Tamil Nadu Quick Facts



Tamil Nadu is home to a large number of Hindu temples.The state has **38,615 temples**, which is more than any other state in India! Some important temples are: Meenakshi Temple in Madurai, Sri Ranganathaswamy temple in Srirangam, Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur, the Ramanathaswamy Temple in Rameswaram and the Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram (built in 7th century!).



Bharatanatyam is a classical dance form that originated in Tamil Nadu. It is one of the oldest and most popular dance forms in India. Hand gestures and footwork, as well as expressive facial expressions, are some of the characteristics of this dance form.



Silambam is an Indian martial art that emerged in Tamil Nadu around 1000 BCE.. The earliest accounts of the Silambam game may be found in Tamil Sangam literature.It's a martial art with a history of using weapons. The game is often played on a level, hard surface with bamboo sticks that are the same length as the participants' heights. There are 18 different types of footwork in all in this martial art.

Asia Society is dedicated to bringing family and friends together to make meaningful connections and experience Asian culture hands-on. Every year, we host family days that feature performances, storytelling, arts and crafts, educational workshops, and games for guests of all ages to learn more about Asian holidays and traditions. For more information about family programs please visit: https://asiasociety.org/new-york and follow us on social media as @asiasociety (Instagram and Facebook) and @asiasocietyny (Twitter).

ASIA SOCIETY
PRESENTS

FAMILY DAY

Puthandu: A Tamil New Year Celebration

Saturday, 22 April, 2023
2:00 PM–4:00 PM



Information & Activity Sheet

Welcome to the first Tamil New year celebration in a museum! Let us wish each other *Puthandu Varthakal*! In the Tamil language *Puthandu* stands for 'new' and *Varthakal* stands for 'wishes'. Let us explore the uniqueness of Tamil culture and its many Hindu Dharmic values through the auditorium performances, creative arts and crafts upstairs and, this Activity Sheet!

Today's List of Events

LILA ACHESOM WALLACE AUDITORIUM
2:00 - 3:00 PM

- Music, poetry and jazz by singer Shalini Lakshmi and Manu Koch
- Literature review & book talk by author Padma Venkatraman
- Parai drum ensemble by NY Parai Esai Troupe

ROSE CONFERENCE HALL (8TH FLOOR)
3:00 - 4:00 PM

- Learn to make ritual ephemeral art of Kolam
- Paper craft inspired by the palm leaf basket weavers of Chettinad
- Embrace the green practice of Manjapais and decorate them
- Paint your forehead and understand the reason behind Hindu forehead markings
- Learn to play age-old cowrie shell games
- Taste and learn to make south Indian rice and lentil-based snacks
- Take pictures in our unique photo-booth that will transcend you in time
- Book signing by author Padma Venkatraman

What is a Kalasha?



A *kalasha* is placed in all important Hindu occasions like festivals, house warming, wedding and daily worship. It is usually a brass or earthen pot filled with water, with a red or white thread tied around the neck of the pot or all around it and topped with a coconut and mango leaves. For a Hindu, *kalasha* **symbolizes the creative energy behind the universe**. The leaves and coconut represent creation. The thread represents the love that 'binds' all in creation. Water represents life that exists in all inert objects and sentient beings. The waters of the kalasha are sprinkled over the heads of the devotees as a blessing and around the house to sanctify all.

- Swamini Vimalananda



The Hindu Dharmic practice encourages one to tie fresh mango leaves outside their homes during festivals and functions. The scientific reasoning behind this is that mango leaves continue to release oxygen for couple of days even after they are cut and the leaves have **anti-bacterial properties** which does not allow for vermin to attack it. Hence they act as natural disinfectants and helps keep the air pure.

Aksarā's mission is to bring to the forefront traditional and contemporary ideas and thoughts about Indian culture in creative and meaningful ways. Aksarā designs and develops Indian cultural events, creative workshops and curriculums that aim to create a deeper cultural learning. To learn more about us please visit www.aksara.us and follow us on social media as @aksara_us (Instagram and Twitter) and @aksara (on Facebook)..

Brochure content and design by Yellopsot Designs, New York

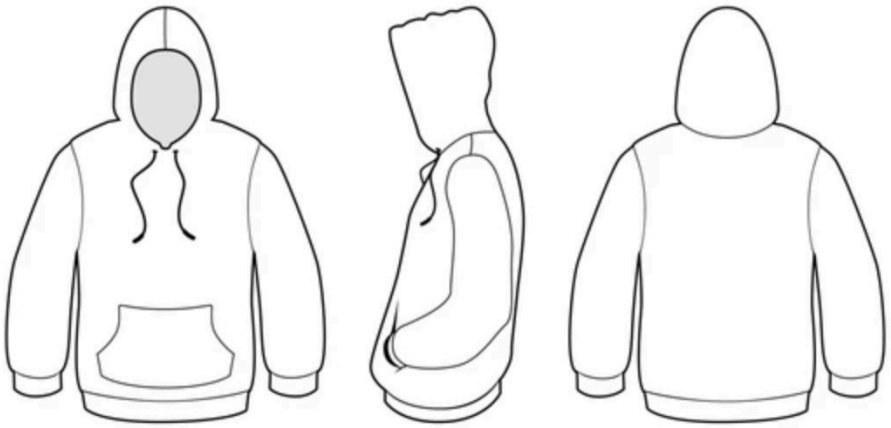
A Carpet With a Political History



Bhavani Jamakkalam (Jama-kka-lam) carpets of Tamil Nadu were first created and marketed in the late 19th century. They were a retaliation to and in competition with British-made textiles, which had flooded the markets. Bhavani village in Erode district is where Jamakkalam originated and was first woven by the weaver community called **jangamars**. A very popular Swedish home furnishing brand has been importing Bhavani Jamakkalams, for sale across its stores, since the 90s! These carpets are very high on utilitarian value and are used as prayer mats, dining mats and as seating mats for auspicious social gatherings.

Let us design our own Jamakkalam hoodie!

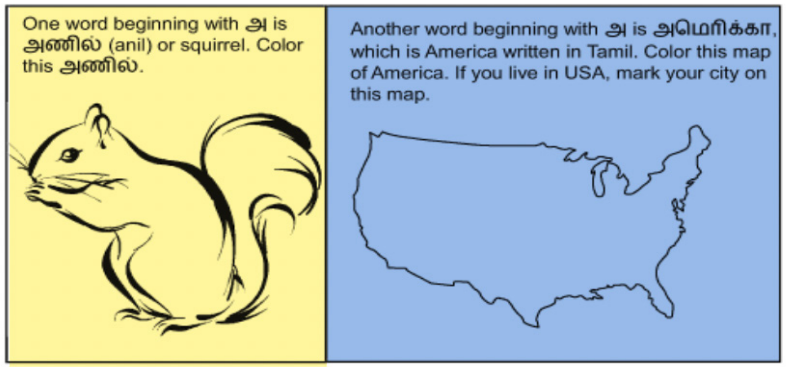
- Use inspirations from the above design, form and color.
- Would your hoodie represent any personal or political statement?
- Give your hoodie a name. And don't forget to attribute your design inspiration to the jangamars weavers of Tamil Nadu.

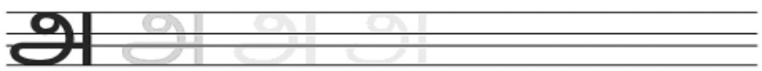


The Tamil Language

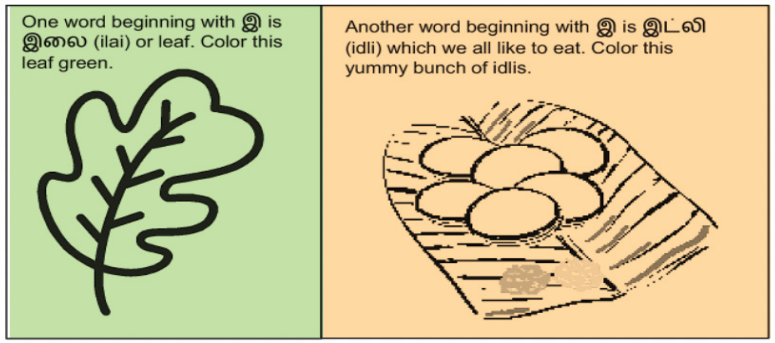
Tamil is a **Dravidian language** spoken by the Tamil people in South Asia and by Indians in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. Tamil is one of the longest-surviving classical languages of India. A classical language is any language with an independent literary tradition and a large and ancient body of written literature. Recorded Tamil literature has been documented for over 2000 years. The earliest period of Tamil literature, Sangam literature, is dated from c. 300 BC until AD 300.

Let us learn the first letter of Tamil language:





Try making the letter அ on your own.





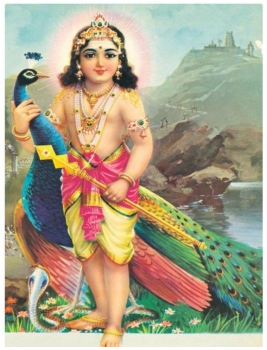
Try making the letter இ on your own.



Arunagirinaadhar was a Tamil saint-poet who lived during the 15th century in Tamil Nadu, India. **Thiruppugal** is one of his major works. They comprise of songs dedicated to Lord Muruga, the son of Shiva and the the Hindu god of war. It is considered one of the central works of medieval Tamil literature, both for its poetical and musical qualities, and for its religious, moral and philosophical content.

Divine Weapon & Divine Consort

Every Hindu god is associated with a divine weapon and a divine animal that acts as the god's consort. **Lord Muruga**'s divine weapon is the Vel a 'spear' and his divine consort is the peacock.



Use the box to draw your divine weapon and divine consort! Think deeper on why you chose them.

Avvaiyar



Avvaiyar was the title of more than one female poet who were active during different periods of Tamil literature. Among them, the first Avvaiyar lived during the Sangam period (c. 3rd century BCE). The second Avvaiyar during the reign of the Chola dynasty in the tenth century. The third Avvaiyar is the most widely known for her **Aathichoodi**, a collection of single-line quotations organized in alphabetical order. There are 109 of these sacred lines which include insightful quotes expressed in simple Tamil words. It aims to inculcate good habits, discipline and doing good deeds. Avvaiyar is often imagined as an old and intelligent lady by Tamil people.

அ	அறம் செய்ய விரும்பு	Intend to do the right deeds.
ஆ	ஆறுவது சினம்	The nature of anger is to subside.
இ	இயல்வது கரவேல்	Help others as much as you can.

Vairamuthu Ramasamy



Vairamuthu Ramasamy (born 13 July 1953) is a renowned Indian **lyricist, poet, and novelist** working in the Tamil film industry. So far he has written over 7,500 songs and poems and 37 books which has won him seven National Awards. What is unusual and profound about his work is that he uses several phrases, similes, metaphors and aphorisms from the 2,100 years old Sangam Tamil literature, in his works. The hundreds of Tamil movie songs The Sangam age roughly extends between 300 BC and 300 AD.

Thiruvalluvar & Couplets



Thiruvalluvar , is a celebrated Tamil poet-saint and philosopher who flourished around 1st century BC or 6th century AD). He is well known for his work **Tirukkural** meaning 'Sacred Couplets', considered a masterpiece of human thought, compared in India and abroad to the Bible, John Milton's Paradise Lost, and the works of Plato. These couplets were on ethics, political and economical matters, and love.

Piravi Perungadal Neendhuvar Neendhaar
Iraivan Adi Seraadhaar

The people who hope to cross the ocean of Samsara (the Hindu scriptures equate the samsara, the cycle of birth and death, to an ocean) are those who surrender to God. - Thiruvalluvar

Let us try writing a poetry couplet. A couplet is a pair of successive rhyming lines, usually of the same length and meter and they complete one thought.

Write a couplet using the words: APRIL and MAPLE

_____

_____

Write a couplet using the words: HILL and MILL

_____

_____

Write a couplet using the words: COW and MEOW

_____

_____

Now modify these three couplets so that they go together and can make an entire poem!

The Singing Saints of South India



Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri were referred to as the Trinity of Carnatic Music for their outstanding compositions in the 18th century that created a new era in the history of Carnatic music. The trio musicians composed new ragas and talas, and had a remarkable ability to introduce innovations within the same raga. "For them music was a spiritual path, an ascent to higher consciousness and moksha", says LA vocalist Lakshmi Subramanian. Carnatic music evolved from ancient Hindu traditions and was relatively unaffected by the Arab and Iranian influences, since the 12th century, as a result of the Islamic conquest of the north, which have characterized the Hindustani music of northern India.

To know more about these saints:

YouTube Watch Smt. Vishaka Hari's Thyagaraja Hrudayam series in Tamil with English subtitles.

YouTube Listen to the blending of Western melodies with Sanskrit lyrics in Muthuswami Dikshitar's nottuswara composition "Shyamale Meenakshi," sung by young Sooryanarayanan.

YouTube Enjoy anecdotes from Shyana Shastri's life and listen to his compositions on the veena with Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh.

- Hinduism Today



Tamil Nadu, located in the southeastern region of India, is a coastal state popular for its rich culture and heritage. From its temples to its art and cuisine, Tamil Nadu is a culturally-rich state. It is also one of the most industrialized states in India, with a thriving economy.

See if you can locate the three major ports of Tamil Nadu:

- ☐ Chennai
- ☐ Ennore
- ☐ Thoothukudi

Shalini Lakshmi



Shalini Lakshmi is a phenomenally talented singer whose unique and evocative singing combines Carnatic, Hindustani, Rock, R&B, Jazz, and Operatic singing styles. Vintage Guitar Magazine praised her singing, saying, "Shalini Lakshmi adds luster" in Prasanna's album All Terrain Guitar. Shalini recorded with A. R. Rahman singing the title track for the Hollywood film "Hundred-Foot Journey." She has also recorded Prasanna's acclaimed score for the Indian National Award-winning blockbuster Tamil film Vazhakku Enn 18/9. Four-time Grammy Award-winning singer/bassist Esperanza Spalding invited Shalini to premiere her original song Vapor at the prestigious Newport Jazz Festival. She has also recorded a song for noted Cannes film festival-winning composer Pierre Van Dormael for the French film Essaye Moi by Pierre Francois Martin. Social media handler **@raga_chants** (Instagram).

Padma Venkatraman



Padma Venkatraman is the author of Born Behind Bars, The Bridge Home, A Time to Dance, Island's End, and Climbing the Stairs. She is the winner of a WNDB Walter Dean Myers Award, Golden Kite Award, Crystal Kite Award, two Nerdy Book Awards, two Paterson Prizes, two Julia Ward Howe awards, three South Asia Book Awards, and many other awards and honors. Her novels have been shortlisted for over 20 state awards, received over 20 starred reviews, and appeared on numerous best-book lists. She has presented keynote addresses, conducted writing workshops, and attended festivals and conferences worldwide. She is the founder of www.diverseverse.com and www.authorstakeaction.com. Visit her at www.padmavenkatraman.com. Social media handlers **@padmatv** (Twitter); **@venkatraman.padma** (Instagram, Facebook).

NY Parai Esai Troupe





NY Parai Esai Troupe is a group of passionate drummers from Long Island, NY. They are a multigenerational group of players who range from high schoolers to older adults. They are also a troupe of both men and women. NY Parai Esai Troupe's sole mission is to bring to light the sounds of this musical instrument which symbolizes the heart of Tamil culture. This musical instrument has never got the recognition it needed to in India and abroad. The parai drum has many as 156 traditional drum beats or *adi* for different purposes and designating different emotions.

Manu Koch



Born in Baar, Switzerland, Koch studied classical piano from age 6 and tenor saxophone at age 18 while also taking courses at the Jazz School Lucerne. In 1993 he attended Berklee College of Music in Boston. His Swiss upbringing, a home base in the US for 25 years, and having resided in Brazil, India and China (Hong Kong) for extended amounts of time have formed his perception of the world and sense of sound as much as his work with over 100 artists, bands and projects throughout his professional career. In his new album Transit Net, set for worldwide digital release on November 26th 2021, Manu is joined by 21 musicians of 14 nationalities and expands on what Filtron M sounds and looks like. Visit him at www.allaboutjazz.com/musicians/manu-koch/