and grammatical elements incorporated in the performance of drama are worth pursuing to understand the grammatical tradition of India.

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