



Tamil Drama

Children sing a song in Tamil



Tamil Stand-up Comedy



Popular dance for a Tamil film song

## TALLAHASSEE TAMIL SANGAM Tamil *Puthandu* (New Year) Celebration 2010

■ By *Thayumanasamy Somasundaram*

For the eleventh year in a row, the Tallahassee Tamil Sangam (TTS) celebrated the Tamil Puthandu (New Year) on Saturday, April 17, 2010 at Recreation Hall, Alumni Village, Tallahassee, FL 32310. Around April 14th of every year in the Gregorian calendar (when Sun moves into the Aries constellation) Tamil people celebrate the Puthandu with reverence and importance.

Tamil, one of the ancient languages of India belongs to the Dravidian language family and is spoken by 66 million people worldwide in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Fiji, UK, Canada, USA, and other countries. Tamil is recognized as an official language in India, Sri Lanka, and Singapore. The antiquity and relevance of Tamil can be seen by noting that Tolkappiyam, a grammar book was believed to have been written around third BCE and that the language has been in continuous usage since then to the present time. Tamil speaking people are proud of their language and have created great literary works both during ancient times and modern times. Tamils are also

pioneers in incorporating its usage in electronic media such as computers, Internet and electronic mail by noting that as early as in 1988 when Unicode88 standard was proposed, Tamil characters were made available, as one of first South Asian language standards to be added. In mid to late twentieth century the Tamil people spread to various parts of the globe and took their passion for the language with them.

So it is only natural for Tamils in the United States to keep using the language at home and with friends and family. One of the obstacles for maintaining proficient usage comes when children are born and raised entirely in the US with very little exposure to the Tamil language outside the home. So Tallahassee Tamil Sangam was established in the year 2000 in order to promote the usage of the native tongue among youngsters. The Sangam (Association) has been able to find volunteers to teach the language to kids. We have been organizing festivals and programs where children and adults sing songs, narrate

stories and poetry in Tamil, dance to music, and act in dramas written entirely in Tamil language.

This year's celebration included staging of children's Tamil drama, songs and prayers in Tamil, stand-up comedy routines in Tamil and a dance program. The celebration was attended by many families and everyone was happy to be part of this great experience. We plan to continue this endeavor to inspire the children to learn their mother tongue. Once they do they will hopefully recognize the connection between the native tongue, and their habits, heritage, and culture. More information about can be found at <http://tamil.somasundaram.us>.



**Thayumanasamy Somasundaram**, a resident of Tallahassee since 1993 is one of the founding members of Tallahassee Tamil Sangam.