

Give us a brief of your profile, qualification (current and ongoing) and career path.

Profile	Educational background	Career path
<p>Sandana Vellien</p> <p>The eldest of 3 children.</p> <p>Married with Rajen Vellien.</p> <p>2 sons- Nayam 9 years old, Pajhane 6 years old.</p>	<p>Primary schooling at the Beau Vallon Govt School.</p> <p>Student of Loreto College Mahebourg (Form I- VI)</p> <p>Holder of Teachers' Certificate Primary (MIE & MGI)</p> <p>Holder of Diploma in Tamil Studies (MGI)</p> <p>Holder of BA Tamil – Annamalai University.</p> <p>Holder of MA Tamil - Annamalai University</p> <p>MA Education – Brighton University (ongoing)</p> <p>Co- editor with Dr Vel Pillay for the book “ Tamil through English”</p> <p>Presented research paper in the 9th World Tamil Teachers' Conference – Singapore (Sep 2011)</p>	<p>Clerk at Rogers Co Ltd (1999)</p> <p>Computer Operator at Plaisance Air Transport Services (2000)</p> <p>Trainee teacher at the MIE-MGI (2000-2002)</p> <p>Teacher/ Senior teacher (2002-2007)</p> <p>Teaching at the Beau Sejour Tamil Darma Sangam Pallee – evening classes (2007 – till date)</p> <p>Educator (Secondary) at the Swami Sivananda State Secondary School – 2008- till date.</p>



1. Vanakkam, Mrs Vellien. You are a professional excelling in the Tamil language for years; can you tell us the reasons for opting Tamil Language as a career?

Right from the age of 3 years old my parents instill the love for the Tamil language in me, by sending me to the “Malai Palli” which was being run at the Dravidian Cultural Association every day from 4.00 to 5.30 p.m. At the primary and secondary level this interest of learning the Tamil language had been further kindled in me by two great and model

teachers, Aya Sivalingum Govinthan and Siven Govinthan -to whom I seize this opportunity to express my most humble gratitude.

Even though I studied in a confessional college where there was no facility available to study the Tamil language, I followed the evening classes at the Dravidian Cultural Association and took Tamil as a 9th subject for the School Certificate examination. I studied Mathematics, Economics and Accounting at HSC. I never thought I would join the teaching profession. It seems that destiny wanted me to join the Tamil field. It’s only after having started to work at the Rogers Co Ltd that the desire to join the Tamil teaching profession cropped in me.

After wards, I had the opportunity to study under the guidance of knowledgeable persons like Dr Siven Tiroumaley Chetty, Dr Keshaven Sornum and Dr Jeeven Chemen.

Even, after my marriage, I have got the unflinching support of my husband who has motivated me to pursue my higher studies in Tamil Language. In order to be able to bring a balance between my professional and family life, I chose to continue with my studies through the distance learning mode where I completed my Bachelor Degree and Master Degree in Tamil at the Annamalai University. My passion for the Tamil language and the teaching profession create in me this inner motivation to always go the extra mile to give the best to my students and for the development of the Tamil language in general.

2. How do you see the state of Tamil Language (spoken and written) in Mauritius? Has there been a decline?

Tamil language is an example of a diglossic language because it has 2 variations for spoken and written form. There are also dialectal differences in the spoken Tamil variety of Tamil Nadu. However Tamil in the diaspora is moving toward a standard form of spoken Tamil.

In Mauritius, individuals, teachers and professors who learnt Tamil professionally have the habit of speaking the purest form of Tamil. However, this form of spoken Tamil is not even prevalent among Tamils in Tamil Nadu.

At school, Tamil language is being taught as a third language. This helps the students to read and write in Tamil. But most of them are unaware of the existence of the spoken form. In this respect, scholars

have rightly pointed out that a second language teaching program in Indian languages, particularly in Tamil should impart competence in both spoken and written varieties.

However, it is also worth mentioning that despite many hindrances and practical difficulties, the Tamil Speaking Union under the chairmanship of Dr Jeeven Chemen has engaged into the bold venture with an objective of safeguarding and reviving the spoken form in Mauritius. However, this action could be extended to include the spoken form in the Tamil Curriculum and syllabus right from the primary level. Moreover, training in the spoken form could also be given to the Tamil teachers in order to better equip them to meet this objective.

Sustaining the Tamil language is the responsibility of all Tamils. Tamil teachers and Tamil organisations together in a joint effort should supervise the growth of the language. If, in a society, the spoken form loses its prominence, then it means that the language is dying slowly. Therefore, we have to concentrate in retaining the spoken form.

If we bear this in mind and take prompt action, it would be possible for us to ensure the maintenance of Tamil language in Mauritius at least for the benefit of the next generation of Tamils.

3. Why is it that many Students drop the Tamil Language at Secondary Level? Do you fear about the future?

At present Tamil is being taught in more than 200 primary schools and nearly all the State Secondary Schools across the country. Among them many are committed teachers who are prepared to go out of the way to promote the language. But there are a few who do not deliver the goods. By their negative attitudes those teachers often drive away the pupils from studying Tamil.

As an educator, I have observed that despite the fact that Tamil has been taught in the State Secondary School for about 3 decades, yet no monitoring of any sort is available to guide and supervise the educators.

Many students study Tamil in Form I –III level. They drop it either for lack of interest or inadequate competence or difficulty in the choice of subjects. Form I –III is considered to be the formative years in the life of the secondary students where they develop either a liking or a disliking for any subject. We, as educators should ensure that the students develop sufficient interest in Tamil at that level even though he/ she may not be compelled to offer it as a subject at SC or HSC. Yet, the interest in the Tamil language should not dwindle.

However, I do fear that in the future students might not be able to study Tamil at the tertiary level or even to join the Tamil teaching profession. This is so because students are no more allowed to offer Tamil as a subject for the HSC if there is less than 5 students opting for the subject in any particular State Secondary School. As it is the case, it is very rare to have 5 or more students opting for Tamil at HSC level in a particular school. This might surely contribute to a decline in the Tamil Language if prompt action is not going to be taken.

4. What according to you should be done to motivate our youngsters, and may be elders, to adopt the Tamil language as an additional medium?

The situation might definitely improve if we give due importance to Tamil Language and Culture. First, we should take the necessary and continuous attempts and determination to maintain Tamil as a home language.

We should develop simple and effective methods of teaching Tamil to our youngsters. Furthermore, with the globalization process, it is felt that technology can bring about widespread and fundamental changes in schools as it has been recognized as being a potential instrument for promoting lifelong education for national development and for building a competitive society. According to research, it has been reported that children are positively motivated to use computers and internet as a medium for learning.

Therefore in this information age, it is essential for Tamil teachers to get actively involved in the use of technology across the Tamil curriculum in order to be able to meet the demand of this modern society.

5. You have been contributing to Pathirikai, since its inception. Do you think Pathirikai can assist somehow in the above.

This beautiful legacy which is the Tamil Language has now to be transmitted and entrusted to the future generations in a world context dominated by the growing demands of modernity.

The teaching of language as a vehicle of communication and cultural expression is increasingly confronted by the great challenge of adjusting to the global era and of taking advantage of the new perspectives of access to knowledge and development opened by the uses of internet and multimedia.

In this context, pathirikai which is an online newspaper can definitely be used as an effective interactive tool among Tamils both on the national and international level.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate the Pathirikai team for the bold and great initiative. I wish you the very best in all your endeavors and undertakings.

6. Do you have a message for our youth?

Nowadays, it is a sad state of affairs to say that many youngsters lack guidance and are ignorant of the attitude to be adopted in the society. They believe that they deserve the best without the least effort and sacrifice. The youth of today is the adult of tomorrow. So, it is imperative for our youngsters to find reliable and credible models in the society to emulate and to incorporate right attitude in their daily life.

My message for the youth is that:

You will inherit the world. You will also have the eventual responsibility, as each generation does, to pass the world on intact to the next generation. As you go through life, you will have many challenges. Each of you will have to find your own way in the world.

In order to live to your full potential as human beings, you have to start devoting yourself to raise your mind, body and character to the highest level. This will ultimately help to create a positive and vibrant atmosphere for your own good and all those around you.

Be a citizen of the world.

I wish you all much success.