A Depth study of Political Administration with reference to Tamil literature

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Introduction

The name 'Tamil' is a little differently pronounced anglicized version of the three letter native name of the Dravidian language spoken mainly by people of Tamilnadu, a state in the Indian subcontinent. It belongs to the southern branch of the Dravidian languages. It is the official and administrative language of the State of Tamilnadu and the Union territory of Puduchery. It is one of the twenty-two scheduled languages of India. From the pre-Christian days of the Indian cultural evolution it has gained the same prominence as the major northern languages, mainly Sanskrit. However it has maintained its tradition, uniqueness and identity as the expressive medium of a cultural community and earned the accolade of being the first Indian language to be declared as a Classical Language by the government of India in 2004. A classical language is defined to own a rich literature that is ancient with an independent tradition that arose mostly on its own. It has the credit of being one of the official languages in the countries of Sri Lanka and Singapore.

Sangam was the ancient academy, which enabled Tamil poets and authors to gather periodically to publish their work. The Sangam met periodically in the city of Madurai in South India under the patronage of the Pandya kings. The current estimate is that the Sangam period lasted between 100 BCE until 300 CE. The earliest mention of the Sangam is to be found in the 8th century commentary on the *Irayanar Agapporul*. It mentions three Sangams lasting, at long intervals, for a total of 9990 years.Sangam literature comprises some of the oldest extant Tamil literature, and deals with love, war, governance, trade and bereavement. Unfortunately much of the Tamil literature belonging to the Sangam period had been lost. The literature currently available from this period is perhaps just a fraction of the wealth of material produced during this golden age of Tamil civilisation.In the Sangam literature, the Tamil language had reached a level of maturity and began to serve as a powerful and elegant medium of literary expression. It had already developed an elaborate code of conventions governing the portrayal of social life in literature. This must clearly have been the result of evolution and development spread over some generations.

Recent researches examining Chera inscriptions found in southwestern Tamil Nadu have revealed names of three generations of rulers from the Chera clan. These names are also found in some of the Sangam anthology *Pathirruppaththu*. Palaeographic analysis of the inscriptions has revealed its age to be within the first two centuries of the Common Era.Evidence from ancient Greek and Alexandrian travellers such as Strabo, Ptolemy and Pliny give details of the trade and other relations between the Tamil states and the ancient Greece and Rome. Archaeology has given proof supporting these accounts. Numerous Roman gold and silver coins and pottery have been found from all over Tamil Nadu. Law as understood today is quite different from the conception of law in ancient Tamil Nadu. Law to the ancient Indians, whether of the North or the South India, was the customary law, the law of diverse peoples. There was in fact no legislature which made and unmade laws. In very ancient times, the king represented the state as the administrator, as the leader of hosts in war and as the judge. But with the expansion of the State, rose up other institutions. A need was felt for the distribution of power among institutions which shouldered the responsibility on behalf of the state. One among such institutions was the department of justice. The king entrusted the work of administering justice to a body of officials who were held responsible for the proper conduct of justice. Invariably the members of this body were learned peoples, and the Hall of Justice was called Arak-kalam. This term is rendered Tarumasanam by the commentator. It is evident that there was then a Court of Justice known *Manram, avai, Avaik-Kalam,* in chief cities where both civil and criminal cases were taken cognizance of, tried, and decided. The judges were largely guided by what is known as Dharmanul.

The pregnant observation of the Kural, namely, that it is not the lance that gains victory but only a righteous administration that contributes to success, is corroborated by the Puram where the observance of the Dharmaic rule is said to be essential to and incumbent on a king. In more than one place in the *Silappadikaram* it is said that, if justice was not properly meted out, the king would not survive it. In fact this is mentioned as the chief characteristic of the Pandyan kings. With such a high sense of justice, then, the ancient Tamil kings left no stone unturned for meting out proper justice to the wronged and the innocent. There was a special department of justice composed of highly learned persons. The king was of course the High Court of Appeal. *Kamba Ramayanam* is a Tamil epic of the 12th century A. D. It is held in high esteem by all the lovers of literature. In the following passage, a new turn is given to the political concepts of the relation between the ruler and the ruled. The fundamental principles of democracy find an important place in this passage; most probably for the first time in the oriental thought. This is an original turn given by Kamban, the poet, on retrospection, experience and projection. The ruler is personified as the body, which is being animated by the subjects, the life. So the rulers and the ruled should realise their responsibilities and act in harmony like body and soul.

The fact that the kings were available to the people for the administration of justice and the redress of their grievances is indicated by the story of Manunitikanda Cholan, who, on enquiry, is said to have ordered the running of the chariot over his son, who had killed a calf while driving his chariot when the calf's mother complained to the king by ringing the bell of justice at the palace gate. Even in later times it appears that such a bell *(araichimani)* was kept at the entrance to the palace to be rung by the aggrieved and distressed people, to call the attention of the king. Immediately after hearing the bell the king would go to the court, summon the party and enquire about the complaint. The king is said to have heard complaints even when he was in camp. Probably if the case was of a complicated nature, he asked competent officers by his side to try it or directed the matter to be settled by arbitration by the learned men of the locality in the presence of a Government official. The king's court, besides being one of original jurisdiction, appears also to have had appellate jurisdiction.

Silappathikaram helps us to know about the keen sense of justice of the people of the Sangam Age. Kavirippoompattinam was the capital of Cholas. There were several Manrams (places of public resort) there. Pavai Manram was one among them. It is interesting to know why it was called Pavai Manram. It was believed that the Pavai (image) in that Manram would shed tears of grief should there be any flaw in the administration of law or failure of justice in the court of the city.The Tamils of those days had a firm faith that justice would never fail in Aramkuru Avaiam. Alangudi Vanganar in one of his poems in Natrinal makes a pointed reference to Aramkuru Avaiam of Uraiyoor.   Sangam literature also helps us to know the types of cases tried, the punishments awarded, and the mode of trial in Aramkuru Avaiam and also of subordinate courts in the mofussil towns going by the name "Uoor Chapaikal."

A noteworthy point in this connection is the release of prisoners. It would appear that a general amnesty was declared on the occasion of the celebration of the birthday of the king. This birthday is designated as Perunal, and Perumangalam. Such general amnesty was also granted on other similar occasions. For example, on the occasion of the founding of the temple for Pattinidevi, Senguttuvan ordered the release of state prisoners like Kanaka and Vijayan as well as other ordinary prisoner.   There were offences of a civil character. One was failure to repay the debts incurred, as will be seen from a reference in the Sirupancamulam, one of the eighteen poems in the category of Kikkanakku. Among the criminal offences were theft, adultery, treason or Rajadroha, assault and so forth. The punishments were of different kinds such as imprisonment, mutilation of limbs, and sentence of deat   When a certain case was presented to the court, one method of enquiry was by the examination of witnesses, there were then, as now, both false and true witnesses. The Sirupancamulam condemns the witness who deposes to an untruth. The false witness is mentioned as one among the six offenders of a State. The other five are pseudo-Sannyasins, housewives loose in morals, disloyal ministers, adulterers and tale-bearers. In different places of the *Silappathikaram,* deposing as false witness is treated as a great crime. Thus, we see how carefully justice was administered and the dignity of law and order was maintained.

Evidences such as the authoritative testimony of good men, constitutional usage, documents and unbroken enjoyment were taken into account in the decision of cases.Information is not available regarding the procedure in the trial of criminal cases. In fact there does not appear to have been any great distinction between the methods in the trial of civil and criminal offences. Among criminal offences were murder, arson, theft, adultery, forgery, misappropriation of temple or public funds, etc., and the offenders were usually ostracised and declared unfit for participation in administrative work, as for instance, service on the village courts and it was only in cases of dissatisfaction with the decisions given in them that they were taken to the court of the king's officer-in-charge of the administration of the local area like the Nadu.

A few cases of murder and homicide are recorded in inscriptions. Once a Sudra while out on hunting missed his aim and shot a Vellala. The villagers assembled together, found the Sudra guilty of homicide (not amounting to murder) and ordered him to make an endowment of sixty-four sheep in the local temple for burning two lamps in expiation of his guilt.   A few offences were punishable with fines *(Kurra-dandam).* An inscription at Anjaneri gives rates of fines for the following offences. 108 Rupakas for outraging the modesty of a virgin; 32 Rupakas for adultery; 16 Rupakas for the mutilation of ear; 4 Rupakas for bruising the head and 108 Rupakas "if the merchant's son is found to have illicit connection with the female porter and should be caught in the actual act of adultery.The trial at the court of Tiruvennainallur, we learn many procedural details of trial in ancient Tamil courts. It is evident from the account of the trial that the trial and judgements were never arbitrary. In the Sangam period, the court was styled as "Aramkuru Avaiam". Later in the period of the inscriptions, it was called as "Dharmasanam." The institution of Aramkuru Avaiam is an excellent testimony to the high sense of justice of the Tamils. Respect for law, the fundamental right of being heard in full, and trial by impartial and fearless men learned in law – these point to a realisation of the basic importance of the rule of law, which inspired those who ruled us in the South. On the whole we gather the impression that much care was taken to administer justice to the people both by the king and by local administrationserve as a powerful and elegant medium of literary expression. It had already developed an elaborate code of conventions governing the portrayal of social life in literature. This must clearly have been the result of evolution and development spread over some generations.

.   **Local Bodies in Tamil Nadu** ([Tamil](): தமிழ்நாடு உள்ளாட்சி அமைப்புகள்) constitute the three tier administration set-up in the [South Indian]() state of [Tamil Nadu](). It is a system of [local government]() which forms the last level from the [Centre](). [] [Chennai Corporation]() (now in [Tamil Nadu]()) in the then [Madras Presidency](), established in 1688, is the oldest such [Local Body]() not only in India but also in any commonwealth nations outside United Kingdom.The history of local bodies in Tamil Nadu could be dated back to the [Ancient period]() wherein the village administration was taken care by a *Village assembly* known as *Sabai* ([Tamil](): சபை) in every village. Further, each village was divided into several *wards* known as *mandalams* ([Tamil](): மண்டலம்). This is evident from the epigraph inscriptions found in *Vaikuntha Perumal Temple* near [Uthiramerur](). They used the Pot-ticket system of election ([Kudavolai Murai]()) to elect the representatives to the assembly.

Later came the [British]() rule in India in which the centralization of governance was enforced. People in the interior of the villages had to walk up to the central authorities for their obligations and grievances. Anyhow this system faded out as the British government realized the pitfalls in this system. Laudable efforts of [Lord Ripon]() brought legislation in

this aspect which created *unions* in small towns and villages, to facilitate proper sanitation and lighting. Later, councils were constituted in this regard for which the members are directly elected by elections. Councils were made accountable to an Inspector and Chairman. Though urbanization was less prevalent those days, Chennai (erstwhile *Madras*) had the honor of having such Municipal Corporation status even in 1688. Urban local bodies known Municipalities were in existence. A department named *Local and Municipal Department* was functioning in the then Secretariat from 1916 and it had Local, Municipal, Plague, Medical and Legislative Branches.

Independent India heard many voices for the revival and strengthening of the Village panchayats, even as the Nation's father Mahatma Gandhi insisted upon this for achieving Swaraj completely covering all the corners of this country. Later, a committee set up by Government of India, popularly known **Balwant Rai Mehta Committee** committee suggested the formation of three tier Panchayati Raj system.[7] From then, there came many legislation to ensure effective system of Local governance in Tamil Nadu. Notable legislative orders to Local Bodies by the centre-state governments include:Article 40 of Indian Constitution.Madras Village Panchayat Act, 1950,Tamil Nadu District Municipalities (Amendment) Act, 1950,Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1958.Tamil Nadu District Development Councils Act, 1958,Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994 (ratifications to 73rd and 74th Amendment of the Constitution of India.

Developmental administration is the main objective of these local bodies. They are effected by the means of *Urban and Rural local bodies*. They are responsible for the implementation of various centrally sponsored, state-funded, and externally aided schemes for provision of basic amenities and other services to the people. Elections are held to elect the representatives for local body council in respective urban and rural areas every five years. *Ministry of Municipal Administration and Rural Development*, Government of Tamil Nadu is the state government governing body for local bodies which is headed by a Minister who is an elected member of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly.Local bodies are categorized into two viz. *Urban Local Body and Rural Local Body*. This classification is rooted in terms of living standards in the context of urban and rural agglomeration.

The urban local bodies acts as platform between the people in the urban areas and the administration. Larger cities of Tamil Nadu are governed by City Municipal Corporations (Tamil: மாநகராட்சிகள்). Tamil Nadu has 12 municipal corporations: Chennai, Vellore, Salem, Erode, Tirupur, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Thanjavur, Madurai, Dindigul, Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi. These cities alone house one-third of urban population in this state. Corporation consists of a council of elected councilors from each ward and a presiding officer, Mayor who is also an elected representative. Apart from them, an executive authority referred as Corporation Commissioner is also vested withdministrative.powers.Municipalities (Tamil: நகராட்சிகள்) fall next to the city corporations. There are about 123 Municipalities in Tamil Nadu. Municipalities have four categories based on their annual income and population. These include 15 special grade municipalities, 31 selection grade municipalities, 33 grade I municipalities, 44 grade II municipalities. Their elected representatives include ward councilors and a presiding officer, Municipal Chairperson. Municipal Commissioner is the executive authority. Town panchayat (Tamil: பேரூராட்சிகள்) is the body of government for areas in transition form 'rural' to 'urban'. Tamil Nadu is the first state to introduce such a classification in urban local bodies.The state has 529 town panchayats. Town panchayats are upgraded to Grade III municipalities if they are found to be eligible. They are categorized in a similar way to that of Municipalities depending on the income criteria and population. Town panchayat council include elected ward councilors and their presiding officer, Town panchayat chairperson. Executive Officer is the executive authority as in case of Town panchayats.Rural local bodies include the panchayat raj institutions of this state. There are three levels in this system as follows.Village Panchayats,Panchayat Unions*(co-terminus with Blocks)*,District Panchayats in this state.

Village panchayats (Tamil: ஊராட்சிகள்) form the grass-root level of democracy as they form the local government for the basic building blocks of our country - villages. It is set up in villages where the population is less than 300. There are about 12,524 Village panchayats in this state Gram Sabha is a part of Village panchayat which consists of elected ward members and Village panchayat president. Village panchayat president himself is an executive authority here. They must meet for minimum of four times a year.Panchayat Union (Tamil: ஊராட்சி ஒன்றியம்) is the group of Village panchayats. They serve as the link between the villages and the district administration. They form the local government at the Taluk level. Tamil Nadu has 385 panchayat unions.[16] Panchayat union council consists of elected ward members from the villages. It is headed by a panchayat union chairperson, who is elected indirectly by the ward members of the council. District panchayats (Tamil: மாவட்ட ஊராட்சி ஒன்றியங்கள்) form the cream of the panchayat raj system. They take the top slot with mainly advisory powers to the rest. Developmental administration of the district in rural areas are in its hands. It consists of ward members elected from various villages in its jurisdiction. It is presided by district panchayat chairperson, who is indirectly elected by its ward members. There are 31 district panchayats in this state except for the district of Chennai as it is an *urban district*.District collector is the ex-officio chairman of the District rural development agency. In all societies, the formation of public governance is largely dependent on its contextual arameters, including social structure, economic condition, political atmosphere, cultural pattern and technological trend. The nature of governance often changes depending on the intensity and speed of transition in some of these surrounding factors. In the current age, one of the most significant contextual phenomena affecting public governance is the revolution in information and communication technology . Internationally, this revolution in ict has facilitated the globalization of the economy, business, finance and culture. Today ict constitutes the fastest growing com-ponent of the global economy an have reached Internally,within each society, the conventional forms of communication (print media motion pictures, radio, telephones, records) are increasingly being replaced with digital and wireless technologies such as cellular telephones, satellites, electronic mail and, above all, the internet However, the most influential dimension of this revolution is the worldwide proliferation of access to the inter-net. It is observed that the number of internet hosts increased from 100,000 in 1988 to over 36 million in 1998; and the number of internet users rose from 26 million in 1995 to 143 million in mid-1998, and it might reach 700 million by the end of 2001 . This contextual phenomenon, which

has changed the nature of the workforce, human relations and public expecta-tions, represents a considerable challenge to the state to adjust its public govern-ance (Centre on Governance, 1999a, b).In response to this transition in the context of governance, in almost every country, the state has taken the necessary initiatives to restructure political and administrative institutions by adopting ict in order to enhance lectronic inter-action and service delivery.

One of themost significant dimensions of e-governance is the creation and maintenance ofwebsites by legislatures, ministries, agencies, political parties, local institutions,and so on.3 The main rationales behind this opting for e-governance are that egovernance will reduce costs and delays in delivering services, expand citizens'access to public sector information, reinforce innovation in public agencies,increase transparency and public accountability, weaken authoritarian tendenciesand strengthen civil society and democracy.In line with this global trend, India has undertaken massive initiatives to introduce -governance at the national, state and local levels. In terms of the total number of government websites, although the advanced industrial countries top the list, India is ranked seventh in the global list . Similar to thepreviously mentioned common rationales, the top policy-makers in India tend tojustify the adoption and expansion of e-governance on the grounds that it costs less, reduces waste, promotes transparency, eliminates corruption, generatespossibilities to resolve rural poverty and inequality, and guarantees a better futurefor citizens .. In short, the government tends to portray e-governance as the panacea for all ranges of problems confronting India. But there are critics who, in general, suggestthat the whole enterprise of ict may have created a new class of 'untouchables'living in 'information poverty', compromised equal access to governmentservices and eroded accountability and individual privacy . one of the most significant dimensions of e-governance is the creation and maintenance ofwebsites by legislatures, ministries, agencies, political parties, local institutions and so on.The main rationales behind this opting for e-governance are that egovernancewill reduce costs and delays in delivering services, expand citizens'access to public sector information, reinforce innovation in public agencies,increase transparency and public accountability, weaken authoritarian tendenciesand strengthen civil society and democracy .In line with this global trend, India has undertaken massive initiatives to introduce e-governance at the national, state and local levels. In terms of the totalnumber of government websites, although the advanced industrial countries topthe list, India is ranked seventh in the global list ,, the top policy-makers in India tend tojustify the adoption and expansion of e-governance on the grounds that it costsless, reduces waste, promotes transparency, eliminates corruption, generates possibilities to resolve rural poverty and inequality, and guarantees a better future for citizens .. In short, the government tends to portray e-governance as the panacea for all rangesof problems confronting India. But there are critics who, in general, suggestthat the whole enterprise of ict may have created a new class of 'untouchables'living in 'information poverty', compromised equal access to governmentservices and eroded accountability and individual privacy.

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