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**Was Tamil (language) the only spoken language around the world long ago?**

Here you could see the professor explaining that Tamil was the only language we spoke long back. Is it right?

6 Answers

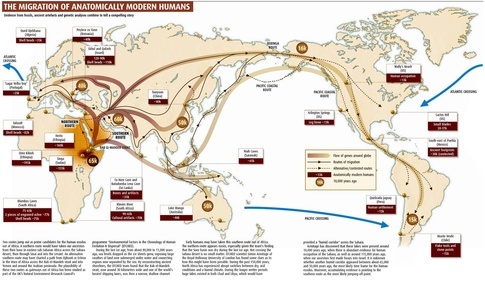
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[**C (Selva) R.Selvakumar**](https://www.quora.com/profile/C-Selva-R-Selvakumar), Native speaker

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I think [Judith Meyer](https://www.quora.com/profile/Judith-Meyer) had given a good response, however I would like to add a few points which will differ somewhat from her views. There is no proof that any of the existing languages or known to be extinct languages were spoken some 45,000 years ago. The question asked  is, however, about some unspecified 'long ago'.   
  
I think it is not currently possible to provide*proof* of a language  which was  *spoken* even some 15,000 years ago. The graphics provided by Judith Meyer about Tamil is not incorrect, however, what she has provided is for the *Tamil literature* which is said to be of highly developed state, and hence can not be taken as the origin of the language or its pre-literary spoken language state.   
Also in her comment, *Old Tamil is not readily understood by modern speakers ,*the emphasis should be on *readily.*Actually most of the Old Tamil songs are understood, though with a little help. Almost all the words are the same in form and meaning even today.    
  
The bottom line is the antiquity of Tamil is not something known at present.  Even in the oldest Vedas, written in Vedic language, Dravidian or arguably Tamil words are found. The following facts are worth keeping in mind though. Archaeological finds including cave paintings and genetic markers can not be taken as evidence of language,  spoken or otherwise, but can be related, to in the case of DNA, the ethnicity of people at least in some cases..  
  
1) The out of Africa human migration spread to India some 60,000 years ago and language is thought to be developed some 45,000-50,000 years ago. The migrations to Europe and elsewhere is later, See the following diagram:



2) The Y-Chromosome Haplogroup C-M130 spread clearly shows the spread through India and South India. See the following:  
[File:C=M130-Migration.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:C%3DM130-Migration.jpg)  
Even today descendants of one of the earliest human migrations live in Tamil Nadu and they are, today, Tamil speakers. (Work due to Dr. R.M. Pichappan. Also see Spencer Wells' description in [Page on onthewing.org](http://www.onthewing.org/user/Sci_Journey%20of%20Man.pdf) ). The following page contains useful information on Dr. R.M Pichappan's work: [The Great Human Migration](http://www.maduraimessenger.org/printed-version/2010/july/the-great-human-migration/)  
  
3) Spread of human population to Australia occurred in more than one wave from South India, perhaps through South-East Asia etc. (including the more recent 2000 BC migration described by Dr. Pugach. See [An Antipodean Raj](http://www.economist.com/news/science-and-technology/21569688-genetic-evidence-suggests-four-millennia-ago-group-adventurous-indians) ). Ancient, 35,000-40,000  year old Cave Paintings have been found in Australia (so called Bradshaw rock paintings and one of the items found in the paintings is the Boomerang). Even today in many communities in Tamil Nadu it is a practice to present Boomerang (known in Tamil as vaḷari  (வளரி)) during marriage as one of the traditional items. There are many other Tamil names for the same.    
   
4) Unlike, Greek and Sanskrit literature, the extant Tamil literature is far more realistic and it is not so much filled with supernatural phenomena. This is not to say that there are no supernatural phenomena, but it is very uncommon. Tamil literature speaks of at least three sea erosion or tsunami-like events, called  kaṭalkōḷ  (கடல்கோள்) in Tamil. It speaks of three Tamil Academies and if we take all three academies into account, it spans some 10,000 years. It seems extraordinary for sure, and may be it is a fiction, but  given many other facts about Tamil literature (not spinning totally imaginary legends), and some scant evidences of lost land, archaeological finds etc., it can not be right away dismissed as total fiction. And yet, we can not take it at face value either. There are in Tamil Nadu, still many unexplored or less investigated sites and archaeological finds. Very recently a rock painting in Tamil Nadu (in Palani) was discovered and it is said to be 4,000-7,000 years old.   
   
In summary, the antiquity of Tamil language is not known. The available ancient Tamil literature  (300 BC to 200 AD)  and the state of Tamil language known from the literature reflects a highly developed system and hence it is not the origin of the language. Although language can not be attested, Tamil people belong to one of the earliest branches of human migration from out of Africa. Language*seems*to have developed only *after*this migration.

[Updated Apr 1, 2014](https://www.quora.com/Was-Tamil-language-the-only-spoken-language-around-the-world-long-ago/answer/C-Selva-R-Selvakumar) • [View Upvotes](https://www.quora.com/api/mobile_expanded_voter_list?type=answer&key=3yQ8PDJ3yhu)

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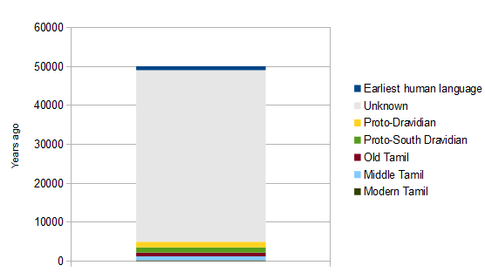
[Judith Meyer](https://www.quora.com/profile/Judith-Meyer)

[**Judith Meyer**](https://www.quora.com/profile/Judith-Meyer), speaks 9-13 languages, published books on languages and organizes conferences

9.8k Views • Upvoted by [Rohan Shankar](https://www.quora.com/profile/Rohan-Shankar-1), Tamil, Kannada, Hindi

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Quite apart from this guy's bogus claims about extra-terrestrials involved in human history, Tamil is not nearly old enough to have been spoken by all humans. See this diagram:



The (invisible) black, light blue and brown parts are when Tamil was spoken, assuming that we include Old Tamil in the definition (Old Tamil is not readily understood by modern speakers). Tamil is ca. 2200 years old, some say 2500. Before that, we know that there were the Proto-South Dravidian (green) and Proto-Dravidian (yellow) languages, which lasted ca. 1500 years each.   
  
We know that during the time of Proto-South Dravidian and Proto-Dravidian, before Tamil first appeared, humans were already speaking distinct languages. There is Ancient Egyptian for example and Proto-Indo-European, which predate Old Tamil. The earliest Chinese inscriptions and the earliest Mayan inscriptions are roughly the same age as the earliest Old Tamil inscriptions.   
  
However, none of these give us a clue as to what the earliest human language was. If you look at the diagram, we can only account for ca. 5,000 years of human language. However, human language first evolved ca. 45,000 years ago. That leaves a huge amount of time for which we have no idea yet.   
  
Most believe that languages diverged when humans first diverged. To wander from Africa via Europe and North America to South America must have taken a long time, during which languages were able to grow as far apart as Mayan, Proto-Indo-European, Proto-Dravidian and Chinese. Still many scientists believe that these all evolved from a common language, long ago, and this language would have had some traits in common with each of the mentioned languages but would also have been unlike all of them.

[Written Feb 5, 2014](https://www.quora.com/Was-Tamil-language-the-only-spoken-language-around-the-world-long-ago/answer/Judith-Meyer) • [View Upvotes](https://www.quora.com/api/mobile_expanded_voter_list?type=answer&key=a0fPcgySTci) • Answer requested by [Charles Bronson](https://www.quora.com/profile/Charles-Bronson-2)

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[**Jonathan H. Avidan**](https://www.quora.com/profile/Jonathan-H-Avidan), Linguistics student, Tel-Aviv University

4.4k Views

Judith Meyer's answer is good enough on its own, but I feel compelled to reinforce it.  
  
No matter how many titles such as "professor" this guy has, he propagates bogus, unscientific ideas (not even theories) which have no basis in reality since they contradict all other evidence.  
  
The answer to your question is "no". How do I know? Because Tamil is a descendant of another language, which can be reconstructed to great extent with logical impunity. It is the end product of language change, meaning there was a preexisting language to change, at a time when languages were already in use in very, *very*distant parts of the world. No, we don't have recordings - much like we don't have video footage of hunter-gatherers but if we find spears and animal fossils with spears in them we can infer that hunter-gatherers used spears, we can also infer from the type and level of civilization that they employed language.  
  
On an anecdotal note, this is not the first time I've come across some sort of Tamil related bogus propaganda. I always wondered where it came from and what fuels it.  
  
Edit: since a few individuals have accused me of "suppressing" and "discriminating" Tamil by my denial of the preposterous suggestions about Tamil, I responded more elaborately, which I'll quote here:  
  
So here are the facts:  
1) A casual trip to Wiki can bring up the linguistic history of Tamil which is a **Dravidian**language. (A non-wiki source is Encyclopedia Britannica: [Tamil language](http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/581953/Tamil-language))  
2) Since Tamil descends from another language (i.e. Proto-Dravidian), it is not the first language in the world.   
3) Proto-Dravidian is unlikely to precede other well-reconstructed Proto-languages, such as Proto-Indo-European, since Proto-Dravidian is thought to have split around 2500 years ago while Proto-Indo-European is thought to have split at least 5000 years ago.  
4) Other Proto-languages have been shown to split much earlier than that.  
5) The reason behind this is the science of historical linguistics which compares thousands of languages and shows by regular, predictable phonological change (in addition to historical evidence) how and when languages originally split.  
  
Ergo, Tamil (which descends from Old Tamil, which descends from Tamil-Kannada, which descends from Tamil-Tulu-Kannada, which descends from Proto-Southern-Dravidian which descends from Proto-Dravidian) is not the world's oldest language, not its first language and was not the only language spoken in the world at any time.  
  
**If you think a science that has thrived for 200 years and has engaged countless linguists in the quest for knowledge is actually a conspiracy just to "suppress" Tamil, then you have an inflated sense of self-importance**.

[Updated Oct 13, 2015](https://www.quora.com/Was-Tamil-language-the-only-spoken-language-around-the-world-long-ago/answer/Jonathan-H-Avidan) • [View Upvotes](https://www.quora.com/api/mobile_expanded_voter_list?type=answer&key=o6a9Wn0haNY) • Answer requested by [Austin Morris](https://www.quora.com/profile/Austin-Morris-15)

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4.4k Views

Surely not.  Even had one language been the source of all, they would diverge into dialects in 500 years, and separate tongues in 1000.  
  
  
John McWhorter makes a good case for the earliest languages to have been more akin to that of the San of the Kalahari.  This is the tongue involving numerous clicking sounds.  He cites enclaves containing those sounds in widely separated locations.  This is what happens when numerous speakers of other tongues spread through a region.  The original inhabitants are separated and isolated from their linguistic fellows.  
  
  
It's almost always the case that where a particular language group originated is where you'll find the most languages.  The language group throughout the Pacific is said to have originated on Taiwan.  Today Taiwan has four different languages and numerous dialects.  And it's not a huge land mass  The Caucasus region may have been the birthplace of Indo-European.  Today there are over a hundred languages spoken there.  
  
  
India has a wide variety of languages and dialects.  Tamil is a very old one.  It's probably the oldest in India.  But the world?  Highly unlikely.  If the "Out of Africa" theory is correct -- and from all indications including mitochondrial DNA, it seems to be -- the Bushmen of the Kalahari have a far better claim.

[Written Feb 4, 2014](https://www.quora.com/Was-Tamil-language-the-only-spoken-language-around-the-world-long-ago/answer/Dave-Hines) • [View Upvotes](https://www.quora.com/api/mobile_expanded_voter_list?type=answer&key=XnFP9BkN9fi)

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[**Harsha Matadhikari**](https://www.quora.com/profile/Harsha-Matadhikari), Languages = rivers supporting civilizatons. Language dies => civilizations die.

2.7k Views

A2A  
First, I would suggest you to know the authenticity of the proof any claim that you are in doubt. I just googled Alex Collier and found this site that points to him as a Andromed Contactee.   
  
[Alex Collier Andromeda Contactee Website](http://www.alexcollier.org/)  
  
I did not watch the video further.  Do you want any more proof to know he is just a fame monger? I outright suggest you to ignore such claims.  
  
Further,  
  
Tamil is a very old language. Modern Tamil is derived from a proto dravidian language [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pr...](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Dravidian_language).  
  
  
 Philologists are investigating the relationship of this language tree with the rest (Indo - European etc.) but they are not able to find it.

Despite many proposals, scholars have not shown a systematic  relationship between the Dravidian languages and any other language  family. Nonetheless, while there are no readily detectable genealogical  connections,

Earliest known script of Tamil was found in 2nd century BC

The earliest known Dravidian inscriptions are 76 [Old Tamil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_language#Old_Tamil) inscriptions on cave walls in [Madurai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madurai_district) and [Tirunelveli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tirunelveli_district) districts in [Tamil Nadu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Nadu), dating from the 2nd century BCE

Even Kannada, Tulu, Telugu and other languages like Bondi are derived are from this proto dravidian language. So definitely if you have to claim the oldest, you can say this dravidian language as the oldest not modern Tamil. But you can attribute the earliest surviving dravidian language to Tamil.  
  
But to prove that even this Dravidian language is the oldest, we should study the human migration pattern.  
  
As per human immigration theory based on mitochondrial DNA [Human mitochondrial DNA haplogroup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_mitochondrial_DNA_haplogroup) , there is a consensus that L3 Haplogroup originated in Africa, but  N haplogroup could also have originated in India.

However, whether or not the mutations which define haplogroup N itself first occurred within Asia or Africa has been a subject for ongoing discussion and study

Since human civilization existed outside of India through other haplo groups such as L3[Haplogroup L3 (mtDNA)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haplogroup_L3_(mtDNA)), definitely Tamil is not the oldest of the languages.

[Written Aug 8, 2015](https://www.quora.com/Was-Tamil-language-the-only-spoken-language-around-the-world-long-ago/answer/Harsha-Matadhikari) • [View Upvotes](https://www.quora.com/api/mobile_expanded_voter_list?type=answer&key=zt90GFIvU2m) • Answer requested by [Austin Morris](https://www.quora.com/profile/Austin-Morris-15)

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[Ernest W. Adams](https://www.quora.com/profile/Ernest-W-Adams), Game Design Consultant, Author, and Professor

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Nothing. Nobody in the USA can ever deliver on their campaign promises, because of the system of checks and balances. The president can promise all he likes, but he doesn't write the legislation.   
  
It's different in a Parliamentary system like Britain's, where the Prime Minister normally has the majority behind him. If he doesn't deliver on his promises, it means he can't control his party and ...

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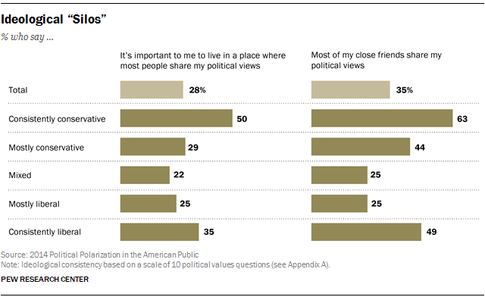
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More and more Americans are isolating themselves politically, only maintaining friendships with people who share their political views.

​

​I guess you're following this trend.

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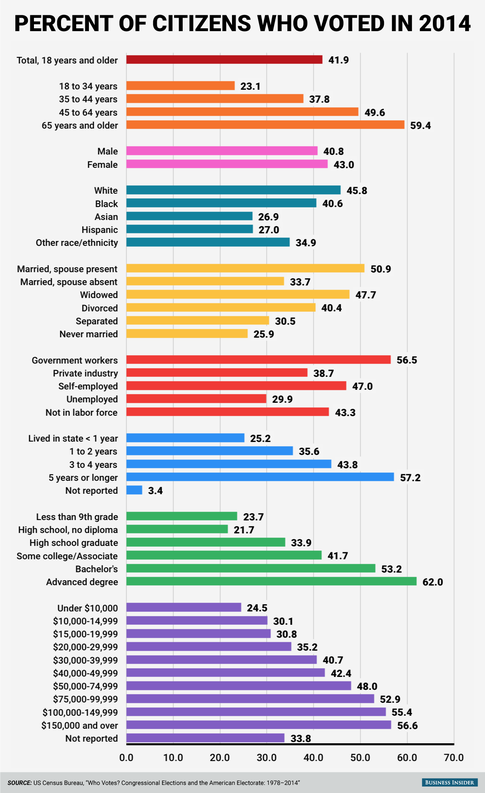
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11.8k Views • Upvoted by [Rod Young](https://www.quora.com/profile/Rod-Young), Was a Community Organizer and activist for the Green Party of Tennessee, Former

[James](https://www.quora.com/profile/James-Hollomon) has [230+ answers](https://www.quora.com/profile/James-Hollomon/answers/Bernie-Sanders-Politician) in [Bernie Sanders (Politician)](https://www.quora.com/topic/Bernie-Sanders-Politician).



What it will take for Bernie Sanders to win the heavily rigged Clinton juggernaut primary is a massive grassroots political movement. Senator Sanders is already well on his way to establishing that. With that established, he will easily win the Presidency and the Democrats will most certainly recapture the Senate and quite likely take the House as well. They will also do well in state elections...

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