

Tamil Heritage Month Celebration January 2021

உண்மை - உரிமை - ஒற்றுமை *

Truth - Rights – Unity



TAMIL HERITAGE

தமிழ்
பாரம்பரியம்



A message from TDSB Tamil Heritage Month Committee

- Tamil Heritage Month was proudly recognized at the Toronto District School Board for the first time in January 2016 and also nationally in January 2016. It was recognized by the province of Ontario since March 2014 when the Tamil Heritage Month Act was passed.
- Toronto has the largest population of Tamil people outside of South and Southeast Asia with thousands of TDSB students and staff members identifying as Tamil. There are approximately 200,000 Tamil people that call Canada home!
- The importance of building awareness, creating a strong self identity and understanding one's own roots and rights are important objectives of the Tamil Heritage Month volunteer planning committee.

Why January?

January marks the celebration of Thai Pongal, a Tamil harvest festival.

Overflowing rice, or pongal, symbolizes abundance and prosperity.



Theme January 2021

This year's theme: உண்மை - உரிமை - ஒற்றுமை
Truth - Rights – Unity

Unmai (உண்மை) recognizes that our lived experiences are our truths and these truths shape our understanding of the world around us. Urimai (உரிமை) examines our right to flourish and shine. Otrumai (ஒற்றுமை) emphasizes our shared lived experiences with other marginalized communities and our shared humanity.

Culture and Tradition

Tamil Values

- 1) Hospitality (விரும்ம்தோம்பல்)
- 2) Duty (கடமை)
- 3) Upholding Character (மானம்)
- 4) Respecting Elders (பெரியாரை மதித்தல்)
- 5) Maintaining Discipline (ஒழுக்கம்)
- 6) Gratitude (செய்நன்றி மறவாமை)
- 7) Truthfulness (வாய்மை)



Greeting - Vanakkam

This is the common way of greeting where by joining both palms together and hold the hand at the heart and say **“VANAKKAM”**.



Getting Blessings

- One Tamil tradition is getting blessings of elders by touching their feet.
- When elders bless this way we get their energy transferred through their hands and feet.



Welcoming People

- ▶ Nirai-kudam (full pot) is used when Tamils have their celebrations. Each part of it has a significant meaning behind it:
- ▶ Coconut represents the human head
- ▶ 5 Mango leaves represents the 5 senses
- ▶ Pot with water – represents water in the human body
- ▶ Rice represents the earth
- ▶ Lamps – cures ignorance



Kōlam

Made with rice flour, finely ground rice powder /paste or sometimes vegetable and mineral based coloured powders.

It is typically drawn using one's hands and utilizes geometric shapes. Reasons for engaging in this art range from giving thanks for one's prosperity, banishing evil and is also seen as a symbol of a powerful woman leading the household.

There are even organized competitions which take place in in state of Tamil Nadu in India to showcase this artistic ability.



Lighting a Lamp

- Light symbolizes knowledge.
- Knowledge removes ignorance just as light removes darkness.



Pottu

- ▶ Since ancient times, Tamils believe that on the forehead between the two eyebrows is a spot considered a major nerve point in the human body.
- ▶ The Pottu is believed to prevent the loss of "energy" from this area.
- ▶ The red 'kunkumam' between the eyebrows is said to retain energy in the human body and control the various levels of concentration.



Piercing of Ears

- Tamils believe that piercing ears helps in the development of intellect, power of thinking and decision making abilities.
- It also increases memory power.





Wearing Bangles

- ▶ Bangles cause constant friction with the wrist which increases the blood circulation level.
- ▶ Furthermore, the electricity passing out through outer skin is again reverted to one's own body because of the ring shaped bangles.

Tamil Traditional Outfits

- Little girls - Paavadai sattai - பாவாடை சட்டை
- Young girls - Paavadai thavani பாவாடை தாவணி
- Women - Saree சேலை
- Men/boys - Vetti sattai வேட்டி





Food

- Thosai (Fermented lentil crêpe)
- Idli + Sambar + Chutney (Steamed rice and lentil cake with coconut gravy and lentil soup)
- Vaalai illai virundhu (Banana leaf meal consisting of rice and various curries)

History & Antiquity of Tamil

Classical Languages

While it is hard to give a precise age to these languages, Tamil is more than 2000 years old.¹

Classical languages:

- Tamil
- Hebrew
- Chinese
- Arabic
- Greek



Did you know?

There have been 10 World Tamil Conferences dating back to 1966. The most recent conference occurred in Chicago in 2019 and had around 6000 participants and 1,150 abstracts submitted.²

1. Zvelebil, Kamil (1992), *Companion studies to the history of Tamil literature*, Leiden: Brill, [ISBN 978-90-04-09365-2](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004093652)
2. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2019/jun/26/10th-edition-of-world-tamil-conference-in-chicago-from-july-4-1995400.html>

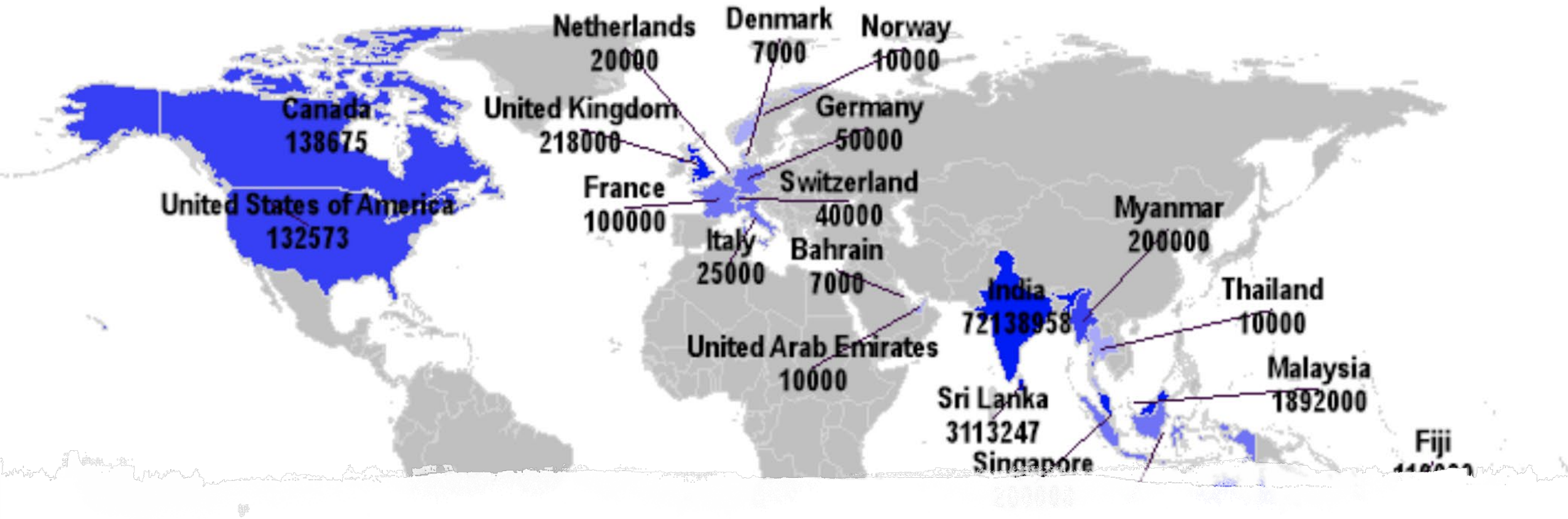
Tamil Language

There are a significant number of Tamil speakers in:

- Australia, Canada, Fiji, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Réunion, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America ³

3. Bharat, K.S. (2015). Impact of social network, reunion, health and adjustment on intention to return: A study of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India. Gokhale Institute of Politics & Economics, Deemed University, Pune.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10973/37955>



World Tamil Population

Tamil Language

Tamil is a phonetic language
(spoken form = written form)

Tamil letters:

12 vowels

18 consonants

12 × 18 = 216 compound letters

One special character (*aaytha ezutthu*)

TOTAL = 247 letters

தமிழ் எழுத்துக்கள் (247) - ஆங்கில உச்சரிப்புடன்

ஆயுத எழுத்து - 1		உயிர் எழுத்துக்கள் - 12				மெய் எழுத்துக்கள் - 18				உயிர்மெய் எழுத்துக்கள் - 216			
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ங்	ங	ஙா	னி	நீ	நு	நூ	நெ	நே	நை	நொ	நோ	நௌ	
ing	Gna	Gnaa	Gni	Gnee	Gnu	Gnoo	Gne	Gnae	Gnai	Gno	Gnoa	Gnou	
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ich	Cha	Chaa	Chi	Chee	Chu	Choo	Che	Chae	Chai	Cho	Choa	Chou	
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it	Ta	Taa	Ti	Tee	Tu	Too	Te	Tae	Tai	Toe	Toa	Tou	
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ith	Tha	Thaa	Thi	Thee	Thu	Thoo	The	Thae	Thai	Tho	Thoa	Thou	
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iy	Ya	Yaa	Yi	Yee	Yu	Yoo	Ye	Yae	Yie	Yo	Yoa	Yow	
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il	La	Laa	Li	Lee	Lu	Loo	Le	Lae	Ly	Lo	Loa	Lou	
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izh	Zha	Zhaa	Zhi	Zhee	Zhu	Zhoo	Zhe	Zhae	Zhai	Zho	Zhoa	Zhou	
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Tolkāppiyam (தொல்காப்பியம்)

Tolkappiyam is considered as one of the oldest book in Tamil literature. Tolkāppiyam "ancient poem" is the most ancient Tamil grammar text and the oldest surviving work of Tamil literature.

The dating of the Tolkappiyam is difficult with proposals ranging between 8,000 BCE and the 8th century CE.⁶



6. Swamy, B.G.L. The Date of the Tolkāppiam: A Retrospect." *Annals of Oriental Research, Madras, Silver Jubilee Volume* (1975), 292 – 317.

Tirukkural

Thiruvalluvar was a scholarly poet in the Tamil culture. He wrote 1330 poem couplets in a book which he named “Tirukkural”. This piece of literature described the ethics, values and beliefs of the Tamil culture. “Tirukkural” is a publication which explains the ideologies and philosophies of the Tamil people. It is now translated into many other languages and studied internationally.⁷

7. <https://thirukkural.gokulnath.com/#/thirukkuralchapters>



Nandri Thank You

*The TDSB Tamil Heritage Month
Volunteer Planning Committee*
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