

Malaysian Tamil Children Literature: Its Journey and Accomplishments

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Abstract Literature as a common reading material has been accepted as authoritative forms that carve and shape the thinking of children. They are called children literature and treated as an important source of formal writings. Regardless of race, colour, and education, every child is in needs of this form of literature to shape up their thinking that would assist in their development. In a multi-racial nation like Malaysia, it is even important to foster better understanding and acceptance among each and other through such literature. Being a multiracial and multicultural nation, with each racial component having its own cultural traditions and practices, Malaysia faces a greater challenge to come into a term of agreeing of what it ought to be treated as Malaysian tradition in children's literature? To our wonder, among the four main languages trending literature, the Malay, English and Chinese version of children literature almost available with notable significances, but the children literature in Tamil is yet recognized or made known for acceptance for in proper. Without acknowledging the true representation of the genre, we could not be painted off the Malaysian literature in whole. This study is offering an alternative by showing how far the literature for children in Tamil has been developed to be part of the Malaysian children's literary tradition. Its journey and

accomplishments in the past 200 years of the trajectory are revisited to cast the trending nature of Malaysian Children Literature in Tamil.

Key words Children Literature in Tamil; Malaysia Tamil Children Literature, Malaysia Tamil Literature

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Introduction

What is literature? It has been addressed differently from time to time, from one civilization to another. Horace claimed that literature is a word formed by combining *dulce* and *utile* which means the beauty and the benefits, respectively (Hasan). Aristotle termed it as *Katarsis* which means purifying the human soul, leading to the formation of a noble human group (Teeuw), in general. In Malay culture, it is known as *(ke)susastera(an)*, *su* means pure, white and *sastera* means treatise or book. In southern Indian tradition, it is called *ilakkiyam*, a combined term of *ilakku*, path or target and *iyam*, move or way, means the way of life. All definitions lead to one: literature is meant for man to live a beautiful noble life. It could not be said that children literature might have another definition than the given one, and the outcome of the literature is obvious, playing an important role in the development of one's character building and personality development, likewise the children literature.

Then, what does qualify as children literature? F. J. Harvey Darton and Hunt described that material or book written specifically for children and read by children are called children's literature, in specific. Children's literature is a special form of literature produced with special aspects for the readers who fall within 12 years old to enhance their understanding of their surroundings. It found in many forms such as novels, short stories, poetry, drama, folklore, rhyme, adventure and so forth, either in original or translation or custom (Salleh 2). Since all of these are aimed at giving fun rather than devoted to teaching, having storytelling elements or prospects within them became rather important. As a complementary medium in shaping the children, children's literature is trusted for its own roles and responsibilities in flexing and forming a child's personality. In this way, it is expected to assist the

child's mental development in a way or other with unique intervened techniques (Murasu 125). This is the pathway that opted by the Malaysian Tamil Children Literature (MTCL), indeed.

The early-day children literature in Tamil appeared to be honoured through oral poem tradition (Letchumi 68). Oral tradition is universal and common to all languages (Ambiyum 1). While there is no solid evidence supporting the existence of oral Tamil children's literature in oral tradition in the Indian community, efforts to keep children rhymes seemingly existed since the era of classical literature (the *Sangam* Period), says Dhanalakhmy. Malaysian Tamil Children Literature (MTCL) also appeared to be developed orally in the early years. Though, this form of folk literary usually denoted for adults, it also widespread in the interest of the children where the elderly people in family or community entrusted to develop the tradition. Emotion and morality are interwoven story-lines usually shared with interesting story plots. Since Indian families appreciate and maintain the shared-family style, where 4 or 5 families usually live under a roof, the oral literary sharing session became a simple necessity calling for an intriguing gathering on daily basis. It has nevertheless further enhanced the development of children's literature in Tamil, and helped the field to flourish and attain a comparable development in par with other literary genres in Tamil (Ambiyum 2).

The beginning point of Malaysian Tamil Children Literature (MTCL) could not be defined accurately; it is often associated with migration of Indian (MI) communities to Malaya¹, which begun about 200 years ago. Southern Indians migrated to Malaya in large number under the initiation of the British government during the late nineteenth century. The journey of MI begun in the late eighteenth century reached its peak at the last quarter of eighteenth and first quarter of nineteenth century before it settled in the early twentieth century. Around 1786 the Indian workers were brought in to work in the sugarcane plantations. The same is witnessed during the 1870's. The trend of MI changed in 1890's and onwards when the British moved from cultivation of sugarcane to rubber. It was learned that the number of Indian workers was 75,000 in 1891, and it gradually increased year after year before it turns to 621,847 in 1931 (Dhandayudham 14). It turned the MI into the third largest group of people with 11.1% of the total population when Malaysia gained her independence. Of the statistics, 85.2% of the majority are Tamil who speaks fluent Tamil (Dhandayudham 14), were from Southern India.

1 Malaysia is known as Malaya until it gains the present title in 1966, with the formation United States of Malaysia. Before 1966, it is known as Malaya. The term Malaysia is used in general to refer the both periods.

Some by-products of the migrants were transferred to Malaya during the migration could not be understated. Some by-products such as their cultural and religious practices, norms and values, along with their language and literary knowledge are a few of them which have along in oral forms. None of them remained the same since then; they have sustained a significant add-on of local essence and flavour, till to a point showing the finer difference with remarkable characteristics. The MTCL, too, has been nurtured in many ways through the efforts of countless people in numerous forms. All of these have turned the field into a rich source of referential modules for children.

1. Children Literature (CL) in Malaysia

MTL is a brand new world, even new is the MTCL. It is even tender in nature with not many noteworthy works, believe many. Unfortunately, the reality remains otherwise. Just like the English version of CL, the TCL has unique contributions as far as its nature, theme and the message are concerned. For past few decades, there have been systematic approaches deployed by selected veteran scholars that have elevated the MTCL into a well-developed stage of attainment. Motivation and encouragement received from a number of parties, especially the Media personals, some talented writers with relevant contributions have subsequently turned the MCL into a contented one. As this information remained scattered and yet been brought together, it gave no proper channel to verify its significance. The present study is aimed at offering a second opinion that MTCL holds significant contributions with its own flavour that produced within the Malaysian context.

It is rather interesting to note the early day development of the MCTL was plagued with many shortcomings. It received less support and encouragements from the locals. Producing and publishing the literature was shattered for not having promising supports and motivation, monetarily and psychologically. This was due to the fact that Indians migrated from southern India to Malaya, then, as hardened labourers trusted for their physical strength and obedient manner¹ in the early-days. They were none other than fortune seekers with non-recognizable academic achievements. Therefore, they paid no much heed to surplus elements but satisfied with rudimental lifestyle¹ and have no high expectation beyond earning, saving and living a rudimentary life, except for a few. A few qualified themselves through self

1 The Indians who were brought into Malaya from Sri Lanka, on the other hand, were educated and well-trained to fill clerical and low-level white-collar jobs, and they did not contribute to the development of Tamil literature in notable level. It was the southern Indians who gained their education here and encouragement here contributed to the development of MTL in general and MTCL, in specific.

and others' motivations, and embarked on a mission of enriching culture, language, and literature, with their surplus efforts. This is what gave birth to MTL and MTCL that present today. It was not a product of an academy or formally formed body of well-wishers.

This study is aimed to offer a comprehensive outlook of MTCL as inclusive as possible. The genre remained understudied domain that not made known publically to Malaysian CL in general despite its contribution in various ways for more than 200 years. This vacuum is somehow given no promising encouragement to study the genre, what's more in capturing its comprehensiveness. The present paper, hence, aimed at giving details of CL characteristics by taking into accounts of the factors gave impetus for its development, alternatively. This is done by looking at the extended version of data collected from a number of sources such as printed books for children, a collection of articles and poems for children, research materials for children and newspaper publications.

2. Rationale

Literature plays a significant role in any community. As clarified by Aristotle, it is known for playing dual roles. One is serving as a tool that purifies the human soul, and other is leading him towards the formation of a noble group of human. At one hand, it is treated as a mirror of society, to reflect the society by registering the events, its norms and values and so on. By absorbing the earlier, it is treated as rendering knowledge to shape and sharp up the society in return, on the other hand. Virtuous literature products tend to create quality reader in exchange, as such it serves as a responsible tool for creating a responsible society. Having known this, social man learned ways to make-up literature, especially through oral tradition since the early-day. So does the children literature begun to grow in the same manner. The MTCL, however, registered a different development chronology that has been overlooked.

The MTCL has registered a steady growth in the last 50 years to contribute immensely to the development of the children's abilities. There were many writers who have been writing different forms of literary works for the Malaysian Indian children in the past 200 years. Both the quantity and the quality of their productions were yet to be verified, as the sorts of its contents and the genre were not studied in whole, due to unavailability of the non-synchronized efforts in recognising them. Along the way, the purpose of productions was also never clarified or justified, as they were meant for children but were made available on the occasional basis to meet the surprising calls from certain parties from time to time (Murasu). The

literature remains scattered without knowing of its importance since they were divided along many differences in terms of timeframes, purposes, and requirements.

Studies show that the CL meant for children used to in-house numerous flexible forms and styles that suit the needs of that category of people. The needs differ from adults' literature. The CL is expected to cater virtue of moral and teaching of morality to nurture children to become valued assets for the nation, indirectly. Children literature has high potential to transform them become a highly potential human being in a country like Malaysia that emphasizes peace and harmony between multicultural communities. As a MCL in whole, the MTCL should be administered carefully to ensure the roleplay of the genre maximally support the nation's aspiration. The current situation does not support this call.

MTCL appeared to have various self-directed needs that were addressed adequately in the forms and ways liked by the children. One of it is the language application. The CL should employ language that is in tandem with children's development, hence, having a friendly and harmonious relationship between literature and the children became necessary, too. As such, preserving language and enriching them with the culture and values of the society became one of the main role-play of CL (Poovannan 345). In the setting of MTCL, this quality within different genres such as poetry, novels, and short stories and so on is not made known in detail (Murasu). Neither proper study verifying what forms of the genre have gained popularity and why, nor detailed articulation of their natures have been made public till now.

The well-wishers were aware of the existence of a few documents here and there in the field of children literature. Bringing them together is an important task for any move not only to details the nature of the MTCL, but also to acknowledge the version of MTCL that has been established. This study offers an alternative, a comprehensive outlook of the literature. This study is intended to offer a comprehensive work, in the end, to match the works of other languages, namely, English, Malay, Chinese and etc., against its contents, quality, and quantity besides knowing the themes and their pattern. Not to deny is the contribution to enrich the MCL, in whole.

3. Development of Children's Tamil Literature in Malaysia

The MTCL seemingly have reached its almost self-regulated completion stage, if it is seen as whole. Using any approach based on selected method or theory may give us an otherwise understanding. This was mainly due to the imbalance growth and development registered throughout different era. The factors enabled its

development and the significant productions resulted from them, in fact, received greater motivation from various impetus. As such, the development throughout the ages could be traced based on 4 main sub-areas;

- i. The significant development/growth of MTCL
- ii. Significance of MTCL productions in the selected genre
- iii. Contribution of poets and their determinations towards MTCL
- iv. MTCL genre productions that meet the need of the children

Ramaiyah, who studied the early day development of Tamil literature in Malaysia before 1978 claimed that the Malaysia version of literature and production trend has no match to anywhere, yet they transmit originality in every form. The strength is received from prosperous growth enjoyed for more than 3 decades and divided them as follow;

- i. The first stage dates from 1946 to 1956
- ii. The second stage starts from 1956 to 1966 and
- iii. The third stage begins from 1966 to 1976. (Ramaiyah 9)

Even though the MTL is acknowledged for inheriting own characteristics that qualified it to be branded as a version by itself, the chronology of its attainments could not be accepted blindly. The different eras pointed by Ramaiyah may offer a little insight to study the significance of MTCL, since the contributions were not regular and consistent. Therefore, MTCL development must be studied based on the different timeframe to discover its comprehensiveness. The following timeline divisions will be used for this purpose;

- i. Early-Day of Indian Arrival (1786 -1945)
- ii. Era Surrounding the Independence of Malaya (1946-1975)
- iii. Momentum Era (1975-2000)
- iv. Contemporary Era (2000-Now)

3.1 Early-Day of Indian Arrival (1786-1945)

Tamil education and its development took place in Malaya, then, offered significant motivation and impetus to the enrichment enjoyed by the Tamil language and the literature during this era. Tamil literature was seen as enjoyed development, as Tamil education begun to stay afoot. The latter is noted for having a profound impact upon the former, and vice versa. The demand arises in the forms of textbooks cater to the rising number of school going children before and after Malaysia gain her independence. The sharp rise of the number of Tamil schools from 122 schools in 1922 (Ramasubbiah 25) to 140 in 1930's to 888 in 1957 (www.indianmalaysian.com/education) also has raised the demand for the textbooks. At that time, however, the supply has never matched evenly in the form of number and quality. This was

later translated as a demanding call for developing new forms of literature, as well.

Though it is not easy to detail the inclination between Tamil education and literature clearly in this era, we could not deny that the necessity of education and its requirements for raising the needs for various literature products in Malaysia. The poems and stories were produced to meet the schoolchildren literary requirements eventually gave rise the number of literary works produced for them. As such, we could claim that calls for the literary texts to support their demands due to the rise in the number of Tamil schools in this era. It is rather at a slow pace.

3.2 Era Surrounding the Independence of Malaya (1946-1975)

The growth of MTCL and Tamil education in Malaysia has a strong positive correlation in this era. The beginning and the development of the Malaysian Tamil Literature, however, remains blur after 1945. It was better known to be acculturations era of two reminiscent, the localized literature and literature form of Indian Schools of Literary Thoughts. Local scholars of the opinion that prominent signs for the growth were seen later after the nation gain her independence, especially after the Tamil education was formalized. Sabib and Krishnan, however, claim that the absolute version of MTL begun somewhere in the mid of 1940's. In contrasts, Dhandhayutham argued that MTL showed greater individualities by reducing a lot of resemblances with that of Indian School of Literary Thought in the 1980's. Of the two, the later seemed to be promising with existing evidence. The development of Tamil education and the contributions of mass media, social institutions, and individuals and so on that came for rescue became visible in the late of 1970's and the beginning of 1980's in Malaysia. The brand new cadre of writers emerged from there came to rescue the field in the latter 1970's when they managed to pave a progressive path for the production of own MTL and MTCL.

The early day development enjoyed by the TL usually captured using various ways. Ramaiyah of the opinion that the first phase should be noted as the beginning era the Malaysian Tamil literature's trajectory. The first phase of the development should be limited to the early 10 years, from 1946 to 1956, he stressed. However, for the present study we have extended the time period of the current period to 1975 as the literatures published during these duration paid great due in covering social milieu and imperfect living scenario filled with scarcity, poverty, illness and confinement in a state of misery of the Indians in Malaya plantations, argued Krishnan (49). A few focused on writing as the education they have earned slightly hurt their minds in this era. Their writing went along the way of capturing the misery they faced in Malaya. With support from local newspapers and encouragements from selected individuals, a new band of writers *Somasanma*, *Murasu Nedumaran*,

Kavimathithasan, S. Velusamy, Valarmathi, Murugaiyan, M. Seenivasan, Maithi, R. Karthigesu, Anvar, Kayem, Kalaichelvan, K. Krishnan, Tangkak Tamil Panan, Asangani, Sinnaiya, Maithi Sultan, Thinaratchagi, Segaran, A. Subramaniam and others (Ramaiyah 22) merged to nurture the field.

The increase in the application of Tamil language in Malaysia, both the written and spoken, owes much of it's due to the uprising of Tamil Education and printing media during the era. As the number of 'little' educated people increased, the number of mass media responded positively to the demand for literary works as well. Newspapers and magazines published during this era, eventually, welcomed writings from the public. Even though the printing business was controlled by Tamil Muslims, better known as *Jawi Peranakan*, they never yielded any obstacles to the literary development in Malaya. The increase in the readers' number and increased space for writings gave significant motivation to the development of Tamil language and literature works (Krishnan 189), in return. Nevertheless, the quality of these literary works remained sub-standard and room for perfections were simply enormous (Krishnan 189). One main reason for the shortcoming was that most of the Tamil literature produced by the locals resembles the genre, style and thematic patterns explored by the scholars from Indian Literary School of Thought. Local literary productions were seen as a by-product without much of localities' essence. The same was witnessed within MTCL.

A new trend has begun to emerge after the end of Second World War. Local writers have had various issues and topics to discuss from then, as the Japanese occupation has left a lot of memories. Among them, the Indian National Army movement and the connection between Subhas Chandra Bosh remained top in the list. The socio-economic milieu with poverty-stricken living condition of locals during the Japanese occupation and the declaration Emergency Period thereafter were among the other topics received serious attention among the writers (Ramaiyah 13)¹. The motivation derived from these factors shown the rise of a group of writers with substantive works marking the beginning point of time to welcome serious yet significant literary works in Malaya in Tamil. They remain as monumental works depicting the characteristics of Malaysian Indians' cultural wealth. The writers ventured to produce literary works for the locals by the locals (Ramaiyah 13).

The development of Tamil literature in Malaya was dull and inactive in the second phase compared to the earlier. There were not many scholarly laden

1 Although there are forms of Tamil literature since 1887, most of the literary works in the form of short stories, novels and poems are the results of the Tamil people who have been educated in Tamil Nadu. When they migrated to Malaya for a business, they were also involved in the writing arena and succeeded in producing literary works (Ramaiyah 13).

intellectual works produced in this era. A limited number of works with restricted scopes showed no clear direction of the CL headway, therefore. Authors working during this era showed no extended passion for generating new or value-added forms of literary exercises aimed at enhancing the MTL. As the league of the writers remained the same, the reflection is seen within the literary forms, as well. Writers such as *Murasu Nedumaran, I. Ulaganathan, I. Ilavalaghu, Kaarakkilaar, Vaaninesan, Saratha, A. Sengkutuvan, K. Velusamy, K. Thirumarasu, S. Vadivel, Tamil Chelvan, Kathirvelan* and *others* (Ramaiyah 23) contributed immensely during this era. Of the list, a few belong to the earlier stage, too.

This era witnessed another significant development in education. The development of primary, secondary and tertiary level Tamil education entered another level with various opportunities to produce the quality literary works in general, and children literature, in specific. In return, their efforts paid off in establishing very own form of Tamil literature. This was, indeed, added with supports of local philanthropists subsequently allowed the MTCL domain reached its near maturity phase and begun its journey towards perfection.

Yet, this era does witness some innovative productions differ in the spectrum of thematic elements touched in compared to the earlier era. The motivation for this development came from an exclusive source belonging to this era, the Tamil Youth Bell Club and their activities. The Club has been organizing nationwide talent stirring programmes among the youngsters in Malaya that aim at promoting the Tamil language and elevate its status. One significant effort is the training for the youths to produced quality short-stories. All these have made the era a special and different from the earlier and the latter, the third stage.

3.3 Momentum Era (1975-2000)

Unlike the earlier two eras, the third stage is considered as a transition era with promising development noted in two ways. One is the development seen the type of literature, and the other is in the number of scholars joined to enrich the domain. Besides of maintaining the continuity of the earlier two stages, the present one inspired and assisted by the development of printed media, the magazines and newspapers. Available vast opportunities welcomed new writers to join hand in enriching the genre; this call was anticipated by the scholars belong to the previous stages. The promising environment turned the CL production saw a twist in Malaysia. It emerged as an extended era with substantial differences giving an exclusive platform for writers to enrich the era with short-stories, developing an eschewed trend. A few scholars belong to the earlier stage and a few of new, namely, *S. Sokkalinmggam, Paavai, S. Muthusamy, S. Subhatthira Devi, P.K.*

Shanmugam, Neelaveni, Veerasingam, Poongavanam, Jeganathan, Anbhu Chelvan, S. Velusamy, Somasanma, Devi, Somasanma, Kannaphiran, and others joined the league to enrich the genre says Ramaiyah (23).

Most of the second generation authors provided opportunities for the third generation authors to participate in the producing the Tamil literary works. These authors have filled the CL of the era with heavy subject matters, specifically for matured children. Though noted for having a lot of similarities with the previous one, the literary works of the era showed a slight difference. They took the era to a maturity level, in term of the thematic selection and the quality, believes (Krishanan 190). During this era, besides the Tamil education, parallel development of mass media joined force in giving impetus for the TL and MCTL growth. The development of the mass media industry and the contributions made towards the MTCL will be discussed shortly.

3.4 Contemporary Era (2000-Now)

The present-day development of MTCL is well advanced, but the quality and quantity are not, compared to earlier eras. Tamil CL is still plagued with the scarcity of creativity and critical thinking. Hence, the achievement could not be claimed to be comprehensive and in parallel to that of achieved by the other languages in Malaysia such as Malay, Chinese, and English. It has been fifteen years since the last proper work produced in its whole for children in Tamil. All we could see in this era are the isolated productions within inconsistent interval produced by veteran writers belong to previous eras. The genre seemed to experience dry spell as the present-day young and profound writers paid no heed to the needs and interested to develop the genre to the next level.

The well-developed mass media industry in Malaysia appeared to be the saviour of MTCL, today. It has developed a new trend, the so-called 'Peer-assisted-Trend'. The magazines, newspapers and the radio station (government controlled) were still protracting their inherited responsibility. With dedicated column and broadcasting hours, these industries still held up the light of hope for its growth. Interestingly, their venture has produced a significant upcoming trend, where the school goers become the contributors for the genre. It let the task now been taken up by the youngsters, children as young as 5 to 15 years old, instead of the veterans producing a highly creative and critically developed piece of write-up. In this way, the mass-media controlling bodies have striven to revive the genre with the help of limited manpower and financial wastage, who serve as the gate-keeper aiming at keeping up the quality of the literary productions of the youngsters met minimal publication standard. The trend which could be termed as 'Peer-assisted-

Trend' received overwhelming support from both, the writers and readers, too. This significant characteristic keeps the genre grow, at least, within its own standard.

4. Media Contribution in the Development of MTCL

In another development, besides Tamil education, the gradually developed Tamil Media has made a significant contribution to the development of MTCL, too. The development of Tamil language and literature in Malaysia seemed to be closely linked to the role of local newspapers and magazines, as well. The authors have had opportunities to publish their works and gain recognition. Sometimes they were traded with encouraging commentaries as ways to correct themselves. The newspapers and magazines became important platforms for accommodating the creative works of local writers in this way. Both mediums have worked in hand to hand in producing inspirational literature in Malaysia. Numerous local newspapers, magazines and radio broadcasting joined the league in promoting the genre, in specific and MTL in general.

4.1 Role of Local Newspapers

Newspaper industry¹ has been the backbone of Tamil language and literacy development in Malaysia. The industry has made noteworthy contributions to uplift the status quo of Tamil language and literature through various initiatives and in a different era. *Tamil Murasu* (July 6, 1935), *Malaya Nanban*, *Kalanjiyam*, *Jananayagam*, *Sanggamani*, and *Nesan Village* are few of which have made significant contributions by offering avenues to nurture the talent of the new writers and allow them to share their thoughts. A well-known Tamil writer, *Ko. Saranggabani* is one of the pioneers who is always remembered in the field of Tamil Literature and its development in Malaysia. Besides, The *Sanggamani*, a newspaper known as union voice, published by the National Union of Plantation Workers, it carries good implications on the working class of the Tamil community and their writings. It encouraged the creation of high-quality creative works from proficient writers who settled within plantations (Krishnan 195).

There are two 'strategic movements' deserve highlights in adding added prosperity to the development of Tamil literature in Malaysia. One is a special class, so-called a story class by the *Tamil Nesan* in the mid of 1960's, and the other is inceptions of Tamil Youth Bell Clubs by Tamil Murasu. Two local figures, *Suba*

1 *Navaneetham*, *Tamiltonan*, *Samudaya Solian*, *Baratha Mithiran*, *Inba Nilaiyam*, *Puthu Yugam*, *Travida Kesari*, *Tamil Murasu*, *Baratha Nesan*, *Janma Earth* and *Tamil Kodi*. In addition, in 1923 a prominent and highly respected newspaper was born in the development of Tamil literature in Malaya, *Tamil Nesan*. This newspaper is one of the oldest newspapers and still in the market until now (Krishnan 193).

Narayanan and *Bairoji Narayanan* took initiatives to provide encouragement and guidance to young writers to produce quality stories (Subramaniam 315) through special classes. The return was promising; it helped to sharp and unleashes the talents of young writers, subsequently gave a new dimension for the development of MTL. This was followed with *Rasanai Vaguppu* or Author Counsellor (Karthigesu 4) that offered room for young writers on the creative writing techniques to produce high-quality creative works. In addition to these, Student Hall of the *Tamil Club Murasu Club* which was established on July 6, 1953, encouraged the publication of their works, subsequently favoured a formation of a new generation creative authors (Ramaiyah 28).

In another development, *Murasu Tamil Bell Club* was formed by *Murasu Newspaper* to boost the encouragement among the youths towards Tamil. The *Tamil Bell Club Murasu*, indeed, succeeded in forming and building a lineage of charismatic and calibre writers in the country. In line with this, the *Murasu Tamil* newspaper issued a badge to writers who succeeded in producing new literary genres. Badge issuance as a token of appreciation and support to the writers to continue to produce good writings remained as good motivation for the new writers. Although it appears to be a coercion, it is seen as a genuine effort to preserve and strengthen the writing culture among young writers. It also served as the catalyst for the establishment of the Tamil Youth Bell Club at state and national level, a hardened cadre of Tamil preserving youths (Dhandayutham 15). Results were seen from the borne of some successful writers in the field like *Somasanma*, *Murasu Nedumaran*, *Kavimathithasan*, *Velusamy*, *Kaverinathan*, *Kaliyap Perumal*, *Kampar Kanimoli*, *Anbananthan*, *Poonmudi*, and *Valarmathi*. All of these figures are noted for their contributions of children's work, as well as attracting children to read and appreciate their quotes (Dhandayutham 15).

In support to heighten the MCTL quality, *Tamil Nesan* and *Tamil Malar*¹ newspapers ventured in a new platform. In 1963, *Tamil Nesan* issued a special magazine for children, *Sirubar Aranggam*. It published children's contributions and nurtured them. *Sirubar Aranggam*'s first magazine was published on February 5, 1964 with the production of poets and writers involved in the production of creative works for children. In 1965, the *Malai Nadu* newspaper also contributed to the development of children's Tamil literature by producing special editions for children covering four pages with a variety of children's Tamil literary genres. Newspapers

1 *Tamil Malar* newspaper operating in Singapore successfully issued a special edition on Sundays for children known as *Sirubar Peravai*. Various literary stories of children of Tamil literature, children's poems and discourses are published in the edition.

like *Tamil Nesan*, *Thina Mani* and *Tamil Osai* have issued special editions for children every Monday. All these noble efforts of the newspapers have directly and indirectly assisted the development of Tamil children's literature in Malaysia.

4.2 Role of Local Magazines

Local Tamil magazines also played a significant role in the development of MTL, and often treated as an important medium in preserving and developing literary ground in this country (Krishnan 202). Magazines were published as volumes and focused on short stories contributions before the Second World War. The scenario seemed to remain same till the 1960's, before numerous magazines mushroomed in the favour of local Tamil readers (Ramaiyah 67)¹. Magazines such as *Makkal Mandram*, *Ethioli*, *Makkal Murasu*, *Malai Mogini*, *Muthamil*, *Nanban*, *Nara Malaya*, *Narumanam*, *Paavai*, *Senthamil*, *Silambu*, *Arumbu*, *Iilathiyam*, *Pasa Malar*, *Tamil Mani*, *Vetri*, *Annai*, *Aruvi*, *Kumari*, *Koottaravu*, *Mutthamil Ithai*, *Sangga Mulakkam*, *Sengkathir*, *Thamarai*, *Tamil Poongga*, *Malai Arasan*, *Kavalan*, *Nermai Kural*, *Bakthan Village*, *Theechudar*, *Thennaruvi*, *Theeni*, *Thondan*, *Jaya Malaysia*, *Thirumagal* and *Jaya Perhigai* (Krishnan 202) join the rank of the long list. These magazines widened up call for literature with local essence. Among them, the children literature too gained due interest.

The first children magazine in Malaysia was *Manavar Poonga*, which was published in 1956. The editor M. Abdul Latif, who is also an experienced, knowledgeable and talented writer, has successfully presented various works for children. It served as a child-like magazine with captivating writings and entertaining aspects. Variety of stories, discourses, poems and dramas that aimed at providing information and knowledge to children remained an added factor for the attraction. Besides, it offered room for the young to share experiences about their life's success. For these significant contributions, Ramaiyah (67-68)², a popular veteran in the world of Tamil literature in Malaysia, crowns it as the first quality magazine that devoted solely for the children in Malaysia. Magazines with same motivation such as *Manavan*, *Annai*, *Manavar Ulagam* were published, but all

1 In 1960s numerous magazines mushroomed (Ramaiyah 67). Magazines such as *Makkal Mandram*, *Ethioli*, *Makkal Murasu*, *Malai Mogini*, *Muthamil*, *Nanban*, *Nara Malaya*, *Narumanam*, *Paavai*, *Senthamil*, *Silambu*, *Arumbu*, *Iilathiyam*, *Pasa Malar*, *Tamil Mani*, *Vetri*, *Annai*, *Aruvi*, *Kumari*, *Koottaravu*, *Mutthamil Ithai*, *Sangga Mulakkam*, *Sengkathir*, *Thamarai*, *Tamil Poongga*, *Malai Arasan*, *Kavalan*, *Nermai Kural*, *Bakthan Village*, *Theechudar*, *Thennaruvi*, *Theeni*, *Thondan*, *Jaya Malaysia*, *Thirumagal* and *Jaya Perhigai* are a few of them. In the meantime, in Tamil Nadu, *Paapa Malar*, *Anil*, *Ambulimama*, *Sanggu*, *Kannan* and *Balar Malar* are among the children's magazines that made significant contributions to the development of Tamil children's literature. (Krishnan 202).

2 This magazine short-lived and stopped its production within few years (Ramaiyah 67).

of them have had a short life span of time. Of all, *Thirumagal* was of significant, published for the younger generation in the Tamil schools since 1969. Compact contents with various literary quotes and stories were attractions to readers to stay glued to it. Among the others, it included short stories, essays, Tamil language lessons, Tamil Classical Literature, Malay Language Courses, and a provision to include students' works. Encouragements also are given in the forms of short story and essay writing competitions (Krishnan 207).

In addition to this, there are two children magazines, *Kuyil*, and *Mayil* begun their operations in 1986 and 1992, respectively, published by K. Selvarajoo and Sothinathan, in order. These magazines are still in the market and distributed to children in the Tamil schools in nationwide. Both focus on publishing various children's literary genres of literature. Question and answer section is given priority, as it provides space and experience for children to ask and find the answer (Ramaiyah 67). Both the *Mayil* and *Kuyil* are playing significant roles in preserving Tamil children's literature in present-day Malaysia. In 2010, another magazine, *Chutti Mayil*, was published as a stimulus for children. The pure efforts of *Chutti Mayil* have made history in returning and preserving the children's literary genre in Malaysia.

In the meantime, the child poets took their own initiatives in order to record the products they produced. There were very few books published specifically for children. Interests and celebrations of the local community in buying and reading children's products are limited. Hence, there is a limitation of children's literary genre in Malaysia (Murasu 57). Such a cold attitude has become a barrier to the development of MTCL. Nevertheless, magazines are also considered to be an important platform in cultivating the development MTCL. The works published in these magazines have notable quality (Murasu 60).

4.3 Role of Radio in Children's Tamil Literature Development

MTCL development owes significantly to the broadcasting industry in Malaysia. In the early stages, the development of Tamil children's literature in Malaysia received great assistance and influence from broadcasting contributions from Singapore radio station. An educational radio broadcasting bureau was formed in Kuala Lumpur in the mid of 1960's, prior to the establishment, the Singapore Radio station contributed significantly to uplift the genre (Murasu 184), where it welcomed and aired the excerpt of the poem meant for children from local and abroad poets. Excerpt of the well-known poets such as *A. Valliyappa*, *Thanigai Ulaganathan*, and *Thamilannal* have topped the selection in reviving the children's Tamil literature in Malaysia in the 1960's, says Murasu Nedumaran.

It was in 1966 when the educational radio broadcasting of own began its operation in Peninsular Malaysia. Various Tamil-based literary programmes begun to adorn the special educational segment (Murasu 184) and consequently raised the demand for new and local productions. It favoured spurring its development in Malaysia compared to Singapore for this very reason. About 95% of the poems, stories, discourses and plays written by the locals were given priority in its broadcasting (Murasu 185). The same literature was documented and distributed to schools as mean to enhance its captivity, and appreciate its essence in-depth. As such the children kinds of literature became well-accepted assets.

Along the development, the genre also gave way for the birth of a new cadre of poets, who actively involved in this spectrum. Leading the array of poets is *Murasu Nedumaran* and the rest are namely *Ponmudi*, *Thambhai Muniandy*, *Jawi Subramaniam*, *MA Santhiran*, *Parithi*, *Mathithasan*, *K. Kaliyapperumal*, *Somasanna*, *N. Mageswary*, *R. Dhandayutham*, *Velusamy* and so on. By the mid-1980s, an educational broadcasting program titled *Phadi Palakuvom* received favourable response among the children, which allow the children join hand to recite and enjoy the musical performance assisted by trained adults (Murasu 189)¹. Along the line, programmes like *Sirubar Malar* and *Chellame Selvame* also targeted for the children. The latter still enjoys weekly broadcasting on Saturdays at 2.00pm in *Minnal FM*, RTM. Therefore, the role and contribution of broadcasting media in the development of MTCL is treated as a great leaping stone.

5. Discussion

In the foregoing, a great deal of interest has been taken to display the characteristics of the MTCL in detail. It is learned that the tradition once was brought in as a merely shared version. Later developments encouraged local enthusiasts to produce and develop their own trend. The history of borrowing Indian essences has depleted, but the history self-production emphasizing local Malaysia essences were initiated. The genre has begun to establish well in the soil of Malaysia due to serious motivation and encouragement received from various parties added with the high demand for such self-marked production.

With the firm founding, various themes have explored and high lightened

1 There is a special program for children planned and broadcasted on the radio, so-called Palani Mama (Palani Uncle), for thirty minutes on Saturdays every week. It was conducted by Associate Professor V. M. Palaniyappan from the Faculty of Science, University of Malaya. Since 1962, about 1300 stories have been successfully communicated through this special radio for children. His charming voice with humorous jokes attracted children. He will also ask questions to stimulate the thinking and application of teaching at the end of the story (Murasu 189).

within the genre in more than one form of literature. Yet, all of those themes show a core, where they are related to developing the morality, mental and physical strength of the children from birth with aiming at making him/her become a benevolent person to self and community. We discovered that it is started as early as tender years using lullaby (*thalattu poetry*), one of the most ancient genres within children literature in Tamil that pondered with kindness, caring, sharing and love. This kind of literary works is rich with the arrangement of appreciable rhythm and sound that attract the child and glue to the singing voice, usually the mother. Murasu (283) claims that besides this it helps the parents to keep their children entertained, it also keeps their parent-children relational obligations were thoroughly demonstrated. Since ancient times, mothers and fathers have emphasized the importance of lullaby and exposed their children to various forms of poems with various rhythms that attract and control the emotions and minds of children, he added. It helps them to overcome sad and rejoices them. Meanwhile, the children poetry remains as a bridging gap entity that connects children's minds by distributing a variety of information, teaching, and values.

The poems for children, on the other hand, appeared to be an appropriate and effective medium for channelling useful messages to them. Children may be lost concentration with reading when face with non-readable information. Most of this ease to sing poems was not only entertaining the children with the lines laden with information and messages but also rejoice them. Singing makes those happy, active, and enthusiastic instigate involvement. Fun, cheerfulness, excitement and excitement filled activities as such make them entertained, in whole. This is another significant characteristic of MTCL.

Besides, the study also discovered that discourse or essay and short stories also make up part of the literary heritage of MTCL. Literary productions that rich in moral and teaching elements were aimed at mental, physical and emotional development were found in large quantity. They were used to guide them to achieve the heights of success. Having said this, the writers used the forms of literature to carefully mould the precious source of the nation, the children. While ensuring the children enjoy rights to be entertained, they interwoven message and information need to be shared, very carefully.

“Peer-assist-Trend” is another characteristic of MTCL. As has been shown earlier, this phenomenon has significantly altered the trend of children literature development in Tamil. Literary production was seen from children as young as 5 years old to enrich the genre. The senior and the pioneer children became role-models for the upcoming youngsters with writing enthusiasm. Selected columns

in the available Mass Medias, printed and broadcasting became main port of harbour for these sort of literature of which quality and quantity could not be undermined. As such, the MTCL is progressing well in a specific manner.

Conclusion

This paper has presented an overview of MTCL. It has shown how the literature has been brought in, imitated and developed to reach a status to be termed as its current level. In doing so, contributions made by significant poets were touched and discussed. It also has explained how the genre has been maintained, imitated and developed justly to verify that MTCL has its class but tender in nature and needs for advancement were still many. In this line, this study must be admitted as a precursor; there are still a lot needs to be done.

The Malaysian Tamil Children Literature has its own historical chronology and significances. At one point, it was established as oral literature or people literary, developed and changed with rapid growth enjoyed through various ways and personals. Compared to the earlier stage, in the latter stage and present-day, the genre is found within many forms of publications as well, especially in printed and electronic platforms. Among them, book versions became a common reading material and have been accepted as authoritative forms that carve and shape the thinking of children. All of these still remain tender in nature even after experiencing 200 years of development, indeed.

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