



Tasveer (Urdu):
image, picture, photo, icon,
symbol, print, likeness, depiction, face,
portrayal, figure...

Ghar (Hindi):
house, home, hut, building, storage,
place, shelter, enclosure, haven, meeting point...

When a Language Becomes a Mother/Goddess **An Image Essay on Tamil**

by Sumathi Ramaswamy

South Asian Visual Culture Series, no. 1

edited by Christiane Brosius

(this paper has been edited in collaboration with Sumathi Ramaswamy, Duke University, and

[Tasveer Ghar](#): A Digital Network of South Asian Popular Visual Culture)

Heidelberg, 30. September, 2008

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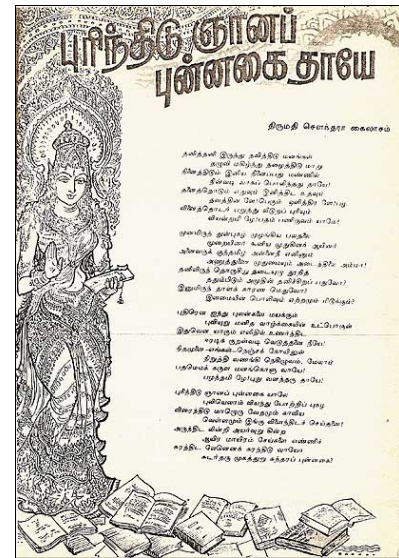
When a Language Becomes a Mother/Goddess

An Image Essay on Tamil

Sumathi Ramaswamy

This essay has an unusual protagonist: a language that comes to be transformed into an object of love and devotion, producing in the process an unusual visual presence for a spoken tongue.

I write of Tamil, a language that currently counts more than 70 million speakers in India and Sri Lanka, and in Singapore, Malaysia, and other parts of the global South Asian diaspora. With a deep and complex history on the subcontinent rivaled only by Sanskrit, Tamil inspired the praise and adoration of many of its speakers from its early recorded literary history traceable back to the opening years of the first millennium of the common era. In the later half of the nineteenth century in colonial India, this admiration intensified to the point that the language was imagined as a mother/goddess variously referred to as *Tamilttāy*, *Tamil Annai*, and *Tamil Tēvi* (Figure 1).



Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, the veneration of and devotion to the mother/goddess Tamil variously fueled powerful movements for religious revitalization, the deepening of linguistic pride and love for Tamil literature, a vigorous assertion of Tamil identity, even a separatist movement for independent statehood free of India. In the course of such developments,

Mother Tamil or Tamilttāy herself no longer remains just a goddess of language, learning and literature, but also emerges as a mistress of territory and polity.

A complex set of factors propels these developments that I have examined in my monograph, *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India* (1997). In this image essay, I want to focus on another unusual outcome of this passionate devotion to Tamil: the language literally becomes visible and manifest as a tangible seeable presence, assuming the form and shape of a (Hindu) goddess and mother figure through the mediation of the popular visual arts. In its appearance as Tamilttāy in prints, posters, and paintings, in textbook illustrations, advertisements and cartoons, Tamil is no longer just a medium of communication, a linguistic vehicle for the expression of thought, or the graphic system of its recognizable alphabetic sequence (Figure 2). Instead it is a very special personage, one who remarkably resembles the numerous divinities who populate the Hindu sacred landscape, or the nurturing mother figure of the



everyday Tamil home. In a sense, this image essay asks what it means when a language comes to be pictured and visualized with a human or divine body, as an anthropomorphic presence? What happens, in other words, when the language in one of its pictorial manifestations such as this (Figure 2).

Is also imagined and visualized as this (Figure 3):



What is being attempted—and what is being risked?

It is questions such as these that this image essay sets out to explore.

Let us look at Figure 4:



In this picture, we encounter Tamil̥ttāy as she appears early in her pictorial career, gracing the frontispiece of an anthology of poems called *Moli araci* [Queen Language, or queen of languages]. This book, printed in 1947 by a key centre of Tamil revivalist learning, is a compilation of numerous poems in praise of the language, some pre-modern but most by poets of the late nineteenth and early half of the twentieth centuries.

In the book's frontispiece—which pictorially echoes many of its verbal claims—Tamil appears as a gloriously attired bejeweled queen (*araci*), a shining crown on her head, a large resplendent halo casting a glow around her. Unlike human queens, though, she has four arms, two of which hold the *veena* (although many Tamil devotees would insist that it is an ancient Tamil

lute called a *yāl*). In one of her other hands is placed a printed book, a symbol that fittingly reminds us of the role of print in spreading the message of Tamil devotion. In a fourth hand, she holds a baton. Her status as a goddess of territory is visually signaled by the fact that she sits on a low stool placed on peninsular India, whose mapped outline she occupies, her feet firmly planted in a lotus in full bloom at the tip of the subcontinent. The island of Sri Lanka—where Tamil is spoken by a small but significant minority—is transformed into a swan, the queen’s vehicle. Mountains to the north further demarcate her domain.

Moli araci’s editor, Velayutam Pillai, who presumably commissioned this picture (although the artist remains anonymous), offers the following explanation:

"Researchers insist that all over India, and in parts beyond, Tamil blood and culture still flourishes. It is to mark this that Tamilttāy's auspicious form spreads all over. Because the Tamil language is believed to be separated into the three parts of *iyal*, *icai* and *nāṭakam*, Tamilttāy holds a book in [one of] her right hands [signifying *iyal*, or literature], both her right and left arms holds the *yāl* (music), and in [one] left hand, she carries a baton, *talaik kōl* [signifying] (drama, according to the *Cilapātikāram*). That Sri Lanka is shown as a swan at her auspicious feet points to the fact that Tamil flourishes there as well."

About a decade earlier, Tamilttāy put in a visual appearance in one of the poet Suddhananda Bharati’s numerous publications (Figure 5).

In this picture, Tamilttāy is a two-armed seated queen (*araci*), her body at an angle to the viewer. In her hands she holds a musical instrument, and also what look like a spear and a scepter (with a bird seated on it). Most saliently, her seated body occupies what is clearly recognizable as the roughly mapped outline of peninsular India, that part of the subcontinent that is inhabited



by speakers of the Dravidian family of languages of which Tamil is the oldest known member. The island of Sri Lanka is transformed here as well into a swan seemingly looking up at the seated figure.

At first glance, Tamil̥ttāy in these pictures (Figures 4 and 5), as well as elsewhere, resembles Saraswati (Figure 6), the Sanskritic-Hindu goddess of learning (Figure 6).



This may not be surprising given that she too is deemed an embodiment of language, literature and learning; some devotees in fact do imagine her as a Tamil incarnation of Saraswati, and every now and then, icons or images of the latter have been appropriated and re-named Tamil̥ttāy (Figure 7).



All the same, there is another figure with whom Tamilttāy has found herself increasingly paired with, or pitted against, in the modern Tamil visual imagination. I refer to Bhārat Mātā, “Mother India,” the Indian national territory similarly imagined as a mother/goddess, a novel personage who also became popular in the Indian visual landscape in the early years of the century, and who gained in importance as the Indian national movement gathered strength. Indeed, I would contend that in her pictorial career, Tamilttāy’s personage develops in tandem with and as a riposte to the development of the “national” figure of Bhārat Mātā: so much so that it is often difficult to differentiate between the two.

For instance, in an advertisement from the early decades of the twentieth century, the female figure advertising the sale of S. S. Anandam’s Tamil “siddha” medicine could be taken to be either of these two goddesses (Figure 8): there is nothing in the visual appearance of the woman occupying the map of India and holding a banner in two of her four hands that states in English that “belief is relief,” that would help the viewer to decide whether it is Bhārat Mātā or Tamilttāy who is being pictorially invoked here.

We would expect that the advertiser might draw on Tamilttāy’s help to sell his “Tamil” medicine, but what is she doing here, occupying what is recognizable as a partial outline map of India (Figure 8)?





For, typically, in India's burgeoning patriotic visual culture, it is the mother/goddess Bhārat Mātā who is associated with the outline map of India. Sometimes, as in Figure 9, she is shown proudly occupying it, her body filling up the map, her limbs and head blurring the fraught boundaries of state cartography.

Occasionally, she stands or sits on the map of India, itself inscribed on a terrestrial globe, as in this poster issued soon after Indian independence (Figure 10).



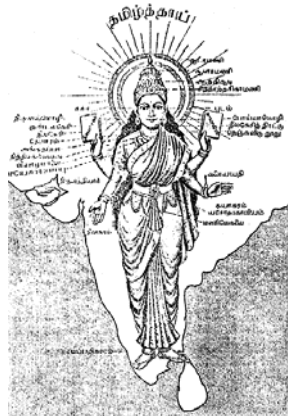
She is also shown literally merging with the soil of India, her body partly disappearing into the map of India (Figure 11).

Most dramatically, Bhārat Mātā's body sometimes completely replaces the map of India, her sari, her limbs, and her hair tracing out the familiar shape of the country, as in Figure 12 and Figure 13:



In such pictures and images, many of which circulated in the Tamil country, some even originating there, Bhārat Mātā lays claim to Indian national territory as its sole embodiment, symbol and sign. The outline map of India (whole or partial, roughly drawn or finely sketched) plays a critical role in visually enabling such a claim to be staged. It is this claim to sole proprietorship that Tamilttāy increasingly challenged as Tamil nationalism grew in strength over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, and as it questioned the very existence of a unitary state called India of which Tamilnadu was deemed an inevitable part. What is worth underscoring is the use of scientific cartographic instruments—maps and globes—to visually wage this struggle.

Consider, for example, an illustration that appeared in 1966 in a Tamil textbook meant for school children (Figure 14).



In this illustration, Tamilttāy stands proudly as a four-armed goddess, a large halo radiating rays around her head. In two of her four hands, she holds books, the gift of Tamil knowledge as embodied in the sacred texts *Tiruvacākam* and *Nālayiram*, sacred to the Saiva and Vaishnava communities of the region. She is also elaborately adorned with the various “jewels” of Tamil literature, the titles of many of which are inscribed in the picture. Most saliently for a principal argument of this image-essay though, Mother Tamil’s body occupies the entirety of the map of India (whose northern, western and eastern borders have all

disappeared), one of her toes even reaching out to claim a part of the Tamil-speaking part of the island of Sri Lanka that we know as Jaffna.

The school child who looked at this picture in 1966 also read an accompanying 4-page lesson in which Tamilttāy herself introduces the language to its young speaker: “I am dear Tamil, your mother. I am also called Tamil Aṇaṅku as well as Tamil Teyvam [Tamil goddess].” She tells her “children” that for two hundred years, she had been ignored and cast aside by them while they had paid allegiance to the foreigner, Queen English. In that process they had forgotten her primeval presence in the country, and that she had been raised by the divine Agastya himself who had fed her on the honey of *iyal* (literature), the fine milk of *icai* (music), and the sweet candy of *nāṭakam* (drama), as she frolicked in the cool waters of Courtalam and played on the southern Potiyam mountains touched by the gentle southern breeze. As she grew, she received homage from the ancient Tamil kings of the Pandya, Chola and Chera domains, as well as from poets and learned savants who adorned her glowing body with numerous jewels. Thus, the poet Ilango Adigal composed the *Cilapatikāram*, a story about a stolen anklet, which now adorns her feet. Another poet Cittalai Sattanar had written the *Manimēkalai*, “the jeweled girdle,” which she wears around her waist, and so on. During the reign of Queen English, however, her children having turned indifferent to her, Tamilttāy began to waste away: she was cast into the prison of colonialism for two hundred years where she languished in darkness. When Bhārat Mātā was liberated through the heroic actions of her patriots, Tamilttāy as well was liberated from her cell. She now flourishes as her children have once again started to adorn her with new jewels, and her reign has been re-established.

In this potted history of the Tamil language, Bhārat Mātā and Tamilttāy are presented verbally as allies, mother and daughter even, as befitted a lesson being taught in an Indian schoolroom, albeit one located in a part of the country with a

highly developed sense of regional pride. Nonetheless, the picture accompanying this lesson tells a slightly different story (Figure 14), for here Tamilttāy's presence is not just confined to the Tamil-speaking part of India. Her body occupies, as we see, the entirety of the mapped form of the country, with no place whatsoever for any other goddess, rival or friendly. In contrast to Figures 3 and 4 where Tamilttāy more modestly occupies only "Dravidian" India, in this schoolbook illustration all of India appears as her domain. The illustration visually translates a claim of some Tamil nationalists that Tamil had been not just the oldest language of India but had once been spoken all over the subcontinent before the arrival of Sanskrit and its speakers had confined it to the south-east corner.

Some Tamil nationalists even claimed that Tamil had been spoken not just throughout the subcontinent, but indeed the world over, at a time when few other peoples and nations existed on the surface of the earth. This claim finds visual manifestation in pictures that circulate in the Tamil country, showing Mother Tamil seated or standing on a terrestrial globe, as in a beautiful poster issued by the literary organization Kamban Kazhagam based in the town of Karaikkudi (Figure 15).

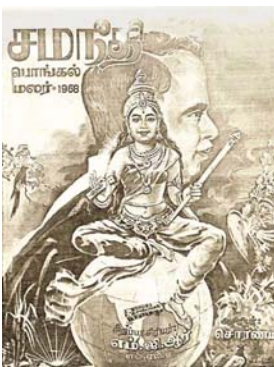
In the artist S. K. Ayya's imagination, Tamilttāy's sari is arranged to roughly outline the cartographic shape of India, as the goddess perches on a globe, carrying the symbols traditionally associated with literature, music and drama.





In another image from a couple decades later, the goddess once again appears, this time rather seductively seated on a globe, the map of India hinted at by the curves of her body, as she gazes out at us rather coquettishly from the cover of a Tamil literary magazine (Figure 16).

The year 1967 in which this illustration appeared is significant because that is when the Tamil nationalist party, the Dravida Munnera Kazhagam (DMK) was voted to power in the state for the first time. The ascension to power of the party was symbolically presented in some nationalist circles as the crowning of Tamilittāy after years of being in exile. Various acts that marked the triumph of Tamil—such as the renaming of the state as Tamilnadu (the land of Tamil), and the abolition of the mandatory study of Hindi in state schools—followed soon after, all of which confirmed to the ardent Tamil devotee that Tamil was sovereign in its domain, once again. Thus, in some DMK party magazines, the Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai is shown placing a crown on Tamilittāy’s head (Figure 17).

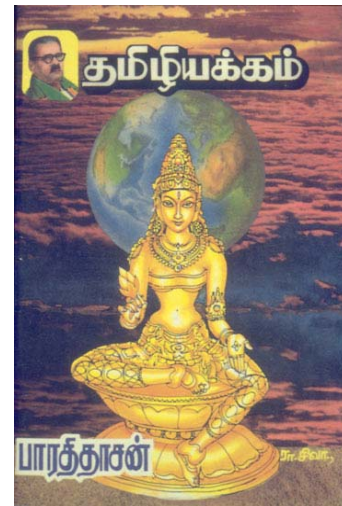
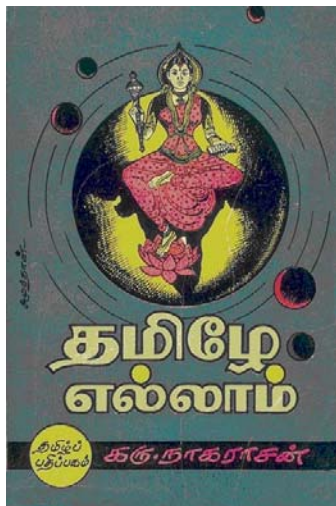


And in others, Tamilittāy is shown seated on a gridded globe, her head reaching into the cosmos, seemingly blessing the entire world (Figure 18).



The terrestrial globe—a symbol that has become popular in modern times as signifying world domination as well as worldliness—also appears in the company of Tamilttāy in various visual media such as a poster issued to commemorate the Fifth International Tamil Conference held in Madurai in 1981 (Figure 19).

And on the covers of Tamil nationalist books written in celebration of the chief motto of the Tamil movement, “Tamil everywhere and at all times” (Figures 20 and 21).



The triumph of Tamilttāy —as signaled by pictures such as these—was particularly sweet to its most ardent of devotees because they believed that it had followed upon years of struggling against other languages such as Sanskrit and Hindi (and to a more limited extent, English). Hindi in particular came to be caricatured by anti-Hindi Tamil nationalists and others as a demonic figure out to destroy Tamil in its own “home.”

Caricatured often as “Inti arakki,” “the demoness Hindi” (for example, [Figure 22](#)), Hindi was also presented to the Tamil speaker from the 1930s as a lascivious strumpet who would destroy the fine Tamil speaker with her loose morals, or as the lowly maid who sauntered in and usurped the fine Tamil home from its rightful owner, Tamilttāy. Not least, she paraded about as an imposter mother who, backed by used the power of the Indian state, sought to lure Tamil speakers away from attachment to their genuine mother, Tamilttāy.



In the course of the anti-Hindi struggles which convulsed the Tamil public sphere from the 1930s into the mid-1960s, escalating in particular from the late 1950s, Tamilttāy came increasingly to be visually presented to her “children” as a suffering mother appearing as the flesh-and-blood women who had given birth to them and nurtured them into adults. She is an all-too human fragile figure, wearing a sari in the style of everyday Tamil woman, but denuded of jewels, weeping over the bodies of her children who had been killed in anti-Hindi riots, or had poisoned themselves, or most consequentially, burnt themselves alive to show their devotion to her.

Yet this sari-clad, all-too-human, Tamilttāy is the exception rather than the rule, for as I have noted, the dominant look she generally wears is that of a glorious four-armed goddess, adorned in jewels, looking full frontal at her viewer. In this regard, despite assertions about her singularity and uniqueness by her devoted votaries, she very much resembles the numerous “poster” goddesses who had become visible from the closing years of the nineteenth century in the burgeoning commercial and devotional visual art complexes of India as a

mixture of all manner of new and traditional forms. So, her visual presence is one that essentially follows the newly formulated canons of the “god-poster” industry for representing the divine female as sensuous but un-touchable, blandly generic and anonymous. Ironically, despite the fact that she is deemed a “Tamil” goddess, she does not particularly resemble the women of the region in her features or demeanor or even the style of the sari she wears, and indeed, she is generally presented with an (un-natural) pale complexion! In fact, as I have argued, unless she is specifically named as such, Tamilttāy runs the risk of being confused with Saraswati, the more well established and widely known Sanskritic goddess of knowledge and learning.

But this is not the only risk that pictures of Tamilttāy have to negotiate. Although Tamil and Dravidian nationalisms, which under-wrote a large part of the Tamil movement from the 1920s, claimed to be secular, even anti-Hindu, in their ideology, Tamilttāy herself looks very much like a Hindu goddess in her dominant visual appearance: she wears the crown that many Hindu divinities typically wear; she holds her right hand in the typical gesture of offering grace to her devotees; she sits on a large lotus or her feet rest on it; and her face often carries the same look of her remoteness and transcendence that marks the countenance of many a deity. Her visual votaries have found it difficult to shrug off the influence of Hindu iconography to which they turn, again and again, in their efforts to picture Tamilttāy.

This is perhaps most obvious when we consider the official Government of Tamilnadu poster that was printed in 1981 when M. G. Ramachandran (not particularly known for his devotion to the language) was Chief Minister of the state. This poster was also echoed in a stone statue installed in the same year in the city of Madurai, renowned for least two thousand years as the seat of Tamil learning, culture and civilization (Figure 23).



As we see in this contemporary photograph of the image, Tamil Annai is a two-armed figure, one of her two hands holding a manuscript (as is appropriate for a figure associated with learning), the other held in a gesture of blessing her viewer. She sits on a large lotus, very much like Saraswati would, and is clothed and adorned in a manner that a Hindu viewer would be familiar with from the female figures housed in numerous temples and shrines across the region. A major Dravidianist poet Bharatidasan had once insisted, “God has neither figure nor name... It is not a Tamil principle to worship stone or copper.” Many in the Dravidian movement associated officially with this installation too insist that Tamil Annai is not a religious icon that one worships, but a symbol of the Tamil language that should invite the celebration of all Tamilians. She is a mother, and not a goddess, as is evident from the fact that the figure has only two arms.

And yet, it is also clear that this particular image was modeled on another housed in a temple of its own in the town of Karaikkudi (Figure 24). In all regards save one, the two are identical: the Karaikkudi image has four instead of two arms!



The foundation for the temple was laid in April 1975 with the blessings of the DMK government of M. Karunanidhi that also sanctioned 500,000 rupees for the project. The temple was finally opened to the public in April 1993. Its central sanctum houses, in addition to *Tamiḷttāy*, the images of her two most venerable sons, the grammarians Agastya and Tolkappiyar. Three subsidiary sanctums carry the images of Ilango, Tiruvalluvar, and Kamban, three of Tamil's most famous poets. The temple itself is shaped in the form of a triangle, the three corners signifying the ancient dynasts—the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya kings, Tamil literature's most venerable patrons; alternately, they also represent the three branches of Tamil: literature, music and drama. Although the structure is referred to as a *kōvil* (the everyday Tamil word for a temple), the sponsors of Kamban Kazhagam are very clear that it is not a "temple" in the religious sense; the image of *Tamiḷttāy* is not an icon to whom worship is due, nor are Hindu religious rituals performed. This is a temple, they insist, that commemorates in their vision the language that belongs to the entire world; accordingly, it is open to all who revere Tamil and not just to the speakers of the language.

Yet, the image enshrined in the temple has four arms, a clear marker of Hindu divinity. During the dedication of the temple in 1993, however, all those assembled were careful to distance themselves from all overt signs of religiosity. In his speech, Karunanidhi, who officially opened the temple to the public, even pointed out that there should be no mistake about his extending his approval to an image that had four arms. Rather than signifying irrationality and religiosity, the Dravidianist leader insisted that the four arms represented the four languages to which Tamil had given birth: Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu and Tulu. *Tamiḷttāy* was not a goddess to be worshipped, but a guardian who will guide us all, he insisted. Others who spoke at the ceremony hoped that Tamil speakers visiting the temple would renew themselves as Tamilians, and resolve to write, speak and think in Tamil, always.

All the effort over the last few decades to create for her a distinctive visual presence notwithstanding, there is no standardized image of Tamilttāy that reigns in the public sphere. Instead, she is both divine and human; a figure confined to Tamilnadu but also one who reigns over India, indeed the entire world; a queen but also an everyday Tamil woman; a comely maiden but also an ageless matron. That there is no single image that triumphs is not a sign however of visual or pictorial failure: on the contrary, the existence of this multiplicity and fluidity ensures her continued availability, as goddess, queen, mother and maiden all rolled into one, that future devotees can draw upon.

Illustrations

Figure 1: Printed illustration featuring Tamil as goddess and muse, 1968

Figure 2: The Tamil alphabet: the letters in the last line are no longer in wide use, having been created to accommodate Sanskrit loan words

Figure 3: Statue of Tamiḷttāy, foyer of Tamil University library, Tanjavur
Photo credit: Rich Freeman, 1991

Figure 4. *Moli araci* [Queen Language]. Printed frontispiece to *Moli araci* [Queen of languages], ed. Velayutam Pillai. Karantai Tamil Sangam, Tanjavur, 1947.

Figure 5, *Pōrri Pututtamilaraci* [Praise be to our New Queen Tamil]. Printed frontispiece to *Paintamilccolai* [Garden of everlasting Tamil] by Suddhananda Bharati. Anbu Nilayam, Singapore, 1936.

Figure 6. Saraswati. Contemporary chromolithograph. Publication details unknown.

Figure 7: Icon of Tamiḷttāy in a roadside shrine to the poet-philosopher Tiruvalluvar, Madurai, 1991. Photo credit, Rich Freeman.

Figure 8. Printed advertisement for Pandit S. S. Anandam's Tamil (Siddha) Medicines, early 20th century. Courtesy: Roja Muthiah Research Library, Chennai.

Figure 9. Bhārat Mātā. Frontispiece in schoolbook, *Putiya ārampakalvi tamil* (*Mūṇṇrām puttakam*) [New elementary Tamil: Book three] by V. Lakshmanan. Shri Shanmugha Publishing House, Mannargudi, 1958.

Figure 10. *Message of Love*. Artist: T. B. Vathy. Chromolithograph. B. Ethirajalu and Sons, Madras, circa 1948.

Figure 11. *Bhārat Mātā*. Artist: Roop Kishore Kapur. Black and white lithograph. Babulal Bhargava, Cawnpore, circa 193?. Courtesy: Urvashi Butalia.

Figure 12. *The Splendour that is India*. Artist: P. Ramachandra Rao. Chromolithograph. P. S. R. Rao, Madras, circa 1947.

Figure 13. Clay figurine of Bhārat Mātā attributed to Subramania Bharati, circa 1911. Courtesy: Bharatidasan Memorial Museum cum Research Centre, Puducheri. Photograph by Kota Noble.

Figure 14. *Tamiḷttāy*. Artist unknown. Illustration in schoolbook, *Arulakat Tamilp Pāṭa Nūl* [Arulagam's Tamil Lessons] by P. Murugayyan. Arulagam Publications, Madras, 1966, facing page 72.

Figure 15. *Tamiḷttāy* by S. K. Ayya. Chromolithograph published by Kamban Kazhagam, Karaikkudi, circa 1941.

Figure 16. *Tamiḷttāy*, Cover illustration of the annual number of Tamil literary magazine, *Tamiḷ Vaṭṭam*, 1967. Courtesy: Maraimalai Adigal Nulakam, Chennai.

Figure 17. Tamilnadu Chief Minister Annadurai crowning Mother Tamil. Cover illustration. *Muttāram*, 1968. Courtesy: Perasiriyar K. Anbazhagan Library, Anna Arivalayam, Chennai.

Figure 18. Mother Tamil seated on a terrestrial globe, with the head of Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai in profile. Cover illustration. *Camaneeti*, January 1968. Courtesy: Perasiriyar K. Anbazhagan Library, Anna Arivalayam, Chennai.

Figure 19. *Tamiḷttāy*. Poster published on the occasion of the 5th International Tamil Conference in Madurai under the guidance of Professor Aru. Alagappan. Tamil Curankam, Madurai, 1981.

Figure 20. Mother Tamil by Amuthon. Cover illustration for *Tamiḷē Ellām* [Tamil is everything] by K. Nagarajan. Tamil Patippakam, Chennai, 1980.

Figure 21. Mother Tamil by R. Siva. Cover illustration for *Tamiḷ Iyakkam* [Tamil revolution] by Bharatidasan. Poompukar Patippakam, Chennai, 1992.

Figure 22. "Inti arakki," [demoness Hindi], artist: Guna. Cartoon in Tamil newspaper, *Mālai Maṇi*, 18th August, 1963, p. 5. Courtesy: Perasiriyar K. Anbazhagan Library, Anna Arivalayam, Chennai.

Figure 23. *Tamil Annai* [Mother Tamil]. Statue installed to commemorate the 5th International Tamil conference, Madurai. Photo credit, Rich Freeman, 1991.

Figure 24. Image of *Tamiḷttāy* in the *Tamiḷttāy* temple, Karaikkudi.

About the Author:

Sumathi Ramaswamy was Professor of History at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and as of July 2007, is Professor of History at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA. Her interest in visual culture began in the 1990s when she wrote about the visualizing of the Tamil language as goddess, queen and mother in her book *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India* (University of California Press, 1997). She also analyzed popular visual representations of Hindi as a demoness in her study of the demonization of the language by Tamil nationalists in an essay entitled "Battling the Demoness in Tamil India." In Crispin Bates, ed. *Beyond Representations: Colonial and Post-Colonial Constructions of Indian Identity*. Delhi: Oxford University Press (2006), pp. 123-150. She is the editor of *Beyond Appearances: Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India* (Sage, 2003), and she is finishing a book entitled *The Goddess and the Nation: Picturing Mother India* that is part of a larger project on cartographic visualizations of Indian territory.